

An evaluation of the implementation of the Foundations for Learning reading guidelines in Grade 6 classes in Malegale Circuit, Sekhukhune District.

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Declaration

I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Master of Arts in English studies has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

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07 March 2016
Date

Dedication

I dedicate this degree to my late mother, Joyce Raisibe Maja and my grandmother, Juliet Ramokone Maja. They have been pillars of strength to my endeavours to obtain this degree. I wish they were here to celebrate the achievement they so dearly nurtured. May their souls rest in peace. I remain indebted to you Mologadi le Mosebjadi ba Serogole sa Mitji - a - magolopa thutla.

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Abstract

Local and international assessments on reading have shown over the past years that South African primary schools learners fail to perform at the expected levels in comparison to their counterparts in other parts of the world. However, efforts by the Department of Education to improve the situation through the introduction of intervention programmes, like the Foundations for Learning do not seem to yield the expected results. This was evident in the Annual National Assessment reports which provided a gloomy picture despite the FFL's declared intention to improve reading performance to nothing less than 50%. This study therefore, sought to evaluate the implementation of the FFL reading guidelines.

This study followed a qualitative research approach wherein observations and interviews were used to engage teachers in four selected Grade 6 rural schools. The resultant data was further corroborated by document analysis that confirmed the findings arrived at.

The main finding emerging from this study was that schools treated the FFL reading guidelines as optional. Other findings were that the participating schools found it difficult to integrate the prescribed time allocated to reading activities into their school time tables without interfering with times allocated to other subjects. They therefore, resorted to their own discretion on how best to use the available time to engage learners in reading activities. The implications of the findings are that the reading guidelines were differently and partially implemented by the schools. The other implication was that the reading instruction conducted by the participating schools focused more on reading for assessment than on reading for pleasure. The ultimate goal of reading, which is to develop learners into independent readers, was therefore compromised.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The reading competencies of primary schools learners have been a challenge since curriculum transformation was embarked upon in 1994 in South Africa. The National Reading Strategy (2008:4) testified that South African learners are failing to perform reading tasks at age-appropriate levels. This inability to read at expected levels of performance has transcended into secondary schools and institutions of higher learning. Meier (2011:549) explains that this state of affairs compelled the Department of Basic Education to go back to the drawing board emerging with the launch of the Foundations for Learning Campaign (FFLC) in March 2008. The FFLC, according to Meier (2011:549), entails amongst others, providing teachers with lesson plans and resources needed for effective teaching and assessment.

While reading is the focal point of this study, the overall language competence is of utmost importance for learners to perform satisfactorily in reading. This is mentioned against the fact that the FFLC requires learners to interact with texts of various kinds. Therefore, for learners to comprehend these texts, as Pretorius (2012:76) explains, they need constant and extensive exposure to print-based material which will familiarise them with linguistic and textual features of written language and the conventions of different types of text genres. She further states that through exposure, practice and explicit instruction they will learn to construct meaning from the text itself.

This study portrays an evaluative account of how the FFLC reading guidelines were implemented by selected schools in Malegale circuit in the Sekhukhune district of Limpopo Province. It must be indicated that as schools countrywide were implementing the FFLC, the word “campaign” was discarded as it was felt that the milestones (knowledge and skills) of the programme are essential for schools to continue instructing learners using them beyond the lifespan of the programme. Hence the FFLC was infused into Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This is evident in the progression of this study.

This study provides an evaluation report on how the four selected schools implemented the FFL. It also provides interpretations and discussions of findings made as well as summary and recommendations arrived at. It further acknowledges the challenges accompanying the implementation of the FFL reading guidelines.

1.2 Background to the study

Primary schools' performance in literacy/language in the public schools of South Africa has been poor over the past years. The Department of Education (now Basic Education) has initiated one programme after another to address the situation. In 2001 and 2004 the Department conducted national systemic evaluations in literacy/language in primary schools across the country. The results of the surveys indicated low levels of reading ability across the country.

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) was conducted by the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) at the University of Pretoria in 2006. The study focused on reading literacy in which South Africa was pitted against 44 international education systems. PIRLS 2006 summary report shows that South Africa achieved the lowest score of all the 45 education systems. Results from the Annual National Assessment of literacy showed that the literacy rate for Grade 3s and 6s is 35% and 28% respectively.

The continual low level of competency in literacy and numeracy in the General Education and Training band prompted the Department of Education to come up with measures to arrest the situation. One such measure was the launch of the Foundations for Learning Campaign in March 2008. The campaign was supposed to run over a period of four years, that is, 2008 to 2011. However given the fact that the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is to be implemented in Grades 4 to 6 in 2013, primary schools will continue to use the FFLC in the period leading to 2013. The FFLC milestones (knowledge and skills) have been infused in CAPS as per the high-level recommendations of the task team charged with the responsibility of reviewing the National Curriculum Statement.

Whilst the FFLC was hailed by teachers countrywide as a much sought-after intervention programme to address learners' competency levels in literacy and

numeracy, the 2011 ANA results have proven otherwise. This study therefore seeks to evaluate how the FFLC reading guidelines are implemented by Grade 6 English language teachers in the Sekhukhune district's Malegale Circuit schools.

1.3 Research problem

PIRLS was conducted in South Africa by the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) at the University of Pretoria in 2006. The study focused on reading literacy in which South Africa was pitted against 44 international education systems. Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Du Toit, Scherman and Archer (2008:19) reported in the PIRLS 2006 summary report that South Africa achieved the lowest score of all the 45 education systems. The National Reading Strategy (2008:4) also indicates that in 2001 and 2004 the Department of Education conducted two national systemic evaluations to assess the literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools. The results of the surveys indicated low levels of reading ability across the country.

The continuous participation of South African children in international and local assessments of literacy/language and numeracy/Mathematics over a number of years continued to be characterised by poor performance. It was this underperformance that prompted the Department of Education to investigate the reasons why the South African children could not read, write, and count at age appropriate levels and to find ways of tackling the problem. In March 2008 the National Department of Education launched a national campaign, The Foundations for Learning that would run over a period of four years, that is, 2008 to 2011. The Foundations for Learning is a four-year programme which is aimed at improving the reading, writing and numeracy abilities of all South African children. The campaign appeals to all primary schools to increase average learner performance in language and Mathematics to no less than 50%, (South Africa 2008:4).

The campaign reached its fourth year in 2011 after being launched in March 2008. Many activities unfolded ranging from the provision of daily teacher activities during literacy time and minimum teaching and learning time. Some basic minimum resources like readers and mathematics kits, assessment frameworks for foundation and intermediate phases with milestones (knowledge and skills), lesson plans,

quarterly assessment activities for literacy, work schedules, pacesetters and so on were provided to schools culminating in the administration of Annual National Assessment for grades 1 to 6 learners in language and Mathematics in February 2011.

The ANA report (2011:20) provided a gloomy picture despite the FFLC's declared intention to improve performance in language to nothing less than 50% in the four years period of its implementation. The 1hour 30 minutes allocated to reading instruction appeared to have had no impact, because nationally Grade 6 learners' language performance accounted for only 26%, with provinces like Limpopo and Mpumalanga accounting for 21% and 20% respectively. It was on this basis that the researcher decided to evaluate the implementation of the Foundations for Learning Campaign reading guidelines.

1.4 Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to evaluate how teachers implement the Foundations for Learning reading guidelines to improve Grade 6 learners' reading abilities.

1.5 The objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- To establish how the daily reading time allocation and daily reading activities recommended by the Foundations for Learning Campaign are implemented.
- To establish how the different kinds of reading strategies recommended by the FFLC are utilised.
- To establish how teachers use focused oral questions to improve the target learners' reading comprehension.
- To ascertain the views of the Grade 6 teachers about the FFLC as a teaching strategy to improve the reading abilities of their learners.

1.6 Research questions

- How do Grade 6 teachers make use of the recommended daily time allocated to various FFLC reading activities and how those activities unfold during reading time?
- How do Grade 6 teachers utilise the different kinds of reading strategies recommended by the FFLC?
- How are focused oral questions used to improve Grade 6 learners' reading comprehension?
- How does the FFLC as a teaching strategy contribute/not contribute to the improvement of Grade 6 learners' reading abilities?

1.7 Significance of the study

This study is significant in the sense that it may provide a clear picture regarding the improvements the schools are making in terms of ensuring that their learners are able to read at age appropriate levels. The study may also assist educators of the sampled schools to review and assess their approaches and strategies to ensure that the reading abilities of their learners are improved. This study is also significant in the sense that it may highlight the kind of support teachers need in order to implement the reading guidelines outlined in the Foundations for Learning document and any other programme that will help learners to improve their reading comprehension.

1.8 Chapter outline

Items addressed in this study are briefly summarised in the outline of chapters below.

Chapter 1

This chapter provides reflections on the following items:

Introduction, background to the study, aim of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, rationale for the study and significance of the study.

Chapter 2

Chapter two provides a theoretical framework underpinning the evolvement of this study and a detailed discussion of literature exploring reading instruction in general and in particular in relation to the Foundations for Learning guidelines.

Chapter 3

This chapter outlines research methods used in the study for purposes of data collection from identified participants.

Chapter 4

Chapter four presents the analysis and interpretation of data outlined in chapter three.

Chapter 5

Chapter five provides the conclusion, suggestions and recommendations based on the findings of the study. It maps a way forward for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I introduced the problem, stated the aim and purpose of the study. In this chapter I reviewed relevant literature in order to locate the study in the context of the previous research conducted in this field. The review is designed as follows: A discussion of the conceptualisation of the problem is presented, followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework underpinning the study. I also provided a discussion of the reading approach as outlined in the Foundation for Learning document. A discussion on the resources propagated by the FFL to facilitate the reading process is also presented. Reading strategies advocated by the FFL are as well outlined and discussed. Lastly, other strategies relevant to reading instructions are as well presented and discussed. Finally, the contextual factors affecting reading in our schools are elaborated.

2.2 Conceptualisation of the reading problem

Joshua (2008:2) refers to the Foundations for Learning as “primarily a national response to persistent unacceptably low levels of literacy and numeracy at General and Education Training band (GET) level”. The assessment programmes alluded to in chapter 1 was done at both local and international levels. The Department of Education’s report on the ANA lists among others the regional Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ), the global Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS) programmes. For example, PIRLS 2006 provides a summary report on South African children’s reading literacy performance in comparison to 44 other participating countries. “South Africa achieved the lowest score of all the 45 education systems. The South African Grade 4 learners achieved an average score of 253 (SE=4.6) and the Grade 5 learners an average score of 302 (5.6). Both scores fall far below the fixed international average of 500” (PIRLS

2006:19). Likewise the Department of Education's National Reading Strategy (2008:5) acknowledges the poor performance of South African learners when tested for their ability to read at age-appropriate levels.

This acknowledgement was based on the results of two national systemic evaluations conducted in 2001 and 2004 to establish the literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools. The results showed disappointingly low levels of reading ability across the country. The National Reading Strategy, like the Foundations for Learning was developed to improve the reading competence of South African children. It was developed in view of the fact that South Africa is participating in a number of United Nations development campaigns, which included the UNESCO Literacy Decade 2003-2013 and the Education for All (EFA) campaign, " which aim to increase literacy rates by 50% by the year 2015" (National Reading Strategy, 2008: 4). The focus on primary schools is to ensure that a solid foundation of fundamental skills and competencies is laid for future success. The Foundations for Learning calls for commitment from all stake holders to ensure that by 2011 and beyond learners are able to demonstrate skills and competencies associated with literacy (and numeracy) at age appropriate levels.

The FFL are supposed to be used by educators as teaching strategy to prepare learners to achieve maximally in language. They contain milestones (knowledge and skills) for each grade. The milestones explain the content embedded in the learning outcomes and assessment standards of the National Curriculum Statement and indicate the expected levels of achievement of learners at the end of the year. Although the Foundations for Learning as per its introduction in 2008 was set to run over a period of four years, that is, it expired in 2011, its milestones have been infused in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) to be effected in Grades R – 3 and 10 in 2012 and Grades 4 - 6 and 11 in 2013 and finally Grades 7 - 9 and 12 in 2014. In the period leading to 2013, that is, 2011 and 2012 primary schools will continue to use the Foundations for Learning strategy and applicable NCS Grade R- 12 policy documents for the intermediate phase. Given the situation outlined above, I chose to evaluate how schools are implementing the Foundations for Learning reading guidelines in Grade 6 classes in the Malegale circuit, Sekhukhune district.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The reading guidelines advocated in the Foundations for Learning are text based and text focused. Learners have to interact with texts of various kinds to establish meaning. Therefore selection and availability of appropriate texts is vital to the development of the learner's reading ability and comprehension. Teachers have a mammoth task of ensuring that the texts they select are of good quality in terms of content, context, composition, structure and other relevant features to activate the cognitive development of their learners. This study is based on Rumelhart, D.E. 1980' schemata theory which is described as the building blocks of cognition. The goal of schema theory, according to Sheridan (1981:67), is to describe interaction between what is in the text and how that information is stored and shaped by the reader. She further indicates that the schema theory propagates that connections are made between the information in the text and what we already know.

2.3.1 Schema theory in reading

Rumelhart (1980:34) defines the schema theory as a theory about how knowledge is represented and about how that representation facilitates the use of the knowledge in particular ways. He holds the view that the reading process is a complicated interaction process of many types of language knowledge which include letters, words, syntactic patterns and semantic meaning. Liu, Zhu and Nian (2010:61) state that various kinds of schemata exist in man's mind, namely car schemata, teacher schemata, building schemata and so on. Liu et al (2010:61) further indicated that the main point of schema theory was that one needed to connect new things with those known concept, past experience, or background knowledge to understand new things. Liu et al (2010:61) maintained that understanding and interpretation of new things depended on the existing schema in mind and the input information must match the existing schema. Sheridan (1981:68) corroborated the said assertion by stating that we comprehend the message in the text when we are able to call up the appropriate schema, fitting it into an interpretation which allows us to see the text in a certain way.

