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READING PRACTICES IN TWO URBAN MULTI-GRADE FOUNDATION
PHASE CLASSES

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that an investigation into 'Reading practices in two urban multi-grade Foundation Phase classes' is my own work and that it has not been submitted for any degree in any other university.

Signed: ....

Coleen Anthea Sampson

Date: ....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To God, who gave me the strength to persevere, despite the many setbacks throughout the writing of this thesis.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my late brother, Russell who inspired me tremendously when he was alive.

ABSTRACT

In Africa, throughout the history of schooling, many teachers have been confronted by the demanding situation of teaching two or more year groups in the same classroom although data on this multi-grade phenomenon is scarce. Although reading is a fundamental competency and the core of our curriculum, a gap exists in practice. In multi-grade classes the gap is wider as a result of the different grades and varying abilities within the grades. The present study was motivated by the researcher's concern for the status of reading in all Foundation Phase classes.

This study answers one main question: How do teachers in two urban multi-grade classrooms teach reading in the Foundation Phase? The two sub-questions are: What are the current reading practices in urban multi-grade classrooms in the Foundation Phase?
What challenges do teachers of urban multi-grade classes face when teaching reading in the Foundation Phase?

The conceptual framework that was central to answering the two sub questions includes four theorists namely: Lave and Wenger's (1991) Vygotsky's (1978); Bronfenbrenner's (1990) and finally Piaget's (1972) stages of cognitive development including pre-operational stage and concrete operational stage. The literature review highlights the physical setting of the multi-grade classrooms, debates the advantages and limitations of urban multi-grade teaching, compares the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) 2005 and the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) reading curriculum, briefly deliberates the stages of reading development and finally discusses the variety of reading practices.

A qualitative interpretive case study research design was formulated to explore the complex phenomenon of urban multi-grade reading practices in the Foundation Phase. The first research question explored the reading practices found in two urban multi-grade classes, and the findings include four themes which are: stories, vocabulary, comprehension and reading. The second sub-question, focussed on the challenges the urban multi-grade teachers experienced.

In conclusion this study reveals that reading can be taught successfully in urban multi-grade classes. Teaching reading in multi-grade classes may foster the emotional, intellectual, social and academic well-being of learners. Secondly although the two urban multi-grade teachers faced many challenges, with the necessary support structures in place, these challenges could be minimized.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CME	Centre for Multi-grade Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EMDC	Education and Management Development Centres
FP	Foundation Phase
GET	General Education and Training
Gr	Grade
IP	Intermediate Phase
Lnr	Learner
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MG	Multi-grade
MTP	Multi-grade Teaching Programme
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NDoE	National Department of Education
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRS	National Reading Strategy
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PALS	Peer Assisted Learning Strategies
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SA	South Africa

SASA	South African School's Act
SLT	Situated Learning Theory
STATS SA	Statistics South Africa
Tr	Teacher
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

The latest Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), research reveals South Africa (SA) as the country with the lowest percentages in literacy rates of forty countries (Howie, van Staden, Tshele, Dowse & Zimmerman, 2012:17). These results highlight the urgent need for the development of reading instruction practices that will address the challenges in language and reading, particularly in the Foundation Phase (FP) of South Africa (Howie et al: 2011:59). According to Vithanapathirana (2010) even schools in urban areas face the challenge of organising teaching and learning in multi-grade settings.

The current study fits into the broader framework of Language in Education in South Africa (SA) and explored the methods of teaching reading in urban multi-grade classes in the FP The basic design of this research was a case study and was undertaken from July to September 2010. The researchers aim was to deeply probe a particular phenomenon in order to understand it better (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit 2004:41). The probing involved observations of two FP teachers during Literacy lessons in their urban multi-grade classes. One teacher had an English class of nine Grade 2 learners and ten Grade 3 learners in one classroom. The other teacher had an Afrikaans class with three grades in one class. There were thirteen learners in Grade 1, ten learners in Grade 2 and eleven learners in Grade 3. See Figure 3.1.

The research methodology adopted was to profile the reading practices of these two urban multi-grade teachers. This involved interviews and observations to establish how reading is taught in multi-grade classes. The research methodology is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

This chapter conveys the origin and background of the study, importance of the problem, context of the study, approach, purpose and goals of the study. It presents the research question, clarification of terms, the significance of the study, limitations and assumptions of the study. A discussion of the organisation of the thesis concludes the chapter.

1.1   ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The present study evolved out of a concern for the status of reading in South African schools. The researcher was motivated by her own context as a FP teacher and agrees with the statement that the most important task of the FP teacher is to ensure that all learners learn to read (NDoE, 2003). For the past thirty-three years, the researcher's aim has been to help learners acquire the cognitive and perceptual skills necessary for their

scholastic and literacy development. She believes that the early stage of a child's school life is crucial for the development of literacy skills. Reading in particular, is a fundamental competency and the core of our curriculum. Every learning area depends on fluent reading and the ability to comprehend text. Hence failure in reading strongly predicts failure in all other academic subjects (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2008). It is therefore imperative that education structures should equip learners with advanced literacy skills in order to cope with the demands in the latter stages and make the transition to 'reading to learn' (Heugh, 2006:9).

The aim of this investigation was to explore reading practices in two urban multi-grade classes. It also creates an awareness of the challenges that multi-grade teachers in urban FP classes experience.

The curriculum policy document that was in use at the time of data collection was the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). Currently, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is used in schools. Reference will be made to both policy documents. In the RNCS (2002) the minimum time allocation for Literacy in the FP was 40% this included the six learning outcomes: listening, speaking, reading and viewing, writing, thinking and reasoning and language structure and use. However, in the new CAPS (2011:9) states that reading and phonics have been given four-and-a-half hours per week which constitutes 64% of the literacy time. Reading has been prioritised in the new curriculum.

Multi-grade teaching refers to the teaching of learners of different ages, grades and abilities in the same classroom by one teacher (Joubert, 2010). Literature uses many different terms to describe this kind of teaching namely, 'multi-level', 'multiple class', 'composite class', 'vertical group', and 'family classes' (Katz, 1995:11). In South Africa, there is no policy standardising which grades are combined (Brown, 2008a). Brunswic and Valerien (2004:45) maintain that multi-grade teaching is often established out of necessity. The reasons may be based on economic, social, political or demographic circumstances (low population density, resulting from rural-urban migration). Brown (2008b:6) added further reasons such as: maximising the use of available teachers and classroom space and cost effective use of available material resources. However, necessity is not the only reason why multi-grade teaching is employed. Multi-grade practice is often implemented because of its advantages (Vithanapathirana, 2006:5). The schools in her study in Sri Lanka, could be categorised as: 'schools in areas where parents send their children to more popular schools within reasonable travel distance' (Little, 2007:19). Little (1995) believes that as the multi-grade reality has typified many schools throughout the 20th century, it will continue to do so well into the 21st century. In Africa throughout the history of schooling, many teachers have been

confronted by the demanding situation of teaching two or more year groups in the same classroom. Quist (2005) confirms that while there is a greater awareness that multi-grade teaching is practiced in Africa, data on multi-grade schools is scarce (Mulryan-Kyne, 2005). Large proportions of the teaching profession are still unaware of the specific needs of teachers and learners, or of the benefits that can be derived for learners in multi-grade classrooms (UNESCO, 1988).

While it is estimated that nearly 30% of the schools in the world include multi-grade classes, in Africa this number is more than 50%. This suggests that multi-grade teaching, though not always recognized, is more widely found than is generally thought (Colbert, Chiappe & Arboleda, 1993).

More than two million children attend multi-grade schools on a daily basis in SA. The Centre for Multi-grade Education (CME) in Wellington SA, is contributing to the quality of education in rural multi-grade schools where the need is more critical than in urban multi-grade schools. Joubert (2010) stated that there is a need for new research approaches that address problems of practice in multi-grade classrooms directly. According to Little (2001:477) for children to be successful in multi-grade environments, teachers have to be well-trained, well-resourced and their approach to multi-grade teaching has to be a positive one. However, the paradox in multi-grade teaching is that many teachers are trained in mono-grade pedagogy and have very little resources at their disposal. Juvane (2010) further emphasises the need for multi-dimensional strategies when training multi-grade teachers, both pre-service and in-service.

Armstrong and McMahon (2006:801) maintain the view that the term 'urban is adaptable, evolving and transcends geographical boundaries'. They argue that while the word 'urban' is often connected to the inner city, in some countries it is linked to the social composition of racial-ethnic, dominant social and power relationships.

Literature indicates that there are also economic distinctions. While SA has one of the largest and more advanced economies in Africa, it remains a highly unequal society. It has a vibrant first world economy on the one hand, and a larger, informal, rural and urban economy on the other, in which poverty is still rife (Makoro, 2007:54).

In this study, the district where both multi-grade schools were located reflects these urban characteristics where poverty was ubiquitous. Demographics such as unemployment and poverty were regular features of the community. Beineke, Foldesy and Maness (2004:2) highlight the fact that urban parents are often less able to contribute to their children's schoolwork due to economic demands. The crime rate for urban areas is believed to be

higher than for rural areas and there appears to be a strong association between failing in school and delinquent behaviour (Fullwood, Gates, Pancake, & Schroth, 2001:5).

Chisholm (2004) reported that the first ten years of SA's democracy have seen many new policies being put into practice in an attempt to improve access, equity and quality in education. Early Childhood Development (ECD) and literacy are the two areas that have not been a high priority over the last ten years. Despite all the measures that have been put in place, major disparity still exist within the schooling system in terms of teaching and learning resources, socio-economic status and household literacy (Hartley, 2005:99). The National Department of Education (NDoE) itself acknowledges that the quality of education in SA schools is disturbingly low in relation to what is spent on schooling (NdoE, 2003:101). Needless to say, none of this encourages the development of meaningful literacy practices in the school context.

According to Bialystok (2007:46) 'the supreme achievement of schooling and its most indelible academic legacy is the acquisition of literacy'. Teaching young children to read is the basis of achieving educational outcomes. Unless children learn to read from an early age, they will not be able to grasp the more complex skills and content that relies on reading. They also lack the skills of understanding printed information, following written instructions and communicating well in writing. Often this leads to poor results and early dropout from the school system. These implications rooted in poor reading ability, has major consequences for a country's economic development. Reading and learning achievement are therefore central to economic productivity and growth (Hanushek & Woessman, 2009). This theory is further enhanced by Richardson (1998:115) who argues that: 'Literacy is a necessity of modernity. The capacity to read and write is causally associated with earning a living, achieving expanded horizons of personal enlightenment and enjoyment, maintaining a stable and democratic society, and historically, with the rise of civilization itself.'

Pretorius and Mampuru (2007:39) contend that internationally, reading is used as the predictor of whether an education system is achieving its goals. Language development and reading achievement are influenced by many factors. These include environmental factors as informed by Freire and Macedo's (1987:29) view that '*Reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world. Language and reality are dynamically connected'.* Literacy learning therefore improves when learners have acquired the basic conceptual ideas that underpin written passages.

1.2 IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Bouysee (2002:25), states that multi-grade teaching can occur anywhere. However, the phenomenon of urban multi-grade teaching in urban areas is not as common as in rural areas. This study focuses on two urban contexts and examines how these multi-grade teachers deliver reading instruction in their unique environments. Each teacher is responsible for teaching two or three grades with varying abilities. Both teachers have been trained in mono-grade teaching pedagogy and have to manage heterogeneous groupings in their multi-grade classes (Miller, 1994). Without the essential skills and knowledge of teaching reading in multi-grade classes, this becomes an arduous task for teachers (Mason & Burns, 1996:42). Au (2002) asserts that different methods can be used to achieve the same outcome to make the mastery of reading skills easier.

The discussion on the importance of this research project begins by interrogating international trends and statistics on literacy, followed by South African trends and finally the Western Province statistics and goals. To document evidence of the problem, reports and statistics have been included.

The 2013/2014 Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2014) states that by 2011 fifty-seven million children were still out of school with the sub-Saharan Africa region, lagging behind with an astonishing 22% of children not in school. Of this 54% of children are girls, with the Arab States experiencing 60% of girls out of school. The report also states that in sub-Saharan Africa the proportion of those starting school who reached the last grade worsened from 58% in 1999 to 56% in 2010. As far as literacy is concerned, many countries throughout the world are concerned and SA is no exception. Hence the period from 2003 to 2013 has been proclaimed as the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNESCO 2005:31).

The 2011 PIRLS report, which is a comparative study on reading conducted in 40 countries, states that SA fared the worst in their samples of Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners (Howie et al 2012). According to this report 78% of South Africa's Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners have not attained the most basic reading benchmarks. This research clearly indicates that learners in SA schools, especially in the Intermediate Phase (IP), are lagging behind in comparison to their international counterparts.

In SA the first National Systemic Evaluations were carried out by the NDoE in 2001. Grade 3 learners in all nine provinces achieved a national mean of 38% for reading and writing in their home language (NDoE, 2003). The results of the Grade 6 evaluation, three

years later, were also below par, with Grade 6 learners obtaining a national mean of 38% for literacy in English, the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) (NDoE, 2005b).

The South African National Reading Strategy (NRS) has as its main goal, the advancement of reading competence of learners, and strives to improve the reading level of all learners in the country. The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Systemic Evaluations re-iterate that the majority of IP learners performed poorly in the reading audit. It was reported that 14% of learners were exceptional in their language competence; 23% were partly competent and 63% were below the required competence for their age level (NRS, 2008:7). Each province of SA, spends one-third of its annual budget on education and literacy remains the most neglected of all education goals, with approximately 759 million adults lacking literacy skills (Wildeman, 2005:14). Table 1:1 indicates the results of the WCED 2011 System Evaluations for Literacy and Numeracy for Grades 3, 6, and 9. However for the purpose of this research project the researcher has only focussed on Grades 3 and 6 and selected out the Reading and Viewing statistics.

Table 1:1   WCED Systemic Evaluation results for Grades 3 and 6

2011 Systemic results for Grade 3 and 6				
Grade	Overall Pass%	Overall Average%	Reading and Viewing Provincial Pass%	Provincial Average %
3	30.4	38.7	26.0	38.1
6	31.5	40.9	41.3	45.8

In light of the above statistics, low reading achievement has been identified as a concern that needs to be addressed (Grant, 2010). These low levels in literacy cannot be seen in isolation. Variables such as lack of resources, inappropriate instructional methods, print-poor environments, large classes, reduced time-on-task and poorly trained teachers also impact negatively on literacy accomplishment (Walter & Davis, 2005).

According to the NRS of the (NDoE) (2008) many teachers in SA have limited knowledge of teaching reading. For example, teachers in the FP tend to use the group reading method while there are other methodologies such as shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, reading aloud and other teaching methods that can be explored. Group reading does not cater for individual learners' abilities and reading levels, especially if it is the only method used to teach reading.

While the FP Curriculum emphasised that it is the core responsibility of the teacher to ensure that learners can read and write independently by the end of Grade 3, no particular methodology was prescribed (NCS, 2002). Teachers were encouraged to use a combination of methods to achieve their goal to develop independent reading skills. Many FP teachers,

however, have not been trained explicitly to teach reading. For this reason they found it challenging to assist learners with reading difficulties. As a result, the teaching of reading in the FP has become a controversial issue nationally (NRS, 2008).

1.3   CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to locate two urban schools in the Western Cape, with multi-grade classes. Both schools were located in the Northern District of Parow in the Western Cape. See

Figure 1:**1** below.
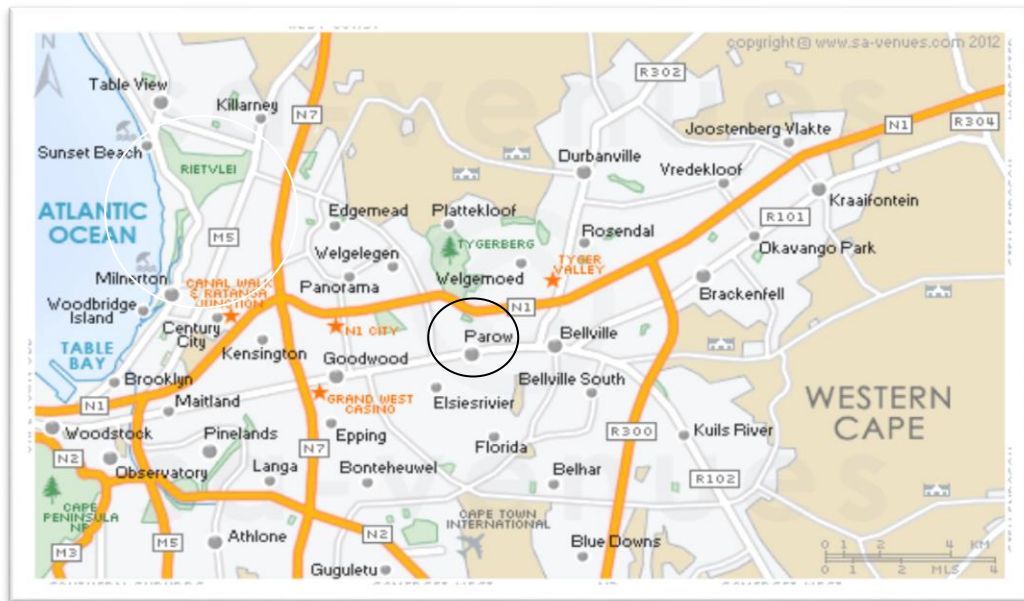
Figure 1:1   A map of Parow where the research was based

School 1 has been in existence for sixty five years and was previously an Afrikaans Model C State school. Presently, it is a parallel medium school with seven hundred and ninety diverse learners from the surrounding areas of Elsies River, Belhar and Bishop Lavis. The school is regarded as a Section 21 school, which means that they are self-governing in terms of the South African School's Act (SASA) (1996). They prepare and manage their own financial budgets and administer school fees to offset costs incurred in the operation of the school.

School 2 has been in operation for eighty years. It is a multi-lingual preparatory school with three hundred and eighty learners. The school has a quintile ranking of 3, since it serves a community where poverty is widespread, owing to rising unemployment. Quintile 1 ranking refers to the poorest schools and quintile 5 denotes the least poor schools (Gower 2008:15). In the interview with the teacher, she mentioned that: 'the school has to write off bad debt on

a yearly basis, as some parents cannot afford to pay the school fees'. School 2 was in the process of applying to have their status changed to a no-fee school.

At both schools many of the learners came from single-parent homes. Very few of them lived with both their parents. Some were in the care of their grandparents throughout the week and went back home for the week-ends. A large number of learners were within walking distance from their schools. Others made use of public transport, mainly taxis to commute to and from school. The common denominator of learners from both schools was that they came from backgrounds where parents were not highly educated and consequently found it hard to find suitable occupations. This inhibited them from assisting their children with homework and more importantly, reading was not a priority.

There is a powerful association between parental education and children's reading achievement. (Howie et al, 2012:73). In SA, the percentage of parents who did not complete secondary education is 26 % (Howie et al, 2012:74). The Western Cape is struggling with a high unemployment rate and according to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), during the first quarter of 2011 the unemployment rate for the Western Cape was estimated at 22.2%.

At both sites there were many learners who exhibited poor word-recognition and decoding skills. Limited access to books appropriate to reading levels of learners resulted in a lack of motivation to read. The schools had a variety of books but there was a shortage of basic Afrikaans readers for the Afrikaans speaking learners..

1.4   THE APPROACH TO THE STUDY

This qualitative case study is located within the interpretive, phenomenological paradigm. Phenomenology focuses attention on the 'deeply embedded frameworks of unstated, taken for granted assumptions through which humans make sense of their lives (Yanow, 2006:15).

The purpose of a case study is to gain detailed understanding of the process involved within a setting. Case studies often use multiple methods of data collection which may include interviews, observations and video recordings, as determined in this research project. The unique character of people and groups can be captured, described and interpreted in their natural settings (Simmons, 1996:229).

An initial meeting was arranged with the heads of the schools where the data was collected. The teachers who taught the specific multi-grade classes were enlightened as to the approach of the study. They were given a detailed explanation as to why their schools were selected and the importance of the research. The schedules for the ensuing weeks were clarified and permission was sought from the WCED to proceed. It was agreed upon that

each school would be visited on alternate Mondays for two hours until the second last week of the third term in September.

Interviews with the two teachers were the starting point of the data collecting process. Both interviews took place after school hours on the school premises and were tape-recorded. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 were very conscious of having to speak into a microphone initially but as the interviews continued, they became more relaxed. The first interview was conducted in Afrikaans, which is the researcher's second language. Unfamiliar terminology was researched to aid the interview process.

Both schools were visited on the first Monday of the data collecting schedule. The researcher introduced herself to the learners and informed them that she would be in their classrooms every alternate Monday to observe how reading and language activities are executed. The following week the researcher started with observation at School 1 after their assembly period. The learners were well-behaved and conscious of the researcher taking notes as their phonics lesson progressed.

On the third Monday at School 1, a video recording was made of Teacher 1 undertaking a reading lesson with her Grade 2 learners. The presence of the video recorder evoked responses from many of the learners. Each time a question was asked, most learners in the group put their hands up to ensure that their contributions were captured on video. The teacher remained calm throughout the lesson. The same procedure was repeated at School 2 the following week, with similar reactions from the learners.

In 2010, during the time that the data was collected, the teachers were using the RNCS. Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing focussed on the learner being able to read and view for information and enjoyment and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in text (RNCS, 2003:44). The weighting of the Literacy Learning Programme was 40%. In contrast, the CAPS which is currently in use, divides reading into four categories, namely: shared reading, group guided dreading, paired/independent reading and phonics, which includes phonemic awareness (CAPS, 2011:9). In the analysis of the data (chapter 4), both curricula will be referred to.

1.5   PURPOSE AND GOAL OF THE STUDY

This research project examines the sporadic occurrence of multi-grade classes. It is an investigation into the reading practices of two urban multi-grade FP teachers in order to ascertain how reading is advanced in these urban multi-grade classrooms.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION

The key question in this study is:

How do teachers in two urban multi-grade classrooms teach reading in the Foundation Phase?

The answer to this question is presented by progressively answering the following two sub-questions:

1.6.1 What are the current reading practices in urban multi-grade classrooms in the Foundation Phase?

1.6.2 What challenges do teachers of urban multi-grade classes face when teaching Reading?

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

1.7.1 Ability groups

'Ability grouping' is where learners of more or less the same ability are placed together in a group. This kind of grouping renders the group more homogeneous thus contributing to more effective teaching and learning. By grouping learners of similar ability together, the teacher is able to focus the level of instruction to the particular level of ability. Children of comparable ability have been found to feel safer and more at ease with their intellectual peers. A standardized aptitude and achievement testing programme can be used to determine into which group the learner should be placed (Kulik & Kulik, 1992:75).

1.7.2 Balanced Reading Approach

A 'balanced reading approach' includes emergent reading, encourages learners to enjoy books and to focus on meaning and gives learners the tools and strategies to unlock the code of the written word. This approach includes the phonics approach, sight word approach and skills that learners need in order to read and write successfully (NCS, 2002:9). With a balanced approach the pre-skills are acquired as the learners are given opportunities to develop their language, knowledge and skills (CAPS, 2011:8). These pre-skills include: auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, fine and large motor skills that need to be developed to a certain level (NCS, 2002:9). Uzuner, Girgin, Kaya, Karasu, Girgin, Erdiken and Tanridiler (2011:2126) state that learner's level of comprehension is increased by the combination of approaches such as whole language and skill development.

Fitzgerald (1999) identified three principles of a balanced literacy approach. First, teachers develop learners' skills, knowledge, and decoding skills. Second, their strategy knowledge for comprehension and responding to literature. Third, their affective knowledge including nurturing learners' love for reading. The aim of a balanced reading approach is to develop life-long readers (Weaver, 1990). A critical component of balanced reading instruction is direct and explicit instruction. This includes phonemic and phonological awareness which is an advantage to learners (Ayres, 1993:153). Spiegel (1998:116) would agree and states that a critical component of a balanced reading system is direct, explicit instruction - the best way to help diverse learners effectively.

1.7.3 Basal Reader

A 'basal reader' includes learner texts with a variety of reading selections, teacher manuals, workbooks and supplementary materials. It reflects a phonics approach to the words in the text by explicitly teaching letter/sound correspondence and phonic rules. These basal readers tend to focus on identifying words rather than on strategies for constructing meaning (Weaver, 1990:42). The basal reader approach is a skills approach for it attends to comprehension as well as to word identification (Weaver, 1990:145).

1.7.4 Cloze procedure

Cloze procedure refers to the reading closure where readers have to fill in blanks left in text, using whatever knowledge and experience they have. The teacher uses the cloze procedure to model a variety of problem-solving reading strategies. In a cloze activity words are omitted from text in ways that require the readers to use specific strategies or to focus on cues in the text (Tierney & Readance, 2005).

1.7.5 Comprehension

There are many definitions of reading 'comprehension'. Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson, Barr and Pressley (2000:545), maintain that children are taught to read so that they can understand what is in text.

Vacca and Vacca (1989:152) identified various levels of comprehension. The first level is described as the literal level or getting the general idea of the text - *reading the lines*. The second level is interpretive and includes making inferences and integrating information - *reading between the lines*. The third level is the applied level where information has to be used to express opinions and develop new ideas - *reading beyond the lines*. This research project examines the higher order thinking skills (see Figure 4.4).

Ness (2008:91) argues that learners who have greater reading comprehension skills would be more likely to retain content. She further suggests that teachers should prioritise reading comprehension instruction. Good reading comprehension instruction will also improve learner motivation to read because they create a high level of self-efficacy in their ability to tackle difficult texts (Lapp, Fisher & Grant, 2008:378).

1.7.6 Foundation Phase

The RNCS (2003:19) defines the 'Foundation Phase' as the first stage of the General Education and Training (GET) band including Grades R, 1, 2 and 3. The fundamental aim of this phase is to introduce primary skills, knowledge and values in order to lay the foundations for further learning. Learners in this phase range between the ages of 5 and 10 years old. While Grade R is not compulsory, they may be admitted in the year they turn 6 years old (Education Policy Act No 27 of 1996).

1.7.7 Multi-Grade

Berry and Little (in Little, 2007:67) state that the term 'multi-grade' refers to settings where one teacher has the responsibility of teaching two or more grades concurrently. Multi-grade may be compared with the more common mono-grade teaching in which one teacher teaches a single grade or class at any given time. The terms for this practice vary from one country to another, for example, 'mixed-year', 'combination classes, 'multi-age' or 'vertical grouping'. In most countries 'multi-grade' teaching is not an educational preference but rather a response to a need that has come about as a result of local contexts with specific demographic features.

1.7.8 Narrative Genre

Children are surrounded by narratives from their earliest language experiences. Young children are exposed to narrative genre through shared book reading at home or day care, watching television programmes with a narrative structure, and participation in talking about daily events (Lepola, Lynch, Laakkonen & Niemi, 2012:259).

'Narrative genre' is a story or account of event experiences, whether true or fictitious. It could be a book or a literary work containing a story sequence with an introduction, body and an end. (Condy, 2004). Narratives are an important part of a child's education and stimulate language and cognitive skills. It builds motivation, curiosity and memory in young children (Bardige & Bardige, 2009).

1.7.9   Phonics Approach

The term 'phonics' refers to the sounds in words and the symbols used to represent them (RNCS, 2002:35; CAPS, 2011:13). This approach aims at teaching learners letter/sound association and rules for sounding out words, so they can make sense of words. It also enables learners to become independent readers. The phonics approach is based on the premise that 'learning to read' is learning to pronounce the words and draw meaning from certain combinations of letters. In the RNCS document, 'phonics' was subsumed in the teaching of 'Reading' in Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing. This outcome states that learners should be able to read and view for information and enjoyment and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts.

1.7.10   Quintile

The 'quintile' score of a school is calculated based on a national census and takes into account, income, unemployment rate and level of education of parents. More money is therefore allocated to the poorer schools. In 2007, schools in national quintile 3 were given the opportunity of applying for no-fee status (Gower, 2008).

1.7.11   Reading

In the international PIRLS study Mullis, Kennedy, Martin and Sainsbury (2006:3) define 'reading literacy' as: *the ability to understand and use those written forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Young readers construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers in school and everyday life, and for enjoyment.* However, in the South African context the previous curriculum called the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (2002:11) defined 'reading' in Learning Outcome 3 as:

> The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts. Reading for meaning is the main purpose. Techniques and strategies that help learners do this with increasing accuracy support reading for meaning. Reading, including visual and multimedia texts is essential for language development, learning to write, enjoyment personal growth and learning about the world.

According to Perkins (2005:6) 'reading' is a shared activity and 'talking' is a vital component of the reading process. They enable the learner to listen for information, to communicate confidently and effectively and to read and view the written text for information and enjoyment. This corresponds with Learning Outcome 3 of the NCS (Reading and Viewing), which requires the learner to read and view for information and enjoyment (NCS, 2002). In acquiring these skills the learner develops the ability to write

different kinds of factual and imaginative texts by using language to think and reason appropriately by using sounds. Reading is defined as more than the mere decoding of signs and symbols into sounds and words. It is seen as a problem-solving activity, which increases in power and flexibility the more it is used (RNCS, 2003:45). In FP reading is divided into 'shared, group-guided, paired and independent reading and takes place through clear, focussed lessons (CAPS, 2011:8). In this study the researcher will refer to reading skills and the approaches to reading in the two multi-grade classes.

1.7.12   Reading Practices

Reading practices refers to the approaches to teaching reading. These include: the phonics approach which advocates that beginners learn to read as soon as possible. This is done by teaching learners letter/sound correspondence which enables them to sound out or decode words. A second approach is the sight word of 'look-say' approach. In contrast to phonics, meaning is emphasised from the outset of reading instruction. Learners are expected to develop a stock of words that they can recognise on sight. The basal reading series reflects on both of the above approaches. Phonics rules are taught explicitly and teachers are encouraged to teach vocabulary before the learners read the selected passage (Weaver, 1988:42).

1.7.13   Sight Word Approach

'Sight words' allow learners to develop a stock of words that they can recognise on sight and that meaning would be emphasised from the outset of reading instruction (Weaver, 1990:42). This approach uses flash cards to help learners recognise basic words like 'I' and 'a'. The teacher begins with a stock of about one hundred basic sight words with which the learners would be able to read about half of the words in any text. The emphasis is on whole words rather than on parts of words.

