

**TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING READING SKILLS IN THE  
INTERMEDIATE PHASE: A CASE STUDY OF A RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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## DECLARATION

I, Ramalepe Mammoni Petrus, hereby declare that **Towards an Effective Approach to teaching Reading Skills in the Intermediate Phase: a Case Study of a Rural Primary School**, thesis hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD in Language Education) is my own work in design and in execution, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.

**Mammoni Petrus Ramalepe**

.....

## **DEDICATION**

To my late parents Makole Maria Ramalepe and Redibone Wilson Lebepe, my maternal grandparents Mathukhwane and Mpopane Ennie Ramalepe I dedicate this project. Had they been alive, they would be the most jubilant and cherish my achievement. Last, but not least, I dedicate this work to my wife and all my children, especially my son Tornado Redibone, and daughter Mankoana Caroloine.

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the introduction of a number of educational policies and measures (for example, the Foundation for Learning Campaign, the National Reading Strategy (2008), Integrated National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (INLNS) (Department of Basic Education, 2011), Certificate in Primary English Language Teaching (CiPELT)) in 2012-13 to increase the quality of education during and over twenty three years of democracy in South Africa, there are still problems with regard to reading levels of rural South African learners in the intermediate phase. The in/ability to read at grade level, still persist even after the introduction of teaching of English as a subject from Grade 1 in all schools as prescribed by CAPS. Available literature on reading in/abilities in South African schools concedes that the problem lies in the primary schools. The aim of this study was to investigate and determine an effective approach to teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase. I employed convergent parallel design as both the quantitative and qualitative strands were used concurrently and equally. The convergent parallel design is suitable for this study as it allows me to compare and contrast quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings for corroboration and validation purposes. The four main approaches which are; Phonemic awareness, Read-aloud, Shared Reading and Guided Group Reading were tested through the employment of an intervention administered to individual groups of grade 4 learners applying a particular approach for seven weeks. In the light of the aim of the study, it is clear from data presentation that Read-aloud approach yielded better results in terms of developing and promoting reading skills in the rural intermediate phase. Results of post-intervention comprehension test show that the Read-aloud group had remarkable improvement in terms of the number of learners who could read at an acceptable level. Teachers' experiences about an effective approach were explored through the questionnaire and interviews; and their responses corroborated findings from learners' post-intervention comprehension test. Nevertheless, Group Guided Reading should not be ignored as the group that was taught reading using this approach had significant improvement that was corroborated by teacher participants' responses in both the questionnaire and interviews. Thus, in this study I argue that Read-aloud promote and develop reading skills in the rural intermediate phase.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	3
1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY .....	5
1.4 OBJECTIVES .....	5
1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS/CONCEPTS .....	6
1.5.1 Reading .....	6
1.5.2 Functional literacy .....	8
1.5.3 Reading Levels .....	8
1.5.4 Reading Assessment .....	9
1.6 READING APPROCHES/STRATEGIES.....	10
1.6.1 Phonics and Word Study .....	10
1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	11
1.8 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS .....	11
1.9 SUMMARY .....	12
<b>CHAPTER 2</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>13</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	13
2.2 PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY .....	13
2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	14
2.4 THE SCHEMA READING THEORY .....	15
2.5 VYGOTSKY'S THEORY .....	19
2.6 COGNITIVE READING THEORY .....	21

2.7 SUMMARY .....	22
<b>CHAPTER 3.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>24</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION .....	24
3.2 READING SKILLS .....	25
3.3 READING APPROACHES .....	29
3.3.1 Phonemic awareness (PA).....	29
3.3.2 Read-Aloud (RA).....	33
3.3.3 Shared Reading (SR).....	33
3.3.4 Guided Group Reading (GGR).....	34
3.4 READING IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS .....	35
3.5 RURAL-URBAN READING DISPARITIES IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS .....	38
3.6 ASSESSMENT OF INTERMEDIATE PHASE LEARNERS READING SKILLS.....	48
3.7 SUMMARY .....	50
<b>CHAPTER 4.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>52</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION .....	52
4.2.1 Quantitative Research Techniques .....	55
4.2.2 Qualitative Research Techniques.....	56
4.2.3 Sample selection.....	56
4.3 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS.....	58
4.4 STUDY SITE .....	60
4.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS.....	61
4.5.1 Observation.....	62
4.5.2 Interviews.....	63
4.5.3 Comprehension test (pre- and post-test) .....	64
4.5.4 Questionnaire.....	65
4.5.5 Documents.....	65
4.6 DATA CAPTURE AND ANALYSIS .....	66
4.6.1 Quantitative Data.....	66
4.6.2 Qualitative Data .....	66
4.7 QUALITY ASSURANCE .....	67
4.7.1 Reliability .....	67
4.7.2 Validity .....	68

4.7.3 Trustworthiness.....	68
4.7.4 Dependability .....	69
4.7.5 Generalisability .....	69
4.8 PILOT STUDY .....	69
4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	70
4.10 SUMMARY .....	70
<b>CHAPTER 5.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>DATA PRESENTATION .....</b>	<b>72</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION .....	72
5.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA .....	73
5.2.1 Data from learners' pre-intervention test. ....	74
5.2.2 Data from learners' post-intervention test. ....	94
5.2.3 Data from teachers' questionnaire.....	101
5.3 QUALITATIVE DATA.....	112
5.3.1 Data generated from pre-intervention observation of learners whilst reading grade prescribed text. ....	112
5.3.2 Data generated from post-intervention observation of learners whilst reading grade prescribed text. ....	113
5.3.4 Data generated from document analysis (1 <sup>st</sup> term Grade 4 Learners' reading mark sheet compiled by the class teacher). ....	114
5.4 SUMMARY .....	114
<b>CHAPTER 6.....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>115</b>
6.1 INTRODUCTION .....	115
6.2 ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA.....	116
6.2.1 Analysis of learners' pre and post-intervention test .....	116
6.2.2 Analysis of quantitative data from teachers' questionnaire .....	118
Table 6.2: Teacher usage of reading approach .....	120
6.3 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS .....	124
6.3.1 Data from observation of learners whilst reading grade prescribed text (error-count test).....	124
6.3.2 Data from interviews with teacher participants .....	128
6.3.3 Document Analysis .....	133
6.4 CONSOLIDATION AND INTERPRETATION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA	135

6.5 DISCUSSION .....	136
6.5 SUMMARY .....	139
<b>CHAPTER 7 .....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ...</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>7.1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>141</b>
7.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS .....	142
7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS .....	143
7.4 CONCLUSION.....	144
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>163</b>
Appendix 1: Faculty Approval of Proposal .....	163
Appendix 2: Ethical Clearance Certificate .....	164
Appendix 3: Permission from the H.O.D, Limpopo Provincial Government .....	165
Appendix 4: Permission from the circuit manager to conduct research at the selected school in Motupa circuit. ....	167
Appendix 5: Permission from the circuit manager to administer the questionnaire to the EFAL teachers in the intermediate phase in Motupa circuit .....	168
Appendix 6: Teacher participants consent form .....	169
Appendix 7: Teachers Questionnaire.....	170
Appendix 8: Intermediate Phase EFAL teachers' interview guide (individually).....	172
Appendix 9: Consent form for parents of learner participants. ....	173
Appendix 10 : A Northern Sotho translated version of Appendix 10.....	174
Appendix 11: Checklist for observation sampled learners while reading grade prescribed text before the intervention: .....	175
Appendix 12: Learners 'test to establish their (learners) reading skills and comprehension before the intervention.....	177
Appendix 13: Learners' test to establish their (learners) reading skills and comprehension after the intervention.....	179
Appendix 13: Learners' test to establish their (learners) reading skills and comprehension after the intervention.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Appendix 13: Comprehension passage for post-intervention test Comprehension passage for post-intervention test .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Appendix 14: The researcher applying Phonemic Awareness approach in group 1.....	181
Appendix 15: A picture showing the researcher applying Guided Group Reading in group 4.	182
Appendix 16: The researcher applying Shared Reading in group 3. ....	183

Appendix 17: A picture showing over-crowding in grade 4 class..... 183

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 5.1: Pre-intervention percentage of learners who COULD NOT read in each group.....	11
Figure 5.2: Pre-intervention percentage of learners who could read in each group.	12
Figure 5.3: Percentage of Grade 4 learners who could not read and those who could before the intervention.....	13
Figure 5.4: Group 1 (PA) Individual learner pre-test raw scores.....	85
Figure 5.5: Percentage of learners who could not read and those who could in Group 1 (PA) prior to the intervention.....	86
Figure 5.6: Group 2 (RA) Individual learner pre-test raw scores.....	87
Figure 5.7: Percentage of learners who could read and those who could not in group 2 (RA) prior to the intervention.....	87
Figure 5.8: Group 3 (Shared Reading) Individual learner pre-test raw scores.....	88
Figure 5.9: Percentage of learners who could not read and those who could in group 3 (SR) prior to the intervention.....	89
Figure 5.10: Group 4 Guided Group Reading (GGR) Individual learner pre-test raw scores.....	90
Figure 5.11: Percentage of learners who could read and those who could not in Group 4 (Guided Group Reading) prior to the intervention.....	90
Figure 5.12: Group 5 (Control Group) Individual learner pre-test raw scores.....	91
Figure 5.13: Percentage of learners who could read and those who could not in group 5 (Control Group) prior to the intervention.....	92
Figure 5.14: Learners who could not read prior the intervention those who could not read after the intervention in each group.....	104

Figure 5.15: Percentage of learners who could read prior the intervention and those who could after the intervention in each group.....	105
Figure 5 .16: Reading progress in each group.....	105
Figure5.17: Group 1 (PA) Post-test individual raw score (Comprehension test).....	106
Figure 5.18: Percentages of learners who could read and those who could not in group 1(Phonemic Awareness) after the intervention.....	107
Figure 5.19: Group 2 (RA) post-test individual raw score (Comprehension test)....	107
Figure 5.20: Percentage of learners who could read and those who could not after the intervention as per their performance in the comprehension test.....	108
Figure 5.21: Group 3 (SR) post-test individual raw score (Comprehension test)...	108
Figure 5.22: Percentage of learners who could read and those who could not after the intervention.....	109
Figure 5.23: Group 4 (GGR) post-test individual raw score (Comprehension test).	109
Figure 5.24: Percentage of learners who could read and those who could not read after the intervention in group 4 (GGR).....	110
Figure 5.25: Group 5 (Control Group) post-test individual raw score (Comprehension test).....	111
Figure 5. 26: Percentage of learners who could read and those who could no after the intervention in group 5 (Control Group).....	111
Figure 5.27: Teachers' perceptions about Read-aloud as an effective approach to teaching reading skills.....	114
Figure 5.28: Teachers' perception about Shared Reading as an approach to teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase.....	114
Figure 5.29: Teachers' perception about Guided Group Reading as an approach to teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase.....	115