Liu et al (2010:61) argue that students, who cannot grasp the meaning when reading, are usually lacking in content-related schema. Liu et al (2010:61) cited Rumelhart who proposed three possible reasons why readers cannot understand a text. The first reason is that readers lack proper schema. In this situation readers cannot understand the meaning contained in the text at all. Secondly, readers may have adequate schema, but the author may not provide enough clues to activate the schema. Readers will still not get the meaning. Thirdly, readers may interpret the text consistently but deviate from the author's intention. In this situation readers would understand the text but miss the author's intention. Jones (1990:161) states that a reader's competence derives from all the uses of language that he or she has heard or read or practised. He further maintains that the sense a reader makes out of a given text depends on the correspondence between the culture in which the text was produced and the culture in which it is received. My study is focusing on the English Second Language teacher and learner in whose teaching and learning environment there are limited or no reading materials depicting their culture as alluded to above. The texts with which they interact more often reflect content and context that are foreign to their teaching and learning environment despite the language itself. The schema theory may unravel these intricacies as it propagates a connection of new things with known concept, past experience or background knowledge to understand new things. The reading instruction should therefore consider the culture, background knowledge and past experience of those it is intended for.

Liu et al (2010:61-62) classify schema theory into three types, which are:

- Language schema
- Content schema and
- Form schema

Language schema, they maintain, refers to readers' mastery of a reading material, identifying the letters, words, and sentences of the reading material. It is a precondition for reading comprehension and a basis for content and form schema. Content schema is composed of situation and background knowledge schemata. Liu et al (2010:61) explain that situation schema is formed when readers combine letters and words in the same semantic field by language during the reading process.

On the other hand they explain background knowledge schema as referring to knowledge and experience stored in a reader's brain which can directly affect the degree of reading comprehension. For them, possession of good background knowledge will enable readers to have good prediction on any reading material at hand and this can also raise their reading speed. Form schema, they state, refers to the extent that readers master the logic structure and rhetoric knowledge in reading. "Different text styles have different form schemas and readers can make a prediction to later development according to form schema they have in mind" (Liu et al 2010:62).

2.3.2 The application and implications of schema theory for the teaching of reading

Sheridan (1981:69) indicates that the schema theory has placed new emphasis on various parts of the teaching process, particularly on the importance of utilizing pre-existing knowledge and experience of the reader, setting purposes for reading and asking appropriate questions before and after reading. She also emphasises the importance of motivating and building interest as well as assessing the knowledge and experience of the reader before making him/her read. Teachers need to determine whether the learners have the general background or experience to understand what they are reading as well as how to use it. She further indicates that when an existing schema is inappropriate to account for the information in the text, teachers will have to help learners to change to a more appropriate schema. She argues that it should not be assumed that learners have schemata for all possible purposes of reading, but teachers' instruction should help learners to develop schemata for inference when faced with purposes of different contexts. Accordingly learners should be praised for taking risks and speculating about meaning. This, she argues, will develop confidence and trust in them. These make sense, because more often teachers complain about learners not performing at expected levels. They will even go to an extent of apportioning blame to their predecessors for having not done enough in the preceding grades. They should apply the schema theory alluded to above to correct the situation rather than resorting to finger pointing.

Liu et al (2010:62) also state that for language schema to be realised, learners' vocabulary should be enlarged by teaching basic words, sentences and grammar.

They argue that little vocabulary is one of the impediments for text comprehension. Following language schema is content schema which according to Liu et al (2010:62) functions in three phases in a reading class which is pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. Urquhart and Weir (1998:183) call them metacognitive strategies, that is, pre-reading (planning), while-reading (monitoring), and post-reading (evaluation) strategies. They classify pre-reading strategies into previewing and prediction activities. Previewing, they assert, helps readers to decide whether to read a book, an article, or a text. It includes activities like thinking about the title, skimming table of contents, the appendix and the index quickly, and so on.

Prediction features prominently in both Urquhart and Weir (1998), and Liu et al (2010). Urquhart and Weir (1998:185) indicates that once a decision is taken during previewing to read a text, prediction strategy is then employed to anticipate the content of a text and to make hypotheses about what the text might contain. Urquhart and Weir's while-reading strategies are divided into self-questioning and self-monitoring activities. They describe self-questioning as a characteristic of good reading when it promotes cognitive processes such as inferencing, monitoring understanding and attending to structure. Readers will constantly check whether the schema they possess fit in well with the schema embodied by the text as they interact with it. With self-monitoring readers monitor their comprehension by checking that understanding is happening and adopting corrective measures when it is not happening. This augurs well with the schema theory, because by checking whether they understand, learners are actually establishing whether the schema embodied by the text fits in with what they already know.

The after-reading activities espoused by Liu et al (2010:64) include discussions, role playing and writing tasks to provide a variety of classroom activities that will improve learners' reading abilities. With discussion learners could after-reading share their experience, knowledge, interest and opinions related to the learning material or consolidate content schema by question and response form. Learners could as well be engaged in role plays to interact with text or learning material reflecting foreign customs. Teachers can also cause learners to rewrite, comment, or summarise reading material. Urquhart and Weir's (1998:185) post reading strategies are reflected through evaluation and personal response questions.

Evaluation and personal response tasks may be done either orally or in writing, but the former is preferred because it promotes discussion and exchange of ideas.

How does the schema theory relate to the reading strategies propagated in the Foundations for Learning?

The Foundations for Learning introduces learners to various kinds of reading materials or texts, such as story books, poems, newspaper articles, posters, visual texts, and so on. Learners are expected to interact and interrogate these texts to establish meaning. This is supported by the schema theory whose goal is to describe interaction between what is in the text and how that information is shaped and stored by the reader.

During shared reading activities learners are expected to make a lot of predictions regarding the content of the reading materials using the information gained from skimming and scanning. Predictions features prominently in the schemata theory. Urquhart and Weir (1998:185) indicate that once a decision is taken during previewing to read a particular text, prediction strategy is then employed to anticipate the content of the text and to make hypotheses about what the text might contain. Similarly, Liu et al (2010:63) also show the role prediction plays in the reading development. They indicate that readers can predict what an article is all about by merely looking at its title.

The Foundations for Learning requests teachers to deal with key vocabulary and phrases that might be unfamiliar to learners before they read. This agrees with the schema theory, particularly language schema, because this is the stage where teachers would check if learners possess appropriate schema to deal with texts before them. If learners are found wanting in this area, this will then present the teacher with the opportunity to ensure that appropriate schema is established for learners to interact and interrogate the text to make sense of it.

During the shared reading activities, teachers are required to constantly check on learners' understanding by encouraging them to respond to the text through focused oral questions. This is catered in the application of content schema wherein it is explained that content schema functions in three phases which are pre-reading (planning), while-reading (monitoring), and post reading (evaluation). It is during

these phases where teachers would activate learners' background knowledge prior to the reading process. It is also during these phases where learners would interact and interrogate text of various kinds to establish meaning. Teachers would also be expected during these phases to do a lot of detailed content explanation. This is also the area where learners' prediction abilities are developed, because prediction according to schema theory is an important skill for reading.

The Foundations for Learning guidelines affords learners opportunities to work individually, in pairs or in groups to read graded readers and complete worksheets. The schema theory causes teachers to engage learners in discussions, role-plays and writing tasks to improve their reading abilities. This could be done in groups wherein learners would after reading share their experience, knowledge, interest and opinions related to the reading material. Teachers can also engage learners, individually or in groups in role plays to interact with the text. They may as well be caused to rewrite, comment or summarise the reading material. All these will be granting learners opportunities to consolidate their language schema.

During reading for enjoyment learners are as well involved in discussions which will lead to their sharing of experience, knowledge, interest and opinions relating to the learning material. With self-monitoring, readers will monitor whether there is comprehension or not and where it is lacking they will adopt corrective measures, like re-reading to ensure that the text is comprehended. Teachers can as well monitor each group or individuals to check if learners are making sense of the text. This could be done by putting learners through evaluation and personal response tasks done either orally or in writing to get immediate feedback.

In conclusion, the schema theory can account correctly on how learners develop their reading abilities and how teachers can facilitate same.

2.4 The Foundations for Learning approach to reading

The Foundations for Learning approach to reading is both prescriptive and instructive. Meier (2011:554), in assessing the programme cite the tone of the document as problematic, because of its exclusion of other stakeholders, that is, parents and teachers' views. He/she argues that the tone of the document conveys

a strong sense of an almost military approach, setting out parameters and targets for an offensive, in which every stakeholder will toe the line until outlined targets are met. This critique is understandable, because the Foundations for Learning document spells out what teachers and learners must do in the classroom with time frames attached. Deviation from the set goals and targets implies not toeing the line. However, it should be understood that the Department of Education had to come up with a strategy to correct the situation as speedily as possible and also that schools required some guidelines to help them rectify the situation. One is, however, not overlooking the challenges that teachers are encountering in implementing the programme. This approach could have emanated from the fact that the FFLC is itself an intervention programme whose purpose is to achieve set goals outlined in the Government Gazette No. 30880 of 14 March 2008 within a particular period. For example, it indicates clearly that all teachers in the intermediate phase must actually teach reading everyday by outlining daily activities that teachers must embark on during language time. It also allocates time and procedure to each reading activity as follows:

Learners in Grades 4-6 must be accorded opportunities to make presentations on weekly basis at the assembly for ten minutes by reading part of an interesting book/text or give a brief review of a book and so on. Teachers must engage learners in shared reading activities, for example, by reading texts with learners and modelling reading techniques like predicting, skimming and scanning, and so on, for 15 minutes daily. They must also engage learners in word and sentence level work daily for 15 minutes by, for example, showing learners sight words in shared text and on flash cards or board.

They must as well teach vocabulary by allowing learners to find target words in shared text. They must also engage learners in group, guided and independent reading activities for 30 minutes daily by providing learners opportunities to work individually, in pairs or in groups by reading graded readers and completing worksheets, check reading for meaning by asking questions, and so on.

Both teachers and learners must engage in reading for enjoyment daily for 30 minutes by reading books of their choice and recording their titles on reading record cards. Both of them must use the last 10 minutes of the 30 minutes to share what

they have read with others in pairs, groups or whole class. This is done with the purpose of checking whether the learners have comprehended what they have learnt or not so that remedial measures could be engaged to assist those who have not comprehended the text.

The above measures were conceived out of a need to address continual poor language performance among South African primary schools learners. The Foundations for Learning require learners and teachers to interact with texts of various kinds to establish meaning. This approach would be elaborated upon in this study when dealing with reading strategies and selection of appropriate texts for reading.

Having embarked on the activities above, teachers are expected to assess, track and record learners' progress and achievement in reading (monthly for class records and quarterly for district office reports). *The Foundations for Learning Intermediate Phase Assessment Framework* (2008:67) has outlined the milestones (knowledge and skills) to be assessed in each term and rubrics to be used for assessment in each language skill. The Foundations for Learning further indicates that "all learners in the primary schools will undergo Annual National Assessment in language using standardised tests to measure progress towards the achievement of the set targets", (South Africa 2008:6). The success of the Foundations for Learning depends largely on the commitment from all stakeholders and more largely on the material resources government provided to schools to help them implement the programme.

2.5 Foundations for Learning resources to facilitate reading

The Department of Education has realised that for the programme to achieve its intended objectives, one of which is to increase learner performance in language to 50% and beyond, support should be provided to schools in terms of resources. The same sentiment is also shared by *Limpopo Provincial Literacy Strategy for Primary Schools* (2008:16) which indicates that the success of a literacy strategy or program depends on improved access to sufficient, appropriate and high quality resources in all languages for learners and educators. The Foundations for Learning recommends the following resources for language learning and teaching. The

resources are categorised into three, that is, (1) those that should be displayed on the wall, (2) those that should be used by the learner and (3) those that should be used by the teacher. The list for the walls includes sight-words chart/list per year, reading motivation posters and so on. This is done to ensure that the classroom environment is print rich to prompt learners to learn reading. The list for the learner include personal dictionary, language textbook, work cards per reading book, reading record cards, and so on. For the teacher, the list includes vocabulary flash cards, grade-level shared texts such as short novels, newspaper articles, and so on. These resources including those that are not mentioned here would help improve the reading abilities of learners and assist teachers to fully implement the programme.

It should be pointed out that before and after the administration of Annual National Assessment in February 2011, primary schools were provided with resources listed in the Government Gazette, No. 30880 of 14 March 2008. They include among others, lesson plans which stipulate step by step how reading should unfold daily in a classroom, common work schedules which outline how reading should be taught per week per term and how it should be assessed (formal or informal), pacesetters pacing the reading tasks to be performed with clearly stipulated time frames, and so on. The Assessment Framework and Government Gazette No. 30880 of 14 March 2008 supplied to schools further explain how schools should implement the Foundations for Learning reading guidelines. For example, the milestones (knowledge and skills) in the assessment framework are divided across the four terms and are intended to provide guidance on the content to be planned, taught and assessed per term.

The provision of the resources mentioned was intended to empower teachers and help them to implement the Foundations for Learning programme. This also conforms with the *Revised National Curriculum statement Grades R-9* language outcomes, which state that in reading and viewing “the learner should be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts” (RNCS, 2002:20). It is therefore worth investigating why primary schools learners, particularly Grade 6 continue to perform poorly in tasks related to reading. Shortage of learning and teaching materials as well as poor teaching and learning strategies were cited among others as factors that led to poor performance in the systemic evaluation conducted in 2003 and 2005 on

Grade 3 and 6 learners. However attempts were made to level the playing fields in terms of the provision of resources alluded to above prior to the administration of ANA in 2011. These attempts however, could not in a short term address the historical legacies of schools, particularly black schools that were over the years discriminated against in terms of “resourcing, teacher supply and support” (*Rural Education*. 2009:1).

It should however, be pointed out that resources, both human and material could not indefinitely remain scapegoat for poor language performance given our socio-economic status in comparison to many countries in Africa whose language performance is better than ours despite their low socio-economic status. The Foundations for Learning is text based and text focused, an approach shared by the Limpopo Literacy Strategy. The *Limpopo Literacy Strategy* cautions that lack of texts can lead to schools compromising the text based approach which will then create a barrier to learning. It advises that “a ‘print poor’ environment could be avoided by teachers’ collection of old newspapers, magazines, brochures, flyers and posters from the immediate environment. Schools could also link with publishing companies for old, unsold copies of magazines and periodicals. They could use the immediate surrounding as text by talking about the environment. They may as well use the residents of the neighbourhood as aural and oral sources by means of interviews, write own texts where possible or use learners’ writing and so on” (*Limpopo Literacy Strategy for Primary Schools*. 2008:17).