1.7.14   Urban

The term 'urban' refers to the city while 'rural' refers to the countryside. In urban metropolitan areas, learners are usually educated in public schools which operate in a context of diversity and often crime (Rigg, 1998:515).

1.7.15   Vocabulary

Vocabulary is teaching the words you use in a particular language or subject. Vacca and Vacca (1989:302) quoted Goodman's (1976:480) definition: *Vocabulary is largely a term for the ability of the child to sort out his experiences and concepts in relation to words and phrases in the context of what he is reading.*

There are three types of vocabulary (Vacca & Vacca, 1989) quoted. First there is 'general vocabulary'. These words comprise of everyday words having widely acknowledged meanings in common usage. Second there is 'special vocabulary'. These words are made up of words from every day and general vocabulary, which take on technical specialised meanings when adapted to a particular subject matter field. Thirdly there are words that have usage and application only in a particular subject or field. This study looks at the differentiated styles of vocabulary teaching.

1.8   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research project will be significant to all teachers, especially those in the FP in terms of highlighting the challenges experienced in urban multi-grade classrooms. Furthermore, it could shed light on particular reading practices that teachers can use in multi-grade classes. It will be of great value to the specific school and teachers involved in the study, as it might allow them to reflect on their current classroom practices as a basis to improve their strategies when teaching reading in their classrooms. Finally, the study will be useful to the NDoE as well as the WCED in terms of highlighting challenges with regard to teaching reading in a diverse community of learners, and how they can improve the current situation.

1.8.1   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since only two sites from the Educational and Management Development Centres (EMDCs) in the Western Cape were selected, it was difficult to generalise the findings to the rest of the Province. Other constraints included the fact that both sites were in the Northern District.

The study is further limited by the basic limitations of qualitative research. Most data sources reflect the views of an individual's perspective and perceptions, which are inherently subjective. The reliability of data and the validity of the analysis may still be compromised by the desires of the individual participants to present their class or school in the best possible light to the researcher.

Observations were limited to Mondays in the third term for a period of 8 weeks. The data collection process was limited to alternate Mondays at each school for the first two hours of the day. This meant that the researcher had to remind the teachers of visits on alternate weeks. Assemblies would often take up the first 20 minutes of the session. The researcher participated and took this opportunity to get to know the ethos of the schools and other staff members. The teachers were presented with the same questions and were encouraged to respond verbally during the recorded interviews. The study was delimited to 'reading practices'.

1.9   ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The assumption, that the children came from literate social circumstances where they had access to books - was made during this study.

It was assumed that the children were all interested in reading books at their level and being read to by adults at home and at school.

The assumption was made that the children would respond naturally while video recordings were being made.

It was assumed that the teachers were trained in multi-grade pedagogy.

The assumption was made that participants would give honest responses and willingly participate in the research.

1.10   ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1: is the introductory orientation and formulation of the research problem. This chapter is an overview and states the origin of the problem, importance, context, approach and purpose and goal of the study. The key terms have been clarified and the significance, limitations and assumptions were verified. This chapter placed the study in perspective and orientated the reader to the nature of the study.

Chapter 2: focuses on the educational theories of learning and development. This chapter presents recent national and international research and debates on multi-grade teaching in the FP. The conceptual framework is based on the socio-cultural theories of learning. Lave's (1991) Situated Learning: Legitimate peripheral participation and everyday cognition, Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory, Bronfenbrenner's (1990) socio-ecological theory and finally, and finally Piaget's (1972) phases of cognitive development.

In this chapter the formal, multi-grade experiences of teachers in the FP are investigated, reflecting on both the RNCS and CAPS policy documents. To answer the first problem statement of this research, the classroom practices of these multi-grade teachers will be explored, with the focus on reading.

Chapter 3: outlines the research method by giving a thorough explanation of the case-study approach which was used during this study. This chapter describes both the interviews, observations and video recordings as the instruments used to gather data, as well as the design of the research process. It gives details about the two multi-grade

classes where the data was gathered and the reading methods adopted by the teachers. The sample size was two independent case studies.

Chapter 4: This chapter analytically discusses the findings, presents a detailed account of the research results, and serves as a discussion of the findings from the research questions.

Chapter 5: presents a discussion of the results and conclusions of the research. Recommendations are given for future research.

CHAPTER 2   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the conceptual theories underpinning learning in multi-grade settings, discusses the issues and concepts which informed this study as guided by the relevant national and international literature reviews on aspects of teaching reading to young children in the FP.

Figure 2:1 is a diagrammatic representation, portraying the conceptual frameworks that the researcher found central to answering the main research question and two sub questions. The views of the following four theorists are considered, namely:

- Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory including: legitimate peripheral participation, authentic situation and community of practice;

- Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory including: Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding;

- Bronfenbrenner's (1990) bio-ecological theory including: microsystems and mesosystems; and finally

- Piaget's (1972) stages of cognitive development including: pre-operational and concrete operational stage.

The rationale for using four theorists is that, jointly they offer a comprehensive representation of multi-grade classes. Lave and Wenger's theory emphasises that knowledge and cognitive development is rooted in context (Langer, 2009). In this study, learners between the ages of 6 and 9 were in the same multi-grade classroom. This links to the discussion on Piaget's stages of cognitive development. The classroom composition with more than one grade is an example of 'community of practice' where learners engage in collective learning (Wenger, 2007). Vygotsky's social development theory supports the interactions of learners with more competent peers and their teacher in the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). Bronfenbrenner's (1990) bio-ecological theory reiterates the social nature which typifies learning in multi-grade classrooms.

An overview of the components of the research project's conceptual framework

- Legitimate peripheral participation
- Authentic situation
- Community of Practice

Lave and Wenger Situated Learning Theory (1991)

Vygotsky Social Development Theory (1978)

- Zone of Proximal Development
- Scaffolding

Bronfenbrenner Bio-ecological Theory (1990)

Piaget Cognitive Theory (1973)

- Microsystem
- Mesosystem

- Preoperational stage
- Concrete operational stage

Figure 2:1   Conceptual frameworks used in support of the research question

2.2   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework positions the research and enables one to make explicit assumptions about the interconnectedness of the way things are related in the world. It also provides an orientation to the study and reflects the stance the researcher adopts (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit 2004:25).

This section presents the perspectives of the socio-constuctivist theorists, Lave and Wenger, on Situated Learning, exploring concepts such as, 'legitimate peripheral participation', 'authentic situation' and 'community of practice'. It also looks at Vygotsky's social development theory, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory and Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Each of these will be discussed in more detail below.

2.2.1   Lave and Wenger's (1991) Situated Learning Theory

Lave and Wagner's Situated Learning Theory (SLT) looks at the learning phenomenon in a broader and holistic perspective incorporating behaviours, actions and cognition by recognizing the interaction between people and environment and the role of situation. It is therefore positioned to bring the individual and the social together in a coherent theoretical perspective (Wilson & Myers, 2000). Heeter (2005) further explains that SLT usually involves engaging in tasks which parallel real world applications. The goal is to improve learning by motivating students and by providing a rich context for learning. It emphasizes the context

and application of knowledge rather than memorizing facts. Knowledge is therefore embedded in, and connected to, the context in which the knowledge developed (Langer, 2009:185). Multi-grade classrooms provide this rich context, in that older learners motivate younger learners.

SLT is based largely on the work of Vygotsky (1978). The theory of cognitive development, often referred to as a socio-cultural theory because it maintains that how we think is a function of both social and cultural forces. Parents and schools shape children's thought processes to reflect that which the culture values. What these children think and do is the result of cultural values and practices, some of which may date back many years, as well as recent social contacts (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1996).

Drawing on Vygotsky's ideas about the social nature of learning, Lave and Wenger (1991:14) have placed learning in social relationships or situations of co-participation, by asking what kinds of social engagements provide the proper context for learning to take place. In the two multi-grade classrooms, learners were given opportunities to interact socially across age and grade. Wenger (1999:4) argues that learning should involve active participation in social communities and construct identities in relation to these communities.

SLT claims that thinking, knowing and understanding is a result of socio-historical experience. This experience includes using and understanding the signs and symbols of one's culture to become part of a social group (Gredler, 1977). Children and other novices receive information about their culture's tools and practices through interaction with experienced members of the culture (Rogoff, 1984). Collins, Brown and Newman (1989:457) reiterated this claim that in situated learning, students get to see how experts solve problems and they learn to tackle problems in the same way, by 'learning through guided experience'. In this study, Grade 3 learners offered guidance and support to Grade 1 and 2 learners. The focus on gaining problem-solving strategies in authentic activities enable learners to use these skills in everyday situations.

The fact that learning is fundamentally social and unintentional is highlighted by Lave and Wenger (1991) as the core concept in SLT. This process is referred to as, 'legitimate peripheral participation'.

2.2.1.1   Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Atherton (2005) analyses the term Legitimate Peripheral Participation and explains that it is 'Legitimate' because all parties accept the position of unqualified people as potential members of the community of practice. It is 'Peripheral' because they do the peripheral jobs,

and gradually get entrusted with more important ones. The 'Participation' refers to the 'doing', because it is through doing knowledge that learners acquire knowledge. As Lave and Wenger (1991:108) stated, 'the purpose is not to learn from talk as a substitute for legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn to talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation'.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991:14) Legitimate Peripheral Participation allows learners to engage in activities of socio-cultural practice, enabling them to become increasingly competent in this practice. The older, more competent learners in both multi-grade classes, assisted in the social and academic development of the younger learners. Driscoll (2000) prefers to call it, distinguishing between 'new comers and old timers'. This encompasses multiple, varied and inclusive ways of being located in the fields of participation defined by a community. Legitimate Peripheral Participation has antecedents in the work of Vygotsky and his ZPD, in that internalisation is central to some work on learning explicitly concerned with its social character.

2.2.1.2   Authentic situation – Contextual

Lave and Wenger (1990) argue that learning is 'situated'. This means that learning occurs through active engagement within contextual experiences. In other words, learning is embedded within activity, context and culture. Situated learning according to Lave and Wenger (1990), contrasts with most classrooms learning, in that it involves abstract knowledge that is out of context. Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989) support Lave and Wenger's propositions and state that the conventional schooling systems are inherently inauthentic domains where knowing is separated from doing. Knowledge is therefore uprooted from its proper context in a community of practice and presented as 'abstract, decontextualized, formal concepts'. They believe that activity and situations are integral to cognition and learning and that cognitive apprenticeship can provide the authentic practice through activity and social interaction. The work of Miller and Guldeas (1987), on vocabulary teaching, shows how the assumption that knowing and doing can be separated leads to a teaching method that ignores the way situations structure cognition. Lave (1990:310) is in agreement with the above researchers and affirms that knowledge is not separable from or supplementary to learning and cognition, it should be an integral part of what is learned.

Boaler (1993) however, disagreed with Lave's (1988) contentions that school learning is bound to the context in which it occurs and also, that transfer cannot be improved through any factors in the learning environment. Anderson, Reder and Simon (1996:6), concur with Boaler (1993) and emphasise that even if these claims of learning in context are valid and generalizable beyond these specific cases, they demonstrate merely that specific skills practiced in real-life situations do not generalize to school situations. Tennant (1997:74),

conversely, is of the opinion that this orientation has the definite advantage of drawing attention to the need to understand knowledge and learning in context. Heeter (2005) agrees with the above accounts and goes on to say that if one puts a learner in a real world situation (authentic context) and interacts with other people then learning occurs. A learning environment is considered authentic if the tasks parallel real world situations.

2.2.1.3   Community of practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) contend that communities of practice are everywhere and that we are generally involved in a number of them: whether at work, school, home, or in our civic and leisure interests. Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour, for example, a group of learners who share a passion for something, they do and learn how to do it better as they interact (Wenger, 2007).

Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the social relations. Wenger (1998:45) states that these practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. The term, 'communities of practice' is therefore fitting. He further depicted a 'community of practice' as the interplay between the physical setting of the institution of learning, its curriculum and accreditation and the practice of teaching and learning within the community (1998:63).

Lave and Wenger (1991) have shifted the focus from acquisition to participation. Hager (2005:23) argues that the two approaches of learning, as acquisition and learning as participation are not mutually exclusive. While participation itself is a process, the learner belongs more to the community of practice by acquiring the right characteristics or products of learning.

2.2.2   Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory

Vygotsky believed that children's cognitive development is shaped by the cultural context in which they live (Gauvain & Parke, 2010). This belief in the importance of social influences, especially instruction, on children's cognitive development is reflected in Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD (Santrock, 2011:50). Vygotsky called the level of concept development at which the child cannot accomplish tasks or understand concepts alone, but can do with assistance from adults or more cognitively mature children, the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978 in Wittmer, Pertersen & Puckett, 2013:297). The ZPD delineates a child's learning environment as not exclusively in advance of children but all around them. The surrounding social nature of learning encompasses the students' interactions with other peers and the instructor. As

Vygotsky (1978) writes, 'the mind extends beyond the skin and is inseparably joined with other minds'. It is teachers and more competent peers who guide each student's social and cultural experience (cited in Wertsch, 1990:90).

Greenfield (1984:131) characterised the ZPD as the distance between problem-solving abilities exhibited by a learner working alone and that learners' problem-solving abilities when assisted by or collaborating with more-experienced people. In other words, the ZPD is the difference between what a learner can accomplish without assistance and what can be accomplished with assistance. In this research project, assistance was not always provided by the teacher. Tudge and Scrimsher (2003) sums up the ZPD as encompassing those abilities, attitudes and patterns of thinking that are in the process of maturing and can be refined only with assistance.

Shapiro (in Snowman & Biehler, 2006:49) offers a cultural interpretation that construes the ZPD as the distance between the cultural knowledge provided by the socio-historical context – usually made accessible through instruction – and the everyday experiences of individuals. Over the course of a teaching session, a more skilled person – a teacher or advanced peer adjusts the amount of guidance to fit the child's current performance. When the student is learning a new task, a skilled person may use direct instruction. Students are helped to answer difficult questions or to solve problems with hints or leading questions. This is called 'scaffolding'. The purpose of scaffolding is to help students acquire knowledge and skills they would not have learned on their own.

As the students demonstrate mastery of the content and indicate that they have begun to internalise the basic ideas and procedures of the lesson, the learning aids are gradually withdrawn and less guidance is given. Scaffolding is often used to help students attain the upper limits of their ZPD (Horowitz, 2005:105).

2.2.3 Bronfenbrenner's (1990) bio-ecological theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1990) bio-ecological theory primarily focuses on the interacting social contexts in which children live and the people who influence their development (Santrock, 2011:71). Woolfolk, Hughes and Walkup (2008:93) expound on the term 'bio', stating that people bring their biological selves to the developmental process. The 'ecological' part recognizes that the social contexts in which we develop are ecosystems because they are in constant interaction and influence each other. This bio-ecological perspective is relevant in that it helps one understand the development of children in more holistic and contextually interactive terms. It also aids in understanding classrooms and schools by viewing these as

systems in themselves, and in their interaction with the broader social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1990:57).

Santrock (2011:71) draws attention to five environmental systems within Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory that ranges from close interpersonal interactions to broad-based influences of culture. The five systems are: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem as depicted in Figure 2.2

The individual learner
sex, age, health etc.

Microsystem
school, peers, family, neighbourhood, religious group, helath services

Mesosystem

Exosystem
friends if family, neighbours, social welfare services, legal services, mass media

Macrosystem
Attitudes and ideologies of the culture
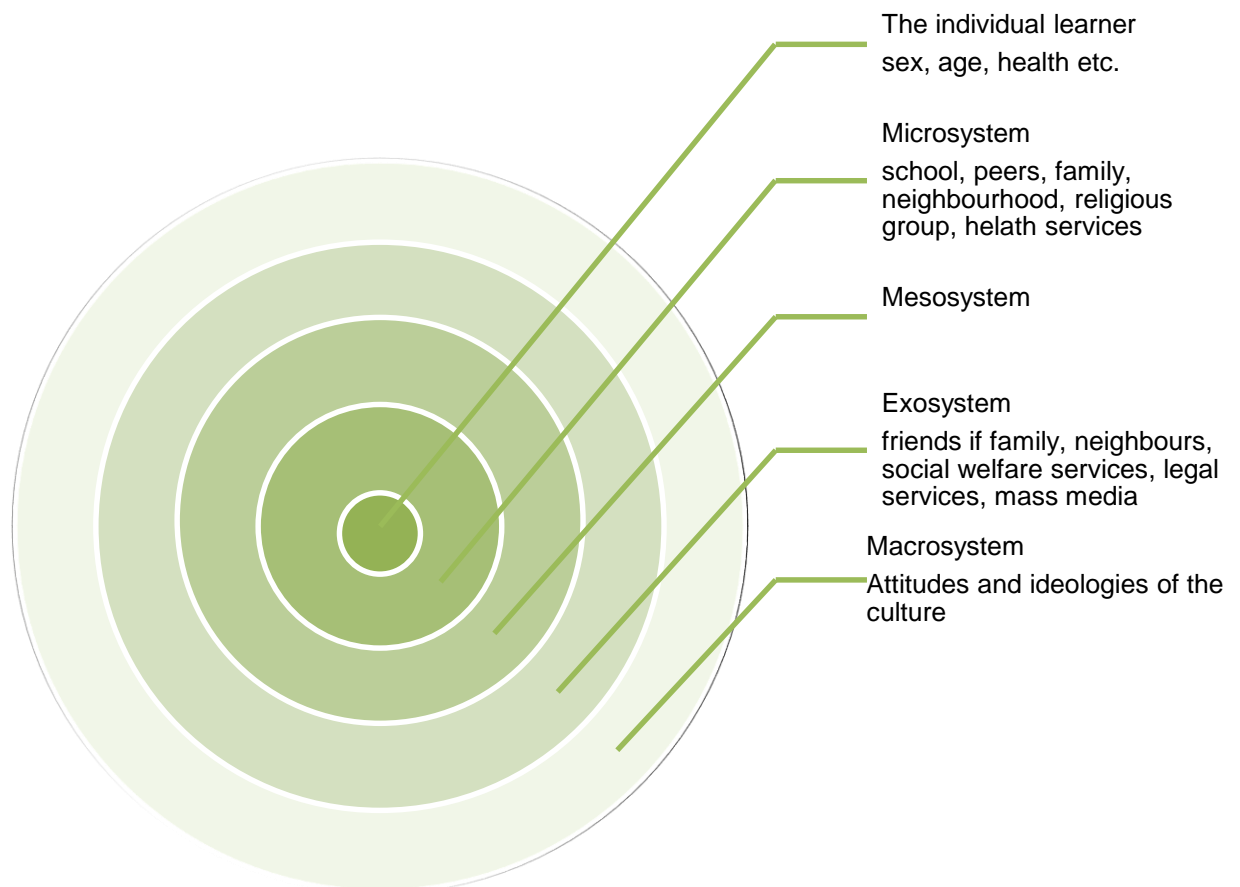
Figure 2.2   Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model

(Adapted from Landsberg, Kruger and Swart 2011:13)

Landsberg, Kruger and Swart (2011:10) emphasised that Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bio-ecological approach, is a multidimensional model of human development with layers of systems resulting in growth such as biological, psychological, cultural and social. Relationships among these systems are reciprocal and multifaceted. Woolfolk et al (2008:92) sums this theory up by stating that every person lives within a microsystem inside a mesosystem, embedded in an exosytem. In a microsystem are the person's immediate relationships and activities. The multi-directionality of the relationships within families (microsystems) as well as between families,

schools and communities, (mesosystems) is emphasised (Christenson & Sheridon, 2001:39). Only these two systems or levels will be discussed in this study, since they directly pertain to the multi-grade classes researched.

2.2.3.1 Microsystems

According to Landsberg et al (2011:14) this system constitutes a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced between individuals and the systems in which they actively participate, such as family, the school or the peer group. Woolfolk et al (2008:92) reaffirms that the microsystem is therefore the immediate environment where proximal processes are played out. It is the child's own little world. It is characterized by those individuals and events closest to one's life and involves continual face-to-face contact with each person reciprocally influencing the other at a particular point of the person's life system. The learners in this study came from diverse backgrounds. For many, the individuals closest to them were their grandparents.

Landsberg et al (2011:232) add, that the developing child and his family present a microsystem at the innermost level of the ecosystem. This system should love and support the child's feeling of belonging and serve as a protective factor. Santrock (2011:72) endorses the fact that this system involves patterns of daily activities, roles and relationships and states that at this level, the key proximal interactions occur. Within these microsystems, the student is not a passive recipient of experiences but is someone who reciprocally interacts with others and helps to construct the microsystem.

2.2.3.2 Mesosystems

The mesosystem refers to the relationships that develop and exists between two or more of these microsystems at a given moment in the individual's life. At this level the family, school and peer group interact with one another modifying each of the systems. For example: the relations between the family and the child's school or peer group (Landsberg et al, 2011:14). Experiences in one microsystem such as teacher-child interactions in the classroom may influence activities and interactions in the peer group or family. A child who is unsupported at home may experience care and understanding from a neighbour, peer or teacher at school. Thus although the lack of support from home may make the child anxious and insecure, interactions with the neighbour, peer or teacher over a sustained period may modify the child's sense of insecurity. In turn this may modify the interactions the child has at home. Epstein and Sanders (2006:232) emphasised that children are best supported when schools and families work together. While the mesosystem is more distant from the child because

they do not involve him or her directly, they still influence their lives as all the relationships are reciprocal (Woolfolk et al, 2008:92).

2.2.4 Piaget's (1972) stages of cognitive development

Since the learners, in this research project, were between the ages of 6 and 11, only the second and third stages of Piaget's developmental stages are appropriate and will be discussed. The discussion will begin by reflecting on Piaget's second developmental stage 'Pre-operational Stage' and will be followed by the third stage, which is termed the 'Concrete operational Stage' (Wittmer et al, 2013:21).

2.2.4.1 Pre-operational stage

This stage is the second stage and lasts from about 2 to 7 years of age. Children at this stage have difficulty seeing things from another person's perspective. They assume that others see things the same way as they see them. Children at this stage display egocentric and intuitive behaviour (Snowman & Biehler, 2011:37).

Piaget believed that children at the pre-operational stage (pre-schoolers, kindergarteners, most first graders and some second graders) can use language and other symbols to stand for objects. They should therefore be given many opportunities to describe and explain things through the use of speech, artwork body movement, role-play and musical performance (Snowman et al, 2011:43).

During the pre-operational stage there is rapid increase in language ability (Eggen & Kauchak, 2014:48). This stage has two subdivisions, namely: pre-conceptual thinking and intuitive thought. Pre-conceptual thinking (approximately 2 to 4 years olds) where children begin rudimentary concept formation and secondly, there is a period of intuitive thought (approximately 4 to 7 years). During this period, the child solves problems intuitively instead of in accordance with some logical rule. The most striking characteristic of the child's thinking during this stage is his or her failure to develop conservation.

Conservation is defined as the ability to realize that a number or substance remains constant even though they may be presented to the child in a number of different ways. For Piaget, conservation is an ability that occurs as a result of the child's cumulative experiences with the environment, and it is not an ability that can be taught until the child has had these preliminary experiences. Maturation provides the necessary sensory apparatus and brain structures, but it takes experience to develop the ability (Santrock, 2011:300).

2.2.4.2   Concrete operational stage

This is the third stage of cognitive development according to Piaget and lasts from about 7 to 11/12 years. Concrete operational thought involves using operations or 'hands-on' thinking (Woolfolk, 2008:44). Logical reasoning replaces intuitive reasoning, but only in concrete situations. Classification skills are present but abstract problems go unsolved. A concrete operation is a reversible mental action pertaining to real, concrete objects. Concrete operations allow children to coordinate several characteristics rather than focus on a single property of an object. At the concrete operational level, children can do mentally what they previously could do only physically, and they can reverse concrete operations. During this stage, however, the thought processes are directed to real events observed by the child. They child can perform rather complex operations on problems as long as the problems are concrete and not abstract (Santrock, 2011:301).

The nature of the concrete operational stage can be illustrated by the child's mastery of different kinds of conversation (Snowman & Biehler, 2011:37). Children in this stage are often more capable of learning advanced concepts than most people realize. Metz (1995) provides evidence in support of the capacity of children to grasp abstract concepts such as theory, evidence and hypothesis since these begin to emerge during the elementary school years. Kuhn (1997) agrees with Metz but cautions that most elementary grade children will be unable to fully understand the nature of scientific enquiry.

For optimal learning to take place, teachers should arrange situations to permit social interaction, so that children can learn from one another. Information must be presented that can be assimilated into the present cognitive structure but at the same time be different enough to necessitate a change in that structure (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2005:303).

2.3   LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section of this chapter looks at national and international literature relevant to reading practices in urban multi-grade classes, in the FP. In order to contextualize the study, the review begins by highlighting the physical setting of the multi-grade classroom, then moves to debating the benefits of urban multi-grade teaching, the limitations of the multi-grade class settings, a comparison of the NCS 2005 and the CAPS curriculum, the stages of reading development and finally there is a discussion on a variety of reading practices.

2.3.1   The status of multi-grade teaching in South Africa and internationally

This unique study highlights the incidences of urban multi-grade classes and the fact that they are not as widespread as in rural settings (Brown, 2010:123). Since there is a dearth of

research on the pedagogy of multi-grade teaching in developing countries, good practice in urban multi-grade settings is examined.

Multi-grade teaching is often dismissed by policy makers and teachers as a second-class option (Joubert, 2010). Due to the lack of pedagogical materials to support learning, self-instruction and guided learning cannot be encouraged. Rural classrooms are characterised by a lack of organisation, arbitrary and inefficient use of time and failure to present knowledge in a logical sequence. Peer-tutoring is not practised either and teachers seem to miss opportunities to utilise the range of abilities present in the classroom. These conditions are not conducive to keep learners motivated (Hargreaves, Montero, Chau, Sibli & Thanh, 2001:504). In urban schools, however, the converse is true.

There is growing evidence from around the globe that explicitly chosen and well-supported multi-grade techniques can result in positive educational experiences and outcomes. Primary education in India is an example of innovative multi-grade teaching methodology which is cost-effective and highly successful both in rural and urban primary schools (Padmanabha Rao & Rama, 2010). Multi-grade environments are therefore not the problem per se. The problem lies in the lack of knowledge on the part of the teachers, prejudice on the part of educational authorities and the effective use of resources for the learners (Joubert, 2010). Jacobs, Vakalisa and Gawe (2011:337) argue that no matter where teaching and learning takes place, the teacher has the responsibility to create an environment that is conducive to effective learning. This can be achieved only with good classroom management skills.

2.3.2 Models of practice for multi-grade teaching

2.3.2.1 Classroom management

Managing a multi-grade classroom is difficult because there is more than one grade level in the classroom (Juvane, 2005). This implies that the class teacher must be skilled in managing instruction to reduce the amount of 'dead time' during which children are not productively engaged on task. In other words, according to Kyne (2005), teachers must be aware of: different ways of grouping children, the importance of independent study areas where learners can go when they have finished their work, and approaches to record keeping which are more flexible than those prevalent in the mono-grade classroom.

Contrary to rural areas, multi-grade teaching in urban areas has advantages for teachers and learners. The benefits of teaching in a multi-grade classroom are related primarily to the way that instruction is organized. Cash (2000) suggests a combination of class teaching and differentiation by levels. Stone (1998:234) maintains that vertical cross-grade groupings of learners can provide both cognitive and emotional benefits.

Irrespective of how teachers divide their classrooms, effective multi-grade teaching should be based on the recognition that children learning in one classroom differ in terms of development. In view of this more flexible approach, learners of mixed abilities and age groups in multi-grade classrooms can be allowed to move through the system at a pace appropriate to them (Loeto, 2010).

Landsberg et al (2011:231) agree with the above authors and state that the cooperative environment of a multi-age classroom promotes emotional stability. Grouping children across grade and age boundaries can be beneficial for children both socially and cognitively. Pratt (1986:111) states that the natural way in which infants are socialized in many cultures is in mixed age groups. He points out that the biggest advantage for children in mixed age settings lies in the development of wider friendship groups and a reduction in competition and aggression. Cognitive skills that help transform the classroom into a community of enquiry include: reasoning skills, inquiry skills, concept analysis skills and translation skills. Habermas (1984:220) contends that genuine conceptual learning occurs only when learners make their own sense of knowledge. A cognitive approach emphasizes the role of the student as active participant and not as a passive recipient of knowledge. It ensures that multi-grade teaching is presented as a liberating force in the lives of learners.

Compared to single-grade classes, children in multi-grade classrooms are more likely to experience Piagetian (1976) cognitive conflicts and Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development, both of which benefit learning. Stone (1998) stated that, socially, children have more opportunities for leadership. According to Kasten and Lolli (1998:7), the older, more advanced children can reap cognitive benefits from cross-age tutoring. Learners, especially shy or reticent learners, are more likely to approach a peer student for crucial assistance about fundamental questions as in a subject than they are to approach a single-class teacher for fear of public humiliation.

Multi-grade teachers are able to develop a wide range of teaching and organisational skills with opportunities for using a greater range of teaching methods. They are able to use different organisational settings, sharing resources across grades, thus developing more effective monitoring and evaluation strategies. Many teachers feel that multi-grade teaching provides them with greater opportunities for creativity and allows them to experiment with new ideas and methods. Working with the same group of learners for several years allows teachers to observe the progress and development of each of their learners (UNESCO, 1988:2).

Multi-grade settings are also effective in promoting the reading progress of low achieving learners because of the differences in approach to instruction in these classes (Berry, 2001:357). Berry argues that in multi-grade classrooms, learners have more opportunities to engage in small-group work than in single-grade classrooms. Approaches such as peer instruction, differentiated whole-class teaching and cooperative group-work are used to address the needs of all levels of learner achievement.

2.3.2.2   Peer instruction

In this strategy of peer instruction, learners act informally as teachers of other learners, mentoring one another (Chapman, 1995:421). Peer instruction engages learners during class through activities that require each student to apply core concepts being presented. They then explain those concepts to their fellow learners. This cements their knowledge even further and younger children look up to the older learners, making the knowledge more attainable (Little, 2007:67). Taft (1997:11) maintains that it is not always a case of older learners helping younger ones. Rather the more competent learners, irrespective of age, help each other: strong learners help themselves by assisting weaker learners. This promotes sharing of knowledge thus promoting meaningful opportunities for learning from modelling (Goto & Schneider, 2010:31). Some studies have suggested that being in a class with younger learners encourages older learners to work harder to stay ahead of younger classmates. Learners also gain confidence when they are occasionally given responsibility for helping younger or less able learners in their class. Veenman (1995:367) concluded that learners are better off in areas such as attitudes toward school, self-concept, personal adjustment and social adjustment in multi-grade classes than in single-grade classes. Learners in multi-age classrooms demonstrate more positive attitudes toward school, greater leadership skills, self-esteem, increased pro-social and fewer aggressive behaviours, compared to learners in traditional graded schools (Mcclelland, 2004).