Figure 5.30: Teachers' perceptions about Phonemic Awareness as an approach to teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase.....	116
Figure 5.31: Teachers' perceptions of whether all reading approaches are inherently wrong or right.....	116
Figure 5.32: Teachers' perceptions regarding whether all approaches are effective towards teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase.....	117
Figure 5.33: Teachers' usage of available reading approaches to teach reading skills.....	118
Figure 5.34: Teachers' usage of available reading approaches to teach reading skills.....	118
Figure 5.35: Teachers' knowledge of approaches to teach reading skills.....	119
Figure 5.37: An approach which teachers find easy to use to teach reading skills in the intermediate phase.....	121
Figure 5.38: Approach teachers find difficult to use to teach reading skills.....	121
Figure 5. 39: Teachers' perceptions about an effective approach to teaching reading skills.....	122
Figure 5.40: Grade 4 percentage of learners who could not read and those who could before the intervention.....	132

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Grade 6 EFAL - ANA average percentage per district in Limpopo 2013-2014.....	3
Table 2. 1: Levels of cognitive processing in reading test.....	22
Table 3.1: Grade 6 EFAL ANA average percentage per the three provinces over a period of three years, 2012-2014 which is evidence to general poor language skills.....	39
Table 3.2: 2013 Number of schools, learners, and teachers in the ordinary public schools.....	43
in the three provinces of Eastern Cape, KZN and Limpopo respectively	
Table 4.1: Data Collection Matrix.....	55
Table 4.2: Sample of learner research participants.....	59
Table 4. 3: Sample of Intermediate phase EFAL teachers' age distribution.....	61
Table 4.4: Teachers' gender distribution.....	61
Table 4. 5: Intermediate phase learners' age distribution.....	62
Table 5.1: Number of Learners Sampled.....	75
Table 5.2: Grade 4 learners' age distribution.....	75

Table 5.4: Total scores and average for the pre and post-test results.....	78
Table 5. 5: Summary of individual groups’ pre-intervention test scores in terms of 0 - 100%.....	81
Table 5.6: Learners who could read and those who could not read in each group before the intervention.....	83
Table 5.7: Group 1 (Phonics awareness): Pre and post-intervention test raw scores; pre and post-intervention reading error-count test scores.....	92
Table 5.8: Group 2 (Read Aloud) Pre and post-intervention test scores; pre and post-intervention reading error-count test.....	94
Table 5.9: Group 3 (Shared Reading) Pre and post-intervention test scores; pre and post-intervention reading error-count test.....	96
Table 5.10: Group 4 Guided Group Reading (GGR) Pre and post-intervention test scores; pre and post-intervention reading error-count test.....	98
Table 5. 11: Group 5 (Control Group): Pre and post-intervention test scores; and pre and post-intervention error-count test.....	100
Table 5.12: Learners who could read and those who could not in each group <i>before</i> and <i>after</i> the intervention. (Number and percentages). <i>Please note that you have to change highlighted sections</i> .....	103
Table 5.13: Teacher participants ‘biographical data.....	112
Table 5.14: Teaching experience of teacher participants.....	112
Table 5.15: Teachers’ age distribution.....	113
Table 5.17: Learners who could read and those who could not read in each group; before and after the intervention.....	124
Table 6.1: Individual groups progress in terms of learners who couldn’t read prior the intervention and those who could after the intervention in relation to pre-intervention and post-intervention comprehension test results.....	129

Table 6.5: Levels of reading prior and post–intervention observation of learners reading grade prescribed text (Error-count test) group 1 (Phonemic Awareness)..	139
Table 6.6: Levels of reading prior and post–intervention observation of learners reading grade prescribed text (Error-count test) group 2 (Read-aloud).....	140
Table 6.7: Levels of reading prior and post–intervention observation of learners reading grade prescribed text (Error-count test) group 3 (Shared reading).....	139
Table 6.8: Levels of reading prior and post–intervention observation of learners reading grade prescribed text (Error-count test) group 4 (Guided Group Reading).....	140
Table 6.9: Levels of reading prior and post–intervention observation of learners reading prescribed text (Error-count test) group 5 (Control Group).....	148
Table 6. 10: A comparison learners’ post-test performance with read-aloud mark sheet compiled by the teacher.....	147

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Most researchers in education accept the fact that student performance in South Africa is shockingly low (Spaull, 2012). In recent years, numerous studies have revealed worrying levels of underperformance in the area of literacy and reading in South Africa's education system. Some examples include, the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Studies (PIRLS, 2006), Combrinck, Van Staden and Roux (2014), Prinsloo and Heugh (2013), Ramalepe (2013), Spaull (2013), Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Scherman and Archer (2007), Moloï and Strauss (2005) as well as the Annual National Assessment Report (DBE, 2014). To illustrate this, PIRLS (2006) cites the fact that compared to other developing countries; South Africa's spending on education is not matched by its results. Further to demonstrate this, evidence from Ramalepe (2013) reports that reading levels in the intermediate phase were found to be under grade level and age cohorts. In the same vein, Combrinck, Van Staden and Roux (2014) report that in 2006 South Africa's Grade 5 learners achieved the lowest score in reading and literacy. It should be noted that reading is a precondition for real learning in the schooling life of any learner.

Rural-Urban resource disparities tend to exacerbate the state of affairs in reading and literacy imbalances due to the lack of necessary amenities such as libraries and computers in the rural areas. In addition, PIRLS (2011) links learners' (in) ability to read, especially at the end of Grade 4, to the vast inequalities between South African language groups. According to PIRLS (2011), the performance of learners who learn in an African language was found to be significantly below that of learners who learn in English and Afrikaans. Other language groups that were characterised by the inability to read were siSwati, isiZulu, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, Setswana and Sesotho. To this, Howie and Van Staden (2012) report that the PIRLS 2011 results revealed

that half of all grade 4 learners, whose mother tongue was Sepedi, Xitsonga or Tshivenda could not read their home language texts by the end of grade 4. If that is the situation in their home language, how much more is it the case in their Second Language (L2), which normally happens to be English? It should be noted that the three language groups mentioned above are found in the rural areas of former black homelands of apartheid South Africa. Hence, Gardiner (2008) maintains that unequal distribution of resources and decades of neglect by colonial and apartheid government, who side-lined these areas educationally, still has a negative impact.

According to Prinsloo and Heugh, (2013) the lack of regular writing opportunities often results not only in poor writing but also in poor reading development. Learning to read and write texts of different kinds and for different purposes should go hand in hand. Constant reading and writing of different texts such as information texts, instruction texts, social texts, and stories help learners to familiarise themselves with the written word and that eases the process of learning to read.

Prinsloo and Heugh (2013) reports that in 2007, the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) conducted a comprehensive ethnographic study to observe literacy practices in classrooms in a sample of 20 schools located in the five districts of Limpopo Province. The fieldwork and data collection's most significant finding for the Limpopo study was that by August/September 2007 only a smaller number of learners had been required to write in their exercise books on at least a weekly basis.

When comparing the English First Additional Language (EFAL) Annual National Assessment (ANA) results, it is definite that learners from the Limpopo province have poor reading skills. This state of affairs is corroborated by the 2014 ANA results, which also reveal a downward trend in reading and literacy achievements of learners in Limpopo. Table 1 below provides a summary of the learner's performance in the five districts:

**Table 1: Grade 6 EFAL - ANA average percentage per district in Limpopo 2013-2014**

<b>Limpopo</b>		<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>Districts in Limpopo</b>	<b>Capricorn</b>	<b>44.6</b>	<b>41.4</b>
	<b>Greater Sekhukhune</b>	<b>30.0</b>	<b>38.8</b>
	<b>Mopani</b>	<b>43.8</b>	<b>42</b>
	<b>Vhembe</b>	<b>47.3</b>	<b>44.6</b>
	<b>Waterberg</b>	<b>38.9</b>	<b>36.4</b>

From Table 1 above, it can be deduced that all the districts in Limpopo province dropped in terms of ANA average performance between 2013 and 2014.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Reading crisis still persist despite the introduction of a number of educational policies, for example, (the 2008 Foundation for Learning Campaign and National Reading Strategy, the Integrated National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (INLNS) and the Certificate in Primary English Language Teaching (CiPELT) in 2012-13. These policies and other projects were meant to increase the quality of education in South Africa, especially with regard to reading levels of learners. Despite these efforts, the inability to read at grade level, still persists even after the introduction of the teaching of English as a subject from Grade 1 in all schools as prescribed by CAPS (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Poor performance in ANA has been attributed to lack of reading skills among learners, especially in the intermediate phase (Ramalepe, 2013). Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul, and Armstrong (2011) report that; an alarmingly high proportion of Grade 6 learners have clearly not mastered even the most basic reading and numeracy skills.

According to Pretorius (2002), it should be noted that a fundamental feature of poor academic underperformance in South Africa is poor reading skills. Fola-Adebayo (2014) concurs that reading is an important medium to facilitate learning. Further, Fola-Adebayo (2014) concedes that reading is one of the most useful skills which learners need for academic reasons and for lifelong learning. Unfortunately, despite such agreement, recommended reading approaches have received little or no attention in research that seeks to establish what works and what does not. My argument is that reading approaches recommended in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) need to be tested as to whether or not they assist in developing rural learners' literacy and reading skills. Learners need to acquire literacy and reading skills that enable them to successfully progress from learning to read to reading to learn in the foundation and intermediate phases and beyond.

ANA is meant to test learner competencies, mainly in the primary grades. It provides a comparable measure for learners' performance at the primary school level. Hence, one key aspect tested through the ANA is reading. According to the 2013 ANA report, CAPS provides teachers with curriculum and assessment statements that are clear, succinct and unambiguous, thus enabling them to improve learners' reading and literacy skills effectively. CAPS has been implemented successfully with regard to EFAL, as the ANA results of grade 5 learners in urban areas (for instance, in Gauteng and the Western Cape) indicate, because learners performed better on average than their rural counterparts in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. These results are ill-fated for the rural communities mentioned.

Gardiner (2008) affirms that, given the high levels of illiteracy among adults and the sporadic contact with languages like English at fluent and proficient levels, rural learners have little opportunity to live, think and work in a language environment beyond that of their home language. Ramalepe (2013) concurs that intermediate phase learners indeed read below their grade level and age cohorts. This study explores the reading approach that can help alleviate the reading problem in the rural areas. Further, research undertaken in South Africa shows that; many South African students, who enrol for undergraduate studies each year, are underprepared for

university education since most of them have a low reading ability (Dreyer & Nel, 2003). Noor (2010) underwrites Dreyer and Nel and further points out that many first-year university students in L2 education, who enter university, are ill prepared for the reading demands placed upon them in higher education. If Kibirige's (2011) finding from a Turkey Honest Significant Difference (HSD) test indicates and suggests that teachers from rural schools read at a frustrating level, then there should be no doubt that an investigation into the most appropriate reading approach for the foundation phase is important. According to the Reading Strategy (DOE, 2008), numerous educators in South Africa have an inadequate perception of teaching literacy and reading. Concurring with the above assertion by Reading Strategy (DOE, 2008) is Pretorius and Klapwyk (2016) whose study reveals that "teachers are not themselves immersed in rich reading practices, teachers claim to be doing more than is reflected in their schools' literacy results, and in general teachers do not seem to have a clear understanding of reading concepts, reading developments and reading methodology" (Pretorius & Klapwyk, 2016: 1). Hence, this study sought to investigate approaches teachers can employ to teach reading skills in the intermediate phase within a rural school context.