2.6 Reading strategies advocated by the Foundations for Learning

The Foundations for Learning expects learners to interact with texts of various kinds to establish meaning. This approach is further corroborated by the *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9* language outcome, which is, reading and viewing. The reading and viewing outcome states that “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” (*Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9*. 2002:6). The reading strategies advocated by the Foundations for Learning are aimed at assisting learners to decode and make inferences from the texts they interact with on daily basis and thus enhance their cognitive development. They are

also intended to increase learner performance in language to 50% plus in the four years period of its implementation and beyond.

According to the Foundations for Learning daily teacher activities (outlined on page 18 of this study) during language time, learners in Grades 4-6 must be given opportunities to make presentations on weekly basis at the assembly for ten minutes. Learners should perform this activity by reading part of an interesting book, give a brief review of a book, read part of a text they have written or recite a poem and so on. Learners' abilities to embark on these activities will however, depend on a number of reading skills they have mastered at the time. *National Education Evaluation & Development Unit* (NEEDU 2013:37) report alludes to the fact that lessons focusing mainly on reading instruction should consist of the five main components of teaching reading, namely: phonemic awareness, word recognition (sight words and phonics), comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. The report further indicates that each of these components should be taught explicitly, practiced daily and increased in complexity as learners progress through their phases.

2.6.1 Phonemic awareness

Pretorius (2012:79) explains phonological awareness as the awareness of sound properties of words, and includes the ability to perceive and manipulate sounds in words, for example, blending sounds (fl+a+t =flat), or deleting sounds (flat without – l- is fat). Equally, phonemic awareness is described as the ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds in spoken words (Department of Education, 2008:12).

The context (second language environment) in which my study unfolds necessitate that learners should be instructed in phoneme awareness for them to grasp the relationship between speech and print. For example, in English words may sound similar, but spelled differently and denote different meaning. I also support the view that if a learner is aware that words consist of small units called phonemes and can identify these units, the learner would not struggle to access the code of the language he/she is instructed about. For example the learner would not confuse words such as (foul – fowl, suit – soot, know – no, and so on) despite them sounding similar. Shankweiler and Fowler (2004:488) state that children who grow in environments with strong support for reading activities at home can adapt to various

instructional approaches. The same cannot be said of learners who lack this kind of support. For them training in phoneme awareness can help them to learn to read. They further argue that children who fail to benefit from phoneme instruction are at risk to have later reading problems. Given the demands and targets of the Foundations for Learning, teachers are duty-bound to provide instruction to learners in phoneme awareness. This is necessary, because learners in whose environments my study was conducted, support at home in terms of taking learners through reading activities is non-existent. Teachers' role is therefore vital in this regard to assist learners to acquire the skill to learn to read.

2.6.2 Word recognition

Word recognition is one of the skills that learners should learn in order to become good independent readers. Word recognition is defined by Koda (2005:29) as “the process of extracting lexical information from graphical displays of words”. It is also described as “one of the skills that readers need in order to read unknown words” (SA. 2008:13). Urquhart and Weir (1998:52) maintains that in normal reading the purpose of word recognition is to access the lexicon. For this to happen, they suggest two routes. The first is direct route, which goes from the visual input to meaning without considering sound. The second is phonemic or phonological route which goes from visual input to sound to meaning.

The Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training's report and recommendations on National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2005:31) corroborates positions alluded to above that reading as the key element of literacy competence involve two basic processes, that is; (1) learning how to decipher print, and (2) understanding what the print means. Their findings indicate that for the two processes to succeed, all literacy instruction should be grounded in the basic building blocks of reading, that is, the set of integrated sub – skills that include:

- Letter-symbol recognition.
- Letter-sound rules (phonemic awareness and phonological knowledge).
- Whole word recognition, and
- The ability to derive meaning from written text.

It was indicated in this study that the Foundations for Learning requires learners to interact with texts of various kinds to establish meaning. Therefore, understanding or knowledge of the sub-skills listed above would help learners to construct meaning out of the different texts they interact with during their learning process. Construction of textual meaning is emphasised by Koda (2005:31) whereby he indicates that unlike in writing where the writer is free from creative constraints, the reader is restricted to textual information, which compels him/her to form interpretations that are justified by the text. If learners are taken through the reading processes alluded to above, they would undoubtedly be in a position to do literacy presentations for the schools as required by the Foundations for Learning.

Word recognition is also elaborated by Pretorius (2012:79) as the ability to recognise a word in the linear sequence of letters on a page without conscious effort, that is, without having to sound the individual letters or guess what the word is. *The Department of Education's Teaching Reading in the Early Grades-Teachers Handbook* (2008:13), indicates that two elements are involved in word recognition which are phonics and sight words. Phonics according to the said handbook means decoding a word by breaking it down into units (syllables and letters). It emphasises that phonics instruction is a way of ensuring that learners understand the relationship between the letters of written language and individual sounds of spoken language and that knowledge of this relationship teaches children to read and write. Phonics instruction will undoubtedly assist learners to meet the reading targets of the Foundations for Learning, particularly because, the correspondence between the alphabetical letters and the sounds they represent are not as direct in English as they are in African languages. In English, each letter has a name, but may represent different sounds depending on how the word is used. For example, the [i] in sit and cite sounds differently and learners should be taught to recognise these variations so that they do not struggle to read them in the texts they interact with on daily basis.

Learners also need instruction in sight words (look and say words), because most of them in English have irregular sound in relation to the letters they represent. For learners to read them fluently, they must learn to recognise them on sight, without thinking. For example, a word like sandwich is difficult for second language learners to relate the way it sounds to its written form, because it has an irregular sound-to-

letter relationship. Words like this confirm the need to teach sight words in English for learners to be fluent in their reading.

2.6.3 Comprehension

The reading comprehension of South African primary school learners was proved by numerous systemic evaluations conducted (for example, in 2001 and 2004, the PIRLS 2006 report and the annual national assessment report of 2011) to be lower than the expected levels. The Foundations for Learning expected learners to perform at 50% plus by 2011 which was not the case as per the ANA report of 2011. The picture alluded to above suggest that during the reading instruction learners could either have been “barking at the print” or did not understand and interpret what they were reading. The Foundations for Learning intervention programme does not only require teachers to engage learners in the reading activities alluded to above, but it also requires teachers to assess, track and record learners’ progress and achievement in reading. This could be realised when learners are able to demonstrate age appropriate levels of literacy in the four years of its implementation and beyond. This noble objective was however, defeated when the ANA results of 2011 revealed the opposite. It is therefore incumbent upon teachers to ensure that learners’ comprehension of the texts they engage with on a daily basis is honed, monitored and assessed to check if positive results are achieved.

Koda (2005:254) defines comprehension as a meaning-construction process, which involves integral interaction between text and reader. Although comprehension and decoding are different words which denote different meanings, the two are interdependent and inseparable in terms of how meaning is processed. Pretorius (2012:77) draws a line between decoding and comprehension. She refers to the former as a skill required in learning and manipulating the code and ‘translating’ the symbols into words in a text. Whilst the latter refers to the overall meaning assigned to a text. Janks (2011: 30) states that decoding is the ability to know and recognise letters, to know letter sound relationship and to understand how letters and their sounds combine to form words. She further indicates that learners who mastered decoding skills without comprehension will ‘bark at the print’. She asserts that decoding skills are lower order skills which learners should receive instruction in their reading. She suggests that learners’ poor performance in the 2006 PIRLS report

resulted from the fact that the questions asked required high order skills than simply decoding. However, Koda (2005:255) indicates that direct decoding skill training enhance reading comprehension.

The 2011 ANA report shows that learners lacked comprehension skills to interpret what most of the questions required of them. *The Department of Education' Teaching Reading in the Early Grades – Teachers 'Handbook* (2008:14) suggests ways of developing comprehension which teachers could follow. The first step is to activate learners' prior knowledge. Secondly, teachers should read aloud to learners and then discuss the meaning, learners' impressions and cause them to guess ahead. Teachers should also help learners to use cues and illustrations in and around the text. They should develop learners' decoding skills, fluency, increase their vocabulary by causing them to read more and develop their ability to apply high-order thinking skills like analysing, evaluating and interpreting. "Learning strategies like categorising, generalising, comparing, sequencing, inferring cause and effect and summarising will develop concurrently with reading comprehension" (Pretorius, 2012:78).

2.6.4 Vocabulary

Although for the purpose of this study comprehension and vocabulary are each allocated different spaces, it is difficult to talk about them divorcing one from the other. The two are closely connected. Koda (2005:257) states that text-meaning construction is impossible without functional knowledge of the words appearing in the text. He further indicates that both comprehension and vocabulary reflect conceptual knowledge and information manipulation capabilities, such as inference and contextual information integration. He argues that a distinction must be made between teaching words (direct vocabulary instruction) and teaching how to learn words (indirect vocabulary instruction). He asserts that the two involve different techniques and have different impacts on both vocabulary learning and comprehension development.

He cautions that care must be taken when designing instructional interventions. He lists factors specifically related to L2 reading ability, such as L2 linguistic knowledge, L2 decoding capability, L1 reading competence and L1-L2 lexical distance that should be included when designing L2 vocabulary instruction. He indicates that,

because of their closeness, instruction designed to increase vocabulary knowledge should also enhance comprehension. Although the Foundations for Learning prescribes and provides guidance on what the teacher should do during daily reading lessons, it does not give much in terms of the selection of suitable and appropriate texts for the learners. The teacher would be requested, for example, to do a reading comprehension task or to read a text modelling a reading strategy. It is left to the teacher to look for the type of texts that will incorporate Koda's factors alluded to above. It also depends on the capacity the teacher has in terms of deciding on the suitability and appropriateness of the texts that would be in line with the cognitive levels of his/her learners and reflect diversity. This might pose a challenge to teachers involved in second language instruction.

The Department of Education's Teaching Reading in the Early Grades – Teacher's Handbook (2008:16) suggests the following steps on how to teach vocabulary;

Teachers should ensure that learners read regularly or listen to texts that interest them. They should also read aloud to learners once a week for 30 minutes, this will introduce them to vocabulary they may not be able to read on their own. They should stop on odd or new words every now and then, and explain them to their learners. Learners should be provided with regular independent reading time and each time on reading aloud, shared and guided reading sessions, there should be at least six to eight new words that are explicitly taught.

For explicit vocabulary instruction, teachers should explain or demonstrate the meaning of the word. They should give examples of the word in a sentence and encourage learners to use the word orally in sentences of their own. Teachers should display the new words and the meanings of the words on a wall chart. Learners should be given the new words to take home to review for homework. Follow-ups should be done on this activity to ensure that learners can practice using their new words. Finally, teachers should arrange for each learner to have personal wordbook wherein each page would be allocated a different alphabetic letter and each time a new word is taught, learners would write it in the correct page of the wordbook.

2.6.5 Fluency

Pretorius (2012) describes fluency as the ease and speed with which reading takes place. She mentions that dysfluent readers read slowly and in a ponderous, monotonous tone. She further states that fluent readers pay attention to punctuation and natural pauses in sentences and phrases, and they chunk strings of words appropriately. Fluency in reading is also defined as “the ability to read texts smoothly, accurately and with understanding. It is a key indicator of comprehension” (SA, 2008). *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades – Teacher’s Handbook* suggests the following steps on how to help learners develop fluency:

Firstly, allow learners to re-read texts a few times to familiarise themselves with the text and to increase their fluency. Secondly, explain to the learners about fluency and motivate them to become fluent readers. Thirdly, have as many reading materials as possible in the classroom. Fourthly, have independent reading time each day as part of the reading focus time. Lastly, during guided group reading and independent activity time, allow learners to choose a book they are familiar with or suitable to their levels. Finally, explain the importance of silent reading and demonstrate how to read silently and, organise opportunities for learners to practice silent reading.

Phonemic awareness, word recognition, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency are considered to be the ‘Big Five’ of reading. Apart from weekly literacy presentations, the Foundations for Learning require teachers to embark on the reading strategies to improve learners’ reading abilities elaborated below.

2.7 The FFL reading strategies

2.7.1 Shared Reading

According to Saunders-Smith (2009), shared reading should precede both group guided reading and independent reading. This is because during shared reading learners are exposed to basic fundamental literacy elements such as; the concept of print, speaking and reading vocabulary, letter names, letter sounds and blending as well as sight words.

Shared reading can be done with the whole class or a smaller group. During shared reading lesson, learners share the reading task with the teacher and gradually take over the task of reading. The teacher should create a relaxed learning environment and encourage guessing and risk-taking, while accepting all attempts from learners and using their responses to promote further learning. Learners should also be praised for attempting to provide responses. In demonstrating shared reading lesson, the teacher can make use of big books, enlarged texts of stories, learners' own writing, magazines, newspapers, poems, songs, advertisements, pamphlets, and so on. *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades* (2008) outlines the next steps as follows:

A. Introduce the text (pre-reading)

The teacher should talk about the title and format, that is, headings, illustrations, subheadings, captions and diagrams. Briefly saying what the text is about and explaining concepts, as well as introducing new words to the learners will increase understanding of the text. The teacher should find out what learners know about the topic and do pictures walk if necessary by discussing illustrations, reading the captions and interpreting the diagrams. Doing all these will make learners know that “talk precedes reading and that talk makes the reading easier and more fun” (Smith, 2009:65). Learners will also learn that talking through the picture helps the reader know what the story is about. They would also realise that knowing what the story is about helps with the reading and enables the reader to make sense of the story.

B. During reading

During shared reading session the teacher should read the text aloud while learners follow in their texts. The teacher models how the text should be read, that is, fluently, observing punctuation marks and with clear understanding. At this stage the teacher should engage in lots of coaching, prompting and questions to activate, sustain and reflect upon learners' thinking.