2.3.2.3   Differentiated whole-class teaching

Differentiation refers to how the same teacher organises learning for different individuals and/or groups of learners in a classroom (Little, 2005). Whole class instruction is characterized by Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Emmons and Zhang (1993) as grade level divisions of classroom time and resources. Guskey and Lindle (1997:10) argue that it is not how the learners are grouped for instruction, but what happens within these groups that are important to learning. The teacher sequentially introduces a new lesson followed by group practice. Additional seatwork is given to allow learners to practise the skill on their own (Good & Brophy, 1994).

2.3.2.4   Cooperative group-work

In one of the multi-grade classes it was apparent that cooperative group-work was taking place within the existing pedagogical structures. Research has shown that the cooperative approach to instruction in many classroom settings has a positive impact on learners. These learners tend to have higher self-esteem and are confident socially. They have fewer stereotypes such as race or ethnicity and display greater comprehension of the content and skills they are learning (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1993; Stahl & Van Sickle, 1992). In cooperative learning the teacher designs the social interaction structures as well as learning activities (Kagan, 1989:12). Learners work together to ensure that all members in their groups have learnt and assimilated the same content. They therefore maximize their own and each other's learning when they work together (Johnson et al, 1993). Slavin (1996:43) argues that a critical element of cooperative learning is group teamwork and team goals. This strategy promotes accountability amongst learners, as they are responsible for making sure that learning is taking place. They assist their fellow group members to achieve a common goal. Cohen (1994) contends that the group has to be small enough for each learner to participate in a clearly assigned collective task, usually independently of the teacher. However, the fact that learners work in small groups does not necessarily mean that they are cooperating with one another and ensuring their own learning and the learning of all others in their group (Johnson et al, 1993). The emphasis has to be on academic learning success for each individual and all members of the group. This is one feature that separates cooperative learning groups from other group tasks (Slavin, 1995).

Tsolakidis, Constantinidi, Sotiriou, and Orfanakis (2005) found that effective multi-grade teaching strategies are cooperative in nature. Berry (2001), agrees that cooperative learning is regarded as a useful strategy in multi-grade classrooms. This reciprocal learning allows the teacher to assign work to groups of learners in the knowledge that they will be able to work productively. In addition, the flexible grouping model is reported to be associated with effective learning outcomes in multi-grade teaching (Vithanapathirana, 2006). Berry (2010:4) further indicates that the above strategies could increase learners' level of independence and cooperative group-work. In order for this model to work in practice, teachers require skills in the development of systematic, cooperative teamwork. These strategies can be effective when teachers are trained and supported in teaching in multi-grade classrooms.

Multi-grade teaching encourages greater depth in children's social, academic and intellectual development. The classroom is seen as the 'family' – expanding the roles of nurturing and commitment (Feng, 1994; Hallion, 1994; & Marshak, 1994). Keeling (2005:15) agrees that

multi-grade classes develop a 'family' atmosphere. Teachers get to know the families of their learners well since they remain in the same class for several years.

The benefits of multi-grade teaching, according to Mulryan-Kyne (2004), are many. Low-achieving children can benefit from a multi-grade setting. Multi-grade classes provide greater continuity and revision in teaching than is possible in a single-grade environment, where learners move into another class with a new teacher at the end of each year. It is easier for the teacher to detect specific learning difficulties and provide the kind of help that will improve learning achievements.

Multi-grade teachers are able to develop a wide range of teaching and organisational skills with opportunities for using a greater range of teaching methods. Different organisational settings can be used and resources can be shared across grades. This develops more effective monitoring and evaluation strategies. Learners are assessed on the basis of the teacher's judgment rather than on the basis of an examination. Many teachers feel that multi-grade teaching provides them with better opportunities for creativity and allows them to experiment with new ideas and methods (UNESCO, 1988:2).

Logue, (2006) found that student disobedience was considerably less prevalent in multi-age groupings than in single-age classrooms; and because of higher rates of language exchange among mixed-age children, those in multi-age groupings had higher language development as well (Logue, 2006). More dated research also supports the finding that learners in multi-age classrooms show significant gains in reading and language skills (Skapski, 1960). Although current research is lacking to substantiate that there are significant academic achievement gains in multi-grade classrooms, where there are multi-age learners, some evidence does suggest that children in multi-age classrooms achieved a higher cognitive developmental level at a faster rate than those in classrooms of same-age peers (Frosco, Schleser & Andal, 2004). Veenman (1995:367) concluded that learners in both multi-age and multi-grade classes tended score as well as their counterparts in single-grade classes. No consistent difference was observed with regard to reading.

Multi-grade classrooms encourage the development of independent learning skills. Children are expected to work on their own for much longer periods than they would in a mono-grade classroom. This helps them to develop their own independent study, and enhances their investigative and organizational skills. They learn to make their own decisions about their work. The variety of activities and the productive atmosphere that prevails during literacy lessons are some of the positive aspects of multi-grade classes (Mulryan-Kyne, 2004:11).

Younger children seem to learn more quickly in a multi-grade setting. They are able to absorb knowledge from older learners while they are being taught. This proves particularly helpful when they themselves come to study that material in subsequent years. Peer-tutoring is promoted and older children serve as role models or mentors to help their younger peers. Peers are seen as resources allowing the teaching time to focus on groups or individuals (Little, 2007:49). Since in the multi-grade mode of education, learners are together in one class for as long as three years at a stretch, sound and meaningful bonds are established across age divisions between learners as well as between teachers and learners. Through increased opportunities for interaction and learning between learners across grade levels, collaborative work is encouraged (Pridmore, 2003:15).

Single-grade classrooms with annual cycles of promotion are in stark contrast to multi-grade teaching (Ariès, 1962:30). The class divisions by age came about as a result of industrial thinking (Kasten & Lolli, 1998:7). The emphasis is on uniformity rather than what is developmentally appropriate or creative and flexible as a reprise to an African dilemma. Given that there is an undeniable crisis in the South African teaching profession and the uneven distribution of talents at individual schools, it could be asserted that one good teacher in an urban multi-grade site is better pedagogy than two or even three poor teachers in mono-grade classrooms. Multi-grade teaching in general could be a national strategic device rather than a last resort to stabilizing parts of the education system in crisis.

2.3.2.5 Curriculum

Teachers may increase their motivation by applying multi-age philosophies to classrooms and implementing differentiated teaching strategies to meet all their learners' needs. Teachers are able to focus on the progress of individual learners rather than their own progress in moving through the adopted textbooks and sticking to rigid course calendars. Learners of different levels can pay more attention to individual projects, which are carefully designed to challenge their own knowledge and abilities. This is in contrast to a common curriculum, which does not focus on individual abilities (Aina, 2001).

2.3.2.6 Outcomes Based Education (OBE)

OBE, which is a first-world system, has as its chief disadvantage that it is a rigid system. It assumes the infrastructure of a first-world society. In a third-world country, this rigidity can be counter-productive. A third-world country requires a flexible and adaptable group of strategies, not one system. Tsolakidis et al (2005:15) argue that multi-grade teaching is indeed a deliberate response to educational problems. UNESCO (2004:28) draws attention to practices in rural and urban areas where multi-grade teaching is a priority. In European

and North American schools, multi-grade teaching receives preferential treatment in respect of teacher-pupil ratio, teaching resources and community support. This provides important starting points for multi-grade teaching and management in other parts of the world.

2.3.3 Benefits and limitations of multi-grade class settings

While researching multi-grade teaching in both national and international literature, it was interesting to note more limitations were discussed than benefits of this type of teaching. In this section the following six points will be discussed: lack of training for teachers; curriculum challenges; planning and preparation; time; younger versus older learners; and parents.

2.3.3.1 Lack of training for teachers

A generally acknowledged point made by multi-grade practitioners is that the multi-grade classroom is more of a challenge than the single-grade classroom (Kyne, 2005). Skills and behaviours required of teachers are different, and coordinating activities is more difficult (Lingam, 2007). Joubert (2007) found that national governments in Africa require all teaching to follow the national curriculum. However, the application of a mono-grade teaching national curriculum in the multi-grade teaching situation, according to him, creates problems for multi-grade teachers. This finding implies that multi-grade teachers need to be supported in specially designed and appropriate ways to implement the programme.

As much as multi-grade teaching can be an innovative strategy, it also faces numerous challenges. Pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes do not address the curricular and instructional demands of multi-grade teaching. Teachers are therefore ill prepared for the challenges they will face in practice as multi-grade teachers (Juvane, 2007; Brown, 2010). The assumption is that they will adapt the curriculum to suit the circumstances. In his reflection, Veenman (1995) argues that multi-grade teachers lack appropriate training for the multi-grade setting. Appropriate resources are lacking, and time for individualised work, including remediation, is severely limited. All this suggests an impoverished teaching situation. In Juvane's (2005) views, the conceptual and skill requirements of the prescribed curriculum that multi-grade teachers in Africa are implementing are higher than the conceptual competence and skills of the teachers and they are unable to cope.

2.3.3.2 Curriculum challenges

Many teachers identify the curriculum as a major constraint (Little, 2007:72). Multi-grade teachers generally acknowledge that teaching a multi-grade class is more challenging than teaching a single-grade class. They find it difficult to cope with the complexities and challenges of this instructional setting and to make the content meaningful to the learners

(Kyne, 2005). Another major reason why multi-grade teaching is in disfavour is the dominance of the paradigm of developmental psychology as reflected in the age-grade approach. Most countries have a national curriculum and this prescribed curriculum is similar for both urban and rural schools. The curriculum used is not differentiated or adjusted to the needs of multi-grade classes. Teachers face problems with the volume of work and with the distribution of teaching time (Tsolakidis, 2010).

Multi-grade teaching analyses the core of learning and radically calls into question the age-grade system of formal education delivery. Teachers should be skilled to handle combined classes. The reality, however, is that teachers are being trained to handle separate grades. The concept of multi-grade teaching is therefore quite challenging to most teachers trained in the traditional way (Juvane, 2005).

The philosophy surrounding the multi-grade classroom centers upon developing a curriculum to meet the individual needs of every child, instead of forcing a child to conform to a rigid and unyielding single curriculum. This guiding philosophy drew from constructivist and social learning theory (Song, Spradlin & Plucker, 2009). The premise is that the child would be exposed to a safe environment where cooperation between ages, group learning, and non-competitiveness combined to create the ideal learning environment (Song et al, 2009). This in itself is a challenging enterprise for teachers.

2.3.3.3 Planning and preparation

In the literature, emphasis is placed on lesson planning, because the multi-grade teacher has to think carefully about how instruction for the different grade groups will be managed (Berry, 2001:537). Teacher education materials often recommend multi-faceted plans. This requires teachers to thoughtfully consider their movements during lessons. They need to decide whether the format of the lesson will be focusing on 'whole class', a 'small group' or 'individuals' (Thomas & Shaw, 1993). Multi-grade teachers have to ensure that they cover the same general theme with all the learners. Appropriate activities that cater to the level of learning of each group have to be prepared. Each grade group, therefore has to be fully engaged (Vithanapathirana, 2006). The difficulty lies in remaining focused on outcomes rather than achievement. Teachers also have to take into account that learners are developing at different rates (Joubert, 2007).

2.3.3.4 Time

Many teachers feel that the lack of time means that topics cannot be dealt with in as much depth as they would have liked. This may be a particularly problematic issue for brighter learners. Some teachers point out that when pressed for time, subjects such as Physical

Education or Creative Arts are left out in order to provide enough time for core subjects such as Language or Mathematics. It is therefore challenging to ensure the quality of teaching and learning.

Multi-grade teaching can be isolating professionally. In this study the two teachers were part of a mono-grade school setting. These multi-grade teachers required more time for planning and preparation than their mono-grade colleagues. Many multi-grade teachers are concerned that they do not have sufficient time to spend teaching different subject areas with different grade levels in their class. Creating effective group work among learners of different abilities and ages is not easy (Farkas & Duffett, 2008). Trying to teach two or more programmes in the same amount of time given to single grade teachers is a demanding task. Finding time for individual learners, or for monitoring activities and feedback, presents a considerable challenge. While it is possible to teach some content to all grades or to teach two or more grades together, there still remains some content that must be taught separately.

2.3.3.5   Younger versus older learners

A benefit of multi-grade classroom structures is that younger children feel emotionally comfortable because this setting resembles a natural family structure. Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem highlights the importance of interconnections between family, school and community in the lives of all learners. Lodish (1992:22) however, argues that teachers may have the tendency to provide fewer challenges for older learners compared to younger children. Younger children may be frustrated by the gap between their work and that of older learners. Keeping all the grades engaged in different tasks throughout the school day can be difficult. Providing a variety of activities and avoiding repetition over a period of two or more years is an exigent task. Noise levels can also be a problem (MTP, 2005:18). The teacher has to teach all the prescribed learning areas for all the grades. Most of these teachers have received little or no training for a multi-grade situation. This is problematic since multi-grade classes are labour intensive for teachers. Lesson planning requires more time and peer collaboration than conventional graded classroom planning (Cushman, 1993:21).

2.3.3.6   Parents

Marzolf, 1978 (cited in Gayfer, 1991) maintain that parents do not support multi-grade teaching. They view multi-grade teaching as a 'waste of time'. Parents express concern for the future of their children (Forlin & Birch, 1995:98). It is important that parents are convinced of the benefits of multi-grade teaching for both young and old learners. Hohl (1991:25) reported that parents see the benefit only for younger learners. Parents need to realize that

learning is in fact taking place in the classroom by providing opportunities for learners to display the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they have gained through active participation. When teachers build connection between families and schools, they encourage better teacher-parent relationships and increased parent involvement (Miller, 1994). Although many teachers agree with the philosophies of the multi-age classrooms, some are sceptical of multi-age programmes because of the difficulties of implementing and operating the programmes. The first barrier is usually dissatisfaction and rejection by parents. Mixing their children with children of other ages raises concerns about the quality of instruction Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological approach to parent involvement provides a theoretical framework for understanding how families and schools are embedded in the community (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). This perspective explains the multi-directionality of the relationships within families (microsystems) as well as between families, schools and communities (mesosystems). It emphasizes that schools should influence families, families ought to influence schools and both affect and are affected by the communities in which they are located (Christenson & Sheridon, 2001:39).

In summary, while there are more disadvantages for multi-grade teaching, each of these disadvantages can be counter-argued. In a mono-grade classroom the stronger learners and slower learners are moving at the same pace. This could lead to frustration on the part of both kinds of learners. What is required, however, is a paradigm shift in the way we approach teaching and learning in South Africa. A flexible, innovative approach will cater more adequately for the diverse needs of learners in our schools. Multi-grade schools can benefit if more attention is paid to the ways teachers create alternatives to cope with the challenges to teach more than one grade (Ames, 2003).

Literature suggests that a more radical approach to curriculum is premised on a shift in philosophies of learning and teaching. Some emphasise learner homogeneity and standardisation of teacher inputs while others acknowledge the diversity of learners and the need for a differentiation of inputs (Little, 2005). This approach recognizes, according to Little, that multi-grade teaching is, in principle, if not always in practice, a desirable teaching strategy in all classes, all schools and all countries. But critics argue that this suggestion may be more idealistic than real, especially since the mono-grade class structure emerged out of multi-grade class contexts.

The next section will interrogate the past NCS curriculum, which was used at the time of data collection.

2.3.4   A comparison of the RNCS 2005 and the CAPS documents

Curriculum 2005, an outcomes-based curriculum, was implemented in the General Education and Training (GET) band in South African schools from 1998, with full implementation scheduled for 2005. This curriculum moved away from a content-based, over-prescriptive syllabus for a number of mainly discipline-based subjects to a more open-ended framework based on eight learning areas, each of which underpin the National Qualification Framework (NQF). Teachers and others were expected to develop learning programmes that integrated learning areas in various combinations and which led learners to the achievement of the outcomes. However, these design features proved too complex. Monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum in action led to widespread expression of concern, which in turn led, to a review. Chisholm found that there were significant criticisms of structure and design of the curriculum (DoE, 2000:20). Other aspects of concern related to the way in which the curriculum itself had been conceptualized with a plethora of terms and their complexity being key points.

Table 2:1 below summarizes some of the key differences in structure and design of the revised RNCS (C2005) and the CAPS document for Literacy in the FP.

Table 2:1   A summary of the key differences between C2005 and the CAPS document

Key differences between the Revised C2005 and CAPS for Literacy in the Foundation Phase	
Revised RNCS - C2005 (2002)	**CAPS (2011)**
The content was organised around eight Learning Areas (Languages, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Arts and Culture, Life Orientation, economics and Management sciences and Technology.	The content (Knowledge, concepts and skills) contained in the NCS has been organized in the CAPS, per term. Four main (Home Language, First Additional Language, Mathematics and Life Skills) subjects replaced the eight Learning Areas.
Languages Learning Area consists of 6 outcomes: Listening; Speaking; Reading and Viewing; Writing; Thinking and Reasoning and Language Structure and Use.	The 3 main skills in Home Language are: Listening and speaking; Reading and phonics and writing and handwriting. Thinking and Reasoning and Language Structure and Use, are incorporated within each of the above skills.
Time allocation for Literacy per week: Language - Grades R-2, 9 hours 10 minutes and for Grade 3, 10 hours.	Time allocation for Literacy per week: - Home Language - Grades R-3, 6 hours - First Additional Language - Grade R-2, 4 hours, and Grade 3, 5 hours.
Guidelines and Assessment Standards for each grade. Suggestions for recording and reporting assessment.	The requirements for each Formal Assessment task are provided for Grade 1-3. This includes 1 baseline assessment and an Annual National Assessment (ANA).

(Adapted from Cohen and Welch, in Hoadley, 2010:311)

The next section examines the documents, which provide the basis for literacy in the FP: The RNCS document and the current CAPS curriculum.

The RNCS Grades R-9 (RNCS, 2002:17), allocates 40% for formal Literacy teaching in the FP in terms of the National Education Policy Act (1996). One of the most crucial aspects of the teaching and learning process in multi-grade classes concerns the management of time (UNESCO, 2004). How teachers distribute their time between learners is critical in assessing real opportunities to learn (Hargreaves, Montero, Chau, Sibli & Thanh, 2001:499).

The Languages Learning Area contributes to the curriculum by developing Reading and Writing, which is the foundation for much of the other learning in the curriculum, such as Mathematics and the Social Sciences. Language serves a variety of purposes, which further shapes, our identity and knowledge. These purposes are: '*personal*' – to sustain, develop and transform identities, to sustain relationships in family and community and for personal growth and pleasure; '*communicative*' - to communicate appropriately and effectively in a variety of social contexts; '*educational*' - to develop tools for thinking and reasoning and to provide access to information; '*aesthetic*' - to create interpret and play imaginatively with oral, visual and written texts; '*cultural*' - to understand and appreciate languages and cultures and the heritage they carry; '*political*' - to assert oneself and challenge others; and to sustain, develop and transform identities; and '*critical*' - to understand the relationship between

language, power and identity; to challenge uses of these where necessary; to understand the dynamic nature of culture; and to resist persuasion and positioning where necessary (RNCS, 2002:5).

The RNCS (2002:20) emphasised that learners' home language should be used for learning and teaching whenever possible. This is particularly important in the FP where children learn to read and write. The Languages Learning Area Statement covered all official languages and comprised five outcomes, namely: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Viewing, Writing, Thinking and Reasoning, and Language Structure and Use. While these outcomes are presented as separate, they should be integrated into teaching and assessments (RNCS 2002:21).

The RNCS further stipulated that reading in the FP should be taught as part of an integrated Reading and Writing focus time. Lessons, which specifically focus on reading instruction, should consist of five main components of teaching reading: phonemic awareness; word recognition (sight words and phonics); comprehension; vocabulary, and fluency. Each of these components had to be taught explicitly as learners' progress through the FP (RNCS 2002:3). These components will be discussed later in relation to this research project.

To improve implementation, a comprehensive CAPS document was developed and implemented in 2011. The CAPS Foundation Phase Home Language Grade R to 3 (2011), replaced the RNCS Grades R-9 (2002). The purpose of CAPS was to replace the previous Subject Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessments Guidelines in Grades R to 12.

Although the data collection for this current research project was conducted in 2010, the analysis and writing up of the thesis was completed while the new CAPS document was in use. It was interesting to note how some of the literacy strategies used by the two urban multi-grade teachers were similar to those discussed in the new CAPS document.

In the CAPS document the Languages programme is integrated into all other subject areas. Language is used across the curriculum in all oral work, reading and writing (CAPS, 2011:6). Time allocation for Home Language in the FP is 6 hours and the First Additional Language is 4 hours for Grade R - 2 and 5 hours for Grade 3.

In Grades 1 - 3 reading takes place in the Reading and Writing focus time. It is here, through clear, focused lessons that learners are taught to be effective readers and writers. Daily time is set-aside for lessons covering different strategies for reading: shared reading, group-guided reading, paired reading, independent reading and phonics (CAPS, 2011:8).

In order to teach reading effectively, readers need to be engaged in appropriate-level, high-quality texts that foster enthusiasm and critical thinking (Dreher, 2003:25). Learners need opportunities to read and re-read developmentally appropriate books. These books should capture their interests, address curriculum content, be based on cultural diversity and provide sufficient instructional opportunities (Compton-Lilly, 2008:668). By allowing learners to try to read on their own, offering feedback and assistance as they demonstrate the need for it, teachers will be able to determine what their learners need and at what stage they are (Pearson, 2011:248).

2.3.5 Stages of reading development

Before discussing the various reading practices, it is important to consider the stages of reading development. This discussion is included because in multi-grade classes there can be up to three different grades of learners within one class. If teachers understand the stages of reading development of their learners and the content of books, they would be able to select more age-appropriate reading material. Teachers can be guided by the relevant reading skills for the different grade levels and stages of development (Chall, 1983:86). These stages of reading are tabulated in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2   Stages of reading development

Stage	Grade level	Characteristics	Major focus
Emergent reader	pre Grade R/ early Grade R	Has no concept of word. Has little phonemic awareness Recognizes few sight words.	Tracking print. Distinguishing beginning consonant sounds. Recognizing 10 sight words.
Beginning reader	late Grade R/early Grade 1	Is beginning to track print. Is able to hear some sounds. Recognized 10 sight words.	Using beginning and ending consonant sounds. Recognizing 50 sight words. Reading simple text. Using sentence context and pictures or word recognition cues to decode.
Fledging reader	early/mid-Grade 1	Confirms with beginning and ending consonant sounds. Recognizes 50+ sight words. Reads simple text.	Recognizing and using word families in reading and writing. Recognizing 100+ sight words. Reading more complex text. Developing fluency. Developing comprehension strategies. Self-correcting errors.
Transitional reader	mid/late Grade 1	Recognises word families in isolation and in texts. Recognizes 100+ sight words. Reads developed texts.	Using word patterns in reading and writing. Developing independent reading using decoding and comprehension strategies. Developing fluency.
Independent reader	early/late Grade 2	Reads and writes independently. Uses strategies to figure out new words. Reads fluently. Uses patterns in reading and writing.	Developing diverse comprehension strategies. Using complex word patterns. Developing fluency in a variety of texts. Responding to text in a variety of ways.

(Adapted from Chall, 1983:86-87)

Learning to read is regarded as a crucial component of early education (Levy, 2011:52). Byrnes and Wasik (2009:171) found that there is a direct and strong connection between reading skills and the level of academic and professional success enjoyed by an individual in his or her lifetime. Teachers are likely to experience positive outcomes when they provide explicit instruction in word study strategies to decode words, word meanings and strategies for deriving the meanings of unknown words and comprehension strategy instruction (Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn & Ciullo, 2010:890).

2.3.6   Application of reading practices in the classroom

This section introduces and briefly discusses eleven different reading practices, identified in the two urban multi-grade schools, such as: shared reading, group-guided reading, paired

reading, independent reading, basal reading, phonics instruction, phonological awareness, vocabulary instruction, fluency instruction, comprehension and finally stories.

2.3.6.1 Shared Reading

Browning Schulman and DaCruz Payne (2000:19) note that shared reading involves the reading and re-reading of enlarged texts (books, poems, nursery rhymes, songs) with a class or small group. These Big Books, (Holdaway, 1983) are used by teachers to model reading while young learners watch. The large illustrations encourage early readers to engage in discussion. The learning focus in each shared reading session may consist of one of the following: concepts of print: story structure, genre study, text features, phonics, language patterns, word identification strategies and comprehension at a range of levels - for example, literal, reorganizational, inferential, evaluative and appreciation questions (NEEDU, 2012:37).

Reading is a shared activity and talking is a vital component of the reading process. Learners have to listen for information, communicate effectively and read the written text for information and enjoyment (Perkins, 2005:6). This corresponds with Learning Outcome 3 (Reading and Viewing), which requires the learner to read and view for information and enjoyment (NCS, 2002). In acquiring these skills the learner develops the ability to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts by using language to think and reason appropriately by using sounds.

Shared reading incorporates a variety of classroom interactions in which the teacher and the learners share a text. These include: echo reading (learners echoing the words aloud after the teacher reads), choral reading (learners reading aloud while the teacher reads aloud), or close reading (teacher reads aloud and pauses periodically for learners to fill in the missing word (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2001). This interactive thinking out-loud situates the instruction within the learner's ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

Shared reading provides learners with adequate time to observe supportively and interactively, recognize, emulate, adopt, practice and self-regulate metacognitive skills (Mathan & Koedinger, 2005:257). Topping and Furguson (2005:126), strengthen this view by stating that this range of literacy skills constitute effective teaching. A combination of fiction and non-fiction texts may be used and the length and complexity progresses through the year and across the grades. According to the CAPS document (2011:9) the complexity of the text used is aimed at the top group in the class. Certain learners will be at a listening level, others will be beginning to engage in the reading while more will be engaging fully. The fact that learners of varying levels of ability are invited to participate in the reading experience makes shared reading particularly suited to a multi-grade classroom.

2.3.6.2 Group-Guided Reading

A comparison between group-guided reading and traditional reading is tabulated in Table 2.3, as a combination of these two methods was observed in the two multi-grade classrooms.

Table 2.3   A comparison between group-guided reading and traditional reading

Group-guided reading	Traditional reading
The focus is on skills and strategies for independent reading of unfamiliar text.	The focus is on skills to read the selections in the basal text.
There are a variety of responses to reading.	Typically, workbook and worksheet exercises form the response to reading.
Various small books are used for reading.	Basal readers are the primary textbooks for reading.
Flexible reading groups change based on on-going assessment as skills or strategies are learned.	Fixed reading groups usually remain together during the reading of the entire basal text.
Reading is connected to other language arts of writing, speaking and listening.	Reading tends to be treated as a separate subject.
Learners are taught to problem-solve unknown vocabulary using strategies they have learnt	Vocabulary is pre-taught to groups.
Instruction is focused on readers' needs through continuous assessment with a variety of assessment tools.	Instruction is focused on a systematic progression of skills in the basal text as measured by an end of the unit, chapter of section test.
Learners read the whole text independently and softly to themselves.	Learners read aloud, page by page, often in round-robin fashion.
Selection of a book by the teacher is matched to readers' instructional needs and interests.	Selection of text focuses on reading needs as determined by the basal reader.

(Adapted from Browning Schulman et al, 2000:15).

The goal of group-guided reading is therefore to help learners become better independent readers who are flexible in the ways they present their knowledge. Each time the learners participate in a group-guided reading session, they learn more about the reading process and practice their reading skills (Browning Schulman et al, 2000:32). Fountas and Pinnell (2012:272), describe this practice of building the power of reading as creating a network of strategic actions for processing text. When learners are efficiently processing text, they flexibly draw from a vast repertoire. Readers use their expertise in language and their knowledge of print, stories and the world to problem-solve as they read. They direct their attention to the detail of letters and sounds as needed. When they need to problem-solve words in greater detail later, they can draw on their orthographic and phonological knowledge more flexibly (Kaye, 2006:71).

Consequently, group-guided reading supports each reader's development of processing texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty (Fountas et al, 1996:25). As with shared

reading, this instructional context is appropriate to the multi-levels found in multi-grade classrooms. This approach respects the belief that every child is capable of learning to read and recognizes that children can learn to read at varying rates of development (Browning Schulman et al, 2000:12). The fundamental concept of group-guided reading is founded on Vygotsky's (1978) theory that students learn best when they are provided with strong instructional support to extend themselves by reading texts that are on the edge of their learning – not too easy but not too hard. Clay (1991:215) argues that since learners in the classroom are so diverse, differentiated instruction is needed to reach all of them. It is important to support learners in taking on more challenging texts so that they can grow as readers, using the text gradient 'ladder of progress'.

Through modelling and prompting, the teacher guides learners to think about the reading process and various reading strategies they need to make sense of the text. Additional practice is provided by allowing learners to manipulate words, engage in extension activities or other literacy tasks. (Browning Schulman et al, 2000:12). Group-guided reading gives learners the opportunity to discuss the text with the teacher and with other learners in the group (CAPS, 2011:10).

2.3.6.3   Paired Reading

Research on paired reading has shown that students of all ages can make extraordinary reading gains (Limbrick, McNaughton, & Cameron, 1985). Less proficient readers benefit and the learners who serve as tutors further their reading abilities (McMaster, Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). In paired assisted learning, each partner has a chance to be the player (reader) and then the coach who listens and provides feedback while his/her partner is reading. The higher-achieving student is always the reader first, modelling correct strategies for his/her partner (Fuchs, Fuchs & Burnish, 2000).

Lessons are divided up by skill-level and the amount of time they will take. The teacher is able to circulate during lessons and record observations while providing feedback. Fuchs, & Fuchs (2005), reported that paired assisted learning strategies can be used effectively to teach phonological awareness, decoding, and word recognition.

When conducting paired reading activities, cooperative learning is encouraged because students earn points for forming good explanations during coaching and for answering problems correctly during practice. Peer tutoring is an instructional strategy that consists of student partnerships, linking high achieving students with lower achieving students or those with comparable achievement, for structured reading and math study sessions. According to

Rohrbeck, Ginsburg-Block, Fantuzzo, and Miller (2003), peer tutoring is systematic, peer-mediated teaching strategies.