### **1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to investigate and determine an effective approach to teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase of a rural school in Limpopo province.

### **1.4 OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the study are:

- To assess the reading levels of the intermediate phase learners.
- To explore through practical classroom experiences of the intermediate phase English teachers, which approach best promotes and develops reading skills in the rural schools' intermediate phase.
- To determine the best practice to teaching reading skills in the rural schools' intermediate phase.

- To recommend an appropriate approach towards teaching reading in the intermediate phase.

## **1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS/CONCEPTS**

It is commanding to give the definition of key terms/concepts in the study so that they are understood in the context of the discourse used. These terms/concepts need to be explained to avoid confusion with regard to their daily usage. The following terms were found to be central to this study:

- Reading.
- Functional literacy.
- Reading levels.
- Reading Assessment.
- Reading Approaches.
- Phonic and Word Study
- Read Aloud (RA)
- Shared Reading (SR)
- Guided Reading (GR)
- Independent Reading

### **1.5.1 Reading**

According to Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grades 10-12 (CAPS) reading involves making meaning of the text and paying close attention to its language features: The importance of reading is summarised by Grabe (2009: 5) as follows: Citizens of the world must be good readers to be successful.

Reading skills do not guarantee success for anyone, but success is much harder to come by without being a skilled reader. The advent of the computer and internet does nothing to change this fact about reading. If anything, electronic communication only increases the need for effective reading skills and strategies as we try to cope with large quantities of information made available to us. Following directions, doing shopping, billboards, and posters all require some reading.

Following definitions by some scholars, hereunder I provide an explanation of the word “reading” as used in the context of this study. Hellekjaer (2009) states that reading includes decoding of the written text on the one hand, and competently processing the information gained (Hellekjaer, 2009:23). “Reading is, therefore, a cultural, economic, ideological, political and psychological act...the issue of whether readers find a message, or engage in interpretation to generate a new meaning is subject to debate in literacy circles” (Hellekjaer: 2009: 23). This perspective suggests that meaning is a result of information acquired from the text and the reader’s background knowledge.

Groove and Hauptfleisch (1982) define reading as “...the meaningful interpretation of the written word”, (Groove & Hauptfleisch, 1982: 2). They add that the act of interpreting the written word is achieved through visual perception, whereby the word and its meaning are recalled in the brain. Beyond that, the ability to attach meaning to what has been read is influenced by the reader’s experience and language proficiency. Pretorius and Mokhwesana (2009:56) explain that reading comprises two main components, viz. decoding and comprehension. Decoding refers to the code-based processes involved in translating the written symbols on the page into identifiable chunks of language, while comprehension refers to the processes that assign meaning to the text as a whole. Thus, reading requires that in the foundation phase there should be a brisk and steady development of lower level decoding processes involving orthographic, phonological, lexical, morphological and syntactic skills.

The Ontario, Ministry of education (2003), maintains that reading is the ability to identify words accurately and read a text quickly with good expression. Fluency comes from the practice in reading easy books about familiar subjects. These texts primarily contain familiar, high-frequency words so that the learners will come across few unfamiliar words. As learners develop fluency, they improve their ability to read more expressively, with proper phrasing, thus gaining more of the text's meaning.

The definition of the concept *reading* cannot be complete without looking at a word with similar connotations; *decoding*. Gough and Tunmer (1986) state that they are unwilling to equate decoding with word recognition, for the term decoding certainly connotes, if not denotes, the use of letter-sound correspondence rules. Gough and

Tunmer (1986) strongly believe that word recognition skill is dependent on knowledge of letter-sound correspondence rules, or what they have termed; the orthographic cipher, which helps in developing reading skills. On the other hand, Høien and Lundberg (2000) hold the view that *decoding* refers to the technical side of reading: seeing a chain of letters and knowing what they represent. Decoding is seen as the ability to understand the alphabetic principle, or code, in order to make sense of the written words. This understanding of *code* distinguishes between spoken and written language by seeing spoken language as *language* and written language as “*code*”. Following this logic, spoken language should be understood as acquired through natural mingling and interacting with native speakers of the target language while the acquisition of written language is a matter of mastering a code.

### **1.5.2 Functional literacy**

Uppstad and Solheim, (2011) inform that functional literacy includes the ability to read a variety of text types. According to Uppstad and Solheim, (2011) reading a timetable, for example, is a fundamental skill in becoming a functional reader. However, nobody would expect a person to be able to understand a time-table by having it read aloud.

UNESCO (2006) define a functionally literate person as: One who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for the effective function of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community's development (UNESCO,2006).

### **1.5.3 Reading Levels**

Grades 4 - 9 Assessment Guidelines for Languages (DoE, 2003(b):39) envisages that a learner should be able to read a passage (prepared and unprepared) using voice projection, fluency, expression and other strategies for spoken presentation. The DoE's (2008:37) document titled *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades Handbook* states that "there are three reading levels (from the strongest to the weakest): which are; *independent*, *instructional* and *frustration* level. However, Moloi and Chetty (2011:7) identify eight reading levels, which are:

- Pre-reading,
- Emergent Reading,
- Basic Reading,
- Reading for Meaning,
- Interpretive Reading,
- Inferential Reading,
- Analytical Reading, and
- Critical Reading.

In this study, I employed the three reading levels as defined by *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades Handbook* to investigate and determine learners' reading levels before and after the intervention.

#### **1.5.4 Reading Assessment**

According to Grabe (2009), reading assessment has a great muscle to enlighten researchers, teachers, administrators and policy makers. It could, however, be nerve-racking and devastating for learners and sometimes even for teachers. Reading assessment could be defined as an activity which is meant to establish the learners' progress. It also helps to identify learners that are struggling with reading and which reading skills they are struggling with. In this study, reading assessment was particularly used to determine which reading approach, as applied to each experimental group, yields better results in developing and promoting reading skills after an intervention. Thus, as suggested by Grabe (2009), the reading assessment was treated with great care and respect, hence, I opted for a multi-faceted approach to assess and determine reading levels of the learners before and after the intervention. The multi-faceted approach for assessing reading is dealt with in more details in Chapter 4.

## **1.6 READING APPROCHES/STRATEGIES**

In any scientific endeavour, there is a particular way of doing things. In teaching reading as well, learners need to be taught following certain ways that have been recommended by scholars regarded as gurus of reading approaches. Over the years different reading approaches have been applied to teaching reading. However, as recently as 2003, the most influential researchers on reading, like the expert panel on early reading in F, Ministry of education (2003), have recommended the following reading approaches: *Phonemic awareness, Reading Aloud, Shared Reading, Group guided reading, Paired Reading and Independent reading*. Each of these approaches is briefly discussed hereunder. An in-depth discussion of these approaches is dealt with in Chapter 3.

### **1.6.1 Phonics and Word Study**

According to the document titled *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades*, DoE's (2008) phonemic awareness is the knowledge of letter-sound relationships to enable learners to decode words and read while *word study* gives children the opportunity to practice high-frequency words so that they can read them automatically.

### **1.6.2 Read-Aloud (RA)**

In read-aloud, the teacher reads to the whole class or to a small group. It helps children to develop a love of good literature, motivation to pursue reading on their own.

### **1.6.3 Shared Reading (SR)**

In shared reading, the teacher guides the whole class or a small group in reading enlarged text that all the children can see – for example, a big book, an overhead, a chart, a poster, or a book. The text can be read several times, first for the children and then with the children joining in. Shared reading involves active participation and considerable interaction on the part of students and teachers.

### **1.6.4 Guided Reading (GR)**

Guided reading is a small group, teacher-directed activity. Here the teacher uses prudently selected books which are at the learner's instructional level. In guided

reading, the teacher is able to help a small group of learners as they talk, read, and think their way through a text. Learners are grouped into smaller groups for guided reading according to their reading ability. *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades*, DoE's (2008:26).

### **1.6.5 Independent Reading (IR)**

The DoE's (2008:37) document titled *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades Handbook* defines independent reading as "purposeful planned activity. Learners choose their own books according to their interest and ability. Learners should be guided to choose texts that they can read with a high degree of success".

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

"Reading is, without a doubt, the most important linguistic skill that needs to be developed in young children". (DoE, 2008:19). Reading serves as a building block upon which all other learning takes place", (DoE, 2008:19) hence, there is a need to explore solutions to improve levels of reading in the schools. This study endeavours to assist education planners and teachers to employ an appropriate approach for teaching and developing reading skills earlier in the schooling lives of the learners. "Poor matriculation results are in part due to the low levels of students' reading skills. University students; even those enrolled for the languages and the arts – are not proficient in reading, in terms of international standards" (National Reading Strategy, DOE, 2008, 4-5).

## **1.8 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

The study is divided into the following seven chapters: **Chapter 1** provides the introduction and background to the study. It contains the statement of the problem as well as aims and objectives of the study. **Chapter 2** deals with philosophical underpinnings of the study and theoretical framework.

**Chapter 3** deals with the literature review relating to the following, reading approaches, and reading in South African schools, rural-urban reading disparities, and reading assessment.

**Chapter 4** explores the research methodology and design of the study. It also reveals how the research methodology and design were applied in this study. In addition, it explains how data were collected.

**Chapter 5** presents collected raw data.

**Chapter 6**, I explored, analysed and interpreted the findings of the study.

**Chapter 7** deals with a brief overview of the study, recommendations, and conclusion.

## **1.9 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I introduced the study in detail. I explicitly discussed the statement of the problem, aims, and objectives of the study, as well as research participants and sample. Key terms/concepts as used in the discourse of this study were clarified. This was followed by indicating the significance of the study. This chapter concluded by sketching out the division of chapters.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

It is imperative to locate this study within the relevant philosophical underpinnings and theoretical framework. In this study I am not attempting to study nor undermine great philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The study does not reject epistemology and metaphysics of modern philosophy. Hence, it draws its philosophical underpinnings on the pragmatic knowledge claim whilst its theoretical framework is based on the schema reading theory as well as cognitive theory.

#### **2.2 PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY**

In terms of the philosophical frame of reference, this study is based on the pragmatic knowledge claim, which is consequence based, problem-centred and pluralistic in nature (Creswell, 2003). Pragmatic philosophy espouses practical solutions to problems encountered in everyday life, hence, it can be summarised as a philosophy which assesses or evaluate theories in terms of the success of their practical application. Dewey (1907) in his book Pragmatism argues that:

The traditional correspondence theory of truth, according to which the true idea is one that agrees or corresponds to reality, only begs the question of what the "agreement" or "correspondence" of an idea with reality is. He further maintained that an idea agrees with reality, and is therefore true, if and only if it is successfully employed in human action in pursuit of human goals and interests, that is, if it leads to the resolution of a "problematic situation

Considering the statement of the problem stated earlier in Chapter One teaching reading should yield practical and observable results in terms of quelling the reading crisis, especially in rural intermediate phase. Hence, the relevance of pragmatic frame of reference lies in the fact it advocates for resolution of a problematic situation in

reality. Therefore, the appropriate reading approach should be investigated and employed to teaching reading in the context of rural intermediate phase.