C. After reading

Here the teacher should ask purposeful questions to check understanding of the text and if necessary, ask questions to provoke personal responses. For example, what did you find most interesting about this? The teacher should proceed to re-read the

text with the learners joining in softly. Finally, learners may engage in a written activity based on the text just read.

2.7.2 Group reading

Group reading is explained in *READ Educational Trust Course Materials* (2004:48) as a way of teaching reading where learners sit in small groups (usually six people to a group) and the members of the group read the same text (for example, a story, report, and so on). *READ* further states that the group reads the passage aloud, each group member taking a turn to read a section. When the group has completed the reading, they discuss the book and complete some activities. The whole class is involved in group reading at the same time, but each group reads different material. *READ* views group reading as one way of allowing mixed ability learners to work together. Below are the steps outlined by *READ* (2004:48) in terms of what happens in group reading:

Learners will meet in their groups; each group has a place to meet. Group leaders will collect the books for their groups and distribute them accordingly. All groups will read at the same time. Each group will discuss their books when they have finished reading. Groups will then complete written activities. The teacher would be facilitating the process by coaching, prompting, and questioning to keep learners thinking and focused to the task at hand.

Here follows an example of a group reading poster outlined by *READ* whereby the three steps of group reading are followed:

A. Looking (pre-reading)

Learners look at the cover and some pictures and each learner says what he/she thinks the story is about.

B. Reading (during reading)

Learners take turns to read part of the book and clarify new words by asking each other, read the words in the sentence (context) or sound out the words.

C. After reading

Learners follow the instructions by reading each question aloud and taking turns to give responses. Finally, each learner does his/her own written work.

2.7.3 Guided Reading

The Department of Education's Teaching Reading in the Early Grades (2008:26) defines guided reading as a teacher directed reading activity. It further indicates that the teacher supports a small group of learners as they talk, read and think their way through a text. *READ* (2004:50) also states that in guided reading the teacher work with a small group of children who are at the same developmental level in reading. A suitable book or text is chosen and learners are guided to read and make sense of the text.

Saunders-Smith (2009:71) outlines six steps she calls the guided reading teaching sequence which include the following: setting the scene, book introduction, picture walk, verbal read, return to text and response. She indicates that the six steps form the core of guided reading as an instructional practice. She further explains what happens in guided learning whereby children form understanding by attaching new information to what they already know and can use. The teacher's role in the process is to build the scaffold that connects one bit of knowledge to the next. This scaffold, according to Saunders-Smith, consists of four types of information, namely: concepts, skills, vocabulary and strategies.

The teacher should make an assessment to determine the specifics of which concepts, skills, vocabulary, and strategies the children have control of and can use in order to use this knowledge to structure support for the next learning. Returning to Saunders-Smith' six steps teaching sequence, when setting the scene the teacher alerts readers to concepts and relevant vocabulary and tells them why they will be reading this particular text. With book introduction the teacher reads the title, the author and illustrator's names and then says something about them. The teacher and learners then examine the details of the cover illustration, check the back cover for more information and move to the title page. The table of contents could as well be checked if it is available. The third step, picture walk involves investigating "each

page of the book in a quick, purposeful manner” (Saunders-Smith, 2009:76). It allows children to examine the illustrations as a source of information and use that information against another source. The picture walk may also include examining and discussing features of print such as italics, speech bubbles, and letter or diary format. The fourth step, verbal read is the main assessment opportunity in the lesson. Here the teacher gets to watch and hear all the children operate on the specific text. During verbal reading the teacher gets the opportunity to observe each child as he/she processes the same text the other children are reading. The fifth step, return to text, crowns the verbal read, because it provides two opportunities to the teacher, namely;

To teach the specific skills and vocabulary the book offers, and to metacognise the problem-solving strategies the children used or missed.

The last step, responding to text, ensures that skills, vocabulary, and strategies addressed during the lesson are understood and used by learners outside the lesson. Here learners get opportunities to respond to the text verbally, in a written form and through other means.

2.7.4 Independent Reading

The Foundations for Learning indicate that Grades 4-6 must allocate 30 minutes daily on reading for enjoyment. It further indicates that everyone, including the teacher, should read a book of their choice and record the title on a reading record card. It further indicates that during the last 10 minutes of the 30 minutes, learners must share what they have read with others in pairs, groups, or whole class. This is also corroborated by the *RNCS Grades R-9 (2002:48)* which stipulates that reading is essential for language development, for enjoyment and for learning about the world. The same view is shared by *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) Intermediate Phase Grades 4-6 (2011:10)* which indicates that teachers should gradually get learners to do more independent reading in any spare time at their disposal. It also calls on schools to integrate independent reading within the time allocated for reading. During reading and viewing CAPS calls on teachers to cause learners to reflect on texts read during independent reading by doing a short

oral book review, relating text to own life, summarise text in a few sentences, sharing opinions on the text and so on.

Teaching Reading in the Early Grades (2008:27) define independent reading as a purposeful planned activity whereby learners with teachers' guidance choose their own books according to their interests and abilities. It further indicates that independent reading should be followed by discussion and dialogue with teachers and peers and that teachers should always observe, listen and gather information about learners' reading behaviour during independent reading sessions. Lockwood (2008:23) states that independent reading works better when children can choose freely what to read, including non-fiction, comics or magazines and there is no automatic requirement to write about what has been read. He further indicates that independent reading provides teachers opportunities to model book choice to children by discussing clues offered by covers, blurb, author information, title and genre. Lockwood (2008:23) further indicates that independent reading works better when teachers read for pleasure as well and that children read more when they see other people reading. Independent reading is the ultimate goal of any reading instruction; therefore, if learners succeed in this area they shall have achieved the objective of the reading instruction.

2.8 Other approaches/strategies for reading

2.8.1 Strategic reading

Reading is a complex process that demands learners to have developed particular levels of cognitive skills to manage the reading process. For example, learners' reading comprehension should enable them to infer, analyse, apply and evaluate information gathered from the various texts they interacted with. Therefore, teaching learners to become strategic readers is one way of helping them to overcome the challenges they might encounter while reading.

Koda (2005:217) describes strategies as reader-initiated actions used to accomplish a given task. He further states that strategic reading cannot be achieved without readers' desire and intent to read more efficiently. He indicates that the

acquisition of strategic reading depends on the corresponding development of cognitive and metacognitive capabilities.

Think Literacy ([Sa]:7) states that effective readers use strategies to understand what they read before, during and after reading. It further indicates that before reading, effective readers should firstly, use prior knowledge to think about the topic. Secondly, they should make predictions about the meaning of the text. Thirdly and finally, they should preview the text by skimming and scanning to get a sense of the overall meaning.

During reading, effective readers should monitor understanding by questioning, thinking about and reflecting on the ideas and information in the text. *Think Literacy* ([Sa]:7) also indicates that after reading, effective readers should reflect upon ideas and information in the text and relate what they have read to their own experiences and knowledge. English second language learners have to be guided through these processes for them to develop into strategic readers.

Reading strategies more often overlap and complement one another in a well-planned reading lesson. They may not be taught once in one lesson, but most of them can be integrated in a single lesson. Reading strategies utilisation will also to a large extent depend on the cultural context in which a particular text is produced and the cultural context in which the same text is received. Therefore, teachers have a role to familiarise and clarify the context to their learners or prompt their learners to use strategies that will demystify a complex or unfamiliar context. With the FFL placing emphasis on text processing activities to construct meaning, the tripartite relationship among the writer, text and the reader glued by the context should be unravelled for learners to comprehend reading instructions and to respond appropriately.

Koda (2005:254-263) also outlines research findings directly relevant to the development of reading comprehension. They are: decoding, vocabulary knowledge, syntactic processing, text-structure knowledge, main idea detection, background knowledge and comprehension strategies. Lack or no competence of these findings will make text meaning construction process difficult.

2.8.2 Read aloud

Read aloud is one other strategy that teachers may use to engage learners in reading activities. The FFL calls on teachers to engage learners in shared reading activities by reading texts with learners and modelling reading techniques like predicting, skimming and scanning for 15 minutes on daily basis. In this kind of activity and others similar to it, teachers are required to initiate and to lead the reading process as well as prompt learners into reading action. Read aloud is suitable to execute this kind of activity. Teaching Reading in the Early Grades (2008:26) indicates that reading aloud to learners helps them to develop a love for good literature, motivates them to read on their own and familiarise them with a variety of genres, including non-fiction.

2.9 Contextual factors affecting reading in schools.

2.9.1 The influence of language-in- education policy on learners' reading proficiency.

Since the advent of democracy South had strived towards normalising and deracialising the language in education policy in the country's education system. The new constitution, Act 108 of 1996's Bill of Rights obligates government to ensure that everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public institutions. These constitutional imperatives prompted the Department of Education to come up with the language-in-education policy that will reflect non-racialism and accommodate the diversity of South African population.

The Department of Education introduced the language-in-education policy on 14 July 1997. The policy is grounded on multilingualism to harmonise language relations in the country. In its preamble the Language-in-Education policy indicates that the learning of more than one language should be the general practice and principle in our society and that being multilingual should be a defining characteristic of being South African. Therefore language-in-education policy obligates schools to promote multilingualism in their curriculum implementation. Broom (2010:509) states that the current language policy allows for instruction in the mother tongue of the learners' choice during Grades 1 and 2 and from Grades 3, the school may choose to

introduce one of the 11 official languages, although in practice the choice is often English. This is corroborated by Howie et al (2008:551) who indicates that the Department of Education's language policy stipulates that South African children should receive instruction at school in their home language until they reach Grade 3. They also indicate that in many schools, the language of instruction changes in Grade 4 to a second language, which is English or Afrikaans, whilst learners continue to receive reading instruction in the language of the first three years of schooling.

Given the directives of language policy alluded to above, one would argue that although the intention of the language policy is good in terms of addressing the language inequalities perpetuated by many years of apartheid rule, it also put pressure on learners and teachers. The introduction of second language (English in most cases) in Grade 4 comes with its own demands. Learners who have been instructed in mother tongue for the past three years have to grapple with a language they hardly speak at home. Although the focus of my study is Grade 6, the period that African language learners are introduced to second language or English, that is, from Grade 4 to Grade 6 does not provide sufficient exposure to African language learners to develop reading comprehension in the new language. Broom (2010:510) argues that the constraint of the current system is that from Grade 3, all assessment is conducted either in English or Afrikaans, thus even under the seemingly democratic policy, very little actual change has occurred. She further indicates that the African language speakers continue to be educationally disadvantaged and subjected to a form of subtractive/transitional bilingualism that devalues their home language.

This may explain why after four years of the Foundations for Learning implementation, learners continued to perform poorly despite the support offered by the programme. Learners in Grade 6 are exposed to English for only two years, that is, from Grade 4 to Grade 5. In Grade 6 learners face the challenge of not having yet established sufficient rapport with English as the medium of instruction to comprehend and to respond to texts in a meaningful way. Broom (2010:510) states that from Grade 3 English is frequently used across the curriculum as the medium of assessment, so children who do not have adequate English reading abilities are at a disadvantage. Despite the use of English as the language of learning and teaching,

it remained confined in most cases to the school environment only. Most learners whose home language is not English continue to suffer from lack of support at home. Under these circumstances learners may not do well in the new language as previous systemic evaluations and annual national assessments results have shown.

Janks (2011:29) states that many children in South Africa come to school without any knowledge of the words in the language they have to learn to read in. He further indicates that children in the throes of a language/literacy switch cannot be expected to perform as well as children who are reading in their home language exclusively. The Foundations for Learning Campaign as an intervention programme designed to improve learners' performance in language, tried to level the playing field in terms of support to learners and teachers in the form of lesson plans, pace setters, assessment framework spelling out milestones to be attained per week per term and so on. However, despite this support learners continue to perform below expectations. One would agree with researchers mentioned above that the switch to English as a language of learning and teaching could be challenging to many learners. Not only learners were challenged, teachers as well had difficulties. Broom (2010) indicates that many of these teachers lack confidence with spoken and written English and have difficulty simultaneously mediating and translating reading materials and instructions. Prinsloo and Heugh (2013) argue that although the underlying principle of the current language-in-education policy is to maintain home language(s), while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s), in practice learners' home language development is abandoned too early. They further argue that premature reliance on a new additional language sacrifices its effectiveness as a medium of learning and teaching. They maintain that the overall result for learners whose home and instructional languages have been compromised simultaneously is poor educational achievement throughout school. Prinsloo and Heugh (2013:1) suggest the following to address the situation: policy awareness, implementation and derived strategies, teacher training, learning material provision, support to teachers and learners and improved teaching practices.

2.9.2 Other factors affecting reading literacy development in schools

Researchers, like Zhang (2006), had found out that disparities that exist in terms of learners performance in reading could be attributed to environment, that is, urban or rural in which the school is located and also to the socio-economic status of the family from which the learners come from. Zhang (2006:581) also indicates that students from higher socio-economic status families are more likely to perform well than those from lower socio-economic status families. This argument sounds convincing in the sense that families whose socio-economic status is higher are assumed to have higher literacy standards and could therefore afford to provide support by supervising the school work of their children, buying them books, magazines, newspapers and electronic equipments that will enhance their literacy development. The lower socio-economic status families do not have the same opportunities, because of their limited literacy prowess. Zhang (2006:583) also indicates that rural students tend to be particularly vulnerable to educational disadvantage.

The 2011 annual national assessments (ANA) which were used to benchmark the four years of the implementation of the Foundations for Learning serve as evidence to the disparities alluded to above in terms of learners' performance. Provinces that are predominantly urban and have higher socio-economic status, like Western Cape and Gauteng did well in the 2011 ANA even though they couldn't achieve the 50% threshold. Equally provinces that are predominantly rural and reflecting lower socio-economic status, like Mpumalanga and Limpopo could not do well. This shows why the Directorate of rural education was tasked to monitor the implementation of government priorities and policies in rural schools to address the imbalances created by the past regime, which to some extent concentrated resources, teacher supply and support to urban schools. Gardiner (2008:10-13) mentions obstructions that hamper learner performance in rural schools, like relations between community members and the schools whereby learners are expected to do certain domestic duties in the morning and afternoon which clash with the school routines and timetables. He also cites poverty and poor physical conditions, such as overcrowding in many schools as stumbling blocks for effective quality teaching and learning.