Topping (1989) states that paired reading involves two learners of different reading abilities. The less proficient reader selects the texts and they read together for fifteen to thirty minutes. If one learner makes an error or hesitates on a word, the other reader waits to see if it is corrected. If not, the partner says the word while pointing to it and the pair continues reading. When the less proficient student feels comfortable to read independently, they give the other reader a signal. At the end of the session, the learners talk about the text and complement each other on their reading rate, phrasing, expression, or word identification strategies. Praise is an important part of paired reading (Nes, 2003).

The pairing of higher-and lower-achieving students is intended so students gain knowledge from each other through practice and reinforcement (students are still within the same skill level, there is not a huge discrepancy between ability levels). During Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) teachers must closely monitor the roles taken on by each student, and interject when instruction is needed (Saenz & Fuchs, 2002:23).

Paired reading provides learners with reading practice and encourages reading for enjoyment. The choice of reading material can be class readers, or simple 'fun' books obtained from the library. This sort of activity should take place frequently and regularly. It is suitable as a strategy while the teacher is assisting smaller groups in group-guided reading (CAPS, 2011:11).

2.3.6.4 Independent Reading

According to the NEEDU (2012:38) report, most teachers do not understand that the ultimate goal of reading instruction is for all learners to acquire independent reading. The above three strategies (shared reading, group-guided reading and paired reading) are goals to this end. This report stated that teachers were content to pursue low-level shared reading activities rather than leading learners towards higher levels of fluency and comprehension.

Moss and Young (2010:1) maintain that 'reading is powerful and can change lives. It creates compassion, moves us to action, transports us to different places and even sometimes transforms us'. Of all the goals for literacy instruction, there is none more critical than creating learners who read independently. Independent reading provides learning pleasure and a passion for books. It affords learners the opportunity to be engaged in reading (Moss et al, 2010:1).

Moss et al (2010:3) state that independent reading is just one component of quality reading. It should not be substituted for direct instruction in basic reading skills. It provides a critical support for learners learning to read and reading to learn. Its implementation need not be delayed until learners master basic reading skills. Rather, it should be provided as a powerful accompaniment to skills instruction. Independent reading ensures that learners are afforded rich opportunities to apply the skills that they learn during shared reading, group-guided reading and other literacy-related experiences (Moss et al, 2010:3). Sanacore (2002:83) argues that love for reading independently is promoted by offering learners access to a variety of texts. Access to self-selected texts improves learners' reading performance (Krashen, 2011).

International comparisons reveal that interest in independent reading outside of school is limited even in the early grades. Gutherie and Wigfield (2000:3) assert that reading motivation impacts independent reading: better readers tend to read more. As learners become older, their interest in reading independently declines. This descent continues in the middle grades and through the high school years (Moss et al, 2010:2).

2.3.6.5   Basal Readers

Basal readers comprise a collection of levelled readers, workbooks and assessment materials. The more recent basal readers have components addressing differentiated instruction (Dewitz, Leahy, Jones, & Sullivan, 2010). However, Allington (2006:49) notes, that 'no basal reading series contains enough reading material to develop high levels of reading proficiency in children'. He points out those greater volumes of reading is a distinguishing feature of high-achieving classrooms and recommends that learners read independently in school for ninety minutes or more each day.

An effective reading programme is more than just a basal reader programme. It should incorporate independent reading experiences that engage learners in reading beyond the basal (Allington, 2006:49). While basal readers follow educational trends, they seldom initiate new ideas (Chambliss & Calfee, 1998). It is therefore important for teachers to modify and augment the programme to meet the needs of her learners (Kersten & Pardo, 2007:146).

Research on basal reading programmes has found that while these programmes provide practice and assessment, they failed to help the teacher provide explicit instruction into the comprehension process (Durkin, 1981; Dewitz, Leahy & Jones, 2009). Miller and Blumenfeld (1993) identified the lack of metacognitive emphasis and McKeown, Beck, and Blake (2009), established poor guided reading questions.

2.3.6.6　　　Phonics Instruction

Phonics, the relationship between sounds of a language and their spelling, is an important tool in reading and writing. When teaching phonics, one teaches the decoding of words by breaking them down into smaller units (syllables and letters). They are also taught that there is a relationship between the letters of written language (graphemes) and the individual sounds of spoken language (phonemes). Knowing this relationship helps children to read and write words and learn that phonics instruction is a means to an end, not an end in itself (Rose, 2006:31).

Contrary to the views of some critics, for example, Graves, Juel and Graves (2007:21), according to Rose (2006:27) the goal of phonics instruction is to allow learners to understand that there is a systematic and predictable relationship between written letters and spoken sounds. This should enable learners to recognise familiar words accurately and automatically and to decode new ones (Bald, 2007:10). It is important that learners acquire phonic information to the point of it becoming automatic, thus contributing to their ability to read words in isolation and in connected text. This acquisition is enhanced by choosing short and interesting words (Cunningham & Allington, 2007:133).

There are numerous approaches to teaching phonics. Stahl (2004:35), defines phonics as 'any approach in which the teacher does or says something to help children learn how to decode words'. The teaching of phonics can be classified broadly into two groups, analytic and synthetic (Stahl, 2004:57). The analytic approach teaches learners to analyse letters and sounds learned in previous words. This helps with pronouncing and figuring out unknown words as they read (Oczkus, 2011:3). The synthetic approaches begin with learning letter sound relationships and blending them to create words c/a/t then cat (Bald 2007:18). The synthetic phonics approach has the learner sound out and blend letters to form words. Allington (2005), claims that phonics is an effective way of teaching learners to read at word level.

The next section discusses phonological awareness, which helps learners recognize that speech consists of a sequence of sounds and teaches them how to recognize these individual sounds, and how phonemes combine to make words.

2.3.6.7　　　Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is hearing and understanding different sounds and patterns of spoken language. It includes different ways oral language can be broken down into individual parts, for instance, separate sounds and syllables (Abruster & Osborn, 2003:4). For some children, hearing these different parts of spoken language can be difficult, because it requires

them to attend to the sounds of speech separately from meaning (Ma & Crocker, 2007:53). For Gray and McCutchen (2006:325), phonemes are the smallest parts of sounds in a spoken word. For example, in the word 'hat' the letter 'h' represents the sound 'huh'. In phonics there is a link between the sound and the letter. Each sound can be written as a letter or group of letters, e.g. the 'buh' (bu) sound is written as 'b'.

According to CAPS, teaching phonological awareness should continue through the FP, and into the Intermediate Phase. This sort of activity should be integrated into reading instruction and should no longer dominate entire lessons.

2.3.6.8   Vocabulary Instruction

If one accepts that comprehension is the goal of reading, then vocabulary is the foundation of reading comprehension - referring to the body of words one needs to communicate effectively. This includes knowing the meaning of words and how to pronounce them correctly. If a learner has a limited understanding of vocabulary, he or she will have a limited understanding of the concepts. This in turn will limit the understanding of the content. It is well established that learners who comprehend well tend to have good vocabulary (Anderson & Freebody, 1981). This correlation, however, does not mean that teaching vocabulary will increase readers' comprehension.

As beginners in reading, children have to make sense out of words they see in print. Literacy researchers, Raphael, Pardo and Highfield (2002:107) believe that there is a strong correlation between reading and vocabulary knowledge; meaning learners who have a large vocabulary are usually good readers. Vocabulary can also be learned incidentally during storybook reading or when listening to others. It is true that if one reads extensively, one is likely to be or become a good reader. Children also need to recognise the shape of words, the letters and syllables that make up the words (Stahl, 2004:63).

2.3.6.9   Fluency Instruction

According to the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000), reading fluency is a critical factor necessary for reading comprehension. In order for children to be successful readers, they must be fluent and comprehend a range of texts (Calo, Woolard-Fergusen & Koitz, 2013:454). As one of the core components of reading, fluency has many definitions. These include the ability to read at an appropriate pace, with accuracy and automaticity and with proper prosody or expression (Hudson, Lane & Pullen, 2005:702; Kuhn, Schwanenflugel & Meisinger, 2010:230). Fluency instruction is most effective when accuracy, automaticity and prosodic reading occur in unison (Rasinski, 2006:705).

While there is no ideal speed, fluent readers demonstrate comprehension, use cues from texts and take pleasure in finding the right tempo for the text (Newkirk, 2011:1). Rasinski and Hamman (2010) found that the norms for reading speed have increased. However, these increases have not been matched by improvement in comprehension. In fact, the way reading fluency has been measured has influenced reading adversely. Rasinski (2012:516) believes that fluency is more than reading fast. Authentic fluency is reading with and for meaning. Fluency is an important bridge between word recognition and comprehension. It can be achieved through repeated oral reading with teachers, peers or parents. The more learners read, the more their reading skills will improve and the more their worldview broadens (Morrow, 2005:23). When teachers model smooth and expressive reading during shared reading, read aloud and group-guided reading, learners begin to understand that words on the page should sound like spoken language, hence, fluency is improved (Browning Schulman et al, 2000:33).

2.3.6.10 Comprehension

A discussion on comprehension skills is deemed important in this study, as comprehension forms the core of reading. When attempting to describe the taxonomy comprehension levels, two international studies have been cited. Harvey and Goudvis (2013:435) describe a taxonomy that includes five comprehension levels while the PIRLS (2011:45) taxonomy includes four levels. Table 2:4 explains the similarities in definition of the comprehension levels.

Table 2:4   Similarities in the definitions of comprehension levels in the primary school

Harvey & Goudvis, (2013:435)	PIRLS (2012:46)
Answering Literal Questions - Answering literal questions is the least sophisticated practice of comprehension. Learners may demonstrate that they can recall information, but simply skimming and scanning to find the answers to questions does not guarantee understanding. Literal understanding is an important foundation of knowledge acquisition and use but practices that do not go beyond this level, are unlikely to lead readers to a deep understanding and do little to engage the reader in learning.	Locating and retrieving explicitly stated detail - Focus on locating and retrieve explicitly stated information. Identifying information that is definitions, words or phrases, identifying the setting of a story, for example, finding the main idea when explicitly stated.
Re-telling - Retelling is a foundational skill for learners and it is more sophisticated than answering literal questions. For young learners, retelling is often the starting-point of summarizing the events of a story. At this stage it is the ultimate achievement of comprehension. Retelling involves short-term recall and understanding a sequence of events.	Make inferences to explain relationships - Make straightforward inferences. Reading tasks that might exemplify this type of text processing, include inferring that one event caused another event, concluding the main point by making a series of arguments, determining the referent of a pronoun, identifying generalizations made in the text, and describing the relationship between two characters.
Merge thinking with content - Comprehension begins when thinking is merged with content. This happens when learners use thinking strategies such as engaging in connecting, questioning, inferring, visualizing, determining importance, and synthesizing information. These strategies facilitate active engagement of the learners with their reading and provide them with a store of devices to construct meaning so that understanding takes root.	Interpret and integrate story events - Interpret and integrate ideas and information reading tasks that may exemplify this type of text processing include discerning the overall message or theme of a text, considering alternative actions by characters, comparing and contrasting text information, inferring a story's mood or tone and interpreting a real-world application of text information.
Acquiring knowledge - Once readers begin to merge their thinking consciously with the content, they are able to turn that information into knowledge. This is not simply memorizing information: to truly learn and remember information, we have to think about it. Comprehension strategies become tools for readers to think about, question, synthesise information and gain insight. Integrating content and comprehension instructions means that strategies help learners make sense of the content. The content gives meaning and purpose to the strategies (Wilkinson & Son, 2011:367).	According to the PIRLS definition of comprehension levels, Acquiring knowledge would link with the above level of interpreting and integrating story events.
Actively using knowledge – When we think about information and acquire knowledge, we come to realize the power of our own thinking. With new insights, learners can integrate their knowledge and actively apply their experiences, situations and circumstances in their daily lives. All learners bring life experiences into the classroom, prior knowledge about topics, as	Evaluate significance of events and actions – Evaluate and examine content, language and textual elements. Reading tasks that may exemplify this type of text processing include evaluating the relative likelihood that the course of events described in the text could really happen, describing how the author devised surprise ending, judging the completeness or

Harvey & Goudvis, (2013:435)	PIRLS (2012:46)
well as their thoughts, passions and insights. Pearson (2008) states that, 'today's new knowledge is tomorrow's background knowledge'. Asking learners to read without using background knowledge is likened to 'asking people to breathe without using oxygen' (Pearson, 2012). Supporting readers to connect their prior knowledge to new information is at the core of learning and understanding.	clarity of information in the text, and determining an author's perspective on the central topic.

Reading and thinking strategies provide an essential foundation for learning and understanding. Harvey et al (2013:435) maintain that the goal of comprehension is to acquire and actively use knowledge. Costa's (2008:23) view that 'the deeper knowledge one has, the more analytical, experimental and creative one's thought processes are', complements this statement.

Knowledge functions richly in people's lives so they can learn about and deal with the world. Instruction in comprehension and thinking strategies are therefore important (Dole, Duffy, Roehler & Pearson, 1991:240). Wilkinson and Son (2011:364) found that comprehension instruction is most effective when learners flexibly use reading and thinking strategies in more collaborative contexts.

2.3.6.11 Stories

Reading storybooks to children has consistently been found to be a strong predictor of later success in school, and confers on children numerous cognitive, linguistic and literate advantages. For instance, children who are exposed to storybook reading in the preschool years tend to have larger vocabularies, greater background knowledge, and better language and conceptual development than their peers who have not been exposed to books or storybook reading; they also learn to read and write more easily and more quickly (Heath, 1983; Wells, 1986; Elley, 1991; Feitelson, Kita & Goldstein, 1986). Reading storybooks to preschool and Grade 1 children improves their expressive language as well as their language comprehension (Vivas,1996), significantly increases their receptive language, their concept of print and narrative competence (Neuman & Dickenson, 2001) and improves their vocabulary, story comprehension and their understanding of sequencing in story-telling (Jordan, Snow & Porche, 2000). These gains were particularly evident in children who had poor language skills at the start of the programme.

Narratives surround children from their earliest language experiences. Young children experience narrative stories through shared book reading at home, or at school. As children listen to stories, a number of cognitive processes are at work at the word, sentence, and text

levels (Oakhill & Cain, 2007:4). These skills are important precursors to reading comprehension (Kendeou, van den Broek, White, & Lynch, 2009; Mckeown, Beck & Blake, 2009). Thus, narrative listening comprehension skills are developing well before a child is able to read and comprehend texts independently. The development of narrative listening comprehension may lead to more effective strategies to foster this ability in young learners and promote later reading comprehension (Lepola, Lynch, Laakkonen, Silvén & Niemi, 2012:260). Sadik (2008) found that storytelling enhanced the integration of language skills, developed language abilities (Houston, 1997) and improved learners' listening comprehension (Neugebauer & Currie-Rubin, 2009).

Interactive reading of rich and complex stories supports and improves children's vocabulary development (Huebner & Payne, 2010:196). Being part of an interactive reading experience exposes children to books full of descriptive language and rare words (Kindle, 2009). Teachers can use questioning and feedback techniques such as asking children open-ended questions rather than those with just one correct answer to enrich this experience. Extended conversations support growth of vocabulary and stimulate the interests of learners (Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith & Fischel, 1994:680).

Children have the ability to connect to other people by imagining the thoughts and feelings of characters in picture books as part of making sense of and responding to stories. This ability to imagine the thoughts, feelings and intentions is known as social imagination (Johnston, et al 1993:428). Carpendale and Lewis, (2002:79) call it social understanding.

Koc and Buzzelli (2004:92) believe that reading fiction has the ability to promote understandings of the human condition especially the understanding of aspects such as personal and moral dimensions of life. In fact, stories are thought to be powerful influences on the ability to understand or imagine the thoughts and feelings of others. Bruner (1986:14) suggests that stories offer children the opportunity to learn about the 'landscape of consciousness' or the inner world of thinking and feeling and the 'landscape of action' the outer world of doing. Picture books in particular present short, appealing views of how these landscapes intertwine. Illustrating the ways in which characters' thoughts, feelings and intentions influence the action of the story (Szarkowicz, 2000:71). It provides information about the minds of other people (Dyer, Shatz, & Wellman, 2000:17).

There is a strong connection between reading and the development of social imagination. This can be seen during the comprehension of stories. As children engage in understanding stories, they make personal connections and relate to the characters. These connections grow into relationships as children learn more about the way in which the characters'

thoughts, feelings and intentions are linked to actions. This is an important part of making sense of the plot line of narrative and the story as a whole. As part of the meaning-making process, learners form relationships with fictional characters. These relationships shape the person reading much like real ones. Thus the same neurological regions of the brain are stimulated whether our connections with others occur in real or fictional contexts (Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, dela Paz, & Peterson, 2006:694). Learners imagine the inner worlds of characters and appropriate some of the voices, which are then internalized (Fernyhough, 2008:225). This appropriation of identity of a fictional character by the reader is a form of mediation of the self (Ricoeur, 1991:77) thus emphasizing the integral role of social imagination in the comprehension process.

2.4   CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 2 has dealt with the conceptual framework in support of the research question: reading practices in urban multi-grade classes. The different aspects of situated learning were analysed within this debate. Key theorists such as Lave and Wenger, Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner and Piaget were referenced. This chapter also presented a literature review with regard to the advantages and limitations of urban multi-grade reading practices. The RNCS and the CAPS documents were discussed, and stages of reading development were explored. A variety of reading strategies were reviewed. The central conclusion in this chapter is that collaborative reading practices are possible and beneficial within an urban multi-grade class. The research gap identified, is a dearth of research in rural multi-grade schools, with the prevalence of research in urban multi-grade classes being even less.

CHAPTER 3   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Atkins and Wallace (2012:6) define research as a process of investigation that is systematic, controlled and empirical: based on a collection of data. Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman (2008:387) argue that good quality research does not depend on a specific philosophical or theoretical stance but many considerations have to be taken into account. Educational research specifically, is based on the researcher's own motivations and values, and is central to teaching as a profession (Atkins et al, 2012:12).

In view of the above, this study examines the reading practices in two urban multi-grade FP classes. The research was guided by the following question: How do teachers in two urban multi-grade classrooms teach reading in the FP? Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical paradigm and research approach and design. It outlines identification and selection of the case, discusses data collection instruments and procedures for data collection and analysis. It describes the context and participants of the study and presents a clear description of the processes followed. These include the instrumentation and measures, data collection, procedures of analysis, issues of validity and reliability and ethical considerations (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014:13). A rationale for adopting a qualitative paradigm for this study is explained and justifications for using the most appropriate research approach – a case a study is provided (Henning et al, 2004:40). To conclude the chapter a brief summary is offered.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:102) the goal of a sound research design is to provide results that are judged to be credible. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the research process is systematic, rigorous, credible and reliable (Atkins et al, 2012:51). Silverman (2011:11) highlights the fact that qualitative research calls for moral responsibility and not quick answers. Its purpose is first, to describe and explore, by providing rich descriptions of complex situations. The second purpose is to enhance the readers' understanding of the phenomenon. This is done by showing relationships between events and meanings as perceived by the participants (McMillan et al, 2010:102). In this research, the complex phenomenon of urban multi-grade classrooms where two teachers were teaching reading in FP was explored. By collecting and analysing the data, an attempt was made to show the relationship between the interviews, observations and video recordings to understand and gain a deeper insight into the reading practices in these multi-grade environments.

3.2   RESEARCH PARADIGM

This research is underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm. Schwandt (1994:118) states that an interpretive research approach provides a deep insight into the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it. Neuman (1997:68) agrees with this definition and points out that the key focus of an interpretive approach is the search for meaning and an understanding of how others see the world in which they live. The systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social world is considered an interpretivist approach. Gephart (1999:5) continues by saying, 'the belief that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation and there is therefore no objective knowledge which is independent of thinking, reasoning humans.' This is fundamental to an interpretivist perspective.

Interpretivists use the term 'natural setting' and Neuman's definition alludes to the participatory nature of the approach, and the belief that meaning is only created through interaction and the subsequent requirement for the researcher to participate in the lives of those being researched. Given the importance of context, according to LeCompte and Schensul (1999:48), this study attempted to access the meanings that teachers' constructed with regard to the reading methods as they were used in their multi-grade literacy classes and taking cognisance of learner responses throughout the lessons. Henning et al (2004:20) describe an interpretivist theoretical paradigm as one that looks for frames that shape meaning within social contexts. McMillan et al (2010:6) reiterate that interpretivists postulate multiple socially constructed realities. This means that the theoretical paradigm covered a range of interpretive techniques which sought to describe, decode, translate and come to terms with the meaning of certain naturally occurring in phenomena in the social world namely, FP multi-grade reading practices.

3.3   RESEARCH APPROACH

A qualitative approach was used in the process of carrying out the investigation of the reading practices used by teachers in two FP urban multi-grade classrooms in the Western Cape.

Qualitative research is value laden and context dependent, as pointed out by Chilisa and Preece (2005:142). Probing into the nature of the above settings, gave the researcher an indication of the reading practices in urban multi-grade classrooms. This approach illuminated how the reading practices were used, lived, valued and experienced by the FP learners within the spaces of their learning. This study, being positioned within a qualitative

research paradigm, explored an academic problem, which was permeated with social dimensions (Kirunda, 2005:126).

Qualitative research is underpinned by an interpretivist, theoretical paradigm and is normally context bound and not universal. It offers a more holistic approach by taking into account people's experiences, insights and perspectives, and by studying them in the setting within which they occur (Clark & Scheurich, 2008:313).

The above views correspond with that of Henning et al (2004:3) who state that the reason for framing one's study within a qualitative framework lies in the quest for understanding and for in-depth inquiry. In this study, the emphasis was on gaining an in-depth understanding of reading practices in the context of multi-grade classes, across two social spaces. The study explored two teachers' interpretations of their social reality and the underlying reasons for being the way it was.

Researchers such as Miles and Huberman (1994:10) argue that apart from the holistic data obtained from qualitative data, other strengths of qualitative research are, that it focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings. It is powerful for studying any process when data is collected over a sustained period. Qualitative research is fundamentally well suited for meanings people place on events, process and structures of their lives and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them.

The socially constructed nature of reality is underlined in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). They refer to the intimate relationship that exists between the researcher, what is studied and the situational constraints that shape enquiry. Qualitative researchers therefore, seek answers to questions that emphasise how social experiences are being created and given meaning. A more generic definition of qualitative research was offered by Denzin et al (2005:3), emphasising that qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations that include field notes, interviews and recordings. Cresswell (2007:36) added that qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words and reports on the views of informants in detail.

Creswell (2007:37) furthers Denzin et al's argument by defining qualitative research as an inquiry into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. He states that research begins with assumptions and the worldviews that provide the basis of the design. Merriam (2009:13) agrees with Denzin et al and Creswell by stating that

qualitative research is concerned with understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to these experiences.

Table 3:1 shows why this study falls within a qualitative research paradigm and indicates the main features of qualitative research as suggested by Babbie and Mouton (2006:271) and how they link to the current research study.

Table 3:1   Features of a qualitative methodological paradigm and how they link to the current research study

What theory says (Babbie & Mouton, 2006:271)	How qualitative research related to the current study
Research is conducted in the natural setting of social actors.	This study explored the nature of the reading practices in two FP urban multi-grade classes in the natural settings in which these practices occur.
A focus on process rather than outcome.	Bi-weekly visits were made to the sites over a period of 3 months. This engagement in the field enabled the researcher to observe the social phenomenon (reading practices) as they occurred (their lived experiences) rather than in retrospect.
The primary aim is in-depth ('thick') descriptions and understanding of actions.	From the observations 'thick' or detailed descriptions were recorded in the field notes. Making specific reference to categories and concepts used by the participants, so as to stay true to them.
The main concern is to understand social actions in terms of its specific context (idiographic motive) rather than attempting to generalize to some theoretical population.	A description is given of the reading practices in the context of two FP urban multi-grade classes. The researcher attempted to understand the social and reading events within the natural classroom situation.
The qualitative researcher is seen as the 'main instrument' in the research process.	In order to generate legitimate and truthful 'insider descriptions' of the events under study, the researcher had to remain unbiased in the descriptions and interpretations of the events under study.

The purpose of this table was to capture the features of qualitative research and show how the current research study links within this methodological paradigm rather than a quantitative methodological paradigm. A quantitative methodological approach is too focused on finding causal relationships, and is ill-suited to capturing the lived experiences of the teachers and learners in this study (Silverman, 2011). Quantitative research fails to take into account the complex and multiple contexts in which this study occurs.

According to Silverman (2011:4) there are distinctive differences between qualitative and quantitative research designs. A brief overview of the two dominant methodological paradigms follows in Table 3:2 and the reasons for choosing a qualitative research paradigm as opposed to a quantitative research paradigm are tabled.

Table 3:2   Differences between qualitative and quantitative research

Qualitative research uses words	Quantitative research uses numbers
Is concerned with meanings.	Is concerned with behaviour.
Induces hypotheses from data.	Begins with hypotheses.
Uses case studies.	Uses generalisations.

3.4   RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used a multiple case study design in order to provide a better understanding and answer to the research question, '*What are the reading practices in two urban multi-grade classes in the Foundation Phase*?' One of the reasons for selecting multiple cases is that they focus on depth and particulars in bounded situations, the 'what' (in this case, reading practices characterize the bonded system). According to Merriam (2009:40), they can be best understood with a focus on the 'thick descriptions'. Rule and John (2011:2) agree with this statement and add that they also allow for some breadth.

The case, according to Miles et al (1994:25) is a specific phenomenon occurring in a bounded context: the unit of analysis. The reading practices of the two teacher participants in an urban multi-grade environment, represent the cases for this research project and served as the sole unit of analysis. Stake (2005:448) believes that case study, as a method has been too little honoured as the intrinsic study of a particular situation.

McMillan (2008:288) concur with the above authors when he describes a case study as a detailed analysis of one or more events, settings, programmes, social groups, in their natural context. The focus may be on one entity (within the site of study) or several entities (multi-site study), as in the case of this research project. Multiple or collective case studies allow the researcher to analyse within each setting and across settings. A holistic case study with embedded units, in contrast only allows the researcher to understand one unique, critical case. In a multiple case study, more than one case is being examined in order to understand the similarities and differences between the cases. Yin (2003:47) describes how multiple case studies can be used to either predict similar results (a literal replication) or to predict contrasting results. However, this research was neither comparative nor a predictive study but rather on understanding and exploring the reading practices in two urban FP multi-grade classrooms.

While case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, Yin (2003:1) cautions that investigators must be mindful of overcoming traditional criticisms when designing and conducting case studies. These criticisms may include: lack of precision, objectivity and rigour. Since case studies investigate contemporary phenomenon in their

everyday surroundings, the challenges arise when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2003:13).

The purpose of case studies as stated by Bloor and Wood (2006:27) may be to provide description through detailed examples or to generate particular theories. Neal, Thapa and Boyce and Neale (2006) refer to a case study as a detailed story about something unique, special, or interesting. Simmons (1996:225) further states that case studies have been advocated as a method because they capture the unique characters through their ability to produce comprehensive data within a setting.

Merriam (2009:50) concurs with the above authors and argues that since a case study is anchored in real-life situations, it is the best plan for answering the research questions: its strengths outweigh its limitations. Case studies offer a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon and results in rich, holistic accounts.

Case studies are concerned with various facets. They may be intensive examinations of groups, programmes or projects. The size of a case may vary and it may be conducted over a period of a year to several months. The selection of individuals involved in the case could range from all the members or a few members of a group. The selection of the case type may be typical, unusual or unique, as highlighted by Lichtman (2011:109). Other features of case studies considered by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:317) are that they include vivid descriptions of events relevant to the case. They provide a chronological description of the perceptions of the participants' and highlight specific events that are relevant to the case. The researcher is integrally involved in the case.

Case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis. Case studies, as Robson (2002:183) clarifies, elect analytic rather than statistical generalization, that is, they develop a theory which can help researchers to understand other similar cases, phenomena or situations. The phenomenon of urban multi-grade teaching has been highlighted in this research study with a particular focus of understanding reading practices in the FP.

One of the strengths of case studies is that they can establish cause and effect (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:253). They observe effects in real contexts, recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects. Sturman (1999:103) argues that a distinguishing feature of a case study is, that human systems have a wholeness or integrity to them, rather than being a loose connection of traits, necessitating in-depth

investigation. Table 3:3 lists other strengths and limitations of case studies according to Yin (1984:21).

Table 3:3   Strengths and limitations of case studies according to Yin (1984:21)

Strengths	Limitations
The results are more easily understood by a wide audience (including non-academics) as they are frequently written in everyday, non-professional language.	The results may not be generalizable except where other readers or researchers see their application, since they use a small number of subjects.
They are immediately intelligible: they speak for themselves.	They are not easily open to cross-checking, hence they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective.
They catch unique features that may otherwise be lost in larger scale data such as surveys: these unique features might hold the key to understanding the situation.	They are prone to problems of observer bias, despite attempts made to address reflexivity.
They are strong on reality.	Case studies are often accused of lack of rigour.
They provide insights into other, similar situations and cases, thereby assisting interpretation of other similar cases.	Case studies are often labelled as being too long, difficult to conduct and producing a massive amount of documentation.
They can be undertaken by a singular researcher without needing a full research team.	
They can embrace and build in unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables.	

3.5   IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION OF THE CASE

3.5.1   Site

The description highlights the school demographics where the research was conducted. As mentioned before the research took place in two FP urban multi-grade classes in public schools. These schools were situated in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town. The schools will be referred to as School 1 with Teacher 1 and School 2 with Teacher 2.

School 1 had a total enrolment of 360 learners and School 2, had an enrolment of 790 learners. The majority of the learners at both schools came from low socio-economic backgrounds, where unemployment, poverty prevailed. As with many schools in South Africa, these schools accommodate a diverse population of learners. Both schools were multi-cultural and multi-lingual spaces, with immigrant learners from neighbouring countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe. The majority of the teachers in both schools were females. School 1 had a headmistress and the management team at School 2 consisted predominantly of males, including the headmaster.

School 1 was a preparatory school that extended from Grades 1 to 3. The medium of instruction at this school was primarily Afrikaans. Teacher 1, however, taught an English multi-grade class of Grade 2 and 3 learners. This class was one of two multi-grade

classes in the FP. The other multi-grade class in School 1, was a class for learners with special educational needs. School 2 was an Afrikaans medium primary school with only one multi-grade class in the entire school. Teacher 2 taught Grades 1, 2 and 3 in her multi-grade class.