Unlike traditional approaches in the theory of knowledge, which saw thought as a subjective primitive out of which knowledge was composed, Dewey's approach understood thought as hereditarily, as the product of the contact between organism and environment, and knowledge as having practical instrumentality in the guidance and control of that contact (Dewey, 2014). The next section discusses the theoretical framework from where the philosophical underpinning of the study is drawn.

### **2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Theoretical framework shows the direction which the researcher took in the study. It may also contribute to an analysis of data as well as highlight what gaps exist for possible future works. In relation to reading, the most common theoretical frameworks relate to three theories. These are the metacognitive, traditional as well as the cognitive or Dual Coding Theory (DCT).

According to Block (1992), in the metacognitive view, there is no debate on "whether reading is a bottom-up, language-based process or a top-down, knowledge-based process." The cognitive theory of reading or the *top-down* model is in direct opposition to the '*bottom-up*' or *traditional* model. Nunan (1991) as well as Dubin and Bycina (1991), argue that the psycholinguistic model of reading and the top-down model are in exact concordance. According to Nunan (1991), reading is basically a matter of decoding written symbols into their aural equivalents in the quest for making sense of the text. He referred to this process as the *bottom-up* view of reading.

Dole, Duffy, Roehlerand, and Pearson (1991) contend that in the traditional view of reading, beginner readers attain a set of hierarchically (*bottom-up*) ordered sub-skills which sequentially build toward comprehension capability. The DCT is a theory of general cognition that addresses reading in all its psychological aspects. Language processing is a matter of matching words with mental representations and mental models of reality that may be in the form of imagery. Imagery is, therefore, an important

substratum of language in the form of experience-based knowledge of the world, to which language refers, rather than a propositional deep structure with innate origins.

Since the late 1960s, theoreticians such as Goodman (1970) have developed collaborating theories of reading, which place great significance on the part of the reader and the information she/he brings to bear on the text in the reading procedure. These collaborating theories, which profoundly draw from the schema theory, now lead reading research and powerfully inspire teaching practice.

Schema theory proposes that readers possess different conceptual frameworks, called schemata, which they bring to the reading of a text and which they use to make sense of what they read. Such schemata are used by readers in interactive bottom-up and top-down processing. Taking into account theoretical perspective alluded to in this section; I conclude that reading nowadays is understood not only as a cognitive process but also a social process wherein the reader is surrounded and affected by a number of factors (cultural, social and mental) in his or her learning situation. These factors are considered throughout the research process of the study, especially during data collection in order to determine an approach that best develops and promote reading skills in the intermediate phase. Thus, the study is rooted in the schema reading theory which is discussed at length in the next section.

## **2.4 THE SCHEMA READING THEORY**

As already alluded to in the preceding section, schema theory has had the greatest influence on models of reading in recent years. Schema theory proposes that readers possess different conceptual frameworks, called schemata, which they bring to the reading of a text and which they use to make sense of what they read. Such schemata are used by readers in interactive bottom-up and top-down processing. Schemata provide a framework for readers to check their understanding of the text, fill in information gaps within the text, and clarify ambiguities (Steffensen & Joag-Dev, 1984). Efficient readers use prior knowledge of content and textual features stored in schemata to make meaning out of the text (Rumelhart, 1977, Goodman, 1984). The

same sentiments are echoed by Fola-Adebayo (2014), who concurs; the major strength of schema theory is that it presents readers with reading material, which is congruent with their pre-existing schema and mainly facilitate reading comprehension.

In other words, schema theory could be defined as the process by which readers associate their own contextual knowledge with the information in a text to understand that text. All readers carry different schemata (background information) and these are also frequently culture-specific. Thus, texts that relate to learners background and culture are vital for teaching reading and testing their reading levels. Hence, one objective of this study is to assess the reading levels of the intermediate phase learners. Schemata theory is the relevant structure upon which to base this study as it advocates for pre-reading tasks which assist in building or activating the learner's schemata. Hence, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement for intermediate phase (CAPS) (2012) recommends that:

Pre-reading activities should be done to help prepare learners to better understand the reading. This could be done by discussing the title of the text and predicting what the story is about. In a text with lots of pictures, look at the pictures and discuss the pictures to get a sense of what the story is about. Key words from the text, not 'difficult words', can also be discussed to engage learners with the text even before starting to read.

On the one hand, Carrell (1988: 245) argues that some students' reading difficulties may be attributed or traced to inadequate background knowledge of where they come from or what the text is about, hence, in such circumstances where schema deficiencies are culture-specific, it could be beneficial to provide local texts or texts which are developed from the reader's' own experiences. In the same vein, Carrell and Eisterhold (1983:89) propose that every culture-specific interference problem dealt with in the classroom presents an opportunity to build new culture-specific schemata that will be accessible to the English Second Language (ESL) learner outside the classroom. These culture-specific interferences are helpful to learners because they prepare learners by assisting them to build background knowledge on the topic prior to reading, through appropriate pre-reading activities.

The schemata theory is particularly important and relevant for this study in terms of advocating and emphasising cultural background of the research subjects. I ensured that the learner participants' cultural background is taken care of when choosing the text used for observing them whilst reading and administering pre and post-tests. The text chosen for the pre-test is an African folktale that had a number of things that learners can identify with. The site is found in the rural setting and therefore learners are familiar with, for example; cows, hunters, drum, and Marimba which appear in the text. Culturally, drums are played during a family gathering and rituals whilst some families have cows which are seen as a sign of wealth. Often some rural boys go out for hunting in the bushes.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1983:80) argue that one of the reasons why a certain content schema may be unsuccessful to be there for a reader is that the schema is culturally specific and is not part of a particular reader's cultural background. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983:80) further contend that readers' way of life can affect everything from the way they view reading itself, the content and formal schemata they hold, right down to their understanding of individual concepts. "If the topic is outside of their experience or base of knowledge, readers are adrift on an unknown sea" (Aebersold & Field 1997:41). This could apply to a learner learning to read a second language whilst having a limited vocabulary of the language, an assertion that is supported by (Cohen, 2014) who acknowledges that language is the main problem in L2 reading. It is under such circumstances (insufficient background knowledge) that some learners may overreact for absent schemata by reading in a slow, text-bound way whilst others resort to guessing; all of which lead to poor reading skills and comprehension problems. In line with Carrell, Devine, and Eskey (1988:4), the researcher used pre-reading activities advocated for by the schema theory with the relevant reading approach to activate the learner's schema.

The concept of schema theory has a widespread impact on notions of reading and it has formed the framework of numerous empirical studies in the domain (Devine 1988; Alderson & Urquhart 1988; Steffensen & Joag-Dev 1984). The idea of the schema in reading proposes that it is an interactive process involving conceptual and textual

processes working interactively. A study by, Ahmad, (2013) based on schema theory, proves the effect of cultural background on reading comprehension and concede that the reading skills are, indeed, boosted by prior cultural experiences.

The major strength of schema theory is that presenting readers with reading material which matches with their pre-existing schema ease reading comprehension. Breznitz (2006) states that activation of background knowledge has facilitative effects on the act of comprehending and recalling, some readers may exhibit meagre comprehension and memory skills; this is not because of shortfalls in comprehension and memory, but because they do not have the background knowledge or fail to trigger the background knowledge that was presupposed by the text.

In summary, an in-depth study of schema theory of reading suggests that pre-existing knowledge of the reader needs to be activated to allow preparation of mental pictures which leads to comprehension of the text. "Efficient readers minimize dependence on visual detail by utilising background knowledge to make predictions and checking these against the text" (Goodman, 1975:12). Hence, it is critical for the teacher to choose texts carefully and give readers suitable support before and during the reading process. From this discussion, it becomes clear that schema theory has, indeed, positively impacted on the teaching of reading and pre-reading activities. However, the controversy is that there are contrasting views by scholars such as David and Norazit (2000) with regard to using text that relates to learner's background knowledge and culture. David and Norazit (2000) argue that it is sometimes desirable for learners to be given reading material on unfamiliar topics, particularly if we want them to eventually see reading in a foreign language as a purposeful and intrinsically interesting activity which can enable them to gain knowledge of the world beyond their own experience. David and Norazit (2000) suggest that unfamiliar text can be used successfully in the classroom by teachers who select texts judiciously and provide readers with adequate support both before and during the reading process.

David and Norazit (2000) argue that unfamiliar text is important in multicultural nations like Malaysia where they conducted their study. The researcher contends that carefully selected text can be used successfully in the multicultural South African situation and

would help bring about social cohesion amongst different cultural groups. Therefore, keeping in mind the influence schemata theory has had on reading, it is critical for teachers to strike the balance when selecting texts to be used to teach reading skills to learners. Striking the balance in selecting texts for teaching reading is in line with the 21<sup>st</sup>-century curriculum which is interdisciplinary, connected to the local community whilst it does not lose touch with both national and global issues. Learners need to collaborate with people around the world in various projects.

Related to the schema theory is Vygotsky's theory which also put more weight on the learner's environment and the learner's contacts with other people through the use of language.

## **2.5 VYGOTSKY'S THEORY**

Vygotsky's work on cultural and social development is amongst the well-known theories relating to theories of knowledge. He is the major theorist among the social constructionists (Huitt, 2003). It is upon his work on cultural and social development that most of the reading theories developed. Vygotsky's learning theory supports the idea that learning is boosted through the social interaction between the learner and the teacher. Vygotsky, (1978) states that development is a result of a combination of any of the strands of separate development such as: emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual, cognitive, moral, social or 'maturational. In line with Vygotsky's learning theory, this study is rooted in the pragmatic knowledge claim which advocates for practical resolution of the problem, which in this case is the reading crisis in the intermediate phase. As a social activity, teaching and learning to read should take place wherein the target language (EFAL) is constantly used by both teachers and learners. According to Vygotsky (1978), every function in the learner's development appears two times: first on the social level and later on the individual level.

Vygotsky's theory of cultural and social development is, as well, the relevant structure upon which to base this study because; learning to read takes place in a social setting/context which is influenced by the cultural background of learners. A significant proportion of learner's daily activities takes place in what Vygotsky (1978) calls the

zone of proximal development. According to Vygotsky (1978), as cited in French (2007: 5) “zone of proximal development is the distance between the [child’s] actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the [child’s] level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”. Vygotsky claims that learning occurs when the zone of proximal development bridges the gap between what is known and what can be known. Thus, pragmatically, when teachers engage and interact with learners through the medium of EFAL, learning to read becomes easier. The question is, pragmatically, which approach yield better results when teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate phase?

In line with Vygotsky’ theory, this study explored the teacher’s (as guiders of learners) experiences in relation to teaching reading to learners in rural intermediate phase. As already indicated, Vygotsky proposes that social interaction profoundly influences cognitive development. Fundamental to Vygotsky’s theory is his belief that biological and cultural development do not occur in isolation (Driscoll, 1994). Further, Vygotsky (1978) sees learning as a reciprocal and collaborative process between adult and child and in this case, the teacher, and the learner. He emphasises the fact that interaction with adults and peers advances learner’s knowledge. In other words, a learner can learn to read under the teacher’s guidance or with peer collaboration a text that s/he could otherwise not be able to read alone. Thus, social interaction enables social learning which actually leads to the cognitive development of the learner as a social being.