The Foundations for Learning like all other programmes that came before it, was not without its own challenges and problems. Meier (2011:552) identified challenges such as integrating the FFL into the school timetable. Schools had to decide on how to incorporate the time dictated by the FFL on the school timetable without compromising other school activities. The implementation of the FFL provided teachers with extra work while they were still struggling to implement the work schedules based on National Curriculum Statement. These include marking tests, recording marks and so on.

Other problems indicated by Meier (2011:552) are that teachers felt that the FFL increased their administrative work at the expense of teaching time and thus adding pressure on their workload. She also indicated that the electronic supply of tests to schools posed a challenge to many schools, because of lack of electronic equipment and photocopy facilities to produce copies for learners. These problems, according to Meier (2011:552), contributed largely to the poor performance in the 2008 ANA which was considered as the baseline assessment for the FFL. She concluded that the FFL is full of control measures, but lacks the strategic measures to ensure the success of the programme. Other factors, like the literacy gap that exists between school and home wherein the two do not complement each other and shortage of reading materials, like readers have also contributed to the poor performance alluded to in this study.

2.10 Conclusion

In conclusion one would indicate that the reading strategies alluded to in this study will not be effective if teachers do not have enough capacity to implement them. Government should prioritise teacher training that will lead to improved teaching practices before putting a programme, like the FFL for implementation. Issues of support should be addressed. Generally, the Foundations for Learning is a good programme which outlined in details every step teachers should take to improve the reading abilities of learners. It provides lesson plans, pace setters outlining items to be taught per week/per term, assessment to be undertaken and quarterly assessment tasks. The teacher's role is simply implementation and providing additional information and clarity to learners.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section of the study seeks to provide a discursive report on how data with participants was generated. It outlines in detail the means of interactions employed to gather data from the four participating schools. The following subtopics were covered: research design chosen for the study, population targeted for the purpose of this study, the sampling procedure used, data collection methods used, limitation of the study and ethical considerations followed.

3.2 Research design

My study was non-experimental in nature and therefore took a descriptive research path which, according to Slavin (1984:15), sought to describe particular phenomenon as they are. The study also subscribed to one type of descriptive research, which is evaluation, because it sought to determine whether a particular programme was implemented as per the provided directives or not and whether it was achieving its intended purpose as envisaged or not. In pursuance of the aim and objectives alluded to in this study, I employed qualitative research approach to engage a selected number of schools with Grade 6 classes. Qualitative research is defined by Creswell (2007:37-38) as beginning with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.

He further clarifies this definition by identifying the following common characteristics that are inherent in qualitative research approach: natural setting, researcher as key instrument, multiple sources of data, inductive data analysis, participants' meaning, theoretical lens, interpretive inquiry and holistic account. By natural setting, reference is made to the fact that "qualitative researchers tend to collect data at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. Researcher as key instrument implies that qualitative researchers themselves collect data by

examining documents, observing behaviour, and interviewing participants. Qualitative researchers collect multiple forms of data, including interviews, observations, and documents, rather than relying on a single source of data” Creswell (2007: 37-38).

Inductive analysis as one of the characteristics of qualitative research involves working between the themes and the database until a comprehensive set of themes is established. The focus of qualitative research is based on the meaning participants hold about the problem or issue and not the researcher’s. Creswell (2007:37-38) also indicates that qualitative research is an emergent design which means that the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed. All the phases of the process may change or shift after the researcher enters the field or begin to collect data. Without going through the explanation of each characteristic provided by Creswell, they all provided a procedural framework upon which this study was shaped and directed.

3.3 Population

The study took place in the Malegale Circuit in the Sekhukhune district of Limpopo Province. Malegale circuit caters for 09 secondary and 19 primary schools and it is about 150 kilometres southeast of the city of Polokwane. The circuit is located in a rural environment hence all the nineteen primary schools constituting it are in the quintile one category, that is, government allocates funds through norms and standards to support the teaching and learning activities of the schools. English at these schools has a dual purpose. Firstly, it is a subject done at First Additional Language Level and secondly, it is a language of teaching and learning. Four schools with Grade 6 classes were sampled from this circuit.

3.4 Sampling

The focus of this study was based on Grade 6 English language teachers who formed part of the sample. They were purposefully selected based on grade (standard/class) and not on performance. Four teachers from four different schools with Grade 6 classes in the circuit were engaged as participants in this study. Grade 6 English language teachers were selected on the basis that they are responsible for a grade in the General Education and Training (GET) band which is at the exit point of the intermediate phase. Their selection was also informed by the fact that annual national evaluation was administered in Grade 6 in 2011 to determine the impact of the FFL.

3.5 Data Collection methods

The researcher employed the qualitative approach to collect data. Of the numerous qualitative methods that exist, the researcher made use of observations (with checklist), interviews and document analysis. The findings gathered through the two data collection methods were further corroborated by document analysis that confirmed the point of views generated through this study.

3.5.1 Instrument 1: Interview questions

The researcher developed interview questions to engage Grade 6 English language teachers of the four participating schools. The interview questions were structured according to what Valenzuela and Shrivastava [Sa] in their presentations refer to as standardised, open-ended interview in which the same open-ended questions are posed to all interviewees. The interview questions focused on the reading procedure outlined by the Foundations for Learning, time frames allocated to the reading activities, the challenges experienced by teachers in administering the reading guidelines, text types used in the reading tasks, competence in language and sentence level work and competence in reading independently or in groups. The interview comprised eight questions with each catering for responses from the four participating schools. The questions allowed follow ups and clarifications where

necessary. Additions and omissions were also catered by a provision on general remarks (if any).

3.5.2 Instrument 2: Observations (with a checklist)

The researcher developed a checklist that was used to observe four teachers in schools with Grade 6 classes. The focus of the observations was based on how the four schools utilise different kinds of reading strategies recommended by the Foundations for Learning. The researcher also observed how Grade 6 English language teachers use focused oral questions to prompt responses from learners and to enhance learners' reading comprehension.

The observation checklist instrument was divided into three categories in terms of the reading strategies advocated by the Foundations for Learning. Category one looked at shared reading activities. It comprised four questions ranging from the introduction, modelling, and content predictions of the shared reading instruction to assessment of learners' comprehension. Time frames were attached to each item observed. The time frames served as guidelines on how much time should be spent on each item under observation. Category two was based on group, guided and independent reading. Two questions were set on this category. One question looked at opportunities created by the teachers for learners to express themselves on the type of the reading task in progress. The other one looked at the monitoring and support teachers provide for learners to respond appropriately.

The last category focused on reading for enjoyment. It checked on opportunities provided by teachers for learners to express their thoughts on the books they have read. The category also looked at the monitoring and assessment of the reading task.

3.5.3 Instrument 3: Document analysis

Document analysis was employed as the third instrument to collect and corroborate data gathered through interviews and observations. Document analysis is one of the assessment methods which is said to be a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic. The involvement of a third instrument is also part of a process that researchers refer to as triangulation. Bryman ([Sa]:1) describes triangulation as

the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings. Hussein (2009) also defines triangulation as the use of multiple methods mainly qualitative and quantitative methods in studying the same phenomenon for the purpose of increasing study credibility. Triangulation in qualitative research is said to help validate the research results.

While most of the documents were interrogated in the literature review in this study, other documents that provide practical evidence of how reading was conducted, assessed and recorded were checked as well. They include individual teacher's files which contains the following: work schedule, pace setters, programme of assessment, record sheets (CASS and oral), assessment frameworks and rubrics for assessing reading, and so on.

3.6 Limitation of the study

Although reading continues to be a challenge in terms of how teachers should structure their reading instructions and in terms of how learners respond to the reading instructions, the time allocation advocated by the FFL remained unaffordable to the participating schools. The FFL promoted reading above all other language activities at schools, hence teachers found it difficult to comply. The FFL was an intervention programme and like all other intervention programmes it had its lifespan. Its impact will to a large extent be determined by its lifespan which may be difficult to measure. Some participants were not aware that the same reading strategies that were advocated by the FFL were infused into CAPS which should make it easier for them to follow and implement.

3.7 Ethical considerations

The four schools that participated in this study were approached and requested officially by letters through the Department of Education's circuit management office. The purpose of the study was outlined and clarified in the letters. Participating schools were assured of strict adherence to the principles of confidentiality and

anonymity. This was done to assure participants that the researcher will not in any way harm or damage their reputation and integrity through their involvement in this study. It was also a means of recognising the fact that as participants, they are autonomous individuals who will share information without any form of coercion or victimisation. Throughout this study ethical considerations were observed to guard against violations of participants' rights that might negatively affect their standing in their working environment and the community they serve.

3.8 Conclusion

The challenge of teaching learners to read with comprehension and of inculcating the culture of reading is enormous. Therefore, no single methodology or programme will on its own achieve the expected results. An integration of strategies and approaches is required to facilitate and develop learners' reading comprehension. The FFL, like other programmes before was intended to address the backlogs experienced by schools in terms of developing learners' reading competencies.

CHAPTER 4

Data analysis and interpretation of the results

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter hinted on the tools used to collect data, the limitations the study incurred and the ethical measures considered. This chapter provides an in-depth information on how data was collected, analysed and the interpretation of the results thereof.

All data collected through the three instruments, that is, interviews, observations and document analysis was assembled and analysed qualitatively. Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003:1) provide an outline of basic approach for analysing and interpreting narrative data (often referred to as content analysis) that was adapted to this study. The outline advocated by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003:2) include the following;

Step 1: Get to know your data

For qualitative analysis, this means understanding your data by reading and re-reading the text.

Step 2: Focus the analysis

This is done by reviewing the purpose of the evaluation and what you want to find out. For example, identify a few key questions that you want your analysis to answer.

Step 3: Categorise information

This was done by identifying themes and patterns into coherent categories.

4.2 Results and interpretations

The results are presented in the order of the questions, responses and observations as they appear on the three data collection instruments used in this study. They reflect the views of the Grade 6 English language teachers from the four schools that participated in the study. The operations in these schools were the same in many respects except for a few areas. For example, all the four schools use a 30 minutes period time table. All the four teachers were responsible for other subjects besides English. The only notable difference was their class sizes. Teacher 1 was responsible for 19 learners, teacher 2 had 57 learners, and teacher 3 had 37 while teacher 4 had 56 learners.

4.2.1 The Foundations for Learning outlines the reading procedure that must be followed during the reading lessons. What is your view regarding these reading guidelines?

Table 1: Participants' views on the FFL reading guidelines

Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
<p>The READ programmes were simple and easy to follow, because we were trained to use them. The FFL though well structured needed time to monitor and assess learners' reading progress, but they provided clear directive on how reading should unfold.</p>	<p>All the reading intervention programmes, including the FFL are very helpful. What makes a difference these days is that schools have sufficient supply of readers to engage learners in reading practice.</p>	<p>Although we were supplied with the foundations for learning documents, we relied more on the READ programme than on the FFL. Shortage of readers also made it difficult to follow the guidelines as prescribed.</p>	<p>The teacher was new at the school, but she knew the FFL from her previous station. When asked if she used them at her former school. She agreed, but indicates that she used them minimally citing time factor and large class size.</p>

Table 1 above provides a synopsis of what transpired during the reading lesson presentations. What is common in the four teachers' responses is that although they had knowledge of the Foundations for Learning, they never fully implemented them as prescribed. What is also commonly lacking is the monitoring and support of the programme, because although the programme was not optional for schools to implement, the four schools treated its implementation as an option and the SMT as well as the circuit or district officials did not rectify this anomaly. Lack of training, time constraints, large class size and shortage of readers are cited as some of the deterrents to the proper implementation of the programme.

4.2.2 Do you find the time frames allocated to each reading activity workable or not? Briefly explain.

Table 2: Participants' views on FFL time frames

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
4.2.2.1	Not workable	Not workable	Not workable	Not workable
4.2.2.2	It was difficult to plan a lesson in accordance with the prescripts of the FFL, particularly because our school uses a 30 minutes period time table which provides insufficient time to address the activities of the FFL. I used my prerogative to ensure that learners, for example, are given time (not the 30 minutes prescribed) to perform reading activities like shared, independent reading and so on.	The FFL has segmented the reading activities and allocated time to each activity. This was confusing because, we have been using an integrated approach to teach reading. In one lesson you find yourself having dealt with three to four reading strategies, that is, shared, group, independent and reading aloud.	The time frames were not workable because, firstly, nothing was done to integrate the time frames with the school time table. It was left on the affected teachers (language and maths) to make some provisions. We tried, but failed to adhere to the time frames as stipulated in the programme.	The time frames were not considered. It was only the content and the strategies that were sometimes used to teach reading activities to learners.

In view of the responses above, it is clear that the time frames not only posed a challenge to English or Maths teachers, but to the SMT or the time table committees that had a duty to integrate the programme into the school time table. The challenge was also experienced when reading activities lessons were administered. The challenge was on whether the prescribed time frames should be divided into smaller units and fit them into the lessons, because using them as they are would mean that the 30 minutes periods should be extended to accommodate these time frames and if this route is followed, other subjects will be affected as well. As a result of this challenge the respondents resorted to their own discretion to provide solution.