All South African public schools are categorised into 5 groups, called quintiles. This is done for the purpose of allocating financial resources. Quintile 1 is the poorest quintile and quintile 5 is the least poor. These poverty rankings are determined nationally according to the poverty of the community surrounding the school. Schools in quintile 1, 2 and 3 have been declared no-fee schools, while schools in quintiles 4 and 5 are fee-paying schools. The current economic situation in South Africa and immigration are the reasons many families in the school communities of School 1 could pay school fees (Grant, 2013). School 1 was a quintile 3 school, and School 2 was quintile 4

3.5.2　　Sample

Purposive sampling was used as a technique for selecting the two teachers. Cohen et al (2008:114) describe purposive sampling as, researchers' hand-picking the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement and of their typicality. In this way they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs. Babbie et al (2005) agree with Cohen et al (2008) and further state that purposive sampling as a method, increases transferability and maximizes the range of information that is obtainable from the study. Likewise they state that purposive sampling is directed at certain inclusive criteria.

3.5.3　　Description of sample

In this study the circuit 5 team manager of Metro North Education District identified these two urban schools with multi-grade classes.

The factors leading to the adoption of multi-grade teaching and its actual practice in schools offers important lessons to researchers. Brunswic and Valerien (2004:45) posit that multi-grade teaching is often established as a result of necessity: often the result of political or educational rationalization. Other factors include population density resulting from rural-urban migration, excessive numbers of learners in certain grades, competition for schools that are seen by parents as being more desirable (Tambulukani, 2004:8; Brown, 2008:6). In this research project geographic and demographic constraints necessitated multi-grade teaching in the schools selected.

South African schools are divided into five categories or quintiles according to their income ranking. The poorest schools are included in quintile 1 and the more privileged fall within

quintile 5. Rankings are determined on the basis of parental income and literacy rates in the area (Hall & Giese, 2008:35). School 1 falls into quintile 3. This school was classified as a 'no fees' school. The purpose of such schools is to make basic quality education available and accessible to learners who come from poverty-stricken areas (Presley 2007:1; Mogakane, 2007:5). School 1 is regarded as one of the better schools in the area. This is another reason why parents wanted their children to attend this school.

School 2 is in quintile 4 and is regarded as a Section 21 school. It is self-reliant (fee-paying) and located in a more advantaged community with learners coming from more disadvantaged areas. This school handles its own budget, school fees and main income. The South African Schools Act (1996:24) states that the School Governing Body of a public school must take all reasonable measures within its means, such as fund-raising, to supplement the resources supplied by the state in order to improve the quality of education. Hence this school, with a School Governing Body, is categorized as a Section 21 school. Both schools offer extra-curricular activities and provide extra facilities such as aftercare, occupational therapy and extra remedial assistance.

The schools selected for this study, are established and have well-qualified teachers with many years of experience. For this reason, aspirant parents are keen to have their children enrolled in these schools. Since the chosen schools have a good reputation, parents from areas such as Bishop Lavis, Elsies River, Belhar and Ravensmead enrol their children there. The EFA Global Monitoring Report (2014:145) states that raising education levels are crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty. It is surprising therefore that even in such a privileged school, there is a need to have multi-grade classes. It can be understood in a rural setting, where few teachers are prepared to go. But in an urban area, especially near Cape Town, where many teachers desire to work, it is hard to explain why any quintile 4 school would need to resort to multi-grade classes. This in itself is a significant point in the study of multi-grade teaching generally. This phenomenon raises questions about typical assumptions made regarding multi-grade classes. It is generally assumed that such teaching takes place only out of necessity. Yet it is being used here in an urban setting quite regularly. Furthermore the question needs to be asked whether it is a last resort or even, in some ways advantageous.

Learners attending Schools 1 and 2 experienced a few of the challenges that face equivalent learners in rural situations. One third of learners were within walking distance from the school. The majority of them had to travel to school using public transport such as taxis. While most learners came from low-income households, parents were prepared to pay for travelling costs in order to provide their children with a better education. These elements are

in stark contrast to equivalent rural schools where transport is a substantial obstacle. Few of the parents of learners in these two urban multi-grade schools were highly educated yet most were literate. They were in a better position to assist their children than their rural counterparts. A key distinction of urban schools is therefore the ability to provide support academically. Howie et al (2012:62) found that South African parents have exceptionally high aspirations for their children's education levels. This study showed the extent to which parents would go to make provision for the education of their children. This makes the failure of South African schools all the more painful. In rural schools the extra physical demands on school-age children to walk long distances to school, requires energy that is much greater than that of children in urban settings. While a large percentage of children in rural schools receive free food on a daily basis, only one urban site in this study was a recipient of food from the nutrition programme. Few children at the two schools selected for this study were hungry in class.

In conclusion most learners in an urban context, specifically as represented by these two schools benefited from services, such as learning support, which the schools offered. Very few learners had difficulty from a transport point of view getting to school. Most learners could depend on some degree of literacy support at home, whether from their parents or other family members. Hardly any learners were so hungry that they were restless in class and unable to concentrate. These important structural distinctions have significant consequences for the nature and quality of teaching and learning in a typical urban multi-grade classroom. In this respect, the urban learners were already in a privileged position vis-à-vis their rural counterparts. Both schools were fortunate in that they did not fall prey to gangsterism and drugs as many Cape Flats schools do.

Table 3:4 describes the profile of both teachers in a diagrammatic form. Indicated here, are the number of learners in each school, the number of multi-grade classes, the number of learners in each FP class, the medium of instruction and, finally, how many grades there were within each multi-grade class.

Table 3:4   Profiles of Teacher 1 and Teacher 2

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
Location	WCED - Northern District	WCED - Northern District
Number of learners in the school	360	790
Number of multi-grade classes in the school	2	3
Number of learners in the multi-grade class	19	34
Medium of instruction	English	Afrikaans
Grade grouping	9 Grade 2 and 10 Grade 3 learners	13 Grade1,10 Grade 2 and 11 Grade 3 learners
Qualifications in basic teacher education	BEd Hon (Remedial Education)	DE3 (JP)
Experience in general teaching	3 years	24 years
Experiences in multi-grade teaching	1 year	5 years

Figure 3:1 is a pictorial representation of the two classrooms in which data was collected showing Teacher 1 had two grades within one classroom and Teacher 2 had three grades within one classroom. Both classes had one teacher only.
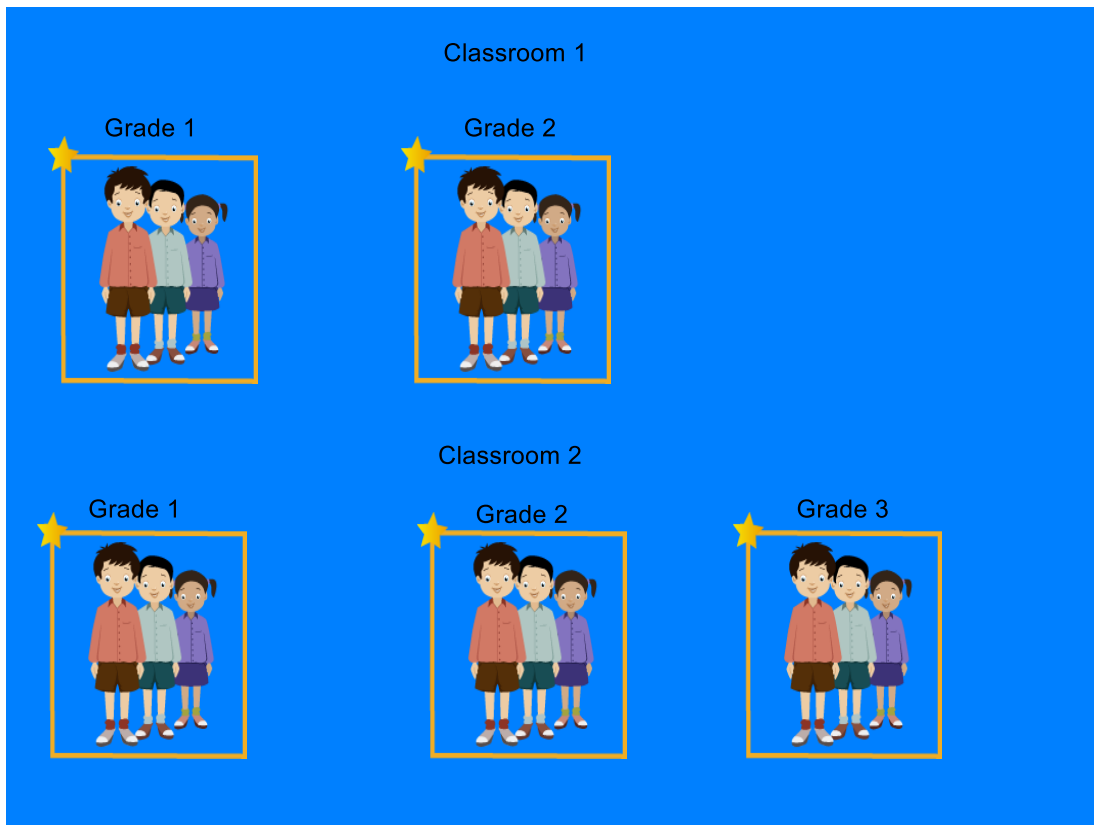
Figure 3:1   Teacher 1 (Classroom 1) and Teacher 2 (Classroom 2) and the multi-grade components within their classroom

3.6   DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Data were collected using interviews and observations. Table 3.5 and Table 3.6 depict the interview and observation schedules.

3.6.1   Interviews

Henning et al (2004:79) describe interviews as communicative events aimed at finding what participants think, know and feel. Bloor et al (2006:104) refer to the informal, conversational nature of interviews. The interviewer is guided by the interview schedule and concerns that emerge from the topic. The questions in this research project were aimed at gaining insights into the teachers' experiences and challenges of teaching reading in multi-grade classes.

Bertram and Christiansen (2014:82) reiterate that an interview is a good data collection tool for finding out what people know, what they value and what they think. In this case, the interviews with the two teachers were conducted in the medium of English and Afrikaans respectively since this was the language of instruction they used in their classrooms. Interview schedules were used. See Appendix 2. Semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewer to use open-ended questions, eliciting data without dictating the direction of the interview (Barbour, 2014:120). Verbal probing questions were asked when the responses were vague or when the researcher required respondents to elaborate. The intention of the probing questions were to help the respondents think more extensively about the issue at hand and to stay focussed on the research topic (Flick, 2011:112).

According to Gray (2009:370) the interview is the most logical research technique. It is the best approach to use when the objective of the research is to examine attitudes and feelings. In this research project, the attitudes and feelings of the two teachers were evident when they addressed the challenges they experienced in their multi-grade classrooms. Bertram et al (2014:83) endorse interviews for the following reasons: The researcher is present with the respondent and questions can be clarified. This allows for a diversion of the interview into new pathways not originally considered as part of the interview. Probing questions may be asked to obtain in-depth data and to meet the research objective.

The interviews were conducted after school hours so that the teaching process was not disrupted. The interviews took place on the school premises. Teacher 1 was interviewed once in her own classroom as she felt it was more convenient for her to stay in her classroom. There were no interruptions from children or parents as the interviews took place late on a Friday afternoon. Teacher 2 chose to be interviewed in the staffroom as it was more private in the afternoons and since the interview was recorded she suggested it may be quieter in the staffroom. Teacher 2 was interviewed twice since part of the first recording was

not audible. She was interviewed a week later using the same interview schedule. Creswell (2009:183) cautions that even if an interview is audio-taped, the researcher should take written notes to prevent a situation as described above.

Although both teachers were mother-tongue Afrikaans speaking, Teacher 1 was interviewed in English since she had taught an English class. Teacher 2 was interviewed in Afrikaans as the medium of instruction of the school was Afrikaans.

Table 3:5   Details of the interview schedule

Teacher 1	Date of interview: .... 9 July 2010 Time of interview:.. 14:00 – 16:00 Venue: .... School 1 Multi-grade classroom Language of interview: .... English Transcribed:... 19 December 2010 Back-transcribed:.. 29 March 2011
Teacher 2	Date of interview: ....16 July 2010 Time of interview:.. 14:30 – 16: 30 Venue: .... School 2 Multi-grade classroom Language of interview: .... Afrikaans Transcribed:.. 20 June 2011 Back-transcribed:...9 July 2011
	Date of interview: ....23 July 2010 Time of interview:.. 14:30 – 15:30 Venue: .... School 2 staffroom Language of interview: .... Afrikaans Transcribed:.. 20 June 2011 Back-transcribed:...9 July 2011

3.6.2   Observations

As a non-participatory observer the researcher observed two teachers while they were involved in real life experiences, in their everyday physical context. Henning et al (2004:82) state that conducting an observation is not just the gathering of information, but participating in the actions of people in the research setting and getting to know how they go about their daily tasks. Bertram et al (2014:84) share the same view and assert that, what is taking place can be observed in context at the site. The researcher listens to conversations and views the interactions and behaviour of participants (Bloor et al, 2006:71). In this study the classroom observations were aimed at investigating and exploring the methodology used in teaching reading, the relationship between learners in the different grades in each classroom, management of classrooms, lesson structure for each grade and noting how different reading activities occurred throughout the lesson (Bertram et al, 2014:85). Careful attention was paid to how teachers made the transition from one grade to the next, and from one activity to the other, as they instructed their learners.

Through observations, the researcher was able to explore issues that were raised in the interviews, directly (Henning et al, 2004:87). Bertram et al (2014:92) maintain that the presence of the researcher, usually a stranger, may have an effect on the data that is recorded. In this study, however, the researcher sat at the back of the classroom for most of the observation sessions to avoid showing any reaction to the behaviour observed.

Observations were conducted during school time, alternating between schools over a period of nine weeks see Figure 3:1. Since the researcher is a class teacher, permission was granted from her principal and the principals of the two schools (Appendix 1: signed letter from principal) to visit both schools on a Monday morning from 8.00am – 9.30am. During this time alternative arrangements, approved by the researcher's principal, were made for the teaching of her class. The researcher had previously met with both principals of the research schools to explain the research purpose. The first visit to both schools on Monday 19 July 2010 was an introductory visit to meet the two teachers and the learners. In order to gain an understanding of all reading practices during the observation sessions, the teachers agreed to amend their timetables so they would do reading early in the morning while the researcher was there. Bloor et al (2006:71) outline the importance of accessing what participants actually do, rather than what they say they do.

Table 3:6   Details of the observation schedules and indications of when the video recordings were made

Week	Date	Time	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
1	Monday 19 July 2010	8.00–8.45	Initial meeting of learners at school 1	
		9.15–9.55		Initial meeting of learners at school 2
2	Monday 26 July 2010	8.00–9.30	News lesson – whole class	
3	Monday 2 August 2010	8.00–9.30		News lesson – whole class
4	Monday 16 August 2010	8.00–9.30	Story lesson-	
5	Monday 23 August 2010	8.00–9.30		Phonics lesson
6	Monday 30 August 2010	8.00–9.30	Phonics lesson	
7	Monday 6 September 2010	8.00–9.30		Story lesson
8	Monday 13 September 2010	8.00–9.30	Listening assessment and Reading lesson	
9	Monday 20 September 2010	8.00–9.30		Reading lesson

To enhance the observations, video recordings were used. They offer unique opportunities for researchers to collect data. As a method of data collection and data analysis it is more reliable than observations data (Bloor et al, 2006:181). The reason for this is that it allows for repeated examination of the videos and can be used to explore everyday activities as they occur in ordinary settings (Silverman, 2011:250). Documentation of the data has specific relevance in qualitative research. For this reason, video recordings take priority over making notes of answers or practices. It is imperative that the technical recording devices do not obstruct the reality. A detailed and comprehensive recording leads to a similarly exact transcript of data. In this research study, the two lessons that were video-recorded were lessons on 'stories'.

Exactness in documenting the events is a precondition for a detailed interpretation of the statements and occurrences grounded in the data (Flick, 2011:129). The researcher made sure the battery was fully charged before entering the classroom, to avoid losing a record of data (Atkins et al, 2012:90). A week in advance the researcher informed the two teachers and their learners that they were going to be videoed the following week (Cohen et al, 2000:57). The researcher conducted the video recordings with a hand-held recorder (Bloor et al, 2006:181), and was able to capture many learners' responses, facial expressions and body language.

3.7   DATA ANALYSIS

During the third term of 2010, the reading practices of two teachers were studied. Interviews, and observations were used as data sources. Maxwell (2005:95) suggests that the data analysis process is the most mysterious aspect of qualitative research. The procedures that lead to the manifestation of the results of the data collected, is presented in

Table 3:**7**

Table 3:7   Details of data analysis

Theory of interpretive data analysis	How the researcher used this theory to inductively analyse her data
Start by reading the single transcript.	Initial ideas were noted and data was divided into smaller and more meaningful units.
Organise the data into initial themes.	General themes were generated from all data collection instruments used. Thus using an inductive analysis approach.
An initial list of themes was created.	Comparisons were made to build and refine categories, to define conceptual similarities and to discover patterns.
Cluster or categorise themes.	The list of themes was arranged into connected areas and categorized.

Create a list with main themes and sub-themes.	Main themes and sub-themes were established reflecting the perceptions of the respondents.
Modify the transcript and create a final list of themes and sub-themes.	Themes and sub-themes were refined and a final list was created.

(Adapted from Smith and Osborn (2008), in Silverman (2011:274) and Henning, et al 2004:127)

Wellington (2000:135) similarly identifies the process of inductively analysing data as: immersion, or 'getting an overall sense for the data'. After reflection, analysis or breaking down of data into components can take place. The next step in this process is synthesis: 'searching for patterns and common themes'. Location and relation follow: the researcher 'identifies how these ideas and themes fit with other current research'. Finally, the data is presented. This qualitative inquiry inductively analysed data for meanings. The categories were analysed, by finding patterns, and making inferences about relationships, causes and effects (Cohen et al, 2000:150). Bloor et al (2006:13) reiterate that inductive analysis involves working systematically, inferring general conclusions from the data obtained. Before the analysis began, data from the interviews and observational notes were transcribed and back transcribed by asking the teacher to read them for clarity and correctness. These transcriptions were then analysed. The process of analyses involved examining words, sentences and paragraphs in order to organise, decode, interpret and theorise data on an on-going, emerging basis (Henning et al, 2007:127).

One observation schedule with notes can be found in Appendix 3. All the notes made during the observations were written in English which is the researcher's home language. The English video recording transcription can be found in Appendix 4.

3.8   TRUSTWORTHINESS

3.8.1   Validity

Validity is the extent to which research produces an accurate version of the world (Bloor et al, 2006:147) and accuracy of results (Salkind, 2009:118). Kvale (2002:309) describes validity as 'good craftsmanship in an investigation'. Truthfulness, accuracy, authenticity, genuineness and soundness are synonymous with validity (Salkind, 2009:117). Cohen et al (2000:105) state that in qualitative data, validity might be addressed through honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the objectivity of the researcher. Validity is therefore an important key to effective research. Henning et al (2004:148), claims that subjectivity of respondents, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives, contribute to a degree of bias. Validity in this study was attained by selecting an appropriate methodology (qualitative case study) for answering the

research questions. Appropriate instrumentation for gathering data was selected and the sample was representative (Cohen et al, 2000:116). In this case study interviews, and observations were used to collect data. To acquire precision, the findings were triangulated and examined numerous times, constantly questioned and interpreted (Bertram et al, 2014:117).

3.8.2   Reliability

As indicated by Salkind (2009:110), if something is reliable, it will perform in the future as it has in the past. Reliability is therefore, both a concept and a practical measure of how consistent and stable a measurement instrument might be (Bertram et al, 2014:186). Bloor et al (2006:148), describe reliability as a measure of precision that is stable and trustworthy.

Reliability in this study, in both classes, was attained by observing four different reading practices, on Monday mornings from 8.00am till 9.30am. Conditions for observations were standardised and detailed notes were taken. Before the data was collected, the researcher confirmed that both teachers if they would adapt their time-tables to teach different reading practices on each of the days that she was observing. She explained that the reason for this, was to enable her to observe a variety of reading practices. The video recorder was placed in such way that it captured the teachers and learners true performances in reading practices. External effects were minimized (Salkind, 2009:112).

The process of data analysis was systematically and meticulously documented (Bloor et al, 2006:148) as described in

Table 3:**7** leading to reliable analyses.

3.8.3   Generalizability

Bloor et al (2006:93) maintain that generalizability denotes the extent to which the findings of a study can apply to other cases outside the study sample or a wider population. Research which is generalizable enables the results and implications of a study to be brought into more general use. However, since case studies are criticized for their lack of generalizability, the researcher deliberately selected schools representing urban multi-grade pedagogy and employed multiple methods of data collection (Bloor et al, 2006:94). Although the results of this study, due to the limited urban multi-grade environment, may not be generalizable to many schools or situations, this research may enlighten a wide range of practitioners, allowing them to compare their institutions (Atkins et al, 2012:26).

3.8.4 Triangulation

Triangulation can help argue against all the threats to validity (Robson, 2011:158). Cohen et al (2000:112) define triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection in a study of human behaviour. They further state that reliance on one method may be biased or distort the researcher's picture of the particular reality they are investigating. In this study triangulation allowed the researcher to compare and corroborate all the data, highlighting certain issues (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007:184). This study is credible, useful and trustworthy in that it was effectively triangulated (Wellington, 2000:14). It relied on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion (Yin, 2008:18). In this study, two types of triangulation were evident: data and theory triangulation.

Data triangulation involved multiple sources to enhance the rigour of the research. These included eight observations, three one-on-one interviews and two video recordings. Figure 3:2 shows the convergence of data triangulation.
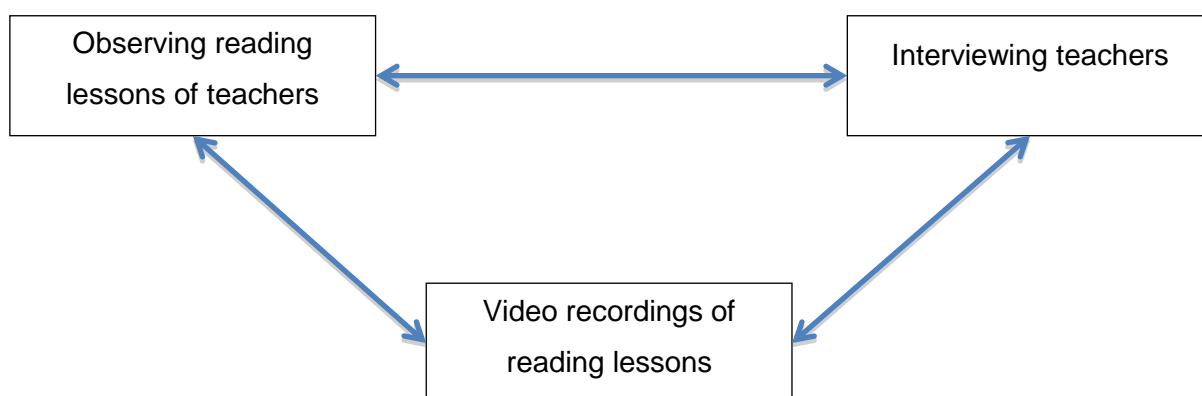
Figure 3:2   Convergence of data triangulation

In this study, Lave and Wenger's (1991) Situated Learning Theory, Vygotsky's (1978) theory of ZPD and scaffolding, Bronfenbrenner's (1990) bio-ecological theory and finally Piaget's (1972) stages of cognitive development theory. Both the RNCS (2002) and the CAPS (2011) documents were referred to throughout the research process. This is evidence that multiple theories and perspectives were considered, thus creating theory triangulation (Cohen et al, 2000:113).

3.9   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Crow, Wiles, Heath and Charles (2006:85) assert that paying careful attention to the issue of informed consent contributes to improved research. It prepares the researcher and the participants for the data collection process and establishes an equal relationship between researcher and participants. Before the researcher began collecting data, a typed letter was

addressed to the principals of both schools where the study was conducted, requesting permission to use the teachers and learners of the FP multi-grade classes (Robson, 2011:202). As an example, one letter is included in Appendix 1. A copy of the consent letter from the WCED (Appendix 5) is included granting the researcher permission to conduct her research in two FP multi-grade classes in the Western Cape.

Consent was obtained and the participants received a clear explanation of what the research study expected of them (Cohen et al, 2008:55). Their choice to participate in the research was therefore informed (Bertram et al, 2014:54) and they could withdraw at any time (Seal et al, 2008:219). The researcher protected the participants and gained their trust by assuring them of the confidentiality of the research and the safety of data. Creswell (2009:87), citing Israel and Hay (2006), stress the importance of promoting the integrity of the research and developing the trust of the research participants.

In this research study, the names of the participants and the schools involved were not mentioned in any written reports, including the thesis. Creswell (2009:89) underlines the need to respect the participants and the research sites. Hence to show respect to the principals, teachers and learners in this research project, names of schools were blocked out to avoid identification. This can be seen in the appendices. Names of schools, teachers and learners were identified in Chapter 4 as such: School 1 and 2, Teacher 1 and 2, as well as Learners (Lnr 1), (Lnr 2). No other personally identifying information was used. The researcher made a commitment to professional and ethical practice by promising participants that the results of the study would be made available to them at the end of the research period (Atkins et al, 2012:246).

3.10   CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the research questions, theoretical paradigm, research approach, research design, identification and selection of the case, data collection instruments, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations. Methodological literature sources were mentioned throughout the chapter in an attempt to link theory to practice. Chapter 4 provides evidence of the results linking the findings to theory, literature review and policy document.

CHAPTER 4   RESULTS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings that focus on the nature of reading practices in two urban multi-grade classes in FP in the Northern District of the Western Cape.

Data in this chapter is presented by providing evidence from three instruments employed in this study; three in-depth interviews conducted with multi-grade teachers, observations and video recordings. The rationale for adopting various types of data was to obtain a broad overview of what occurs in two multi-grade classes with specific focus on reading practices. A concise and detailed account of the interviews and observations has been recorded in this chapter and empirical results are presented in accordance with the aim of the study.

4.2   FINDINGS: Answers to the research questions

As presented in chapter 1, the focus question over-arching the current research investigation is as follows:

- How do teachers in two urban multi-grade classrooms teach reading in the Foundation Phase?

The answer to this question is presented by progressively answering the following two sub-questions:

- What are the current reading practices in urban multi-grade classrooms in the Foundation Phase?
- What challenges do teachers of urban multi-grade classes face when teaching Reading?

Each sub-question will be discussed by using direct quotations from interviews, observations and video-recordings as evidence to ensure triangulation.

4.2.1   Research Sub-question 1

- What are the current reading practices in two urban multi-grade classrooms in the Foundation Phase**?**

After careful and detailed analysis of the three instruments used (interviews, observations and video recordings), the following four key components emerged from data and are used as a lens to view the findings. These are: stories, vocabulary, comprehension and reading.

Both teachers made connections between oral and written reading skills which enabled learners to 'learn language, learn about language and learn through language' (Lyle, 1993). This integration across the curriculum facilitated concurrent teaching and learning (Smilan & Miraglia, 2009:40). For the purpose of this research project, however, the reading skills have been interpreted and analysed separately.
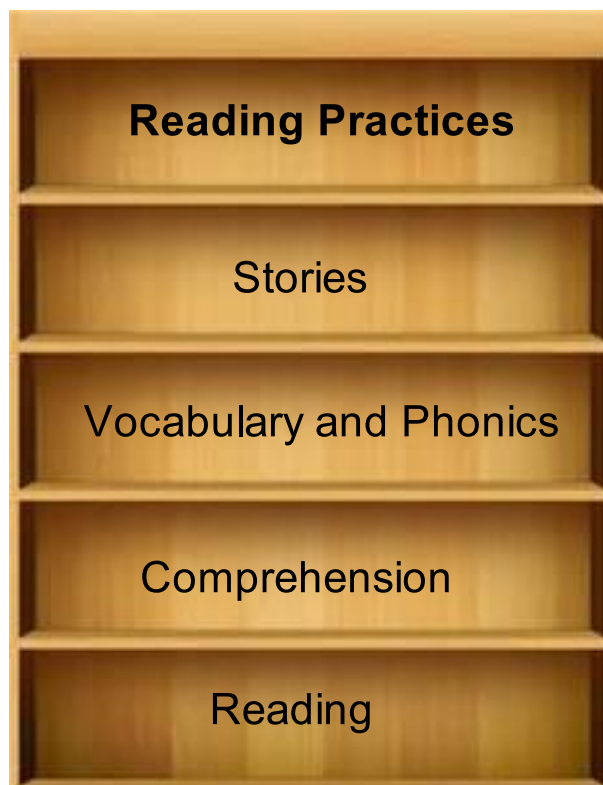
Figure 4:1   The main themes of the reading practices in two urban multi-grade classrooms

To ensure the validity of the findings, each of the four themes will be discussed by juxtaposing the data gathered from the interviews, observations and video recordings.

Although the composition of the classes appeared to be framed in a similar manner, the settings were different. These differences resulted in different reading practices and challenges.

4.2.1.1   Stories

Green (2004:247) claims that all knowledge comes in the form of stories. By reading stories aloud to learners, a love for literature is promoted (Lane & Wright, 2007:668).

A description of each of the two teachers' approaches to story-telling is now presented. Within this theme three sub-themes became apparent which were: types of stories, the teachers' styles of reading and presenting stories, and finally questioning techniques. Each

of these sub-themes will be discussed in more detail by, first giving examples from Teacher 1 and then Teacher 2 with specific reference to their insights applying a multi-grade pedagogy to their reading lessons. Although the lessons consisted of general literacy skills, the reading skills have been foregrounded.