In terms of cultural theory, Vygotsky encourages connections between people and the cultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences (Crawford, 1996). Vygotsky (1962) argues that culture is the primary determining factor for knowledge construction. We learn through this cultural lens by interacting with others and following the rules, skills, and abilities shaped by our culture. Brown and Palincsar (1989), study has demonstrated that Vygotskian approach with reciprocal teaching methods is successful in terms of teaching reading strategies. Hausfather (1996) states that; Vygotsky’s theory requires the teacher and students to

play untraditional roles as they collaborate with each other. Instead of a teacher dictating his/her meaning to learners for future recitation, a teacher should collaborate with his/her learners in order to create meaning in ways that learners can make their own.

In summary, Vygotsky (1978:102) recognizes that:

Learning always occurs and cannot be separated from a social context. Consequently, instructional strategies that promote the distribution of expert knowledge where students collaboratively work together to conduct research, share their results and perform or produce a final project, help to create a collaborative community of learners. Knowledge construction occurs within Vygotsky's (1962) social context that involves student-student and expert-student collaboration on real-world problems or tasks that build on each person's language, skills, and experience shaped by each individual's culture.

## **2.6 COGNITIVE READING THEORY**

Concise Oxford English Dictionary (Eleventh Edition) explains the word cognition as the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge through thought, experience, and the senses. Piaget is considered the chief theorist among the cognitive constructionists (Huitt, 2003). Khalifa and Weir (2009), as cited in Bax (2013: 5) provide what they refer to as the concept of cognitive processing in reading. This concept proposes a hierarchy of cognitive processing complexity in reading that is agreeable to empirical research.

According to Khalifa and Weir (2009) cognitive processing in reading moves from simple lexical processing to complex inter-textual reading. Table 2.1 below summarises levels of cognitive processing in reading as proposed by Khalifa and Weir, (2009).

Table 2. 1: Levels of cognitive processing in reading test

	Level of activity (ordered from simple to complex)	Readers' typical cognitive operation in language text	Size of typical unit
1	Lexis: word matching	Reader identifies the same word in question and text	Word
2	Lexis: synonym and word-class matching	Reader uses knowledge of word meaning or word class to identify synonym, antonym or other related words	Word
3	Grammar/syntax	Reader uses grammatical knowledge to disambiguate and identify answer	Clause/sentence
4	Propositional meaning	The reader uses knowledge of lexis and grammar to establish the meaning of a sentence.	Sentence
5	Inference	Reader goes beyond literal meaning to infer a further significance	Sentence/ paragraph/text
6	Building a mental model	Reader uses several features of the text to build a larger mental model	text
7	Understanding text function	Reader uses genre knowledge to identify text structure and purpose	text

(Adapted from Khalifa and Weir, 2009)

## 2.7 SUMMARY

In conclusion, this chapter has given an overview of theoretical framework upon which this study is based. The chapter gives the reader basic understanding of some of the theories relating to reading. It came out very clearly in this chapter that the schemata theory has, indeed, impacted heavily on reading the research. Schema theory suggests that readers have different conceptual backgrounds, called schemata, which they carry to the reading of a text and which they apply to make sense of what they read. Such schemata are applied by readers in interactive top-down and bottom-up

processing. Thus, the chapter has laid the groundwork on which this study evolves and enlightens the reader what direction it takes. The next chapter presents literature review.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review shares with the reader the outcomes of other studies that are related to the one being undertaken Creswell (2009). It relates the study to the larger, on-going debate in the literature. It offers a summary for stating the importance of the study as well as providing a yardstick for comparing the results with other findings. McMillan and Schumacher,(2006) concede that the knowledge gained from the literature review assists in stating the importance of the problem, developing the research design, and linking the results of the study to previous knowledge. It is thus hoped that, the literature review in this study will enlighten the reader's mind as well as enhancing his or her insights into the available approaches employed to teach reading and which amongst them yields better results, in accordance with the findings of this study and in terms of developing and promoting reading skills.

"Conducting a literature review is a means of demonstrating an author's knowledge about a particular field of study, including vocabulary, theories, key variables and phenomena, and its methods and history. Conducting a literature review also informs the student of the influential researchers and research groups in the field". (Randolph, 2009: 2). Hence, Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) argue that the literature review plays a part in delineating the research problem, seeking new lines of inquiry, avoiding futile approaches, gaining methodological understanding and identifying recommendations for further research.

This chapter explores available literature related to the research topic. There is a number of scholars who have written extensively with regard to teaching reading in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. Examples of these include Moloj and Strauss, 2005; Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Scherman, and Archer, 2007; Mullis, Martin, Foy, and Drucker, 2012; Ramalepe, 2013; and Fola-Adebayo, 2014.

As there are various fields within the area of teaching reading skills in the English language and literature, this study is about determining an approach or approaches that best promote and develop rural learners' reading skills in English, a language which happens to be their first additional language as well as language of learning and teaching in many South African schools.

### **3.2 READING SKILLS**

“Well-developed *reading skills* are central to successful learning across the curriculum” (CAPS intermediate phase, DBE, 2012). According to Gardiner, (2008) huge strides have been made in uprooting centuries of colonialism and apartheid in the education system, but much more still has to be done. The Progress for International Reading and Literacy Studies (PIRLS) 2006, reports that, when likened to many other developing countries, South Africa's expenditure on education does not correspond with the results. Research also convincingly proves that good teaching is vital for improved results. This state of affairs has been attributed to the inability to read by learners in the intermediate phase, which is often carried over to senior phase and institutions of higher learning (Twist, Schagen & Hodgson, 2007) “Studies reveal that this problem manifests itself at primary and secondary levels, as well as at university level” (Cekiso & Madikiza, 2014).

In addition, Bharuthram (2012) draws attention to the DBE report, which indicated that the 2011 ANA results had dropped since testing in 2008. This source also explains that research in applied linguistics and reading show a strong correlation between reading proficiency and academic success at all ages. Numerous experts, such as Townsend and Turner (2000), Nunes (1999) as well as Alexander (2000) agree that poor reading skills lead to meagre academic performance, which in turn unfavourably affects students' overall development. Between 2004 and 2007, South Africa participated in the assessment of reading skills for Grade 4 learners with 40 other countries, comprising 45 education departments. PIRLS (2007) gave a summary of the findings from South Africa's participation. Alarmingly, South Africa achieved the lowest score of all the education departments. More recently, Mullis, Martin, Foy, and

Drucker (2012) as cited by Combrinck, Van Staden and Roux, (2014:2) reported that: Pre-PIRLS 2011 results point to continued underperformance by South African learners with little evidence of improved reading literacy scores, even when administering an easier assessment. The Pre-PIRLS 2011 study results revealed that South African Grade 4 learners obtained the lowest reading achievement score in comparison with the international centre point of 500. In contrast, learners from Botswana achieved 463 (SE = 3.5) and learners from Colombia obtained 576 (SE = 3.4).

This means that South African learners are performing far below par when compared to learners from some of the poorest countries in the world. Thus, a lot remains to be done to promote, develop and enhance reading abilities earlier in the schooling life of learners. To this end, Zimmerman (2014) advises that teachers should undertake activities at the word, sentence and text level in order to assist learners to make connections between these elements. The expert panel on early reading in Ontario, Ministry of education (2003:14) maintain that:

The knowledge and skills that children need in order to read with fluency and comprehension include oral language; prior knowledge and experience; concepts about print; phonemic awareness; letter-sound relationships; vocabulary; semantics and syntax; metacognition; and higher-order thinking skills. These are not isolated concepts taught in a lock-step sequence; they are interrelated components that support and build on each other.

According to Reynolds (1998), phonemic awareness seems to be the most vital approach for learning to read English. Furthermore, this source reports that in the L1 reading acquisition literature, there seems to be general agreement that phonemic awareness needs to be taught as soon as possible. On teaching reading, Singh (2009) maintains that the teaching of phonetic sounds is a prerequisite for pre-reading. This source describes phonetics as sounds and syllables that, when put together, formulate words. The practice of phonetic sounds eases learners into reading. This is done by starting with simple sounds and moving on to sounds that are more complex.

As a researcher, I do acknowledge that there are many other factors, especially contextual factors that contribute towards the state of affairs with regard to reading in South African schools, particularly in the rural areas. Hence, McIntyre, Hulan, and Layne (2011) argue that there is interplay between learners' difficulties or successes in learning to read and write with the environment in which the learners are. Nevertheless, this study sought to investigate an appropriate approach to teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase in a rural context. As shown in the preceding discussion, scholars agree that reading is fundamental to academic performance. Hence, in his earlier study on reading levels of intermediate learners, Ramalepe (2013) confirms that learners in the intermediate phase read below their age cohorts and grade level. Combrinck *et al.* (2014:8) report that delayed introduction of reading skills and strategies in the foundation phase was found for four critical reading skills and strategies, despite an indication in the curriculum that these activities should be introduced in Grade 1. According to Taylor, (2008), more than three-quarters of learners in former white schools were reading at the suitable level, as defined by the national curriculum. This figure, while getting better, was less than half in previously Coloured schools, and in former Department of Education and Training (DET) schools where only four learners in a hundred were reading at grade level.

There is a number of reading approaches applied with the aim of promoting and developing reading skills to enhance the overall academic performance in the schooling life of every learner, however, the in/ability to read at an appropriate level remains a thorny issue. Thus, the fundamental question becomes: where are we getting it wrong in the midst of all available reading approaches? "If teachers knew that children must read with comprehension so that they can talk about what they have read, they would select methods that would promote listening for comprehension, and verbal interaction to promote communication" (Lenyai, 2011: 69).

Lenyai (2011) goes on to concede that the danger of a lack of knowledge in approaches and methods of teaching reading could lead to teachers' choice of inappropriate content use of unsuitable teaching approach. In response to the

revealed poor reading abilities of South African learners by various researchers, (including the Pre-PIRLS 2011 study), the Department of Education (DoE), devised a document known as National Reading Strategy (NRS) (DoE, 2008). This document aimed to promote, develop and enhance reading skills from an early age. The NRS stipulates that:

To meet the crisis of reading, one of the practices promoted by the Department of Education is that all schools (especially primary schools) should arrange an additional half hour per day to 'Drop All and Read'. This campaign creates a culture of reading in the classroom and in the school. Everyone from learner to teacher, principal, and support-staff can be seen reading for enjoyment for half an hour a day. If learners enjoy reading, this will raise literacy levels and improve the ability to read ... As part of the *National Reading Strategy*, all Foundation and Intermediate Phase classrooms will have a 'reading/library corner' with exciting story books in all the languages spoken in the class. These reading corners will have story books for learners, reference materials for teachers and learners to help them effectively implement the National Curriculum Statement (NRS, DoE, 2008).

Unfortunately, the NRS never clarified in detail what particular strategy/strategies and/or methods should be applied to promote and develop reading skills. The NRS deals mostly with what to do and not how to do it. For example, the NRS recommends that the principal's responsibility should be to ensure:

- Steps are taken to encourage reading.
- Reading approaches are integrated into all school subjects.
- A culture of reading is inculcated in the school.
- Every learner learns to read.