4.2.3 What challenges do you experience when administering the FFL reading guidelines?

Table 3: FFL challenges

Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
<p>Teaching learners to read is a process that cannot be regulated by time frames, but depends on the progress learners made. The FFL was conceived on time frames assuming that from 2008 to 2011 learners shall have accomplished the ability to read at age appropriate levels. This is a challenge, because some learners could still not read appropriately with understanding. The 2011 ANA results provided concrete evidence.</p>	<p>One of the challenges is that the FFL seemed not to embrace an integrated approach to reading. The reading strategies advocated by the FFL cannot be taught in isolation from one another. The response of the learners to the reading instruction will always determine the type of reading strategies to use. The FFL appear to be rigid on this matter.</p>	<p>Integrating the FFL time frames on the time table was the biggest challenge. Adhering to the time frames during lesson presentation was also challenging because our periods are 30 minutes which equals to one FFL reading activity in a day. For example, reading for enjoyment for 30 minutes daily.</p>	<p>The challenge was that one did not bother much to use the FFL reading guidelines except picking one or two strategies in a particular day. Perhaps one was challenged on how to use these strategies because there was no training that I attended on the implementation of the FFL.</p>

Table 3 above shows that of the four teachers none of them indicates that she was not challenged. Even teacher 4 who confessed to not having used the FFL much, point out that perhaps lack of training caused her lack of interest in the FFL reading guidelines. The challenges indicated by the other three teachers range from rigidity of the programme, integrating FFL time frames on the time table, teachers' workload, class size, insufficient readers to accommodating diversity in the classroom. Teachers complained that the programme does not accommodate the fact that some learners need more time to grasp the reading instruction. They also indicated that the teacher-learner ratio does not make things easy for them to implement the programme as required. Lastly, they indicate that the programme brought more administrative work to deal with, like compiling learners' progress report on monthly and quarterly basis and administering assessment as stipulated in the FFL assessment frame work manual. The FFL seemed not to welcome flexibility and a different view point. It suggested a give and take kind of a situation.

4.2.4 The Foundations for Learning requires learners to interact with texts of various types to establish meaning.

4.2.4.1 Which text types do you find interesting to your learners?

4.2.4.2 What would you say is the reason for their liking?

Table 4: Text types liked by learners and reasons thereof

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
4.2.4.1	Large picture books and story books with pictures	Large pictorial texts and texts that depict what they are familiar with like, soccer, birthday parties, wedding, and so on.	Large picture books and story books with pictures	Large picture books and story books with pictures
4.2.4.2	They are mostly attracted to pictures more than to the content itself. As a teacher I must ensure that I relate their interest on pictures to the reading instruction in progress.	As children they are likely to be attracted to pictures more than to the content itself. It is therefore important for us as teachers to use that as an advantage by explaining what the pictures entails in relation to what they are going to read about. This will make text comprehension easier.	Children like pictures and they find reading to be more of fun when coupled with pictures than something laborious.	Children find fun in pictures. They do not care what the intention of your teaching instruction is. It is therefore important to explain to them the relation between the pictures and the content they interact with.

Table 4 above is unanimous on the kind of texts learners like most. They are attracted to big picture books irrespective of what the content is all about. Teachers therefore have a duty to explain and establish a link between the pictures and the content of the texts. Learners should not see the pictures in isolation from the texts. Teacher 2 indicated that pictures are actually assisting them because, they simplify the content and once learners understand what the pictures represent, learning the content becomes easy for them. It is clear that teaching reading with picture books make things easy for both learners and teachers.

4.2.5 Shared reading is one of the reading strategies required by the FFL in which learners must be assessed.

4.2.5.1 How often do you model shared reading activities to your learners?

4.2.5.2 How would you describe your learners' reactions to these activities?

Table 5: Participants' views on shared reading and learners' reactions

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
4.2.5.1	Shared reading is allocated two periods on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I read aloud with learners following me silently. I also listen to them reading and interject to correct their pronunciation and call on them to observe punctuation marks.	Most of my reading instructions are preceded by shared reading. I hold the reader up for everyone to see and call the learners' attention to the title. I then ask learners to read the title aloud and to make some predictions on what the title is about. I show learners pictures and allow them to tell what they think about the pictures. I then	I demonstrate every reading lesson before making learners to read. I pronounce and explain words that are difficult to learners. I then call on learners to read making them to observe punctuation marks. I then ask them questions based on the text they have just read to establish if they understood the text.	Every lesson is demonstrated before learners could read. I point out to learners to observe punctuation marks as they read. I assess learners' comprehension by asking them questions based on the text to check if they have established meaning of the text.

		<p>model reading with learners following silently. Learners are prompted to read aloud as I point the lines with a ruler. I call their attention to observe punctuation marks. I then assess their comprehension by asking them questions based on the text they have read.</p>		
4.2.5.2	<p>They enjoy a lot, especially if I have led the reading and particularly if the text is not dominated by words that they are not familiar with.</p>	<p>They enjoy the reading, especially if the text provides opportunities for dramatisation. They love dramatising what they read.</p>	<p>As long as you have demonstrated how they should read, learners enjoy the reading lesson. If you call them to read individually they all compete to read first.</p>	<p>They enjoy the reading. What is important is to demonstrate the reading to them.</p>

According to Saunders-Smith (2009:65) the teacher should create a relaxed learning environment and encourage guessing and risk-taking, while accepting all attempts from learners and using their responses to promote further learning. Learners should also be praised for attempting to provide responses. It is no wonder that teachers in table 5 above prefer shared reading above all other strategies to teach their learners to read. By creating a relaxed atmosphere teachers are able to drive their reading instruction to their targets, who are learners. The four teachers in table 5 above agree that they engage learners in shared reading during most of their reading lessons. They only differ in terms of how often they engage in shared reading. Teacher 1 engages her learners in shared reading on Tuesdays and Thursdays whilst the other three appears to be doing it every time they conduct a reading lesson. It is also clear in terms of the responses above that learners enjoy the shared reading activities. The modelling and demonstration of the shared reading tasks by teachers could be attributed to the liking of these activities by learners.

4.2.6 The Foundations for Learning requires teachers to engage learners in word and sentence level work.

4.2.6.1 Can your learners recognise and identify language items such as nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and so on in word and sentence level work activities during reading?

4.2.6.2 Which language items challenge them most?

Table 6: Learners' recognition/identification of language items and challenges experienced

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
4.2.6.1	Yes, they do, because sometimes I ask them to underline nouns, verbs, pronouns, and so on from the text that I have selected for the reading lesson.	Yes, but only after I have explained them and their functions in a sentence. They are also able to identify characters and tell about setting in a story.	Yes, they do, but sometimes they need prompting from me before they can tell the language structure you have pointed in the text.	They do, but they need guidance from me and some examples that have these language items for them to relate them to the text they read.
4.2.6.2	Adjectives, prepositions, adverbs and conjunctions. Identification of these items in complex sentences also challenges them.	Adjectives, prepositions, adverbs and conjunctions. Identification of these items in complex sentences also challenges them.	Adjectives, prepositions, adverbs and conjunctions. Identification of these items in complex sentences also challenges them.	Adjectives, prepositions, adverbs and conjunctions. Identification of these items in complex sentences also challenges them.

Table 6 above shows that learners are in a position to recognise simple basic language items like, nouns, pronouns and verbs without the assistance of teachers. It also shows that when the sentence gets complex most learners fail to recognise and identify the very language items they have identified in simple sentences. In some cases they need coaching and prompting from the teachers for them to recognise and identify these language structures. Teacher 2 indicated that her learners are also able to mention characters in the story and also tell where the story is taking place without being prompted. Other language items like, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and so on remain a challenge to most learners.

4.2.7 The Foundations for Learning requires learners to engage in reading for enjoyment daily for 30 minutes and to share what they have read with others in pairs, groups, or whole class. Can you describe the level of competency of your learners regarding this activity?

Table 7: Learners' competency levels in reading for enjoyment

Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
<p>There are some learners who can read and tell you what they have read about and could also answer questions when asked. We also have learners who would read silently, but keep quiet when asked to tell what they were reading about. Some would memorise the text without understanding what it entails.</p>	<p>Most learners are average in terms of reading competency. They are more active and respond to questions when they read in small groups or whole class than when asked to read individually.</p>	<p>Most of the learners can read well and respond to simple questions relating to the text they are reading. However, when you ask questions that require insight, you don't get responses.</p>	<p>Here learners who cannot read are few. Most of the learners, though they can be described as average readers can read and respond to questions that assess their comprehension. We place learners who cannot read in groups with those that can read to boost their confidence and to encourage them to keep on trying.</p>

Table 7 above provides a scenario wherein you have learners who can read well and respond to questions when they read with others, but fail to do the same when they read as individuals. It also indicates that most learners are average readers, but when probed further about the extent to which learners are motivated to read, one does not get a clear answer. It could be that some learners are shy and need an assuring and relaxed atmosphere to do their best. Group reading though it might build confidence in shy learners, must not be overdone, because the ultimate goal of any reading instruction is to develop independent readers.

4.3 General remarks

From the responses provided by teacher 1 to teacher 4 above it is clear that reading activities do take place in the schools sampled, be they under the auspices of the FFL, READ or CAPS. It is also evident that the reading strategies advocated by the FFL are also found in both CAPS and the READ programme, because one teacher would indicate that she does not follow the FFL per se, but she relies more on READ only to find that shared, group, guided and independent reading strategies are equally advocated in both CAPS and READ. At the end of the interview the level of the reading competency of the learners could not be established with certainty, because teacher 1 to 4 would talk about average, without qualifying it. The next data collection instrument which is observation (with checklist) will perhaps establish the reading competency of learners in the four schools represented by teacher 1 to 4.

4.4 Observation checklist for reading lessons in grade 6 English language classes.

The researcher also embarked on observations to try and validate the information gathered through the interview questions above. The researcher used a checklist as indicated by table 8 below to capture what transpired during the observations. Teacher 1 was observed on 30 October 2013, whilst teacher 2 was observed on 31 October 2013. Both teachers 3 and 4 were observed on 4 November 2013. Table 8

below shows the observed activities that unfolded during the observation period. Each participant was observed on the application of the reading strategies advocated by the FFL. The first column on the left shows the reading strategies observed, while the second column itemises the specific areas observed. The third column indicates the time frames the researcher allocated to each observed item to guide the observation process. The fourth column provides the observation remarks generated from the observation process. The fifth and last column provided the researcher with points of reference on which the observation was sourced. All the observations captured from each participant were recorded in table 8 below.

Table 8: Observation of the application of the FFL reading strategies in the classroom

TEACHERS: 1, 2, 3, and 4				
Does the teacher:		Proposed time allocation	Observation remarks	Source
Shared reading	Introduce the text as a model reader by, for example reading the title, going through the contents and index pages, reading subheadings, clarifying key vocabulary and looking at illustrations with learners.	0-5 minutes	Teacher 1 introduced the text by asking learners to read the title which they did. She asked questions based on the title, like what do you think the title is about and learners made several responses that she finally reconciled. She also did a picture walk with learners asking them to tell what they see. The same trend was followed by teacher 2, 3 and 4. As part of their pre-reading activities they went through the title, the pictures and give learners opportunities to make some predictions on the content.	FFL requires: Orientation to the text Clarification of key vocabulary Saunders-Smith (2009)

	<p>Use the title of a text during pre-reading activities to inspire and request learners to make predictions about the content of the story.</p>	<p>0-5 minutes</p>	<p>In school A and B learners were actively involved in this exercise because the text used was not seen for the first time. At school C and D few learners responded positively to this activity. Teacher 3 and 4 provided different reasons for these minimal responses. Teacher 3 alluded to the fact that the text was new to the learners while teacher 4 indicated that in most of her reading activities same learners are always making responses.</p>	<p>FFL requires learners: To make predictions about the content of the story. Saunders-Smith (2009)</p>
	<p>Read the text slowly with learners joining in and repeating or clarifying problematic areas encountered by learners.</p>	<p>0-5 minutes</p>	<p>All teachers 1 to 4 demonstrated how learners must read by modelling the reading task. As learners join in to read they kept on calling their attention to observe punctuation marks and to reread phrases and sentences that were not read properly.</p>	<p>READ (2004), Saunders-Smith (2009) The FFL advises teachers to model the reading procedure.</p>

	Regularly check learners' attentiveness by posing simple yes/no or multiple choice questions to keep learners on track.	0-3 minutes	Teacher 1 kept on asking learners the who, what and why questions as well as the yes or no questions to check on learners' comprehension. Teacher 2 went further by asking learners to provide the setting, characters, plot and summary of the story. Learners responded positively which showed the extent to which reading is regarded at this school. Teacher 3 and 4 asked the yes or no questions and few wh-questions (not as much as teacher 1 did). Learners responded positively in all respects.	Saunders-Smith (2009) The FFL requires teachers to assess comprehension through focused oral questions.
		Multiple choice	No multiple choice questions were posed by all teachers 1 to 4.	
Group, guided and independent reading	Give learners opportunities to work individually, in pairs or in groups to read graded readers and complete workbooks.	Individual work 5-10 minutes	In all the four schools individual learners were provided opportunities to read. They read well except in few areas where teachers called their attention to observe punctuation marks.	The FFL and READ encourage individual, pair and group work.

		Pair work	Pair work did not take place.
		Group work	Group reading was observed in all the four schools. Teacher 1 to 4 cited same reasons why they engage learners in group reading. The most common one was that they grouped learners who struggle to read around those who can read to inspire them and boost their confidence. They alternatively also seat learners who cannot read in one row and those who can read in another. Their reasons were that when they give reading tasks to individual learners who cannot read well, once they perform the reading correctly, they are promoted to the group that read well. This is a way of encouraging them to aspire to read like their counterparts in the row that read well. The same happened with good readers. If they relapse they are

			demoted to the row of those who cannot read well.	
	Monitor and give support to each group or individuals by praising, prompting, mentoring, looking into learners' books and providing additional information.	0-5 minutes	All teachers 1 to 4 tried to monitor the reading sessions by correcting learners when they misread their lines, causing them to observe punctuation marks and making them to pronounce words appropriately. Although their level of praising, mentoring and prompting was not the same, they all tried to encourage their learners to read correctly.	READ (2004) Saunders-Smith (2009) FFL (2008)
Reading for enjoyment	Give learners opportunities to read books of their choice and record the title on reading record cards.	5-10 minutes	In all the four schools there were no record cards kept for this activity. The only records kept were mark sheets depicting formal continuous assessment (CASS) and oral assessment marks on reading. Reasons provided for lack of activity in this area were insufficient readers, lack of time and more workload. It was evident that schools 1 to 4 promoted reading for assessment over	The FFL requires learners to read and record titles of books they have read on their own.

			reading for enjoyment.	
	Regularly monitor and update the reading record cards.	0-3 minutes	No monitoring was done as there were no record cards kept. Only teacher 2 was aware of the record cards while others were not.	“
	Give learners opportunities to share the contents of their books with others in pairs, groups or the whole class.	5-10 minutes	Not done	“
			Only done formally (not for enjoyment) for the purpose of assessment by individuals, groups or whole class.	
			Groups	
		Whole class		
	Establish whether learners are able to make sense of the texts they have read by asking them various questions, such as literal (level 1) questions like recognition or recall of details, main ideas,	5-10 minutes	Observations were made in all the four schools were teacher 1 to 4 conducted reading lessons. Recognition and recall types of questions were asked and learners responded positively, but these activities were not meant for reading for	READ (2004) Saunders-Smith (2009) and the FFL advises teachers to assess learners' reading comprehension during

	sequence, character traits, and so on based on the text.		enjoyment. Learners did not select the books based on their own criteria and in all the four schools teacher 1 to 4 used prescribed readers. Reading for enjoyment did not materialise at the four schools.	the pre-, the while- and the post reading activities.
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4.5 General remarks

In all the four schools where observations were done, there were notable improvements concerning reading. The supply of readers though not covering all learners has made a difference, because group and pair reading are easily facilitated. It is only independent reading that suffers, because every learner should have a copy to read individually and assessed as such. Another area of concern is reading for enjoyment. Although it relies on a sufficient supply of readers, teachers 1 to 4 could have improvised despite the reasons they forwarded as impediments to its application. Learners could have been caused to share and rotate readers and teachers could have improvised by creating reading record cards out of the unused papers or card boxes, so that learners could easily record the titles of the text they have read.