Types of stories (Teacher 1)

Teacher 1 chose a complex, fictional animal story that was written on newsprint sheets and placed on the chalkboard in random order. This activity included Grade 2 and 3, there was no differentiation. It is believed that through the reading of fictional stories, learners' understanding of human conditions is promoted (Koc & Buzzelli, 2004:92). The story chosen by Teacher 1, contained many complicated words, for example, 'reluctant', 'astonished'. Though neither the Grade 2 nor Grade 3 learners had encountered these words before, they made positive attempts at postulating meanings for them. The absence of picture cues made it more challenging for them. The CAPS document (2011:15) states that Grade 2's should 'make sense of a short written story with pictures …'

Styles of reading and presentation of stories

Teacher 1 had the whole class (Grade 2 and 3) of learners, on the carpet as the Grade 3s and the teacher read through the story of the rabbit that was moving house. The Grade 2s sat passively listening to the Grade 3s read the sheet of paper. One of the aims of the teacher was to allow the learners to sequence the story (RNCS, 2002:33; CAPS, 2011:15). Haven (2007:38), states that 'as we order events, we construct narrative models that in turn, shape our understanding of new experiences.' Teacher 1 placed the newsprint sheets on the chalkboard in an arbitrary manner, as can be seen in Figure 4:2
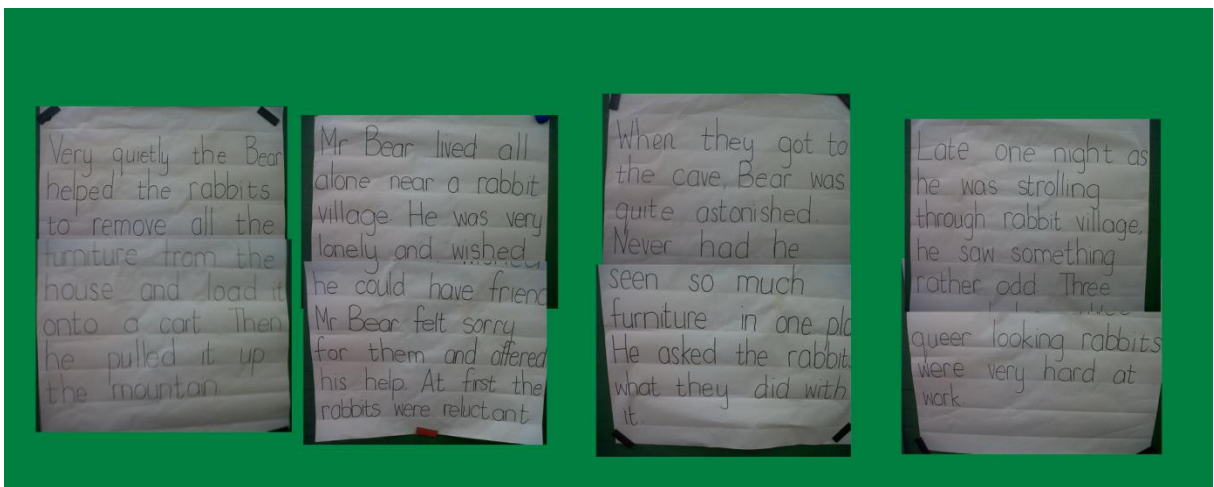
Figure 4:2   The story as it was shown to the learners in a jumbled order

The example below shows how the teacher moved both grades (the whole class) through a process that involved prediction, verification, judgement and critical thinking (Vacca & Vacca, 1989:100). Teacher 1 and the Grade 3s read a sentence at a time: then she posed guided and reflective questions for interpretation and clarification. She paused for discussion after placing each sheet on the chalkboard, since there were several unfamiliar words.

Tr:	Now, only my Grade 3s are going to read this part. So Grade 2s you need to listen! (In a firm voice).
Lnrs:	'Very quietly the Bear helped the rabbits to remove all the furniture from the house and load it onto a cart. Then he pulled the cart up the mountain to the rabbits cave.'
Tr:	Ok, that's the first part of the story, now let's see if you can answer some questions.
Tr:	Why do you think the rabbits were putting things on a cart and taking it somewhere? (to Grade 2s and 3s)
Lnr:	because they can't carry it. (Grade 3)
Tr:	Ok, but why would they be taking things away?
Lnr:	because they are moving.
Tr:	Ok, let us read the next part. [Only Grade 3s take part]

In the reading lesson, Teacher 1 discussed unfamiliar words with both grades. The example below explains how she examined the term 'village' with the learners. Both Grade 2s and 3s were encouraged to give explanations of the new vocabulary. The teacher asked leading questions to aid the learners thinking and to assess their comprehension (RNCS, 2002:33; CAPS, 2011:15).

She sometimes showed irritation, when her learners answered incorrectly. She did not offer any scaffolding, (Vygotsky 1978, CAPS, 2011:11) to their suggestions but bluntly cut them off by answering 'No!' and asking another learner for the answer. This is an example of Teacher 1 not acknowledging learners' correct responses. It reveals the teacher's lack of understanding of words in the English language since Afrikaans is her first language.

Lnrs:	'Mr Bear lived all alone near a rabbit village. He was very lonely and wished he could have some friends.'
Tr:	Now village, who can tell me something about village?
Lnr:	Teacher, it's where old people live (Grade 3)
Tr:	No! (Teacher calls another child by name to attempt to answer the question.)

Lnr: It's between high mountains. (Grade 2)

Tr: Yes, the bottom part between two mountains is called a village.

Lnr: Teacher and a village is very small.

(Teacher does not comment on this statement.)

All the learners were encouraged to reflect on previous reading lessons in which skills such as syllabification, analysis and synthesis of words were taught to help them answer questions. They also had to look at the words in context in order to deduce the meaning (RNCS, 2002:33; CAPS, 2011:54).

Tr: Let's move on, now everybody is going to read this part.

Lnrs: 'Mr Bear felt sorry for them and offered his help. At first the rabbits were reluctant.' (Both grades struggled to identify this word. The teacher gets the learners to break up the word into syllables and then asks them what the word means. The learners do not respond.)

Tr: Let's finish the sentence and then we'll see if you can figure it out.

As a means of consolidation, Grade 2 and 3 learners were expected to put the story in the correct sequence. An example of the process of sequencing can be seen in Figure 4.2. According to the RNCS and CAPS documents, the skill of 'sequencing of events' is appropriate for both grades (RNCS, 2002:33; CAPS, 2011:78).

Tr 1:   Now we are going to put the story in the correct order. (Naming a learner, Teacher 1 asks where they should start.)

Lnr: (Points to the second sheet on the board)

Tr 1:   So you think we should start with the sheet that says,

Mr Bear   Why do you say so?

Lnr: Because Mr Bear is the main person in the story.

Tr 1:   `He is one of the main characters but that is not where the story starts.

(Teacher 1 calls upon another child whose hand is raised).

Lnr: Miss, Miss, 'Late one night...'

Tr: Yes, it's telling us when the story happened. Like the words, 'once upon a time'. Let's move the sheet. Now, which one comes next?

(The learners debate about which sheet should be second).

Lnr:	I know which one is last Miss. The page when they got to the cave, cause the cave is on the mountain.
Tr:	We have to start from beginning to end. Now let's find the next part of the story. (There is silence). Okay, I will help. It is this one, (pointing to the sheet with the words, 'Mr Bear lived all alone...') Now who knows what comes next? Come now!
Lnr:	Is it, 'Very quietly...' (With a questioning tone).
Tr:	Yes, that's right and now we can move the last page into position.

The sequencing of the story took a long time and learners found it hard to provide reasons for placing the sheets in a particular position. Teacher 1 did not acknowledge a Grade 3 learner who jumped ahead of the story even though he pointed out the ending correctly. This Grade 3 learner did not make any further contributions. Teacher 1 resolved to help with the sequencing when she detected that learners (both Grade 2 and 3) she had selected were finding the task demanding. Even after her assistance, the learners were hesitant to attempt answers.
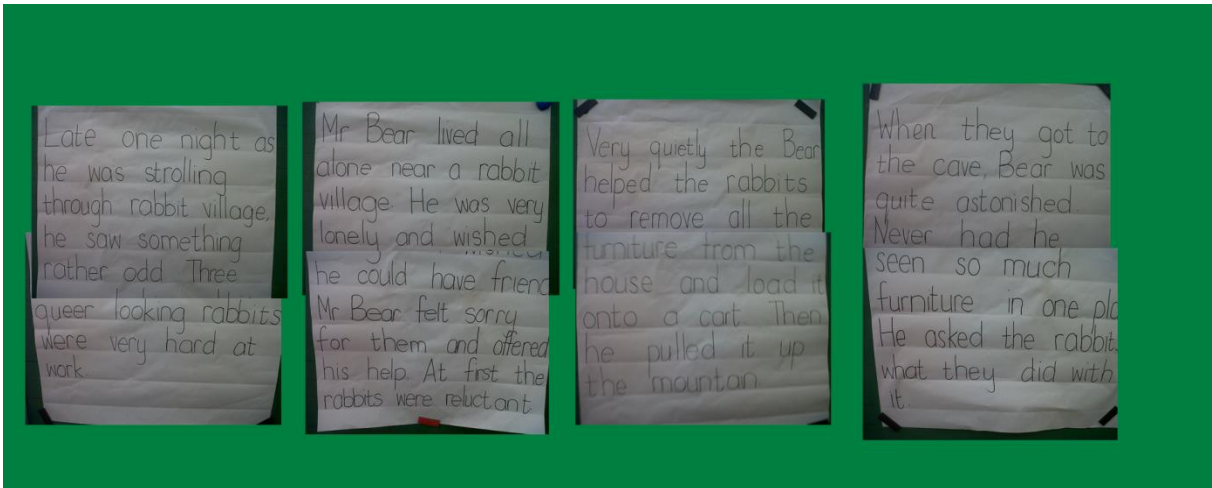
Figure 4:3   The story as placed in the correct sequence

To end the lesson, the learners were encouraged to develop a suitable title for the story. As they brain-stormed ideas, Teacher 1 wrote their suggestions on the chalkboard. A few of them, from both grades, came up with very appropriate names for the story such as: 'The lonely rabbit', 'Clever Mr Rabbit'. The final title was, 'Mr Bear and the robbers'.

Questioning techniques used

Teacher 1 paused at regular intervals, asking both grades questions to ascertain how learners reasoned and to see whether they understood the vocabulary that they encountered in the story. The class deliberated about words such as, 'village' that appeared in the passage. It was a Grade 2 learner who offered the meaning of the word 'village'. It was

evident that this Grade 2 learner had come across the word in a different context but the teacher did not elaborate. From the explanation given by Teacher 1, it became more apparent that she was not teaching in her mother-tongue.

Teacher 1 incorporated several strategies to enhance learners' experience of the story. She made reference to language rules and asked learners to provide synonyms and antonyms for words. In addition, she made them clap a number of times to replicate the number of syllables in a word. They were guided to find the meanings of words and phrases in context. She drew on their knowledge and recollection of previous concepts. Specific questions were directed to the Grade 3 learners, about synonyms and plurals. This indicated that they had covered more concepts in language than their Grade 2 counterparts. The Grade 2s were asked more literal questions.

In the next section the reading lesson of Teacher 2 as observed in the classroom will be discussed.

Types of stories (Teacher 2)

Teacher 2 chose the traditional fable, 'The Little Red Hen' and used a 'Big Book' (CAPS, 2011:56). This participative story had repetition of actions and verbal patterns. It was a short, simple story with delightful pictures and could be classified as falling within a narrative genre. Both curriculum documents (RNCS, 2002:39; CAPS, 2011:80) expect Grades 2s and 3s to read fiction and non-fiction 'books/texts'. At the end of the lesson, Teacher 2 gave the moral of the story, which was, 'those who work, reap the benefit'.

Styles of reading and presentation of stories

Teacher 2, similarly, had her entire class (Grade 1, 2 and 3) of learners on the carpet for her story-time. She, however, conducted a 'shared reading activity' (CAPS, 2001:56) showing them the pictures as the story progressed. She used facial expressions and indicated the shift in roles, making the story very exciting. Learners participated in this shared-reading experience, as seen below:

The following example outlines the story lesson:

> Tr: Who of you like eating baked bread?
>
> (Most of the learners in the class put up their hands.)
>
> Tr: Do you know how bread is made?
>
> Lnr: With flour Miss.

Tr: Yes, and other ingredients. Today we are going to do the story of the little red hen that baked bread. (She starts to read).

One day the little red hen found a sack of grain. She had an idea. She would plant the seeds. The little red hen asked her friends, 'Who will help me plant the seeds?' 'Not I,' barked the lazy dog 'Not I,' purred the sleepy cat 'Not I,' quacked the noisy yellow duck 'Then I will,' said the little red hen. So the little red hen planted the seeds all by herself.

(Teacher shows the pictures from the book).

When the seeds had grown, the little red hen asked her friends, 'Who will help me cut the wheat?' 'Not I,' barked the lazy dog 'Not I,' purred the sleepy cat 'Not I,' quacked the noisy yellow duck 'Then I will,' said the little red hen. So the little red hen cut the wheat all by herself.

When the wheat was cut, the little red hen asked her friends, 'Who will help me take the wheat to the mill to be ground into flour?'

Lnrs: (In chorus, 'Not I,' barked the lazy dog 'Not I,' purred the sleepy cat 'Not I,' quacked the noisy yellow duck 'Then I will,' said the little red hen. So the little red hen took the wheat to the mill all by herself.

(The teacher continues the story, showing the pictures as she goes along).

Teacher 2 continued with the story. Each time another step in the baking process was introduced all the learners would say the repetitive part. In this way learners participated and the story became interactive.

It was interesting to note that Teacher 2 did not stop to explain vocabulary as the previous teacher did. Her aim was to explain the moral of the story to the learners (RNCS, 2002:33). A stimulating exchange of ideas then followed: the teacher and learners deliberated about each character's behaviour in the story; how one influenced the other. The questions are examples of the discussion that took place.

Questioning techniques used by Teacher 2

What follows is an example of how Teacher 2 asked questions to engage all the learners in the story:

Tr: What can you tell me about the little red hen?

Lnr: She wanted to bake a bread Miss.

Tr: Why do you think the other animals said no to the little red hen when she asked for help?

Lnr:	They were lazy Miss.
Tr:	How do you think the little red hen felt when she had to do all the work herself?
Lnr:	Sad!
Lnr:	She was not worried Miss, cos she wasn't lazy.
Tr:	How do you think the little red hen felt when all the animals wanted to eat the bread she had made?
Lnr:	She said 'oh no'
Tr:	Yes, but how did she feel?
Lnr:	She thought they were greedy.

The teacher's initial questions were meant to arouse interest in the story and to promote discussion. As the lesson advanced, she asked more higher-order questions, compelling learners to offer opinions and to delve into the feelings of the main character: as in, for instance '*How do you think the Little Red Hen felt when she had to do all the work herself?*' Both Grade 2s and 3s were able to answer the questions because the responses required them to relate to their own experiences. Not one Grade 1 learner responded during this lesson.

Teacher 2 encouraged all her learners to reflect on relevant issues such as 'as iemand te veel eet; as iemand trots is; as iemand terug wil baklei' (over-indulgence, pride, and revenge) in her questioning. These questions were explained in such a way even the Grade 1s participated. Positive aspects of story-telling such as logical thinking, analysis of narratives for meaning and motivation to pay attention, were highlighted in this learning moment (Haven, 2007:89). As with Teacher 1, she also integrated her questioning across the curriculum by referring to topics dealt with in Life Orientation lessons.

In the interview, Teacher 2 revealed that, in her experience, 'children's listening skills are enhanced when they are regularly exposed to different genres'. She felt strongly that children should be encouraged to think critically and consider their own actions in similar situations. She stated:

> Most of the time I tell simple stories and then we have a time of discussion so that my children can talk about their own experiences.

This was evident in the application of the story. Learners were asked to close their eyes and identify with 'The Little Red Hen.' They were asked to talk about how they would feel if nobody wanted to offer them help. It was interesting to listen to learners describing feelings

such as 'sad', 'lonely', 'left out'. As the learners shared their emotions, one of the learners (a Grade 2 learner) showed empathy for the other (also a Grade 2) by gently touching her hand.

Teacher 2 mentioned in her interview that learners often dramatized stories using puppets but no dramatizations were observed during the time of observations.

Summary

Both Teacher 1 (Grade 2 and 3) and Teacher 2 (Grade 1, 2 and 3) taught a shared reading lesson to the whole class while all the learners sat on the mat. The genre of both these stories was fiction; they were about animals, which were given human characteristics. Teacher 1 used a more complex story, both in vocabulary and sentence structure and there were no pictures. Teacher 2 had to accommodate Grade 1s. She used a simpler story, with pictures. With her questioning techniques she engaged learners in a diverse discussion related to relevant life issues.

Both teachers taught stories to the class as a whole: no differentiation between the grade groups was evident. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 used different sequencing techniques to convey the meaning and understanding of the stories. Teacher 1 interrupted her reading to clarify meanings of words. Teacher 2, however, read through the whole story from beginning to end. She intermittently showed pictures from the book but left the questioning until after the story was read.

The questioning techniques used by the two teachers were significantly different. Teacher 1 emphasised the meanings of words. She made explicit the integration between the story and other aspects of the language-learning area. According to Wagner (1985) integrating language provides natural learning situations in which skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing can be established. Teacher 2 attempted to link the moral of the story to the learner's lives and the life orientation learning area. Both teachers' questioning techniques were aimed at the level of the Grade 2s and 3s.

4.2.1.2   Vocabulary and phonics

In this section, the evidence of vocabulary teaching with Teachers 1 and 2 will be discussed, followed by deliberating on examples of phonics teaching with the two teachers.

Teacher 1 used the weekly themes as a basis for teaching vocabulary. This was undertaken in the context of stories, but the learners often found it difficult to apply new words. In the interview she explained:

> We teach according to themes and the vocabulary comes mainly from the stories. I find that my Grade 3's don't use Grade 3 words when they speak or write.

As a practice, Teacher 1 differentiated between Grade 2 and 3 learners when assigning vocabulary tasks. In view of the fact that the Grade 2s did not do spelling tests, they were required to underline the high frequency words in a passage. The Grade 3 learners, however, were given a new list of spelling words each week. These words had to be revised daily for the tests, which they wrote on a Friday. According to the teacher:

> They are generally weak in the area of spelling.

With the theme as a basis, Teacher 1 first extracted specific vocabulary for Grade 3 learners to write sentences. In another section they had to choose the correct word to complete the sentence. This written work was graded into levels of difficulty, for example, Grade 2 learners did a cloze activity and were required to underline the high frequency words which they encountered in stories (CAPS, 2011:13). Grade 3 learners had to complete a crossword puzzle using cryptic clues with the same word lists. Pressley, Mohan, Raphael and Fingeret (2007:222) emphasise that 'effective teachers make good choices with regard to instructional materials based on learners' abilities'.

Teacher 1 valued an integrative approach to the teaching of reading. Cunningsworth, (1984:46) mentions that many communicative skills are integrated simultaneously in language use. Teacher 1 was deliberate and purposeful about enriching the literary experiences of learners by using prior knowledge to explain vocabulary with which learners were not familiar. This occurred in the story lesson: she explained the meaning of the word 'odd'. What follows is an illustrative example of the way in which Teacher 1 referred the learners to a previous Literacy lesson in order to make the meaning of the particular word clear.

> Tr: Remember in the news the other day, there was a story about a tiger that escaped from its owner and was seen running across a field and in the streets? That's 'odd'.

She then continued with the lesson.

Teacher 1 taught phonics from a set curriculum and dealt with two new sounds per week. This was done in accordance with (RNCS 2002:3) which stipulates that each of the components in reading instruction should be taught explicitly. Sounds were on flashcards and learners had to identify them individually and name words that began with a particular sound. This appeared to be the procedure for every lesson, yet several learners were uncertain of the pronunciation of a number of sounds and the teacher therefore had to clarify

with examples of words. This teacher was Afrikaans 1ˢᵗ language, yet she taught English 1ˢᵗ Language. The following sentence came from one of the observations when Teacher 1 distinguished between the two 'ow' sounds:

> Tr: the first sound is 'ow' as in 'cow' and the next one is the 'ow' as in the word 'bowl'

Teacher 2 used flash cards to reinforce vocabulary at the start of her lessons. The Grade 2 learners emphasised the number of syllables in words by clapping (CAPS, 2011:106). Sight words were taken home to revise daily and in the interview the teacher made reference to the fact that learners did not always recall the words. She said:

> There is very little parental support at home so children don't always learn.

Christenson and Sheridon (2001:39) emphasise the importance of the reciprocal relationship between schools and families.

Teacher 2 engaged her learners in games such as matching pictures to words, while assessing their phonic knowledge and learners participated enthusiastically. In the interview she mentioned that she tried to vary her lessons so that learners could remember and apply the words in the reading activities. She stated:

> I sometimes play games using the new vocabulary, just to make it more interesting.

As an introduction to a reading lesson, Teacher 2 would make use of quick teaching moments and teach specific sounds and word-building. These occurred in grade-groups. She worked through her term planner systematically and in the interview she explained:

> The Grade 1s start with single consonant sounds and vowels and at this stage they are able to build simple words. The Grade 2s are adding prefixes and suffixes to words and the Grade 3's are writing sentences to illustrate the meanings of words.

Grade 1 learners were tasked with having to identify initial or final sounds of words. By contrast, the progression in the lesson with the Grade 2 learners was evident: they were expected to identify digraphs in words. Their auditory skills were developed by playing games where they had to choose the odd word from a series of related words.

Example in Afrikaans:

> Tr: vaal, saag, mat, laat, 'watter woord behoort nie?'
>
> Lnr: mat, juffrou.

Tr: jy's reg maar waarom behoort die woordjie mat nie?

Lnr: hy't nie die lang 'aa' klank nie juffrou.

(Tr   grey, saw, mat, late, 'which word does not belong?')

(Lnr: mat, teacher)

(Tr: you are correct but why does the word mat not belong?)

Learners identified the word that did not belong and had to provide a reason for their choice. The Grade 3 learners were required to write sentences onto whiteboards from the teacher's dictation. They still sounded out certain words as they wrote them, emphasising the sounds. An example from the observation shows:

Tr: Ons gaan Vrydag saal toe.

Lnrs: Ons g-aa-n Vry-dag s-aa-l toe.

(Tr: We are going to the hall on Friday.)

(Lnrs: We are go-ing to the h-all on Friday.)

Summary

There were three similarities and two differences in the way Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 taught vocabulary and phonics. Both teachers taught vocabulary and phonics using differentiated methods between the grades in their classes. Teacher 1 differentiated the content and phonic sounds between Grades 2 and 3. Teacher 2 differentiated the phonics and vocabulary activities between Grades 1, 2 and 3. Both teachers provided grade-appropriate activities for all their learners. This was a good example of multi-grade teaching.

For homework, both Grade 3 classes had spelling lists for their weekly spelling tests. The Grade 1 and both the Grade 2 classes had high frequency words which they needed to learn at home. Both teachers complained that due to the lack of adult supervision the homework was seldom completed satisfactorily. Both teachers began their reading lessons using flash cards to reinforce single sounds and consonant blends. These phonic sounds were not directly related to the texts that followed. A noticeable difference between the two teachers was their style of teaching vocabulary and phonics. Teacher 1 taught both skills in context, using stories, whereas Teacher 2 used activities and games.

Another difference was Teacher 2 adjusted the set curriculum to accommodate the three levels of learners, since she had three grades in her class. Teacher 1, however, who had two grades in her class, taught directly from the prescribed NCS curriculum. No evidence of adaptation according to levels was found in her teaching.

4.2.1.3   Comprehension

The following theme will be examined by focussing on the four higher order thinking skills as described in the PIRLS document (Howie et al, 2012:45) and how the two teachers employed these question forms Figure 4:4 illustrates the hierarchical ladder of the higher-order questions.

The hierarchical ladder of the higher order thinking skills
(Howie et al 2008:11)

4. Evaluate and examine content language and textual elements
The type of question words used:
decide, rank, test, measure, select, judge, explain, compare, summarise

3. Interpret and integrate ideas and information
The type of question words used:
analyse, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select combine, integrate, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, design, invent, what if?

2. Make straight forward inferences
The type of question words used:
apply, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, show, solve, examine, modify, relate, change, classify, experiment, discover.

1. Retrieving explicitly stated information
The type of question words used:
list, tell, describe, show, label, collect, name, who, when, where, why, what.

Figure 4:4   A framework of the hierarchical ladder of the higher order thinking skills

From the observations and interviews, evidence of the questioning techniques used by both Teacher 1 and 2 from an oral perspective will be provided.

In the interview, Teacher 1 considered comprehension a significant part of being able to read. She clarified that her aim was to encourage learners to read sentences fluently and understand their meaning. This was a long process that comprised practical steps such as,

the use of pictures, key words and then sentence strips that were later cut up for learners to re-build. She emphasised:

> It is important for learners to understand what they are reading.

In spite of this, she acknowledged that she did not set comprehension activities regularly since many learners found it too challenging. She revealed that:

> They have no idea of word recognition and even battle with straight-forward questions.

Teacher 1 asked oral questions that required learners to retrieve explicitly stated information and make deductions from the passages chosen. The following examples depict Teacher 1's style of questioning.

Lnrs:	When they got to the cave Bear was quite astonished (learners stumbled over this word and the teacher reads the sentence again.)
Tr :	Who knows what astonished means?
Lnr:	afraid
Lnr:	quiet
Tr :	No its not afraid or quiet, he couldn't believe his eyes when he saw something, let's see what he saw.
Lnrs:	Three queer looking rabbits were very hard at work. It seemed that they were busy moving.
Tr 1:	Grade 2s what does the word 'queer' mean, think back to the Toy Story book.
Lnr:	scary
Tr 1:	No, remember the cat was funny looking and the clown? People don't normally look like that.

Teacher 1 used pictures and sentence strips to stimulate learners to interpret and integrate information: This is the third higher order skill as depicted in Figure 4.4. Teacher 1 indicated in the interview, that they used picture discussions: all the learners were given the same picture and they had to come up with sentences that interpreted the picture. During the observations it was evident that Teacher 1 expected her learners to reflect critically on the story. Learners had to use their skills of interpretation to create and design a suitable title for the story. This can be seen in Figure 4.4. As indicated by her question:

What can we call the story?

Another lesson observed was when Teacher 1 assessed learners' listening skills and oral comprehension abilities. Learners were given a prepared sheet and the teacher instructed them to listen carefully. They asked questions for clarification but the teacher repeated the instruction only once and they had to carry out her command. These instructions are examples of the third level of questioning: the learners had to interpret her instructions on paper. The following are examples of the types of instructions that were given by the teacher.

1. Colour the bee yellow and black and draw a pink flower next to it.
2. Draw a red ball on top of a green wagon.
3. Give the cat a red and blue ball of wool to play with.
4. Uses a purple knife to cut through the brown bread.
5. There are 3 eggs between the nest and the multi-coloured hen.

The same teacher assigned a written comprehension passage to Grade 2 and 3 learners. Differentiation between the two groups was evident in the level of complexity of the questions. Grade 2 learners were required to answer five basic questions, ranging from cloze procedure to unscrambling sentences. Grade 3s had to answer nine more demanding questions, using their knowledge of nouns, verbs and adjectives. Teacher 1 used grade-appropriate vocabulary for the respective grades and formulated her questions using the first three levels on the hierarchical ladder of higher-order thinking skills, as depicted in Figure 4.5. Grade 3 learners were not challenged to use more complex thinking skills such as analysing, comparing evaluating, judging or summarising.

Teacher 2, in contrast, applied basic comprehension lessons with the Grade 1s. This took the form of sequence stories where learners were required to show the development of a story by arranging pictures in the correct order. They were expected to display their understanding of text. In the interview Teacher 2 remarked:

> The Grade 1s don't really do written comprehension exercises. Sometimes I let them draw pictures to illustrate sentences.

In order to gauge learners' understanding of words in context, the same teacher asked the Grade 2s, who were on the mat, to choose the appropriate response from multiple answers. The following examples were taken directly from the lesson, so they are in Afrikaans:

'Die boek is op die raak, rak of dak.' 'Ek dra a das om my hek, nek of rek.'

The Grade 3 learners, however, worked independently at their desks. They were given a prepared comprehension passage from a book called 'Doen en leer' and were expected to answer questions in full sentences. Teacher 2 acknowledged in the interview that:

> The Grade 3's are supposed to do written comprehension three times a week but we don't always get to it.

She also mentioned in the interview that comprehension strategies are taught incidentally and added:

> The nice part of a multi-grade class is that they pick up from one another so you don't have to re-teach the same concepts.

From the observation, it was apparent that Teacher 2 asked questions from the first three higher-order thinking skills.

Teacher 2 asked oral questions that required learners to retrieve explicitly stated information, to make inferences and integrate ideas that emerged from the passage chosen. The following examples depict Teacher 2's style of questioning in order from the first level to the third level.

Tr:	How do you think the animals felt when the Little Red Hen told them they could not help to eat the bread?
Lnr:	They felt sad.
Tr:	What lesson did the animals learn?
Lnr:	They won't say 'No' again
Lnr:	hey will help to make the bread so they can eat also.
Tr:	What would you do if your friends do not want to help you?
Lnr 1:	I will ask someone else Miss.
Lnr 2:	I will do it myself like the Little Red Hen.
Tr:	What do you think would have happened if all the animals helped the Little Red Hen?
Lnr 1:	They could have got a piece of bread.
Lnr 2:	They could have worked together.

Summary

From the observations there appeared to be similarities in approaches to teaching comprehension in both multi-grade classes: one grade-group was being taught on the carpet, while the other groups were busy at their desks with related activities. When stories were read, the learners would listen attentively and were then expected to answer oral questions, which tested their retention and recall. Teacher 1 placed emphasis on reading for meaning. Since her Grade 2 and 3 learners had difficulty anwering written comprehension questions, she used an oral approach with visual aids to enhance their interpretation of information. Teacher 2 required her Grade 1 learners to sequence pictures to demonstrate their understanding of stories. It was apparent that the Grade 3 learners in this class were more capable of working independently on written comprehension tasks than Teacher 1's learners.

4.2.1.4   Reading

From the observation, it was evident that Teacher 1 used two basal readers, namely, Janet and John and the Beehive series (Appendix 3). Teacher 1 explained that 'there were not sufficient copies of the Oxford Reading Tree series, so these were used mainly for picture discussion'.