According to Spaul, (2013) most parents choose to have their children taught in English, which is seen as the language of social and economic mobility, despite the challenges it poses in reading. This is further compounded by the fact that in many South African schools, English, a language that is foreign to the majority of learners, is used as a language of learning and teaching from grade 4. This is in accordance with the National Education Policy Act No. 27 of 1996, which stipulates that; South African learners should receive instruction at school from grades 1 to 3 in their home

language. However, in grade 4, learners are instructed in a second language, the change from home language to the English medium of instruction is not well handled as teachers have slight training in helping learners make the switch.

De Clerq and Shalem (2014) note that research on professional knowledge propose that to teach well, teachers need a particular knowledge of what they teach, and broad sense of varied methods of teaching. In terms of teaching reading, the most influential researchers on reading, like the expert panel on early reading in Ontario, Ministry of education (2003), have recommended the following reading approaches: *Phonemic awareness, reading aloud, shared reading, group guided reading, paired reading and independent reading*. Hereunder is an outline of each of the above reading approaches.

### **3.3 READING APPROACHES**

#### **3.3.1 Phonemic awareness (PA)**

Phonics is a systematic approach that links the underpinning of PA with children's knowledge of letter-sound relationships to enable them to decode words and read while *word study* gives children the chance to practice high-frequency words so that they can automatically read them. According to Reynolds (1998), PA seems to be the most critical approach for learning to read English. Furthermore, Reynolds (1998) reports that in the First language (L1) reading gaining literature, there seems to be general agreement that PA needs to be taught as soon as possible. Blachman (1994) indicates that phonological awareness is teachable in one's L1, and is teachable at very young ages even before learners begin to read. Reynolds (1998) concedes that those with severely limited phonology may be advantaged from PA training.

"The Alphabetic Principle refers to the relationship between spoken and written language, or more precisely to the relationship between sounds and letters whilst phonemic awareness, by contrast, refers to a person's ability to perceive the basis for the alphabetic analysis, i.e. individual sounds in spoken words" (Uppstad & Tonnessen, 2011:110).

National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000) report delimits phonemic awareness as follows: Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to focus on and manipulate phonemes in spoken words. NRP (2000) mentions the tasks here-under as commonly used to assess learners' Phonemic Awareness (PA) or to improve their PA through instruction and practice:

- Phoneme isolation, which needs recognizing individual sounds in words, for example; what is first sound in the word *paint*. (/p/)
- Phoneme identity, which needs learners to identify the common sound in different words; for example, what sound/s is the same in the following words? *can, carry, and cat*. (/c/ and /a/)
- Phoneme categorization, which needs learners to recognize the word with the odd sound in a sequence of three or four words, for example, Which word does not fit? *bus, bun, rug*. (*rug*)
- Phoneme combination, which requires listening to a sequence of separately spoken sounds and joining them to form a familiar word. For example, "What word is /s/ /k/ /u/ /l/?" (*school*)
- Phoneme division, which needs learners to break a word into its sounds by tapping out or counting the sounds or by pronouncing and positioning a marker for each sound. For example, "How many phonemes are there in the word "ship?" (*three*: /ʃ/ /l/ /p/)
- Phoneme deletion, which learners to requires identify what word remains when a specified phoneme is removed. For example, "What is smile without the /s/? (*mile*).

Learners need to learn that the words we say are made up of sounds. This understanding is called phonemic awareness. Phonics is a systematic approach that links the foundation of phonemic awareness with learner's growing knowledge of letter-sound relationships to assist learners to decode words and read while *word study* gives learners the opportunity to practice high-frequency words so that they can read them automatically.

Blachman (1994) indicates that phonological awareness is teachable in one's L1, and is teachable at very young ages even before students begin to read. Blachman is in line with Reynolds (1998) who argues that once one has acquired a given level of phonological awareness in one's language, it is possible to transfer that understanding to any other languages. Reynolds (1998) further concedes that phonemic awareness seems to be the most crucial for learning to read English as those with severely limited phonology may benefit from phonemic awareness training. Hence, "the discovery of a strong relationship between children's phonological awareness and their progress in learning to read is one of the great successes of modern psychology" (Bryant & Goswami, 1987, 439). According to the report of the expert panel on early reading in Ontario Ministry of education (2003:16), learners need to:

Learn that the words we say are made up of sounds. This understanding is called phonemic awareness. Research has confirmed that phonemic awareness is a crucial foundation for word identification. Without it, children struggle and continue to have reading difficulties. The evidence also shows that phonemic awareness can be taught and that the teacher's role in the development of phonemic awareness is essential for most children. Children who have phonemic awareness are able to identify and manipulate the individual sounds in oral language. They demonstrate this, for example, in recognizing that the spoken word "ship" consists of three distinct sounds: sh + i + p. In English, there are about 44 speech sounds and in French 36. The number of individual speech sounds in other languages varies. In learning a second language, children may encounter speech sounds that do not exist in their home language and more time to develop phonemic awareness in the language of instruction.

The aim of learning a language is to expand the learner's four skills which are; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Brown (2015) identifies reading as a *receptive skill* for which organization is the suitable strategy and writing is recognised as an *expressive skill* for which communication is the suitable strategy. Araújo, Morais and Costa (2013) explain reading as an active and complex process that involves understanding written text; developing and interpreting meaning; and using meaning as appropriate to the type of text; aim and situation. According to Araujo *et al.* (2013), the skill to decode has long been seen as the foundation for positive reading development in alphabetic languages, regardless of the specificities of different

orthographic systems. The trio refers to decoding as the mechanism of assigning a phoneme to each grapheme, which is followed by phonological recoding, the fusion or integration of the recovered phonemes in order to form each of the successive syllables. However, Araujo *et al.* (2013) acknowledge that in deep orthographies like English there are many multi-letter graphemes. In transparent writing systems such as the Finnish, there is an almost perfect one to one match between graphemes and phonemes and a simple syllable structure. In the early stages of learning to read these written code differences seem to result in differing degrees of reading development. Specifically, learners learning to read in English seem to take longer to attain the same level of decoding ability of the majority of learners in other languages.

Ellis, Natsume, Stavropoulou, Hoxhallari, Van Daal, Polyzoe, Tsipa and Petalis, (2004) report that research studies with other orthographic codes also advocates that orthographies that represent pronunciation boost faster learning for reading aloud and the more clearly they do this, the faster the learning rate and the more they reassure lexical access via phonology.

The letter-sound relationship is succinctly described by the document titled Teaching Reading in the Early Grades, (DOE, 2008) as follows:

In indigenous languages as well as in Afrikaans, there is a nearly direct correspondence between the alphabetical letters and sounds they represent. The names and sound of the letter are generally the same, and letter sound does not vary depending on what letters are near it. Therefore, it is easier to teach phonemes in these languages than it is in the English language. In the English language, there are 26 letters of the alphabet, there are 44 phonemes (sounds) and 120 graphemes (letters and combination of letters). The variations explain why the teaching of phonemic awareness and phonics takes so much longer in English than in African language. In English for example, the sequence of letters “ough” can sound differently depending on whether they are used in “ought” or “through” for example. This does not happen in African language or Afrikaans.

In Sepedi for example, the letter *k* sound as /k/ as in *kamogelo* (welcome) and in Afrikaans the same sound is retained as in the word “*kans*” (chance). In English, the sound /k/ can be represented in different spellings that may be confusing to the learner

whom English is a L2. For example, the sound /k/ is also used in words that do not have letter "k" as in chemical, café, carrot, and chameleon. However, according to Reynolds (1998), the majority of the research on phonemic awareness has been conducted with learners learning to read English as their L1. Hence this study seeks to establish and determine an approach or approaches that best promote and develop reading skills to intermediate phase learners whom English is their L2.

### **3.3.2 Read-Aloud (RA)**

In RA the teacher orates to the whole class or to a small group. It helps children to develop a love of prose, and zeal to pursue reading on their own. In Read-aloud the whole class or small group of learners listen to the teacher reading aloud. It helps learners to develop a love of good literature and motivation to follow reading on their own. Reading aloud to learners helps them to develop a love for reading different genres. It gives learners an opportunity to learn new terminology, exposes them to a variety of literature, and adds to their oral and written language development.

Expert panel on early reading in Ontario, Early Reading Strategy Ministry of education (2003) state that reading aloud should occur every day in the early stage of reading instruction to stimulate the learners' interest in books and reading. Teachers who do good model reading inspire learners with the love of reading and a passion for stories as they are likely to be imitated by learners. Frederickson and Cline (2002) echo the same sentiments by elucidating that when the teacher read aloud to learners, they (learners) are provided with a step-by-step demonstration of what is required. Further, a study by Naidoo, Dorasamy and Reddy (2012) reveals that majority of teachers prefer teaching reading as a whole class activity, which is in actual fact, Read-Aloud approach.

### **3.3.3 Shared Reading (SR)**

In SR the teacher monitors the whole class or a small group in reading enlarged text that all the children can see – for example, an overhead, a poster, a chart, or a book. The text can be read many times, first *for* the children and then *with* the children joining in. SR encompasses active participation and substantial interaction on the part of students and teachers. Zama (2014:22) states that:

"During the shared reading sessions, the teacher may find it suitable and convenient to model a range of reading strategies for the learner. This will show the learners what to do and how to pronounce some words in the texts. The teacher assists in decoding unfamiliar words and gradually the learners are given the opportunity to take over the task of reading".

Ministry of education, (2003) informs that in shared reading the teacher guides the whole class or a small group in reading enlarged text that all the children can see – for example, a big book, a chart, a poster, or a book. The text can be read numerous times, first *for* the learners and then with the learners joining in. Shared reading involves active participation and considerable interaction on the part of students and teachers. According to Ministry of education (2003) shared reading provides the teacher with the opportunity to model effective reading; inspire listening comprehension; teach vocabulary; strengthen concepts about books and print and letter-sound relationships, and build background knowledge on a range of subjects. According to Teaching Reading in the Early Grades, DoE (2008), shared reading can be used for the following reasons:

- Can be used for any age or ability group or grade level.
- It allows for but does not demand active participation.
- It extends learners' sight and listening vocabularies.
- It allows for the teaching of many interesting things such as rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration.

### **3.3.4 Guided Group Reading (GGR)**

GGR is a small group, teacher-directed activity. It involves using carefully selected books at the children's instructional level. In this approach, the teacher supports a small group of children as they talk, read, and think their way through a text. Children can be grouped for guided reading in accordance with their reading ability or specific instructional goals. The approach allows the teacher to observe reading behaviours, identify areas of need, and allow children to develop more independence and confidence as they practice and consolidate reading behaviours and skills. Foundations for Learning Intermediate Phase Languages Lesson plans First term

Grade 4 (DoE, 2008) concurs that learners need to read texts that suit their level of competence (not too simple/not too difficult). They are not ready to read the same texts at the same time. This is where group reading comes in. Learners can be grouped according to their reading ability, into 3 - 4 groups, with the teacher working with each group at least once a week (DoE, 2008: 10).

Echoing similar views about this approach is the Ministry of education, (2003) which states that GGR is a small group, teacher-directed activity. It includes using carefully selected books at the learner's instructional level.