The other notable area of concern was that assessment in the four schools observed was not done uniformly. There were no official rubrics for reading that were used to assess the reading competence of the learners. When asked about this anomaly they provided different reasons. Teacher 1 and 2 indicated that they thought mark sheets would serve this purpose and given the other subjects they teach, they did not have time. Teacher 3 indicated the time factor and that the department did not supply, but yet the assessment framework for intermediate phase has all the rubrics for assessing all language skills. Teacher 4 cited workload as the reason. She indicated that she is responsible for three different subjects besides English and therefore, she is in no position to apply individual assessment using rubrics to all learners. Evidence of monitoring and support at both school and circuit/district level was not visible, hence the four teachers did not see anything wrong when they deviated from the procedure outlined in the Foundations for Learning programme.

4.6 Document analysis

Apart from data collection methods alluded to above, the researcher also employed document analysis to further validate the findings gathered through interviews and observations. Table 9 below shows the documents analysed and the results thereof.

Table 9: Documents analysed and results

Document Analysis		
Teacher	Document(s)	Results
1	Work schedule, programme of assessment, record sheets, class work books, readers, pace setters, FFL assessment framework, rubrics for reading assessment and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).	The work schedule was available but not used. Programme of assessment is used. Record sheets (CASS and oral) available and used. Class work books contained reading activities done during informal assessment. Readers were insufficient but used in each reading lesson. Pace setters were not available. FFL assessment framework and rubrics are available but not used.
2	Work schedule, programme of assessment, record sheets, class work books, readers, pace setters, FFL assessment framework, rubrics for reading assessment and CAPS.	Work schedule was available but not used. Programme of assessment, record sheets and readers were available and used. Class work books contained some evidence of reading activities done during informal assessment. FFL assessment framework and rubrics were available but not used. Teacher 2 used the rubrics contained in the readers supplied by publishers which are not sanctioned by the department.
3	Work schedule, programme of assessment, record sheets, class work books, readers, pace setters, FFL assessment framework, rubrics for reading assessment and CAPS.	Like teacher 1 and 2 above, teacher 3 rather used the programme of assessment than the work schedule. Record sheets, class work books, and readers were available and utilised. Pace setters, assessment framework and rubrics were available but not used.

4	Work schedule, programme of assessment, record sheets, class work books, readers, pace setters, FFL assessment framework, rubrics for reading assessment and CAPS.	Teacher 4 had a programme of assessment and followed it. She had record sheets, classwork books reflecting assessment of learners' reading comprehension and readers that she used to conduct reading lessons. Work schedule assessment framework and official rubrics for assessing reading were not utilised.
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4.7 General remarks

The inconsistency reflected in table 9 above is a cause for concern, because no one can fathom how informal reading instruction was structured without the use of the work schedule. It is a known fact that informal activities are a build-up to formal ones. The work schedule is an official frame work that contains topics, sub-topics and time frames that must be dealt with in a particular subject. It is therefore not an option to use it when structuring the reading instruction. The reading strategies outlined in the work schedule are clarified and elaborated easily with time frames measured in weeks than in minutes, which is the case with the FFL reading guidelines. Record sheets though used by all teachers to record marks showing how learners performed the reading tasks are not uniform. Teacher 1's record sheet shows the performance of learners in reading aloud out of 10 marks, reading comprehension 20 marks, another reading 20 marks and language structures 15 and 20 marks respectively.

Teacher 2 has the same items as teacher 1 above, the only difference is that on top of what the two have in common teacher 2 has reflection on stories 10 marks, performing song or poem 20 marks and 30 marks reading comprehension. Teacher 2 also has a separate oral mark sheet which assesses learners out of 5 marks each, in terms of early reading, can read most of the words, can answer why questions, can explain the main idea and can say what is in the picture. Teacher 3's mark sheets (both orals and CASS) do not show what was assessed, except that oral marks were entered out of 20 and at the bottom there are names of learners categorised into good and bad readers. The criterion used for this categorisation is not clear, because no rubrics were made available as requested. Teacher 4 is also not specific about what was assessed in her record sheet. There is an entry for oral work out of 30 marks in each term. No rubrics were made available upon request.

The use of different record sheets indicate that both the programme of assessment expressed in CAPS and the assessment framework outlined in the Foundations for Learning intermediate phase assessment framework booklet are not followed as claimed. If teacher 1, for example, was using CAPS programme of assessment her record sheet will be compatible with CAPS programme of assessment. The same will apply to those who use FFL assessment framework. The readers supplied to these

schools are commendable, because they are written in big letters, have pictures to supplement the written symbols and are suitable to the level of Grade 6 learners' comprehension. Their structure is a perfect way of accommodating diversity.

4.8 Conclusion

Despite the challenges mentioned by teachers 1 to 4, learners sampled for reading at the four schools read well with some degree of fluency. They only vary with their levels of comprehending the reading texts, because some learners find it difficult to respond to questions posed to them. However, given enough exposure, practice and explicit instruction, they will eventually show good signs of reading competence. The FFL tried to bring some uniformity and common approaches to language instruction in general and to reading in particular.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter showed how the assembled data was analysed and interpreted. It reflected on the views of teachers 1 to 4 in response to the interview questions posed to them. It also provided reflections emanating from the observations made and the documents the researcher analysed. Finally, it provided an interpretation of the results generated through the three instruments alluded to above.

In this chapter a summary of the investigation is outlined. It is then followed by the main findings of the study, which are divided into sub-findings. Comparisons are also made in relation to studies undertaken in the same area. This is then followed by implications derived from the study and recommendations. Finally, a conclusion regarding the findings of the study is drawn.

5.2 Summary of the study

This study was intended to evaluate the implementation of the FFL reading guidelines for Grade 6 learners in the selected schools of the Malegale Circuit in the Sekhukhune district of Limpopo Province. Chapter 1 reported about the background to the study, the research problem and the rationale for the study. It was mentioned that the inability of learners to read, write and count at expected levels and their inability to execute tasks that demonstrate key skills associated with literacy and numeracy necessitated the introduction of this intervention programme in 2008. It was also pointed out that the continual poor performance of learners in local and international assessments of language by public schools in South Africa motivated the Department of Education to come up with ways and means of addressing the problem. A review of literature was outlined in chapter two to locate the study in the context of research already done in this focus area. This study has embraced the

schema theory to unpack how reading is acquired through various stages of instruction. An indication was also made with regard to the resources advocated by the FFL to facilitate the implementation of the programme.

A discussion on each reading strategy, like shared, group, guided and independent reading advocated by the FFL was outlined. How each of the reading strategies unfolds during the reading instruction was also explained. Other reading strategies, like strategic reading and read aloud, that can help improve the reading competence of our learners were also discussed in this study. An elaboration on the contextual factors that affect reading in public primary schools was also made. One of the contextual factors alluded to in this study was the influence of language-in- education policy on learners' reading proficiency. Although the purpose of the policy was good, but it's varying implementation by schools has put pressure on learners and teachers, because the period African language learners are introduced to second language or English, that is, from Grade 4 to 6 does not provide sufficient exposure to African language learners to develop reading comprehension in the new language.

This study has provided a discursive report in chapter 3 on how information with participants was generated. Details regarding the means of instruments employed to gather information from the four participating schools were as well outlined. The study employed the descriptive research design, particularly evaluation research, because it sought to determine how the FFL reading guidelines are implemented by the four sampled schools. This study also embraced qualitative research approach for sampling and data collection. Data collection methods included interview questions and observations with checklists. The two data collection methods were supplemented by documents analysis to corroborate the data gathered. This third instrument was used to scrutinise participants' portfolios which contained work schedules, pace setters, programme of assessment, record sheets, and so on.

The extent of the limitations of the study was reported as well as the ethical measures that were considered as the investigation unfolded.

In chapter 4 a report was provided on how the three instruments, that is, interview questions, observations with checklists and document analysis were used to collect data. It also provided details on how the same data was analysed. All data collected

and analysed was done qualitatively. The results and interpretations of data collected were captured in a similar pattern. For example, questions were thrown at participants and their responses were then captured in tables 1 to 7 in terms of interviews and table 8 regarding observations and finally, table 9 with regard to documents analysis. At the bottom of each table, analysis and interpretations of findings made were discussed. Finally, general remarks were provided to sum up discussions of the findings on each instruments used for data collection.

In summation, it was evident that Grade 6 learners in the four participating schools were exposed to reading instructions. It was also evident that although teachers 1 to 4 were aware of what the FFL entails, they implemented the programme differently, with teachers 3 and 4 at times preferring to use the READ programme over the FFL. It could therefore not be established with certainty that the level of reading competence displayed by Grade 6 learners at the four participating schools was as a result of teachers implementing the FFL reading guidelines correctly or incorrectly. The support and monitoring part of the programme remains suspicious as well, because no records of the same were made available upon request. It therefore remains to be seen now that the FFL was infused into CAPS, whether schools will implement the reading guidelines as directed by policy or not.

5.3 Main findings

The main findings of the study could best be understood in relation to the aim and the objectives of the study outlined hereunder.

5.3.1 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to evaluate how teachers are implementing the Foundations for Learning reading guidelines to improve Grade 6 learners' reading abilities.

5.3.2 The objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- To establish how the daily reading time allocation and daily reading activities recommended by the Foundations for Learning are implemented.
- To establish how the different kinds of reading strategies recommended by the FFL are utilised.
- To establish how teachers use focused oral questions to improve the target learners' reading comprehension.
- To ascertain the views of the Grade 6 teachers about the FFL as a teaching strategy to improve the reading abilities of their learners.

The overall finding emerging from this study is that the four participating schools treated the FFL reading guidelines as optional. This assertion emanates from the different ways in which each of the four schools implemented the FFL reading guidelines. This lack of uniformity is proof enough that the guidelines were implemented differently.

5.3.3 Objective 1: to establish how the daily reading time allocation and daily reading activities are implemented.

Findings: This proved to be a challenge to all the four schools. This is because the findings revealed that all the four schools use a 30 minutes period for English and this allocated time should be divided into reading and other language skills. For example, learners must be engaged in 30 minutes reading for enjoyment. This is equals to the minutes allocated to the whole period and as a result the four schools failed to comply with this requirement and instead opted to subject their learners into reading for assessment than reading for enjoyment. The prescriptions of the reading time frames were therefore not complied with, because they also ignored the fact that other subjects offered by the schools must also have a share of the time available.

Sub-findings: Teachers 1 to 4 resorted to their own discretion on how best to utilise the time available to engage learners in reading activities. This was made possible,

because no direction and support was provided by the authorities to assist teachers in this regard and the FFL document was not elaborative enough on this matter.

5.3.4 Objective 2: to establish how the different kinds of reading strategies recommended by the FFL are utilised.

Findings: In all the four schools teachers engaged learners in shared reading. They modelled and demonstrated to learners how this reading strategy should unfold. However, the same could not be said with other reading strategies. Group reading though it was done, was not happening at the level at which shared reading was done. Independent reading suffered on the basis that schools did not have enough readers. This was despite the fact that there were some readers even though they did not cover all the learners.

Sub-finding 1: teachers' preferences came before the prescripts of the FFL reading guidelines. It was clear from the engagement that all the four teachers prefer shared reading over other reading strategies. For example, claims of insufficient readers to engage learners in independent reading could have been dealt with had teachers improvised by allowing learners to exchange readers on a daily basis. Group reading was also promoted over individual reading. The reason that some learners perform better in groups than individually was not supposed to demote the importance of individual and independent reading.

Sub-finding 2: The attachment of time frames to each reading strategy confused teachers. Teachers thought that the FFL reading guidelines do not embrace an integrated approach to reading instruction wherein all the strategies can be used in one lesson depending on how learners respond to the reading instruction in progress. They assert that teaching learners to read is not an event, but a process that cannot be regulated by time frames.

5.3.5 Objective 3: to establish how teachers use focused oral questions to improve the target learners' reading comprehension.

Findings: during the observations of the reading instructions by teacher 1 to 4, learners were asked questions throughout the lesson. This was done in pre-, the while- and the post reading lessons. Most questions asked were the wh- questions to which learners responded well. Questions demanding more insight and

knowledge were not asked which did not provide evidence enough that learners were reading with comprehension.

Sub-findings: Teachers 1 to 4 followed their learners' reading attentively, because all of them were in a position to correct learners when they were punctuating and pronouncing incorrectly.

5.3.6 Objective 4: to ascertain the views of the Grade 6 teachers about the FFL as a teaching strategy to improve the reading abilities of their learners.

Findings: the FFL reading guidelines were not implemented as outlined in government gazette no. 30880 of 14 March 2008. This is seen in the different ways in which teacher 1 to 4 interacted with the programme. This is further corroborated by the use of different assessment tools that were used to assess learners, while the FFL has prescribed its own.