The first reading lesson observed was paired reading between the Grade 2 and 3 learners. According to (CAPS, 2011:11), this sort of activity should take place frequently and regularly, and is suitable as a strategy while the teacher is assisting smaller groups in group-guided reading. Throughout the paired reading session, it was noteworthy to observe the interdependence of the younger and older learners. Chapman (1995:421) asserts that in this way, learners mentor one another. During the paired reading, the younger learner would stop and ask for help when he stumbled upon an unfamiliar word and the older learner would use his knowledge of vocabulary to explain the meaning. This was a typical example of learning taking place in social relations of co-participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991:14). Teacher 1 could facilitate and intervened only when necessary. This is an example of the theories of (Lave & Wenger, 1991 as well as Vygotsky, 1978) as discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

In the group-guided reading lesson with the Grade 2 learners on the following occasion, Teacher 1 began with the Grade 3 learners on the carpet. They were given instructions about their activity. Learners were expected to analyse sentences into parts of speech. When this activity was completed, they were told to select a book from the box supplied by the Department of Education (DoE) and read silently.

The lesson with the Grade 2s started with a discussion of sight words and identification of phonic words. The learners then read aloud in turn and were stopped intermittently to answer questions about the passages read. They were made aware of stopping at full stops and pausing at commas and Teacher 1 demonstrated the way she expected her learners to read. Some learners used their finger to track the words and they were encouraged to read fluently. This indicated that Teacher 1 integrated language structures and punctuation in her lesson.

When a learner did not know a particular word, Teacher 1 made him/her repeat the word several times and then read the sentence from the beginning. Most of the learners struggled to identify high-frequency words and their word recognition skills were generally poor.

Frustration on the part of one learner, in particular, was visible. The rest of the group became fidgety while having to wait their turn. When asked in the interview whether the children were given books to take home to practise their reading, Teacher 1 replied:

> Some children have to do more reading than others and get to take the same book home until they have mastered it.

Later in the interview, she expressed the need for more 'appropriate learning materials and for support with struggling readers'.

Teacher 2 used various reading series and materials in her classroom. In the interview she clarified that her Grade 1 learners used the 'Read and Do' series, which has many pictures to reinforce vocabulary needed at his level.

The Grade 2s and 3s used the Oxford Reading Tree series. In addition to this, they used the 'Goue Reeks and Pierewiet' series as supplementary readers. They made use of the 100 reading books that the DoE sent to the school.

In Teacher 2's classroom, from the video-recording, Grade 2 and 3 learners were observed writing their weekly news at their desks, while the Grade 1 learners were engaged in a group-guided reading lesson on the carpet. Their reading lesson started with an exercise that trained left-to-right eye movement. Learners were in pairs and had to take turns to move an object from one side to the other while the partner's eyes followed and the head remained still. They then proceeded with phonics: learners had to listen for initial consonants, identify the sound and provide a reason why the word did not belong to the group. Learners then read groups of words and built sentences to illustrate the meanings of words. The teacher spent a long time talking about sentences and how they should enable the listener to grasp

the exact meaning. For example, 'I have a ball'. This sentence does not explain what a ball is. Rather talk about what you do with a ball. 'I kicked the ball into the goal post'.

In the interview, Teacher 2 mentioned that she used 'train reading' with her learners. She explained:

> This is where one learner reads from the capital letter to the full stop and then another learner continues.

Her reason for doing this was to: 'emphasise paragraphs, particularly when working with the Grade 3 learners'.

The above reading practice was observed and learners were seen performing actions such as stamping their feet when they came across a full stop and clapping once when they saw a comma. Teacher 2 remarked:

> It makes them pay attention to punctuation as they read.

When asked in the interview how she helps learners to read more fluently, Teacher 2 replied:

> In Grade 1 it is a bit difficult because they still point with their little finger while reading word-by-word, but in Grade 2, I encourage them to use a bookmark because I don't want them to use their fingers.

Teacher 2 believed that with daily practice, the Grade 1s eventually understand the notion of rapid movement of the eyes across the page. Later in the interview she remarked:

> But… you will always have your slow readers.

Summary

Of the four reading lessons observed, both Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 taught reading to their multi-grade classes as a whole as well as in grade groups and made use of peer tutoring. Teacher 1 taught one shared reading lesson; facilitated one paired reading lesson and used a basal reader approach to teach the Grade 2s and the Grade 3s in different groups. In these lessons Teacher 1 taught different skills (vocabulary, comprehension and phonics) to the different grades.

Teacher 2 incorporated emergent reading skills in the Grade 1 lessons. While these lessons were in progress the Grade 2 and 3 learners were working on grade appropriate comprehension passages.

There were similarities in the way both teachers used syllabification to teach vocabulary. For example, Teacher 1 used syllabification with both grades to clap the different syllables. Whereas Teacher 2 taught vocabulary using different approaches with the three different grades. With the Grade 1s she used a more kinaesthetic approach whereby the learners would touch their own body parts to count the syllables. With the learners in Grades 2 this teacher used white boards where they wrote the words on the white board and broke them up into syllables. The Grade 3s extended root words by adding prefixes and suffixes.

The most noticeable difference between the two teachers was that Teacher 2 used more concrete apparatus to teach reading to her Grade 1s.

Both teachers had struggling readers in their respective groups, yet Teacher 2 displayed more patience than Teacher 1.

4.2.2 Research Sub-question 2

What reading challenges do FP teachers experience in urban multi-grade classes?

After extensive inductive analysis of the three instruments used (two interviews, eight observations with two video recordings), the following six themes, arranged in order from most significant to least significant, emerged from the data and are used as a lens to view the results. These are:

- Professional support for teaching reading in multi-grade classes;
- Classroom management and grouping of learners for reading;
- Curriculum adaptation and planning for teaching reading to the different grades;
- Struggling readers and monitoring reading progress;
- Use of reading resources; and
- Parental support.

4.2.2.1 Professional support for teaching reading in multi-grade classes

Both teachers were practising multi-grade teaching although they were qualified to teach in a mono-grade education system. They expressed the need to network with other practising urban multi-grade teachers to find ways of supporting one another. Teacher 1 said:

> Actually, this interview is making me think that I should contact the WCED and ask them to do workshops on specific subjects for us as multi-grade teachers.

Having these workshops could ease the problem. Joubert (2010) identified a lack of knowledge on the part of the teachers and prejudice on the part of educational authorities as two elements obstructing the implementation of good multi-grade teaching. The RNCS (2002:16) refers to building the capacity of teachers by having education programmes for teachers but this does not include multi-grade pedagogy.

In the interviews, the two teachers were asked whether there was professional support available to assist them in teaching reading to the different grades in their classes. Both teachers, despite having 3 and 24 years of teaching experience, respectively, indicated that they had little training for teaching reading in a multi-grade environment. The initial training they received was general and there had been no follow-up.

Teacher 1 (with 3 years teaching experience) confirmed her lack of professional support by stating that:

> There was no specific multi-grade training ... I attended a course run by the Department but it was based on curriculum, like Numeracy and Literacy teaching.

She added that as a teacher, she wanted to improve her pedagogical skills and theory of teaching, since competent teachers have an important role to play (RNCS, 2002:9).

Teacher 1 made reference to the following:

> I attend all the workshops that WCED offer even if they do not directly relate to multi-grade teaching.

In the interview she mentioned that she was not sure whether she was doing what was expected:

> I stick to what I learnt when I was studying. I'm not sure if it is right or wrong. It would be nice to get some input from the Department.

Later on in the interview she clarified that:

> The other multi-grade class in the school is for learners with special needs. So the expectations for our classes are different.

Teacher 2, with 24 years of teaching experience, mentioned that at her school she had a few support structures in place:

> We have a learning support teacher, a speech therapist and an OT ... All interventions are done by the teachers and after considering all the factors, a child is referred.

While these external support structures were in place, the professional educational support was minimal. Teacher 2 stated that:

> Since those initial workshops, there has been no further professional development from the Department or the school.

The RNCS (2002:13) states that in order to achieve a sound and healthy relation between integration across learning areas, on-going development of teachers, school management teams and departmental support personnel is important. Teacher 2 felt strongly that it was her responsibility as a FP teacher to ensure that all her learners learnt to read. This implies that the teacher has to read with all learners (RNCS, 2003:45). From these observations it was noted that, since Teacher 2 had Grade 1, 2 and 3 learners in her class, there was a greater need for support. The Grade 1 learners constantly needed guidance with their written work even after instructions were given. A few learners approached the researcher for help. Teacher 2 remarked in the interview:

> Having an assistant in the classroom will be a great help but I was told, there is no money.

Teacher 2 was the only teacher with a multi-grade class in the FP. She felt that she ought to have more professional support from her school. She mentioned in the interview that having a classroom assistant to oversee one grade could support her while she was teaching reading to another grade. The school, however, could not afford to appoint an assistant. She justified her reasons for wanting an assistant as follows:

> I sit with little Grade 1s who are still learning to read. Then there's my Grade 2s who are now reading nicely and my Grade 3s who are more fluent in reading ... All at different levels.

While observing a thirty-minute reading lesson where Teacher 2 worked with the Grade 1 learners only, who were required to sound out words and build words in context, it was noticed that the Grade 2 and 3 learners were working on their own. This was a teaching moment where a classroom assistant could have been well used.

4.2.2.2 Classroom management and grouping of learners for reading

In the interviews, the two teachers were asked how they managed their multi-grade classes with regard to the organisation of reading groups. The practice of teaching according to ability groups (Chorzempa & Graham, 2006) was familiar to both teachers. They acknowledged, however, that working within their grade-groups made teaching reading easier. Kyne (2005) emphasises the need for teachers to be aware of different ways of grouping children.

Grouping for reading instruction in both classes occurred on the basis of grades. This meant that teachers could focus on the relevant reading skills required for each grade and provide the necessary activities. Piaget's concrete operational stage reminds teachers to provide concrete experiences for learners while being conscious of the stage they are at (Santrock, 2011:301). Learners' daily classroom activities are likely to have a direct impact on their reading development (Mullis, Kennedy, Martin & Sainsbury, 2006).

Both teachers structured the classroom management of reading lessons by starting with whole-class instruction followed by grade-groups. Both classes had a wide range of reading abilities in each grade. These diverse reading abilities were addressed in the interview and Teacher 1's response was:

> It is impossible for me to cater for all the reading abilities in the class so I try to vary my lessons.

During one of the observations with Teacher 1, a few of the Grade 3 learners were doing paired reading with the weaker Grade 2 learners, acting informally as teachers, mentoring one another (Chapman, 1995:421). Teacher 1 used her more competent learners to assist her in teaching reading. This practice is reflected in Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD (Santrock, 2011:50). ZPD emphasises the surrounding social nature of learning and interactions with peers.

Teacher 2 stated in the interview that the 'tips on classroom management' she received in the initial training session 'sounded good in theory but did not work in practice'. She felt that the Grade 1 learners required more contact time and she was unable to give them the attention they needed:

> I feel sorry for my poor Grade 1s sometimes ... they need me more than the others.

In a multi-grade classroom, children are expected to work independently for longer periods than they would in a mono-grade classroom. This helps them to develop investigative and organizational skills (Mulryan-Kyne, 2004), but Teacher 2 argued that her Grade 1 learners needed more time to develop these skills.

4.2.2.3   Curriculum adaptation and planning for teaching reading to the different grades.

As multi-grade teachers, these two teachers are responsible for teaching other learning areas as well as reading. This is a challenge since multi-grade classes are labour intensive. Lesson planning requires more time and peer collaboration than the conventional graded classroom planning (Cushman, 1993:28). In the interview Teacher 1 stated:

> We don't work together at all... I am quite isolated.

Lack of team planning in both multi-grade schools is contrary to the approach advocated in the RNCS (2003:3), which promotes coherence, integration and cohesion for the phase. Planning together provides effective use of teaching and learning support materials.

Both teachers felt that they needed more time to prepare their reading lessons than their mono-grade colleagues. These two teachers were expected to compile multiple work plans and assessments for the various grades they taught. Teacher 1 commented:

> Our deadlines for assessments are exactly the same as our single-grade colleagues. No considerations are made for us.

As far as adapting the curriculum to accommodate reading on the time-table, Teacher 1 remarked:

> I had to adapt my time-table so that both grades have Language at the same time but the lesson is different. It is hard to coordinate what happens in both grades all the time.

Teacher 2 stated that she not only had to plan for all her subjects and three different reading lessons, but she had to adapt the curriculum to suit the needs of her learners:

> It is impossible to get through the entire curriculum for each grade, so I teach what I think is important.

Later on in the interview Teacher 2 reiterated:

> I try to have a flexible time-table but at the end of the day, the children must be ready for the next level. I wish I can spend more time on reading, with my younger learners in particular.

4.2.2.4 Struggling readers and monitoring reading progress

During the video-recorded observations of both teachers' reading lessons, learners who struggled to read were noticeable. When Teacher 1 placed a printed story on the board and asked the learners to read it, one boy in particular did not look up at the board once during the reading of the passage. Another learner was unable to explain what the story was about. Both these learners were in Grade 2. In the group reading lesson observed, these two learners displayed a similar lack of interest in reading or understanding the context of the story. When asked to read a sentence, one learner could not identify certain words and had to sound out most of the words in the sentence. This took a long time and the teacher and learners showed signs of frustration. In the interview, Teacher 1 revealed that while 'the school has an inclusive policy' where teachers understand, recognise and address barriers to

learning (CAPS 2011:5), 'it is hard to address all the different needs of the learners in a multi-grade class'.

Teacher 1 further explained:

> There are children that do not understand comprehension – even basic questions. They should be referred to psychologists but the waiting list is so long.

She added that reading was monitored on a continual basis using a variety of methods and activities (RNCS, 2003:32). These include unprepared reading passages, jumbled sentences, language exercises and comprehension pieces. She admitted that it was 'hard to control'.

In the interview, Teacher 1 indicated that 'each struggling reader was dealt with differently'. Her aim was to improve the fluency of her learners. The learners who struggled with word recognition and 'have no clue of words', were supported by a remedial teacher once a week. Teacher 1 acknowledged that 'some children have to do more reading than others and get to take the same book home until they have mastered it'.

Teacher 2 revealed that she had a few learners in her class who came from other countries. They did not speak the Language of Learning and Teaching of the school (RNCS, 2003:22).

> These children have a major backlog because of language and find it hard to keep up with the rest in the grade.

It was her school's policy to accept learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability and equip them with the knowledge, skills and values (CAPS, 2011:4).

According to the RNCS document (2002:20), learners' home language should be used for learning and teaching whenever possible. This is particularly important in the FP where children learn to read and write. Teacher 2 expressed her concern about 'letting her learners down' due to lack of time to prepare thoroughly for this transition from home language to an additional language. She added:

> These children face many reading challenges.

Teacher 2 highlighted a case where a learner in her class was allowed to proceed to Grade 2. She had already repeated Grade 1 the previous year. 'This child had to be put in the group with my Grade 1 learners, especially when I do mat work for Language'.

In the interview, Teacher 2 pointed out that she used her Grade 3 learners to 'tutor' her struggling Grade 2 learners. This peer tutoring was corroborated in the video-recording where one Grade 3 boy was observed assisting four Grade 2 learners while sequencing sentences. This exemplary peer-tutoring could be seen as best practice in a multi-grade setting because learning is placed in situations of co-participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991:14). Teacher 2, however, remarked:

> I wish I could organise and control the interactions between the learners better ... If only I had the time.

In the interview, Teacher 2 referred to an instance where she had a Grade 2 learner who struggled with sounds. She placed this learner with the Grade 1 learners 'to give her the foundations of sounds'. According to Teacher 2, this was the reason she did not have 'ability groups'. She emphasised that, while having older learners helping junior learners was a benefit of a multi-grade class, 'the tough part is monitoring all the different reading levels'. Au (2002), classifies thorough planning and co-ordination of learner' activities as pre-requisites for the teaching of reading.

The RNCS document (2002:14) stipulates that assessments should provide indications of learner achievement in the most effective and efficient way. Teacher 2 said:

> I do my best to see that each child is able to apply the skills that I teach.

Since the assessments are grade-specific (RNCS 2002:16), 'they take very long to do'.

4.2.2.5 The use of reading resources

When compared to rural multi-grade schools who have a 'chronic shortage of basic' teaching-learning resources (Padmanabha & Rama, 2010), these two urban multi-grade classes were better resourced. Teacher 1 had basal readers but not every learner had his or her own copy of the reading book. She used supplementary readers to compensate. Teacher 2 had a basal reader for each child in her class. Both schools had libraries, which the learners visited once a week. In 2009, each school received a consignment 100 books as part of the WCED's Literacy Strategy (2002 – 2008). These books were not grade-appropriate but according to the RNCS (2003:13) different schools had access to different types of resources: - both regarding type and quantity. In the interview, Teacher 1 stated:

> The Department gave us books for which we are happy, but they are either too easy or too difficult.

She added:

Another problem is, we have to share these books with the other grades in the school.

In response to a probing question about how Teacher 1 strengthened her reading resources, she responded:

I made photocopies of short stories. When the learners have finished an activity, they can choose a story to read.

During the period of observation, not many learners were seen making use of the file, which consisted of photocopied short stories and extra worksheets once the learners, had finished. Despite having these reading resources at their disposal, reading levels of learners remained low. This points to the fact that the materials are not being used effectively. The RNCS document (2003:51) states that learners should be encouraged and supported to undertake a wide range of reading by themselves and with others.

Teacher 2 stated that she preferred to compile her own reading resources because this enabled her to 'pitch' at the level of her learners. The drawback was that it was 'time-consuming' and had to be revised as the learners progressed. She added:

The WCED books are way above my children.

Teacher 2 further expressed the desire to have more 'appropriate Afrikaans reading books' at the disposal of the learners. She felt that:

All the nice books are available in English. The Afrikaans books are limited.

She admitted to translating from English to Afrikaans when telling stories but could not constantly do this.

4.2.2.6 Parental support

Christenson and Sheridon (2001:39) as well as Bronfenbrenner's (1990) microsystem, emphasise the reciprocal relation that ought to exist between schools and families. The RNCS document (2003:49) supports this belief and stipulates that: 'learners need to be encouraged to link classroom experiences with languages and cultures in their homes'.

In the interview, Teacher 1 mentioned that:

Many of the learners are in the care of their grandparents. Their older brothers or sisters usually help them with their homework because most of the grandparents don't know how to help them.

While this is not ideal, Teacher 1 felt that 'at least the homework gets done'.

Teacher 2 expressed her discontent with learners not reading sufficiently at home (Bronfenbrenner, 1990). As was the case with Teacher 1, many of the learners in Teacher 2's class lived with their grandparents during the week and went home to their parents for weekends. Teacher 2 disclosed:

> The parents don't have time for the poor children, so whether they go home for the weekend or not, it does not really make a difference.

Santrock (2011:71) and Bronfenbrenner (1990) stress the importance of the social context in which children live and the people who influence their development.

Teacher 2 continued:

> It is a struggle with parents even to do the little homework that I send. They do not understand what is expected even though I give them guidelines.

In answer to a probing question about communication with parents, Teacher 2 revealed that she 'sent home message books but some parents are literate only in French or Xhosa, they do not respond'. She added that many of these parents are unemployed. 'They get involved when it is too late' as when their child has to repeat a grade. Kohen, Leventhal, Dahinten and McIntosh (2008:156) link low income and unemployment to parenting that is less consistent, less stimulating and more punitive. Yet parental involvement in learners' literacy practices is seen as being more influential than the family's social class or the level of education of parents (Clark & Rumbold, 2006:24).

Summary

After inductively analysing the data on the challenges urban multi-grade teachers experienced while teaching reading, it was interesting to discover how both Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 experienced similar challenges of teaching reading to their learners. The most significant challenges these teachers experienced were lack of parental support, which had not been role modelled from an early age. Many of the learners live with their grandparents and have neither been exposed to books nor reading in the home environment. The parents could not support the teachers with reading homework.

Curriculum adaptation and planning for teaching reading to the different grades was another important challenge for both these teachers. Since reading is a fundamental skill in the FP, which forms the basis of all learning areas, lesson planning is intensified as these multi-grade teachers had to prepare totally different content for each grade. They had to also take into consideration that the different grades needed to collaborate with each other, and this was time consuming. There was insufficient time to teach all the aspects of the reading

curriculum. Both teachers had to abide by the schools time constraints and deadlines that were expected from all single grade classes, but yet they had to plan for either two or three grades. This was time consuming and no concessions were made to help them nor to lighten the load.

Both teachers felt that they would benefit from professional support where the issue of multi-grade teaching of reading, and working with struggling readers, could have been addressed. Teacher 1 expressed the need for regular workshops where all urban multi-grade teachers could network with one another. The lack of knowledge of multi-grade pedagogy was a concern for both teachers and they would have preferred to have more professional training. In the past the Centre for Multi-grade Education had offered workshops where the rural multi-grade teachers had met, but this did not include the urban multi-grade teachers.

4.3   CHAPTER SUMMARY

Significant findings have been made based on the qualitative data which emerged from the interviews, observation and video recordings in attempt to answer the two sub-questions which have been set out in Section 4.2. The first sub-question presented and discussed the reading practices found in two urban multi-grade classes, which were: stories, vocabulary, comprehension and reading. The second sub-question, which focussed on the challenges the urban multi-grade teachers experienced. The results were as follows: professional support for teaching reading in multi-grade classes; classroom management and grouping of learners for reading; curriculum adaptation and planning for teaching reading to the different grades; struggling readers and monitoring reading progress; use of reading resources; and finally parental support. Chapter 5 discusses conclusions and suggests recommendations.

CHAPTER 5   DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The final chapter of this research project focuses on a synthesis of the findings. The findings have been summarized by returning to the purpose, research questions and the problem that guided this study. The implications for practice and suggestions for future research are presented.

The main aim of this study was to investigate reading practices in two urban multi-grade classes within the FP. The challenges that multi-grade teachers faced when teaching reading were examined, particularly in terms of RNCS (2002) and CAPS (2011) which provided guidelines for teaching single-grade classes. This chapter presents a discussion, suggests recommendations for future study and unveils the conclusions offered as a result of an examination of the findings.

5.2   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

5.2.1   Research Question 1

The key findings in answer to the main research question are tabulated below:

Table 5:1   Key Findings

Themes	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
Stories	Used the shared reading approach with stories. The initial reading of the story had no illustrations. Older learners read the story and younger learners were allowed to answer questions. Questions were asked throughout the reading of the story and integrated with prior learning.	Used shared reading as a strategy with illustrations. Background to the story was created. The story was read to the end before questions were posed. Questions had direct links to learners' personal experience. Discussion was encouraged at the end of the story.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary was based on themes. The Grade 2 learners were taught high frequency words while the Grade 3 learners were given weekly Spelling lists to learn. Crossword puzzles and cloze procedure activities were given to reinforce vocabulary.	Syllabification was used to emphasise vocabulary. Learners played matching games to reinforce words.
Phonics	Two new sounds were introduced per week. Learners identified them and named words that related to each sound.	Basic word-building activities were given to assess the learners' knowledge of sounds. Auditory sound identification games were played.
Comprehension	Questions were based on	Sequence stories were used to

Themes	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
	pictures at first and later, learners were expected to demonstrate their understanding of text by interpreting sentences.	teach and assess comprehension. Activities included multiple choice questions for the younger learners and written questions for the older learners. Types of questions varied from basic to making inferences.
Reading	Various approaches to teaching reading were used. These included, the basal reader, paired reading between older and younger learners, while the teacher facilitated and group-guided reading. The group reading sessions started with identification of phonic sounds followed by read aloud sessions.	A basal reader and a variety of other reading series were used. Group-guided reading was done in grade groups. The younger learners were accommodated by including preparatory activities with perception skills. The older learners constructed sentences with familiar words while group reading was is in progress.

5.2.2   Research Question 2

The challenges that both teachers faced were as follows:

Lack of parental support to enrich reading at home was one of the challenges highlighted by both teachers. Modifying the curriculum to suit the needs of all the grades within the class was an immense task. Lesson planning for groups, whole class and paired activities was extensive. Therefore all the areas of reading did not receive adequate time and consideration. These two teachers were part of a larger mono-grade school system and had to abide by the deadlines set. Struggling readers were marginalised due to time constraints.

5.3   DISCUSSION

In Chapter 4 the findings were presented. This chapter discusses four further reading interpretations and insights that have emerged from the study. These are: reading as a social practice, teachers' attitudes towards teaching reading in multi-grade settings, the importance of reading stories contextually and teaching reading in an integrated manner. Each insight is reviewed in relation to the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2 and the findings discussed in Chapter 4.

5.3.1   Reading as a social practice

Literacy is embedded within the family, the community and the broader culture, it functions as an aspect of human activity rather than as a set of isolated skills (Pretorius, 2008:261). Following the conceptual frameworks of Vygotsky (1978), Bronfenbrenner (1989) and Lave and Wenger (1991), it became clear in this research project that learners' cognitive development is shaped by the cultural context in which they live (Gauvain & Parke, 2010).

These social theories posit that human development is a result of the reciprocal interaction of behaviour, cognition and the influence of the environment. It is this constant interplay that takes place during the learning process that shapes people as they develop.

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory emphasises that social interaction plays an important role in the development of cognition. Teachers therefore have the task of stimulating children's interest in knowledge about print through meaningful social interactions. Bronfenbrenner's (1990) bio-ecological perspective considers the interactive social contexts in which children live and the people who influence their development. Lave and Wenger (1991:14) assert that learning takes place in situations of co-participation and is fundamentally social by nature. These socio-cultural conceptual frameworks play an important role in teaching reading in an urban multi-grade context.

It is therefore important for teachers to focus and reflect equally on the content and the pedagogy of their reading instruction if learners are to succeed and improve their reading abilities (Taylor, 2008). Thorough planning and coordination of learners' activities provide culturally responsive instruction (Au, 2002) and prerequisites for the teaching of reading.

In the current research project there were many examples of socially constructed group-guided reading lessons. One example of this was when Teacher 1 stated in an interview that during the Literacy Half Hour period:

> They get to read their library books to each other in the same Grade or the Grade 3's will read to the Grade 2's at times they would read aloud.

Vygotsky (1978) would agree that this is an example of a meaningful social interaction where the learners are reading library books to each other.

Another example of this strategy was when Teacher 2 conducted a whole-group reading lesson. She showed the two groups of learners their reading passages and explained the outcomes for each group. Thereafter she worked directly with the Grade 1 and 2 learners guiding and coaching (Connor, Morrison & Katch, 2004:306) them to socially construct meanings of words discuss what they saw in pictures and together identify sounds. At the same time the Grade 3 learners, working as a social group, without the teacher, were expected to orally answer questions based on a prepared reading passage. Guthrie, Wigfield and Von Secker (2000:332) would agree with this pedagogical reading practice as they state that teachers need to foster learners' involvement in groups, by providing challenging, motivating activities (Pressley, Dolezal, Raphael, Mohan, Roehrig & Bogner, 2003). Since Teacher 2 used both whole group and small group reading lessons, Chorzempa and Graham

(2006:530) would agree that a balance between whole group and questioning reading skills were created.

5.3.2   Teachers' attitudes towards teaching reading in multi-grade settings

Cambourne (2004:25) asserts that, 'there is nothing as theoretically interesting as good practice'. However, teaching in an urban multi-grade setting can be challenging when dealing with multi-ability groupings as is apparent from an example of Teacher 1. The Grade 2 and 3 learners were together on the mat when Teacher 1 asked a question about the story. A Grade 3 boy risked offering an answer but Teacher 1 bluntly shouted him down by saying 'No!' and did not scaffold any learning by offering to explain his incorrect answer or provide support.

This is an example of 'bad practice' and it was interesting to understand this experience from a theoretical perspective. Cambourne (2004:28) states that learners 'engage more with demonstrations when they are free from anxiety'. When Teacher 1 shouted at the learners she would have created an environment, which provoked anxiety. Lave and Wenger (1990) argue that learning occurs through active engagement within contextual experiences. In this incident the teacher did not engage the learners in the learning activity. Vygotsky's notion of scaffolding is when the teacher assists students answer difficult questions or to solve problems, by giving them hints or asking leading questions (Shapiro, 2003). In this case Teacher 1 neglected to create a responsive social environment where 'the more knowledgeable adult scaffolds the constructive processes of the children who gradually achieve autonomy in their performance' (Dickinson & Smith, 1994:117).

In the interview Teacher 1 mentioned that she starts her reading lessons by flashing new words that appear in the story. If the learners were not sure of them, she gave them clues and allowed them to sound the word out phonetically. This is an example of good practice where the teacher was providing appropriate scaffolding techniques. In this case the learners were being assisted to answer difficult questions or to solve problems by giving them hints or asking leading questions. They therefore acquired knowledge and skills they would not have learned on their own (Shapiro, 2003, in Snowman & Biehler, 2006:49).

When asked how the learners were divided into groups, Teacher 2's positive attitude towards teaching her urban multi-grade class was reflected in her answer:

> In a multi-grade class I think the fact that we have three grades, almost lends itself to natural grouping according to grades. Last year I had a little Grade 2 girl who struggled with sounds so I could group her with my Grade 1's to give her the foundations. That is the advantage of having three grades in one class, I would say.

Mulryan-Kyne (2004) agrees with Teacher 2 about the benefits of multi-grade teaching. She expounds on the fact that low-achieving children can gain from a multi-grade setting where there is continuity in teaching. Knowledge can be made accessible through instruction, thus offering scaffolding until the learners demonstrate mastery (Vygotsky, 1978).

5.3.3   The importance of reading contextually relevant stories

Dressel (2005:750) maintains that most readers read stories where their human experiences are reflected. She believes that learners who become personally involved in the story obtain a higher level of understanding than students who read decontextualized texts. Cambourne (2004:35) is of the same opinion and says that contextualized texts are more likely to result in robust, transferable, and worthwhile learning where learners can make connections. Dressel (citing Rosenblatt, 1985) claims that personal literacy experiences are indispensable starting points. Readers' past experiences, together with the purpose of the reading and the socially situated circumstances all have an effect. Cultural knowledge does influence learners' understanding and interpretation of texts (Dressel, 2005:751).

In this research project there were two examples where the teachers attempted to contextualize their stories. Teacher 1 wrote a text based on a book titled 'Mr Bear and the Robbers'. Although these urban children would not have experienced bears, they may be familiar with 'robbers'. In smaller social groups the learners were required to develop their own appropriate titles for this story. Some of the titles included 'The sneaky rabbit', 'Mr Bear and the sneaky rabbits', 'The three rabbits and Mr Bear' and 'The crooks and the bear'. This experience shows that the starting point of this exercise related to these urban learners where they were able to transfer the learning to their own lives and make realistic connections.