Both Grabe (2009) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase, (DBE, 2011) assert that GGR gives the teacher an opportunity to engage learners before, during and after reading. Learners are given the opportunity to predict what the story is about. During reading, learners could be asked to look back at the text to confirm whether their predictions about the story were correct. Regarding post-reading, learners could be asked to retell the story, dramatise it or critically discuss the values, morals, and messages in the text. As a means of making sure that learners understand the text, they could be asked to establish a relationship between the text that was read and similar other texts that they read individually. Learners could also be asked to relate the text to their own lives, showing similarities or differences between these texts. Learners could also discuss social, cultural or moral issues raised in the text. This corroborates with Grabe (2009) who holds the view that readers employ complex cognitive processes when reading; which include contextual, background knowledge and memory. The same source acknowledges that sociocultural factors and L1-L2 language relationship contribute towards reading abilities.

### **3.4 READING IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS**

Spaull (2013) reports that Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) II (2000) and SACMEQ III (2007) revealed that there was no development in South African Grade Six reading ability or numeracy

performance over the seven year period. Given that 13 other African countries also partook, it is possible to compare the achievement levels of South African Grade Six learners with other Grade Six learners on the continent. In the most recent round of SACMEQ (2007), South African learners were graded 10th of the 14 education systems 2 for reading, behind much poorer countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, and Swaziland.

Taylor, (2008) reports that figures from the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Studies (PIRLS) study 4 indicate that South African schools spend significantly less time on reading, which is the foundation for all other learning... nearly three-quarters of South African schools spend less than 3 hours a week on reading. (PIRLS) (2006) reports that, when compared to many other developing countries, South African spending on education is not matched by the results, and research shows convincingly that good teaching is vital for improved results. Good teaching includes the teaching of reading in the early grades.

Araujo *et al.* (2013) argue that failing to learn to read fluently with good understanding before the third or fourth year of schooling may result in life-long problems in learning new skills. The above clearly shows that reading in both the foundation and intermediate phases leaves much to be desired. This state of affairs has been attributed to the inability to read by learners in the intermediate phase, which is often carried over to senior phase and institutions of higher learning. This state of affairs is further elucidated by Monyai (2010) who notes that “some families are simply not interested in reading books or magazines. Learners from such families tend to perceive reading as homework and visiting the library as punishment” (Monyai, 2010: 12). According to SACMEQ (2000), South Africa is outdone by 8 surrounding countries, including Mozambique, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, which are much poorer compared to South Africa.

On the other side Bharuthram (2012) reports that, research in applied linguistics and reading research demonstrates strong association between reading skills and academic success, with several experts, such as Alexander (1997); Nunes (1999) as

well as Townsend and Turner (2000) agreeing that poor reading skills lead to poor academic performance, which in turn adversely affects students' overall development. Sporer, Brunstein, and Kieschke (2009) contend that generally accepted aim of primary education is the mastery of reading comprehension since reading comprehension provides the foundation for most learning that takes place in secondary school. As already indicated in section 3.2 above, Pre-PIRLS 2011 results have continued to reveal underperformance by South African learners even when subjected to an easier assessment. The Pre-PIRLS 2011 study results revealed that South African Grade 4 learners obtained the lowest reading achievement score in comparison with the international centre point of 500. This state of affairs is best described by Spaul, (2013:9).

While the low-level equilibrium that South Africa finds itself in has its roots in the apartheid regime of institutionalised inequality, this fact does not absolve the current administration from its responsibility to provide a quality education to every South African child. After 19 years of democratic rule, most black children continue to receive an education which condemns them to the underclass of South African society, where poverty and unemployment are the norms, not the exception. This substandard education does not develop their capabilities or expand their economic opportunities, but instead denies them dignified employment and undermines their own sense of self-worth. In short, poor school performance in South Africa reinforces social inequality and leads to a situation where children inherit the social station of their parents, irrespective of their motivation or ability. Until such a time as the DBE and the ruling administration are willing to seriously address the underlying issues in South African education, at whatever political or economic cost, the existing patterns of underperformance and inequality will remain unabated.

As already indicated, South African learners are performing far below par when compared to learners from even some of the poorest countries in the world. Thus, much still remain to be done to promote, develop and enhance reading abilities earlier in the schooling life of learners. Hence, Zimmerman (2014) reports that teachers should undertake activities at the word, sentence and text level in order to assist learners to make connections between these elements.

“The overarching goal, as per the injunction of the President of the Republic of South Africa in the State of the Nation Address in 2010, is that by 2014, at least 60% of learners in Grades 3, 6 and 9 should have achieved acceptable levels of competency

in Language and Mathematics” (Report on ANA, Department of Education, 2014). On the contrary, Pretorius, Jackson, Mckay, and Spaul (2016:10) assert that:

Many children enter the Intermediate Phase with very poor decoding skills and can hardly read texts at all, let alone understand them. On the other hand, many can decode adequately, but they don't understand what they read. Many teachers think that they have taught their learners to read if their learners can read aloud without making mistakes, yet very little attention is given to helping learners construct meaning while they read.

The assertion by Pretorius *et al.* demonstrates the need to undertake this study. Table 2 below shows the EFAL average percentage of the three provinces that have not been doing well in the recent past in terms of grade 12 results.

**Table 3.1:** Grade 6 EFAL ANA average percentages 2012-2014

<b>Province</b>	<b>Average Mark (%)</b>		
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>EC</b>	<b>36.3</b>	<b>43.2</b>	<b>38.2</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>31.7</b>	<b>43.2</b>	<b>36.0</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>41.7</b>	<b>45.5</b>

Table 3.1 above presents a dwindling EFAL performance by Grade 6 learners from 2012 to 2014. This justifies the need to investigate and determine an effective approach to teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase of a rural intermediate phase. As already indicated in section 1.7, reading serves as a building block upon which all other learning takes place, hence, it is the most important linguistic skill that needs to be developed in young children.

### **3.5 RURAL-URBAN READING DISPARITIES IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS**

Government's agenda of redress, access, and equity remains a pipe dream in South African Education. This is visible in rural-urban reading disparities,, Van der Berg

(2015). Ramalepe (2013). Zhang (2006), reports that rural education in many underdeveloped countries is often synonymous with disadvantages for learning. The same is true with South African education. Van der Berg (2015) analysis of the findings of a study of learners' performance in the 2012 and 2013 Annual National Assessments (ANAs) showed that the learning gap between learners from rich and poor schools is already *very wide* by grade 4. Zhang (2006) asserts that available evidence suggests that, in the latter half of the 1990s, primary school learners in rural areas consistently under-achieved substantially as compared to their urban counterparts in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Spaul (2013: 6), 2011 pre-PIRLS results revealed that:

Grade Four pupils from rural areas and townships are two to two and a half years behind urban children in reading. The National School Effectiveness Study (2007/08/09) showed that Grade Three pupils from former-white schools scored higher on the same test than Grade Five pupils from former-black schools, showing that already by the age of eight there are large inequalities in the educational outcomes of pupils.

One disturbing finding of the study by Spaul (2013) is that "severe inequalities of educational outcomes in South Africa can be seen along a number of correlated dimensions, most notably: wealth, school location, language, and province. In each case, the difference between the top and bottom categories is at least two grade-levels worth of learning and sometimes is as large as four grade-levels" (Spaul, 2013: 6). Such educational inequalities also translate into reading inequalities as well. As early as 2002 Pretorius and Naude (2002) reported on the ever-widening gap in performance between learners from rural or township backgrounds, and learners from well-to-do areas as an indicator of learners' poor reading skills. Dieden and Gustafson (2003) too, claim that learners living in rural areas perform poorly since the parents are absent. Madiba, (2012: 19) asserts that most of the children of the elite attend ex-Model C schools or private schools that use English as a medium of instruction from the first grade. Whereas the use of English as a medium of instruction does not seem to be a barrier to learning in these ex-Model-C schools, especially the upper class ex-Model-C schools (i.e., schools historically reserved for whites), which are well resourced and have good teachers and a relatively high racial mix, in lower class ex-

Model-C and poor rural schools, the use of English as the only medium of instruction has devastating consequences (Howie, 2005a; Jordaan, 2011).

The policy provides guidelines on the teaching of indigenous African languages or home languages as subjects of study in their own right and as media of instruction. In terms of this policy, home languages, especially indigenous African languages, may be studied as subjects up to Grade 12. The policy requires that these languages be used as media of instruction for at least three years, after which learners switch to an additional language which can be either English or Afrikaans. However, according to the South African Schools Act (Act of 1996), the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) have the power to decide which language should be used as the tuition medium in their schools, with the result that in some schools English is used as the only medium of instruction from Grade 1. Where additive bilingualism is being implemented, research shows that it is not being done correctly (Heugh, 2011: 148). The implementation of the curriculum, it appears, is promoting early-exit bilingualism rather than additive or late-exit bilingualism, which is conducive to the development of academic language proficiency. At present, about 78% of learners switch to English in Grade 4 (Heugh, 2011: 153). Accordingly, only an insignificant minority of English and Afrikaans students enjoy the benefits of monolingual mother-tongue education throughout their secondary and tertiary educational careers.

The early exit to English destabilises the development of academic language proficiency among the learners who have indigenous African languages as home languages. These learners are transitioned to English before developing strong foundational academic language in their home language, and also, which is a matter of concern, English has been included as the first additional language for only three years. As a result, learners move to English-medium tuition with a vocabulary of not more than 500 words, compared to native English learners with 7000 words at the same level of schooling (Heugh, 2011). This is not surprising as second language teaching is never aimed at preparing learners to use it as the medium of instruction (Heugh, 2011: 142). The question is; can the urban-rural gap in reading achievement be explained away by differences in learners and school features? (Zhang, 2006).

One is tempted to go along with Zhang by conceding that, indeed, reading achievement can partially be explained in terms of differences in learners and school features. For example, rural-urban division relating to individual and family circumstances as well as school characteristics. Rural families have lesser resources than do urban families whilst most rural schools are still without basic libraries and other infrastructural facilities.

The rural-urban reading disparities in South African schools is clearly demonstrated by SACMEQ III (2007), which found out that “27 Percent of South African Grade Six pupils were illiterate since they could not read a short and simple text and extract meaning, with the proportion varying significantly by province: half (49 Percent) of all Grade Six pupils in Limpopo were illiterate, while only 5 Percent of pupils in the Western Cape were thus classified” (Spaull, 2013:4). Rural-urban reading inequality is further shown by Spaull, (2012) who reports that South Africa has two education systems which perpetuate reading imbalances:

A minority of students (about 25%) who come from wealthy backgrounds of all races attend high quality primary and secondary schools and go on to study at University or other institutions of higher learning... The second schooling system consists of the majority of students (75%) who come from poorer backgrounds, attend low quality primary and secondary schools and have very little chance of accessing higher education opportunities due to the low quality of their education (Fleisch,2008).

The above shows primary school inequalities which also manifest themselves in the spheres of rural-urban reading disparities described by Spaull (2012) as the dualistic nature of the primary education system in South Africa. The wealthy schools are quintile 5 found mostly in the urban areas whilst the majority of the low quality primary and secondary schools are quintile 1 and 2 found mostly in the rural areas.