Sub-findings: teacher 1 to 4 felt that the fact that learners do not take the same time to grasp the reading instruction is overlooked by the FFL. The FFL also does not accommodate diversity in the classroom. It prescribes the same medicine for different ailments.

5.4 Other findings

Finding: learners at the four participating schools love big picture books despite the content they entail.

Sub-finding: teachers at the four participating schools concur that big picture books simplify the content learners engaged with and thus boost their reading comprehension. This is further simplified if learners could recognise and relate items in the pictures to their day to day events. For example, pictures of weddings and birthday parties are easy to understand, because learners see and engage in these activities on daily basis.

Finding: learners at the four participating schools can identify language structures like nouns, pronouns and verbs in simple sentences without teachers prompting or

coaching. However, the same language structures pose a challenge to some learners in complex sentences.

Sub-finding: other language structures, like adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and so on remain a challenge to most learners irrespective of whether the sentence is simple or complex.

5.5 Comparison of findings with other studies

5.5.1 Monitoring and support of the programme

Evidence of monitoring and support of the programme by school management teams and Education Department officials was found lacking in all the four participating schools. This was also raised by participants in the study conducted by Mbhalati (2012) wherein they indicated that government officials did not even bother to monitor the programme after handing it to them for implementation. This frustrated teachers who expected guidance from the authorities to implement the programme.

5.5.2 Insufficient supply of resources

The participating schools indicated that although readers were supplied to their schools, they were not enough for each learner to have a copy. This resulted in independent reading being compromised in many instances. The same situation occurs in the study by Mbhalati (2012) wherein participants complained about insufficient supply of resources by authorities.

5.5.3 More control measures, less guidance on implementation

Meier (2011) mentions that the FFL is rich in control measures, but poor in strategic measures for ensuring the success of the programme. This corroborates my finding whereby participants indicated that integrating the FFL reading time frames on the school time timetable was a challenge to their schools. The FFL provides no guidance on how the schools can integrate the time frames with their timetables but demand schools to do the integration.

5.5.4 An indication was made in the study that besides English participants were also responsible for other subjects. The introduction of the FFL brought additional

responsibilities on their daily workload, hence they complained of being overloaded. Similar complaints were expressed by participants in Meier (2011) study who complained that more paper work needs to be done and recording of individual learners performance as well as keeping of class records is tedious.

5.6 Implications of the findings

The findings mentioned above show that the reading guidelines as advocated by the FFL were differently and partially implemented by the four participating schools. This is evident in that the participating schools more often relied on own discretion than on the FFL reading guidelines before them, particularly with regard to reading time frames. The other implication emerging from the study is that the reading instruction conducted by the four participating schools focused more on reading for assessment than on reading for pleasure. The ultimate goal of reading which is to develop learners into independent readers was compromised.

Teachers' initiatives and improvisations were found lacking in the four participating schools. This implied that even a simplest resource that could be initiated by the schools is shelved in the name of government not supplying same to schools. For example, non-availability of reading record cards at the four schools is incomprehensible, because schools could have created reading record cards by using charts or hard covers of old exercise or note books. Also the excuse of insufficient readers could have been addressed by causing learners to exchange readers on daily basis. This indicate the extent to which capacity building workshops are necessary for the four participating schools and other schools that are in a similar position.

The complaint about workload also implied that time management skills are also necessary for this kind of programme to succeed. Teacher 4, for example, has got more subjects to offer other than English. The same applies to the other three teachers with varying degrees. The issue is that if the situation remains the same for years to come should reading be treated at these schools as it is done currently? Teachers need to find ways of addressing this problem and one of them is to put their time management skills into practice.

Programmes like the FFL are necessary to improve the reading competence of learners. At the four participating schools, even though they did not fully implement the programme as required, signs of reading improvements were visible in the learners. This implied that had the participating schools tried hard to implement the programme as expected, many improvements could have been achieved by their schools. However, government also could have levelled the playing field by ensuring that all schools are provided with necessary resources and adequately monitored and supported.

5.7 Recommendations

Below are recommendations that would help teachers in general and particularly the four participating schools. Like all programmes that came before, the FFL was also riddled with challenges. One challenge that confronted teachers was instructing learners in a language that is not only foreign to them, but whose exposure and support was only limited to the school environment and non-existent at home. Therefore, the following are recommended to assist teachers to improve learners' language competence:

Teacher training.

Teacher training should be prioritised before a programme such as the FFL is implemented. Although advocacy was done prior to the implementation of the programme, no thorough training was done to induct teachers on the successful implementation of the programme as indicated by the four participants. An audit of teachers who were not exposed to this programme should have taken place so that newly appointed teachers and those who were not teaching this subject before are inducted in the programme.

Teacher support and monitoring.

Although monitoring and support by various levels of the Department of Education was advocated, very little was done in this area. Subject heads and circuit as well as district officials only checked on the availability of resources and the integration of FFL timeframes into schools' time tables, with no efforts spent on assisting teachers to interpret content, that is, the milestones.

Teacher motivation.

Teachers, especially those in low socio-economic environments should have been motivated to embrace and implement the programme despite the challenges they are confronted with. As Meier (2011:554) puts it, "... the tone of the document conveys a strong sense of an almost military approach..." This kind of tone did not ease the pressure on the already burdened teachers. Therefore some kind of motivation would have been necessary to encourage teachers to soldier on.

Adequate provision of resources, especially readers.

The playing fields should have been levelled in terms of provision of resources, particularly to schools whose home language is not English. In some of the participating schools learners had to share readers and this compromised independent reading where learners have to read suitable books and share what they have read with the class.

Teacher-learner ratio.

Large class sizes did not make it possible for teachers to implement the programme easily. Teachers find it difficult to provide individual attention to learners who struggled to cope with reading tasks in overcrowded classrooms. The programme expected teachers to achieve the target goals, but did little to convey strategic measures to ensure success as stated by Meier (2011:555).

Parental involvement.

Although the FFL defines the role of parents, schools in low socio-economic environments find it difficult to lure parents to take interest in their children's school activities. The low literacy levels of most of the parents did not help the situation either. The department has a mammoth task of educating parents to take interest in their children's school work.

Policy awareness.

Teachers should be made aware of policy imperatives. This awareness will assist in ensuring that programmes, directives and guidelines such as the

FFL, despite one's feelings about them, are not brushed aside, but are implemented as required. Teachers should be made aware that their roles are not to develop or criticise policies, but to implement them as they come.

5.8 Conclusion

The introduction of the FFL by the authority in 2008 was a forced intervention to address poor performance by schools in language (and Mathematics) countrywide. The department found itself in a situation that required immediate attention. Given the continual poor performance of learners across the country in local and international assessments of language (and Mathematics), the department was within its right to insist that schools implement the programme. This was a necessary step to ensure that uniform standards in language (and Mathematics) are established countrywide. Despite its shortcomings the FFL was welcomed by teachers as a good attempt by the department to fill the vacuum that existed for a long time in the reading curriculum. The FFL provided guidelines on how reading should be approached and assessed. However, ways and means should be established to ensure that intervention programmes, like the FFL are sustained and inputs to improve their functionality are put to use. Findings from the four participating schools revealed that teaching reading to learners whose home language is not the language of instruction posed many challenges, but with the introduction of user- friendly programmes, those challenges can be conquered.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interviews and observations programme

PROPOSED INTERVIEWS PROGRAMME FOR MAJA R.N

DATE	SCHOOL	TARGET	DISTANCE
		Gr.6 English language teachers	
03/10/2013	A	“	19x2 km
07/10/2013	B	“	22x2 km
08/10/2013	C	“	24x2 km
09/10/2013	D	“	30x2 km

PROPOSED OBSERVATIONS PROGRAMME FOR MAJA R.N

DATE	SCHOOL	TARGET	DISTANCE
		Gr. 6 English language teachers	
30/10/2013	A	“	19X2 km
31/10/2013	B	“	22X2 km
04/11/2013	C	“	24X2 km
04/11/2013	D	“	30x2 km

N.B: The above scheduled interviews will take place between 13h30 to 14h30 (except where observations are done in a real classroom situation) to avoid or limit interference with the school program.

There will be follow-up visits on the schools listed above for further inputs, clarity and discussions.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Letter to the Circuit Manager

04 SEPTEMBER 2013

The Circuit Manager

MALEGALE CIRCUIT OFFICE

PRIVATE BAG X 1220

SEKHUKHUNE 1124

Sir

Request to conduct interviews in your circuit.

1. The above matter refers.
2. I Maja R.N request permission to conduct interviews and observations for the purpose of the study I am currently involved with the University of Limpopo at the schools under your supervision.
3. The schools, dates, and times identified for this purpose are reflected on the schedule attached.
4. I am looking forward to fruitful engagements with your schools.

Yours faithfully

Maja R.N

Appendix C: Letter to principals of participating schools

16 SEPTEMBER 2013

The Principal

Sir/Madam

Request to conduct interviews and observations at your school.

1. The above matter refers.
2. I Maja R.N request permission to conduct interviews and observations with your Grade 6 English language teacher regarding the implementation of the Foundation for Learning Campaign (FFLC) reading guidelines at your school.
3. The interviews and observations are part of the study I am currently pursuing with the University of Limpopo's English department.
4. I am looking forward to a cooperative and fruitful engagement with your school.
5. Please find attached the programme for the intended visits.

Yours faithfully

MAJA R.N

Appendix D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. The Foundations for Learning outlines the reading procedure that must be followed during the reading lessons. What is your view regarding these reading guidelines?

Table 1: Participants' views on the FFL reading guidelines.

Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
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2. Do you find the time frames allocated to each reading activity workable or not? Briefly explain.

Table 2: Participants' views on FFL time frames.

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 3
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3. What challenges do you experience when administering the FFL reading guidelines?

Table 3: FFL challenges.

Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
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4. The Foundations for Learning requires learners to interact with texts of various types to establish meaning.

4.1 Which text types do you find interesting to your learners?

4.2 What would you say is the reason for their liking?

Table 4: Text types liked by learners and reasons thereof.

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
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5. Shared reading is one of the reading strategies required by the FFL in which learners must be assessed.

5.1 How often do you model shared reading activities to your learners?

5.2 How would you describe your learners' reactions to these activities?

Table 5: Participants' views on shared reading and learners' reactions.

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
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6. The Foundations for Learning requires teachers to engage learners in word and sentence level work.

6.1 Can your learners recognise and identify language items such as nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and so on in word and sentence level work activities during reading?

6.2 Which language items challenge them most?

Table 6: Learners' recognition/identification of language items and challenges experienced.

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
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The Foundations for Learning requires learners to engage in reading for enjoyment daily for 30 minutes and to share what they have read with others in pairs, groups, or whole class. Can you describe the level of competency of your learners regarding this activity?

Table 7: Learners' competency levels in reading for enjoyment.

Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
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Appendix E: Observations checklist

The researcher also embarked on observations to try and validate the information gathered through the interview questions above. The researcher used a checklist as indicated by table 8 below to capture what transpired during the observations. Teacher 1 was observed on 30 October 2013, whilst teacher 2 was observed on 31 October 2013. Both teachers 3 and 4 were observed on 4 November 2013. Their responses were consolidated in table 8 below.

Table 8: Observation of the application of the FFL reading strategies in the classroom.

TEACHERS: 1, 2, 3, and 4				
Does the teacher:		Proposed time allocation	Observation remarks	Source
Shared reading	Introduce the text as a model reader by for example, reading the title, going through the contents and index pages, reading subheadings, clarifying key vocabulary and looking at illustrations with learners.	0-5 minutes		FFL requires: Orientation to the text Clarification of key vocabulary Saunders-Smith (2009)
	Use the title of a text during pre-reading activities to inspire and request learners to	0-5 minutes		FFL requires learners: To make predictions about

	make predictions about the content of the story.			the content of the story. Saunders-Smith (2009)
	Read the text slowly with learners joining in and repeating or clarifying problematic areas encountered by learners.	0-5 minutes		READ (2004), Saunders-Smith (2009) The FFL advises teachers to model the reading procedure.
	Regularly check learners' attentiveness by posing simple yes/no or multiple choice questions to keep learners on track.	0-3 minutes		Saunders-Smith (2009) The FFL requires teachers to assess comprehension through focused oral questions.
		Multiple choice		
Group, guided and independent reading	Give learners opportunities to work individually, in pairs or in groups to read graded readers and complete workbooks.	Individual work		The FFL and READ encourage individual, pair and group work.
		5-10 minutes		
	Pair work			
	Group work			
	Monitor and give support to each group or	0-5 minutes		READ (2004) Saunders-Smith

	individuals by praising, prompting, mentoring, looking into learners' books and providing additional information.			(2009) FFL (2008)
Reading for enjoyment	Give learners opportunities to read books of their choice and record the title on a reading record cards.	5-10 minutes		The FFL requires learners to read and record titles of books they have read on their own.
	Regularly monitor and update the reading record cards.	0-3 minutes		“
	Give learners opportunities to share the contents of their books with others in pairs, groups or the whole class.	5-10 minutes		“
		Groups Whole class		
	Establish whether learners are able to make sense of the texts they have read by asking them various questions, such as literal (level 1) questions like recognition or recall of details, main ideas,	5-10 minutes		READ (2004) Saunders-Smith (2009) and the FFL advises teachers to assess learners' reading comprehension during the pre-, the while- and the post

	sequence, character traits, and so on based on the text.			reading activities.
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Appendix F: Document analysis

Apart from data collection methods alluded to above, the researcher also employed document analysis to further validate the findings gathered through interviews and observations. Table 9 below shows the documents analysed and the results thereof.

Table 9: Documents analysed and results.

Document Analysis		
Teacher	Document(s)	Results
1	Work schedule, programme of assessment, record sheets, class work books, readers, pace setters, FFL assessment framework, rubrics for reading assessment and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).	
2	Work schedule, programme of assessment, record sheets, class work books, readers, pace setters, FFL assessment framework, rubrics for reading assessment and CAPS.	
3	Work schedule, programme of assessment, record sheets, class work books, readers, pace setters, FFL assessment framework, rubrics for reading assessment and CAPS.	

4	Work schedule, programme of assessment, record sheets, class work books, readers, pace setters, FFL assessment framework, rubrics for reading assessment and CAPS.	
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