The second example was where Teacher 2 took a story called 'The Little Red Hen', which was a story few of the learners would have understood from their urban environments. Teacher 2 skilfully created a social community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) by attempting to contextual the fictional characters in the story and making it personal to the lived authentic lives of her learners. She began by asking questions to stimulate the learners' prior knowledge about what they had baked with their parents, and how they had baked it. She continued to read a bit further and then asked 'How would you feel if nobody offers to help you do chores?' These learners were able to relate to this decontextualized text about a hen, since the teachers' questions directly connected to their own lives. She valued, and encouraged, their discussion where they could personalize their response and identify with the characters.

5.3.4 Teaching reading in an integrated manner

Cunningsworth (1984:46) said that in language use, one skill is rarely used in isolation. Numerous communicative situations in real life involve integrating two or more skills, either simultaneously or in close succession (Cunningsworth, 1984:46). Grellet (1981:8) agrees with this statement and states that it is important to integrate the different skills through reading activities. Teaching skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing in close association facilitates learning. This integration using other skills would make learners more successful and more eager to learn than if the reading skill were taught traditionally or in a vacuum (Willis, 1981:150).

The idea of integrating reading and writing instruction is gaining increased acceptance because research has indicated its theoretical validity. Teachers have discovered the pedagogical effectiveness of integrated instruction (Jeanette & Moseley, 1985).

According to Tierney and Pearson (1983) learners of the same age, sex and cultural background are often not interested in the same things and their learning abilities differ. Teachers enrich the learning experience for all their learners when integrating the language curriculum through using a multi-sensory approach (senses and muscular movements). If something is taken through more than one channel, it is more likely to be learned well. Practices in these skills therefore serve as reinforcement for concepts (Harmer, 2001). Peck (1988:187) states that listening comprehension together with reading, offers one of the most powerful means of extending learners' 'stock of language items' with which they can later express themselves in speech or writing.

Rose (2006:32) cited the importance of broad, language-rich contexts in which young children can learn cooperatively. This means providing many opportunities for engaging with interesting texts and for language play, including games and activities, which are multi-sensory.

Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasise that learning is fundamentally social and unintentional. In SLT, this is regarded as the core concept and is referred to as, 'legitimate peripheral participation'. 'Participation' refers to the 'doing', because it is through doing knowledge that learners acquire knowledge. The purpose is not to 'learn from talk as a substitute for legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn to talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave & Wenger, 1991:108).

Schools have been viewed as one of the most effective and efficient contexts in which to address children's academic, affective and social needs. Children who share a passion and

interact on a regular basis will become better at it (Wenger, 2007). Both teachers integrated a variety of reading material in their lessons. They both used basal readers, supplementary readers and library books to extend the different interest levels of their learners.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Introduction

Since this research project was merely an introductory investigation into reading practices in urban multi-grade classrooms and the challenges that teachers face, it is by no means a conclusive study. Further research is necessary to ascertain how multi-grade teaching can benefit urban teachers and learners in single-grade classrooms too.

5.4.2 Recommendations for duplication of this research

In the case that the teacher's home language is different to the interviewees, it is recommended that the interviewee practise the interview questions beforehand with a person who speaks a different language. By practising possible responses from the person talking the second language it will help the interviewee respond more spontaneously during the actual interview.

Another recommendation is that the interview schedule be piloted before the interviews take place. In this research project the interview questions covered the whole literacy spectrum and were far too broad, cumbersome and too time consuming. By piloting the questionnaire, it may allow the researcher to select pertinent questions that answer the research question. It will also give an idea of the time the interview will take.

Upon completing this research project, the benefits of multi-grade teaching in urban areas became clear. Multi-grade teaching encompasses the principles of social learning as described by Lave and Wenger. Learners gain from working cooperatively with their peers. Grouping children across grades and age boundaries promotes emotional stability and can be beneficial both socially and cognitively. Bonding occurs frequently between individuals of similar emotional and intellectual development, which are factors often at odds with age. An emotionally immature eight year-old learner may, for example, forge a friendship with a more mature seven year-old learner. It is therefore recommended that more schools in urban areas implement multi-grade classes.

In this country the practice of multi-grade teaching is generally synonymous with rural areas, and more widespread than in urban areas. Finding two suitable schools within the same urban circuit took time. It was, however, a valuable experience to observe teachers in this project embrace the challenge of teaching more than one grade in an urban setting. Since

there is a dearth of research in the area of urban multi-grade teaching, it is recommended that further research be conducted in this area. Investigating the practices of multi-grade schools in other urban circuits would be beneficial.

In this research project, only one lesson per teacher was video-recorded. Notes were taken in all subsequent observations. For future research, it is recommended that all the observed lessons be recorded. Audio-visual footage provides more detailed evidence and captures nuances such as body language. This helped the researcher, months later, when referring to the observations for transcription.

The time frame for the data collection extended over a period of two months. Each school in the research project was visited on alternate Mondays. This impeded the continuity of data collection. Learners had to adapt to having a strange person in the classroom each time and this hampered the natural flow of the lessons. It is recommended that data be collected at one school continually for the duration of the data collecting period and then move to the following school.

While this study was not comparative by nature, the differences between the two schools were interesting to note. The two urban schools differed in quintile ranking hence their economic status was different. One school was a preparatory school and the other accommodated learners up to Grade 7. The medium of instruction varied, one was purely an Afrikaans medium school and the other employed both English and Afrikaans languages. It is recommended that for further research, a comparative study be undertaken. This will shed light on how these differences impact upon learning and teaching in multi-grade classes.

5.4.3 Recommendations on how to create positive educational experiences when teaching reading in urban multi-grade classrooms

There is growing international research evidence that explicitly chosen and well-supported multi-grade techniques can result in positive educational experiences. Greater awareness regarding multi-grade pedagogy needs to be created in order to dispel prejudices that still surround multi-grade teaching. This research project has shown how successful and effective multi-grade teaching in South Africa can be. It is recommended that education authorities be made aware of the benefits of multi-grade teaching so that they may become more involved and committed to support multi-grade schools.

In order to create a positive educational experience for teachers and learners in multi-grade classrooms, a paradigm-shift has to take place. Such a change is recommended so that the positive aspects of a multi-grade teaching approach can be appreciated: starting with education authorities in WCED, then channelled to teachers, parents and communities.

Collaboration between all the relevant parties is essential and recommended. This could be advantageous to education in the country as a whole.

This research project examined two schools that incorporated multi-grade classes out of necessity. The classroom organisation worked well in both cases. These teachers took into account the varying ages of their learners, the economic conditions that the community faced and the fact that several of them were immigrants. In South Africa these factors are becoming more prevalent in school communities.

Aspirant teachers should have the option of doing courses at tertiary level, equipping themselves to teach in a multi-grade environment. Therefore it is recommended to introduce an extended programme of multi-grade teaching in both pre- and in-service teacher training institutions. This implies that universities of human and social sciences should provide more research opportunities in the training of multi-grade teachers.

5.5   CHAPTER SUMMARY

The emphasis of the study focused on how two urban multi-grade Foundation Phase teachers taught reading in their classrooms.

Two main conclusions can be drawn:

First, the teaching of reading in urban multi-grade classes does work and second, with proper support structures in place, the challenges that multi-grade teachers face, could be minimised.

When this research project began, the researcher was not wholly convinced that multi-grade teaching of reading could be successful. However, after completing this research on urban multi-grade teaching of reading, guided by the conceptual framework and current international literature review, and grappling to make sense of the findings, it has become clearer that there may be more benefits. Multi-grade teaching of reading may foster the emotional, intellectual, social and academic well-being of learners.

However, does the concept of a single-grade class exist? In South Africa the majority of state schools are classified as single-grade schools. In effect, within those single-grade classrooms, teachers apply 'multi-level' teaching principles. In single-grade FP classes, teachers use ability groups to differentiate between learners' competencies. They do so by providing more challenging work for the advanced learners. In multi-grade classes, learners are primarily taught in grade-groups. Inevitably, varying capabilities exist within these groupings. Teachers utilize their older, more capable learners to peer-tutor the younger

learners. This research project has documented many challenges. There is a need for teachers to be trained adequately for multi-grade teaching. Both the WCED and teacher training institutions should assist with curriculum adaptation and preparation for teaching multi-grades. In doing so, best practice in urban multi-grade classrooms can be achieved.

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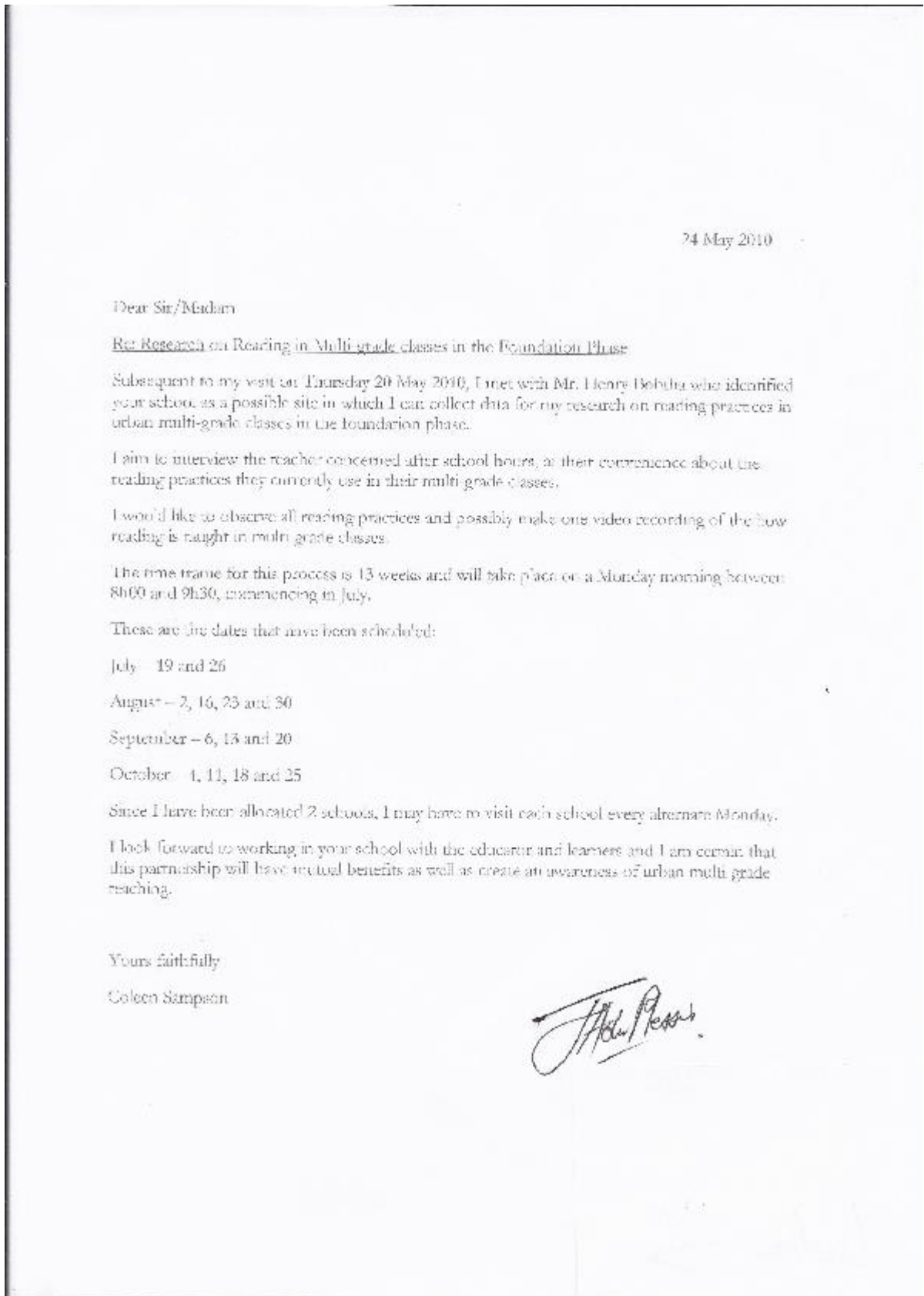
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1   Signed letter of permission from principal

24 May 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Research on Reading in Multi-grade classes in the Foundation Phase

Subsequent to my visit on Thursday 20 May 2010, I met with Mr. Henry Botha who identified your school as a possible site in which I can collect data for my research on reading practices in urban multi-grade classes in the foundation phase.

I aim to interview the teacher concerned after school hours, at their convenience about the reading practices they currently use in their multi-grade classes.

I would like to observe all reading practices and possibly make one video recording of the how reading is taught in multi-grade classes.

The time frame for this process is 13 weeks and will take place on a Monday morning between 8h00 and 9h30, commencing in July.

These are the dates that have been scheduled:

July – 19 and 26

August – 2, 16, 23 and 30

September – 6, 13 and 20

October – 4, 11, 18 and 25

Since I have been allocated 2 schools, I may have to visit each school every alternate Monday.

I look forward to working in your school with the educator and learners and I am certain that this partnership will have mutual benefits as well as create an awareness of urban multi-grade teaching.

Yours faithfully

Coleen Sampson

Appendix 2   Interview schedule

What are the reading practices in the Foundation Phase of urban multi-grade classes?

Biographical details: Teacher 1 and 2

1. Current Grades taught:
2. Years of experience:
3. Gender:
4. Qualification:
5. Home language:
6. LoLT:
7. Nationality:

MAIN QUESTION	REASONS FOR QUESTIONS	PROBING QUESTIONS	BODY LANGUAGE
1. Did you receive any training in multi-grade pedagogy	To ascertain whether the teacher is trained in multi-grade pedagogy	a. Do you feel equipped to teach your multi-grade class?	
2. How do you teach **listening skills** in your multi-grade class?	To establish how these skills impact literacy development.	a. Do you have a listening skills programme? b. Do you allow your learners to listen to stories on tapes/ cd/ dvds?	
3. How do you teach **speaking skills** in your multi-grade class?	To establish how learners relate to different languages in a multi-grade class.	a. What language do you speak in your class? b. Do you allow your children to use different languages in your class? c. Do you have a variety of activities where the learners are expected to talk such as dialogue? d. Do your learners speak in phrases or full sentences?	
4. Which **reading approach** do you use	To identify which reading approaches are most commonly used and the success rate	a. Do you use a basal reader?	

MAIN QUESTION	REASONS FOR QUESTIONS	PROBING QUESTIONS	BODY LANGUAGE
in your classroom?	thereof.	b. Do you use the Longman's series? c. Do you use the Whole Language approach? d. Do you use the phonics approach? e. Do you use a meaning centred approach? f. Do you use technology in a reading class? g. What forms of technology are used to teach reading? h. Do you use the literacy half hour and what do you do? i. How does using different approaches impact the learners in other grades?	
5. How do you teach your learners **phonics**, word building and phonemic awareness?	To highlight common methods used to teach phonics and learners' phonological awareness.	a. Can your children visually identify initial sounds? b. Can your children hear different sounds? c. Can your children write simple three-letter words? d. Can your children write more complex words including blends? e. How do you teach sight words? f. How does teaching phonics in a multi-grade class impact the learners in other grades?	
6. How do you teach **vocabulary?**	To establish the importance of vocabulary in developing readers and writers.	a. What strategies are used to teach vocabulary? b. Do you teach vocabulary at a separate time or do you teach it in an integrated manner? c. Do your children have a limited or broad knowledge of vocabulary usage? d. Do your children use the correct words in the correct context? e. Can your learners remember and use the new vocabulary appropriately? f. How does teaching vocabulary in a multi-grade class impact the learners in other grades?	
7. How do you teach reading **fluency** in your class?	To identify whether fluency is a used/taught/needed literacy skill.	a. What do you understand by the term 'reading fluency'?	

MAIN QUESTION	REASONS FOR QUESTIONS	PROBING QUESTIONS	BODY LANGUAGE
		b. Do you explicitly teach fluency? c. Are there class structures in place to improve reading fluency (such as paired reading)? d. Do you use the system of 'reading buddies' in your class? e. How does teaching fluency in a multi-grade class impact the learners in other grades?	
8. What is your approach to teaching **reading comprehension?**	To gain a better understanding/clarity on how comprehension is viewed and taught in a multi-grade class.	a. How often do you expect your children to complete a comprehension? b. What strategies have you taught in order for the learners to complete a comprehension? c. Is it necessary to teach these comprehension strategies? d. Why is it necessary to teach comprehension skills? e. Are comprehension passages taught separately or do you integrate it with other learning areas? f. How does teaching reading comprehension in a multi-grade class impact the learners in other grades?	
9. How do you encourage your learners to become **independent readers** and thinkers?	Identifying strategies for independent learning in an in multi-grade classroom.	a. Are the learners encouraged to have their own lists of books they have read?	
10. What type of reading activities do you expect your learners to complete?	Establish what/how children apply knowledge of literacy skills learnt/taught.	a. Do you use worksheets where the learners complete a word in a sentence, write sentences, cut, colour, paste, match, draw? b. Do you use work-cards in your class – graded according to the level of the learners – reading comprehending, writing, copying completing sentences/words?	
11. How do you encourage learners to engage with text using **language structures** (for example stories)?	To establish the role of language structure and use in interpreting various forms of texts.	a. How do you teach grammar structures such as tenses, plurals etc. in your multi-grade classroom? b. How do you teach punctuation in your multi-grade class?	

MAIN QUESTION	REASONS FOR QUESTIONS	PROBING QUESTIONS	BODY LANGUAGE
12. How do you make provision for **differentiation** in your class?	To ascertain how differentiation affects the way in which children learn.	a. Do you teach according to ability levels in your class? b. Do you have different grades in your class and how do you address these different grades in a reading lesson? c. How do you monitor the progress of the learners?	
13. How does your school address issues of **diversity**?	To identify possible problems related to diversity which may hamper or improve literacy skills development.	a. Do you teach in the learner's mother-tongue? b. Do your children speak a different language than the language taught in the class? c. Do the children travel far distance to get to the school? Is transport provided? d. Are your children from different religious groups in your class? e. Do the children come from different socio-economic backgrounds? f. If so how does this affect the classroom ethos? g. Do they interact with one another?	
14. How do you **assess** reading?	To establish which assessment tools are being used and how effective they are.	a. Do you use rubrics? b. Do you allow the learners to read to you? c. Do you use a checklist? d. Do you allow the learners to do paired reading? e. Do you allow the learners to do peer reading? f. How often do you assess the learners reading? g. How often do you assess your learners writing skills? h. How often do you assess the learners' comprehensions? i. How often do you assess the learners' phonic skills? j. Do you use pre and post testing as a means of assessment? k. Do you use these results to direct your teaching? l. How does assessing reading in a multi-grade class impact the learners in other grades?	

MAIN QUESTION	REASONS FOR QUESTIONS	PROBING QUESTIONS	BODY LANGUAGE
15. How do you support learners with **reading difficulties** in your multi-grade class?	To gain insight as to how learners with needs are assisted, if they are assisted, and if all their needs are met.	a. How do you identify struggling readers and writers? b. How do you support you learners that struggle with reading and writing in your class? c. Do you have learning support teachers in your school? d. Can you refer these struggling learners to a psychologist? e. Does your school have NGO's that work in your school and offer support? f. Do you have a specific approach to assisting the struggling readers and writers? g. How does assisting struggling readers in a multi-grade class impact the learners in other grades?	
16. What **resources** are available to you in your class?	To identify which human and material resources are needed in order to improve/stabilize literacy levels.	a. Do you have readers in your class? b. Do you allow your children to read these books? c. Where are they kept in the classroom? d. Do you have non-fiction books for the learners to read in your class? e. Do you have fiction books available in your class? f. Do they read a variety of genres for example newspapers, recipe books? g. Do you have to share the books with other classes? h. Are they suitable to the needs of your learners? i. What other resources do you have available to you? j. Have you developed any resources or materials to strengthen the literacy in your class? k. What material do you display on the walls? l. Do you use bought posters or do you use the children's work? l. How often do you use resources to teach literacy in your classroom? m. Do your children use dictionaries? n. Do you have different books for the different	

MAIN QUESTION	REASONS FOR QUESTIONS	PROBING QUESTIONS	BODY LANGUAGE
		learning areas?	
17. What **professional support** is available to assist you with your multi-grade class?	To gain insight into professional teacher development with regard to literacy enhancement.	a. Are the teachers computer literate? b. Are the learners computer literate? c. Are there opportunities to improve your personal development in teaching? d. What are the attitudes of promoting professional development in your school? e. Are you financially supported in furthering your professional development?	
18. Do the **parents** of the learners read to their children?	To establish if parent involvement is evident. To find ways of bridging the gaps in learning by getting parents involved in parent-child literacy programmes.	a. How are parents encouraged to help their children read? b. Do the children take books home to read? c. What would you like parents to know about helping their children to read? d. What should parents be doing to assist their children in literacy development? e. How does the school liaise with the parents f. What are the attitudes of the parents towards reading? g. Do you think your parents are involved in supporting the academic functions of the school? If so please explain and if not also explain?	
19. What support is there to encourage reading in your school **community**?	To identify the role the community plays in developing literacy skills in young children. Establish accessibility to literacy teaching and learning resources and material. To establish adult literacy levels.	a. Is there a library in the community for the children to borrow books? b. In what other ways does the community assist in helping the learners to read? c. Do the grandparents encourage reading to their children? d. How does the extended family encourage reading in the home? e. Are there pre-schools and Grade R classes available for your learners? f. Do the teachers follow a National curriculum to teach in the pre-school and Grade R?	

MAIN QUESTION	REASONS FOR QUESTIONS	PROBING QUESTIONS	BODY LANGUAGE
		g. What literacy skills are taught in these classes?	

Appendix 3   Observation schedule

Observations were based on the following:

Checklist	School 1(English)	School 2 (Afrikaans)
Listening skills	Taught using stories, asking questions and following instructions	Taught using stories, poems and games
Speaking skills	Learners share news, prepared oral and general conversation	Learners share week-end news in groups
Reading materials	Basal reader Janet and John for Gr 2 and Beehive series for Gr 3 learners. Sight-word approach used	Grade 1 – Read and do series, Grade 2 and 3 Oxford reading series and other supplementary readers
Phonics	2 to 3 new sounds are taught per week in Grade 2 and Grade 3's get spelling lists to learn	Sounds taught systematically – single sounds and vowels for Grade 1 and for Grade 2 and 3 prefixes and suffixes are added and sentences constructed
Vocabulary	Comes from the stories – new words taught	Words are flashed – usually done in the context of story
Fluency	Teacher demonstrates the correct way a passage should be read. Repetition is used	Learners mainly use their finger but bookmarks are encouraged for rapid eye movement
Comprehension	Done twice a week – all learners are given the same passage – graded	Learners are asked to answer questions about sentences or paragraphs
Independent reading	Learners are encouraged to use the library and make booklists	Learners are given topics to research
Reading activities	Closed procedure, comprehension, jumbled sentences	Mainly practical – individual, group and dramatization
Differentiation	Grade 2 has 9 children Grade 3 is a group of 10	Natural grouping according to grades, peer tutoring used and learning support
Assessment	Marks are given for various activities – fluency, word recognition	Assessment is on-going listening to them read and giving them a mark
Learner support	Learning support is available and learners are withdrawn from class during the day	Learning support is available and children are referred
Resources	Library books, department's 120 books, readers	Library, readers additional books 120

Appendix 4   Video transcript

Video - Teacher 1

Both Grade 2's and 3's are seated on the carpet.

Tr 1:   I want you to say the sounds as I flash them.

Lnrs: voice the sounds as they are flashed. The individual consonants were: j, i, g,u, e, l, s, b, n, t, k, d and the double sounds and blends were: cr, ng, br, cl, nd, gr, fl, gl, sh – Teacher 1 explains: when we put these two sounds together we do not say them as separate sounds, we say, 'sh'.

Learners are not sure of the aw sound and the teacher gives examples of words for clarification such as 'draw' and sounds out the word, 's-a-w saw'

The learners debate about the sound 'ow' until the teacher says: ow as in cow or ow as in bowl. Teacher 1 rectifies the pronunciation when they give the incorrect sound.

This continues=d for at least 8 minutes.

One little boy in the last row was not participating in the class lesson and remained a passive observer. The teacher did not include him when she asked questions.

The next part of the lesson was as follows: Tr. 1 put a prepared newsprint sheet on the chalkboard:

Tr 1:   Now, only my Grade 3's are going to read this part. So Grade 2's you need to listen. (Very firm voice)

Grade 3 learners read: 'Very quietly the Bear helped the rabbits to remove all the furniture from the house and load it onto a cart. Then he pulled the cart up the mountain to the rabbits cave.

Tr 1:   ok, that's one part of the story, now let's see if you can answer some questions. Why do you think the rabbits were putting things on a cart and taking it somewhere?

Lnr 1:   because they can't carry it.

Tr 1:   Ok, but why would they be taking things away?

Lnr. 2:   because they are moving.

Tr 1:   Ok, let us read the next part.

Lnrs: 'Mr Bear lived all alone near a rabbit village. He was very lonely and wished he could have some friends.

Tr 1:   Now village, who can tell me something about village?

Lnr 3:   Teacher, its where old people live

Tr 1:   No,

Teacher 1 called another child by name to attempt to answer the question.

Lnr. 4:   It's between high mountains.

Tr 1:   Yes, the bottom part between two mountains is called a village.

Lnr: teacher and a village is very small.

Teacher 1 did not comment on this statement.

Tr 1:   Let's move on, now everybody is going to read this part.

Lnrs: Mr Bear felt sorry for them and offered his help. At first the rabbits were reluctant (learners struggled to identify this word. The teacher gets the learners to break up the word into syllables and then asks them what the word means). The learners do not respond. I don't know

Tr 1:   Let's finish the sentence and then we'll see if you can figure it out.

Lnrs: but eventually he agreed on one condition (most of the Lnrs struggled with this word and one little boy said it correctly) that he would be as quiet as a mouse because they don't want to wake the family.

Tr 1:   It's a very long sentence, let me read it again. (Teacher 1repeats the sentence and then poses the question again. Lnrs debate amongst themselves and came up with answers like quiet. Teacher1 says: 'no!, reluctant means at first they didn't really want them to help but eventually they thought Bear is big and strong so it would be easier'.

Tr 1:   Now, why do you think the rabbits were reluctant at first?

Lnr 5:   Because they were scared of Bear.

Lnr 6:   Teacher, maybe they thought they were strong enough.

Tr1:   Maybe they thought that they could do it themself. Who has another idea?

Lnr 7:   Maybe they thought, they don't need Bear's help because they can do it on their own.

Tr 1:   We had that one, you're not listening.

Tr 1:   Ok, let's continue reading.

Lnrs: 'When they got to the cave Bear was quite astonished (learners stumbled over this word and the teacher reads the sentence again.)

Tr 1:   Who knows what astonished means?

Lnr 7:   Afraid?

Lnr 8:   Quiet!

Tr 1:   No its not afraid or quiet, he couldn't believe his eyes when he saw something, let's see what he saw.

Lnrs: Never had he seen so many furniture together in one place so he asked the rabbits what they did with all the things. They told him that they do repair work.

Lnr 9:   Teacher, repair is when you fix something.

Tr 1:   Yes, so why was he astonished, think! (Teacher reprimands a girl who is talking to her friend).

Lnr 10:   Teacher, because they had never seen so many furniture together in one place.

Tr 1:   (repeats the answer without commending the child and asked the following question) Do you think the rabbits do repair work?

Lnr 11:   No

Tr 1:   Let's see, they never said the furniture was broken we thought they were moving. Let's read on maybe we can figure it out.

Lnrs: 'Late one night as he was strolling through rabbits village, he saw something rather odd. Three queer looking rabbits were very hard at work. It seemed that they were busy moving.

Tr 1:   What does odd mean?

Lnrs all debate and come up with words like strange and weird. (Teacher uses an incident that occurred in the news recently where a tiger escaped from its owner and was seen running across a field and in the streets, to explain the word odd.

Lnr: Teacher, it was very late and they were moving.

Tr 1:   Yes, usually people move during the day but they were moving very late at night.

Tr 1:   What does the word strolling mean?

Lnr: Teacher, he was walking

Tr 1:   Grade 2's what does the word queer mean, think back to the Toy Story book.

Lnrs: scary

Tr 1:   No, remember the cat was funny looking and the clown – people don't normally look like that.

Tr 1:   Now this story is not in order, we are going to put it in order. (Naming a learner asks where they should start.

Lnr.   Points out where she thinks they should start and why. (Together they debate about which parts of the story should follow each other and rearrange the sheets on the chalkboard until the story is in the correct sequence. They then read the story from start to finish in chorus.

Tr 1:   Now, this story needs a name, what do you think we can call it?

Lnr: The sneaky rabbit.

Tr 1:   The sneaky rabbit, I like that

Lnr: Mr Bear and the sneaky rabbit

Tr 1:   Who else?

Lnr: The three rabbits and Mr Bear.

Tr 1:   Now let's write all three on the board and then we can decide which one. (The teacher proceeded to write all the titles on the board and the learners were asked to vote.)

Tr 1:   Now, this is a real story and it comes from this book. It is called Mr Bear and the robbers. Robbers is another name for thieves, people who steal. (The teacher

then reads the library book, showing them the pictures as she goes along and asking questions.

Tr 1:   what does the word dawn mean? Common Grade 3's you should know that.

Tr 1:   Grade 3's I'm going to put your work on the board. These sentences are mixed up and you have to write a story and after you have put them in order you must give the story a name. So you cannot write the sentences as they are here. You have to read through them and think which one will come first and so on. When we write a story do we start each sentence in a new line, no we write all the way to the end and then carry on. Grade 3's you may go to your tables.

(Grade 2's do a revision lesson about the making of butter. Their sentences are read to them by the teacher and instructions are given. The learners are reminded that they did the lesson so they should know the order of how to make butter.

Appendix 5   Letter from WCED granting permission

Navrae	
Enquiries	Dr A.T Wyngaard
IMibuzo	
Telefoon	
Telephone	021 467 9272
IFoni	
Faks	
Fax	(021) 425-7445
IFeksi	
Verwysing	
Reference	20100630-0064
ISalathiso	

Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Mrs Coleen Sampson
45 Applemist Road
Ottery
7800

Dear Mrs Coleen Sampson

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: SUPPORTING TEACHERS IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE OF MULTIGRADE CLASSES: THE DESIGN OF A READING GUIDE.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from 19 July 2010 to March 2011.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

    The Director: Research Services
    Western Cape Education Department
    Private Bag X9114
    CAPE TOWN
    8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Audrey T Wyngaard
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 30 June 2010

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