According to the Gardiner, (2008) gigantic strides have been made in dismantling centuries of colonialism and apartheid in the education system, but much more still has to be done. Nevertheless, there have been noteworthy infrastructural developments since 1994.

Gardiner, (2008) reports that, according to the National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS): National Assessment Report published by the Department of Education in 2007, many rural schools still lack clean running water, electricity, libraries, laboratories and computers. More than one-quarter of the schools in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo have more than the number of required learners per classroom. These are not easy environments in which to deliver a sound education for young people. The poorest and least-developed rural communities are those located in the former homelands, particularly in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo. It is worth noting that these provinces have a high number of rural schools. For example, according to Education Statistics South Africa, DBE (2015) in 2013 KwaZulu-Natal had 5937 schools which had 2798975 learners; Eastern Cape had 5562 schools which had 1881605 learners; in Limpopo, there were 3924 schools which had 1662106 learners.

From Table 3.2 below it becomes clear that more than half of the public ordinary schools are found in the mostly rural areas of Limpopo, KZN, and Eastern Cape, hence, I found it imperative to conduct this study in the rural areas of Limpopo, South Africa. In 2013, 15423 out of 24136 in South Africa were in mostly rural provinces of Limpopo, KZN, and Eastern Cape. That is, 63.9 Percent of South African schools are found in rural provinces.

**Table 3.2:** 2013 Number of Public Schools, Learners, and Teachers in the of Eastern Cape, KZN and Limpopo

<b>Province</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Learners</b>	<b>Teachers</b>
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	<b>5562</b>	<b>1881605</b>	<b>63137</b>
<b>KZN</b>	<b>5937</b>	<b>2798975</b>	<b>91285</b>
<b>Limpopo</b>	<b>3924</b>	<b>1662106</b>	<b>54708</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15423</b>	<b>6, 342,686</b>	<b>209,130</b>

**Source:** 2013 SNAP Survey.

From the statistics in Table 3.2 above it becomes clear that more than half of the public ordinary schools are found in the mostly rural areas of Limpopo, KZN, and Eastern Cape.

The statistics in Table 3.2 above agrees with Gardiner (2008) when he reports that the term *rural* is used in educational matters, the matter of the size and scale of the issue is very important. The legacy of poverty and neglect in these places is far from being eliminated, partly because of the emphasis in South Africa on urban development. Contextual factors such as poverty, inaccessibility and inadequate resources can have a negative impact towards teaching reading in South African rural schools. Gardiner, (2008) goes to explain that general public in the rural areas is preoccupied with poverty, unemployment, difficulties with access to water and energy as well as problems with transport and the lack of basic services, hence, formal education is seen as a part of all other vital activities that affect households, learners, and teachers. However, Zhang (2006) asks some pertinent questions;

- Are rural-urban gaps in reading literacy attributable to differences in school resources and processes apart from students' individual characteristics?
- Are there patterns across the school systems, with respect to the role of school resources and processes that could account for the observed rural-urban gaps in students' literacy scores?

As already indicated in section 3.2 above, South African learners are performing far below par when compared to learners from some of the poorest countries in the world. Thus, a lot remains to be done to promote, develop and enhance reading abilities earlier in the schooling life of learners. To this end, Zimmerman (2014) advises that teachers should undertake activities at the word, sentence and text level in order to assist learners to make connections between these elements. Ministry of education (2003:14) maintain that:

The knowledge and skills that children need in order to read with fluency and comprehension include oral language; prior knowledge and experience; concepts about print; phonemic awareness; letter-sound relationships;

vocabulary; semantics and syntax; metacognition; and higher-order thinking skills. These are not isolated concepts taught in a lock-step sequence; they are interrelated components that support and build on each other.

As a researcher, I do acknowledge that there are many other factors, especially contextual factors that contribute towards the state of affairs with regard to reading in South African schools, particularly in the rural areas. Nevertheless, this study sought to investigate an appropriate approach for teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase. As shown above, scholars agree that reading is fundamental to academic performance. In his study on reading levels of intermediate learners, Ramalepe (2013) confirms that learners in the intermediate phase indeed read below their age cohorts and grade level. According to Taylor, (2008) more than four out of five children in former white schools were reading at the appropriate level, as defined by the national curriculum. This figure, while improving, was less than half of former Coloured schools, and in former Department of Education and Training (DET) schools were only four children in a hundred were reading at grade level.

There are a number of reading approaches being applied with the aim of promoting and developing reading skills to enhance the overall academic performance in the schooling life of every learner, however, the in/ability to read at an appropriate level remains a thorny issue. The fundamental question is where are we getting it wrong in the midst of all available reading approaches? On reading strategies and/or methodologies, Fola-Adebayo (2014:2), reports:

The poor state of reading in Nigeria is caused by a lack of knowledge of relevant reading strategies. Closely related to this is that, in some situations, the teaching of reading is not theory-based and research findings are not operationalized in some textbooks.

In response to the revealed poor reading abilities of South African learners by various researchers, (including the Pre-PIRLS 2011 study), the Department of Education (DoE), devised a document known as National Reading Strategy (NRS) (DoE, 2008). This document aimed to promote, develop and enhance reading skills from an early age. (NRS, DoE, 2008:15) stipulated that:

To meet the crisis of reading, one of the practices promoted by the Department of Education is that all schools (especially primary schools) should arrange an additional half hour per day to 'Drop All and Read'. This campaign creates a culture of reading in the classroom and in the school. Everyone from learner to teacher, principal, and support-staff can be seen reading for enjoyment for half an hour a day. If learners enjoy reading, this will raise literacy levels and improve the ability to read ... As part of the *National Reading Strategy*, all Foundation and Intermediate Phase classrooms will have a 'reading/library corner' with exciting story books in all the languages spoken in the class. These reading corners will have story books for learners and reference materials for teachers and learners, to help them effectively implement the National Curriculum Statement.

Unfortunately, the NRS never clarified in detail what particular strategy/strategies and/or methods should be applied to promote and develop reading skills. The NRS deals mostly with what to do and not how to do it. For example, the NRS recommends that the principal's responsibility should be to ensure:

- Steps are taken to encourage reading.
- Reading approaches are integrated into all school subjects.
- A culture of reading is instilled in the school.
- Every learner learns to read.

According to Mudzielwana (2014), experience through interacting with practicing teachers shows that when learners read aloud individually, they are not given time to reflect on what they are reading. Learners often read parrot-like, while they are unable to understand what they read ...from this it may be concluded that teacher inability in implementing the new curriculum is a weakness to effective and efficient reading.

According to research, the knowledge and skills that learners need in order to read with fluency and comprehension include oral language; prior knowledge and experience; concepts about print; phonemic awareness; letter-sound relationships; vocabulary; semantics and syntax; metacognition; and higher-order thinking skills. These are not isolated concepts taught in a lock-step sequence; they are interrelated components that support and build on each other.

Ministry of education (2003), report that learners who have partial opportunities to hear and speak the language being learned outside of school, experience difficulties with reading as the school is the only place where it is used systematically. The Ministry of education (2003), have recommended *read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading* and *independent reading* as the most common reading strategies. Modeling reading, associating words with pictures, letter-sound relationship, identifying initial sounds of words, for example, identifying the letter that represents that initial sound, as well as foundational skill for alphabetic understanding, are all critical in teaching reading skills. Learners should be taught and understand that there are letters that represent continuous and those which represent stop sounds. For example, continuous sounds are represented by the following letters: **a, e, f, i, l, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, y, z** whilst stop sounds are represented by **b, c, d, g, h, j, k, p, q, t, x**. The learner should also be made to understand that, besides representing particular sounds, letters do have names, for example, they should be able to identify the following letter names: s, a, i, d, t, h, e. Other important aspects of learning to read English, especially as a L2 and or FAL is irregular words that do not follow alphabetic rules or common spelling-sound correspondences requirements. Such words should be pasted on the wall as sight words, for example, words such as; chemical, chemist and chemistry. This shall help learners to automatically recognise irregular spelling patterns.

This state of affairs in the South African rural schools made worse by the insignificant reading population where those who can read, choose not to read books. It is also compounded by a schooling system that is not producing learners with functional literacy. For example, Howie and Van Staden (2012) report that Proficiency in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2006 & 2011), an international benchmark test for Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners, indicates that literacy levels in South Africa are poor, lagging behind other countries. In addition, it found that:

- Grade 4 learners, especially those tested in African languages, achieved well below the International Centre point despite writing an easier assessment in 2011.
- 43 Percent were unable to reach the Lowest International benchmarks for reading and only 4 Percent could reach the Advanced International benchmark (compared to 8 Percent internationally).

Thomas (2012) is of the opinion that providing learners with positive reading role models is one aspect of addressing this problem and links student teachers' reading behaviours with future good practice. Applegate and Applegate (2004) affirm that teachers who themselves have good reading habits are likely to pass them on to their learners. Applegate and Applegate (2004) further argue that teachers must build a classroom environment which encourages the growth of readers with good reading habits. I am of the opinion that teachers who do not love reading themselves will find it difficult to inculcate the love of reading to learners and as "Peter in the Bible story, they cannot 'give what they do not have" (Applegate & Applegate 2004:556). In the rural areas it is uncommon for the majority of teachers to be seen reading a novel, let alone newspapers as they are often out of reach. Combrinck, Van Staden, and Roux, (2014) concur that the absence of a reading culture in rural communities is very disturbing. Information in printed form is hard to stumble upon – there are very few books or magazines or newspapers in homes or elsewhere, and there are generally no libraries. This is the fertile ground for not inculcating ardent readers with well-developed reading skills, hence the need to explore and determine an approach that promotes and develop such skills. The need becomes even more evident through concerns raised by scholars such as Pretorius, (2002); Dreyer and Nel, (2003); Noor, (2010) regarding learners' lack of reading skills from the lower grades.

Concurring with Cekiso and Madikiza (2014) about the reading crisis experienced in South African schools, (as already alluded in the preceding paragraph) scholars such as Pretorius, (2002); Dreyer and Nel, (2003); Noor, (2010) whose studies reveal that the inability to read at an appropriate level manifests itself at primary level and secondary level, as well as at university level. Hence, the high failure rate at matric (Grade 12) level is partly attributed to the lack of reading comprehension, which is often linked to the use of ineffective and inefficient reading strategies. This state of affairs is also confirmed by Reed, (2015) who reports that of the 77108 students who wrote the academic literacy test which is designed to assess their ability to cope with the language of instruction and the academic reading and reasoning demands of first-year University courses;

- "28.87% were categorised as 'proficient' and thus as ready to engage with 'regular' programs of study;
- 26.90% were categorised as 'upper intermediate' and 28.97% as 'lower intermediate' and thus in need of support (e.g. extended or augmented curricula) if admitted to a program of tertiary study, particularly if categorised as lower intermediate;
- 15.26% were categorised as having only 'basic' academic literacy and thus as needing extensive and long term support (e.g. bridging programs) in order to cope with tertiary level studies" (Reed, 2015: 5).

Many rural schools still lack behind in terms in material terms as compared to schools in urban areas. Even the urban township schools are far better off than schools in villages. State of the art schools are found in very few villages; hence, the gap is too wide to be closed in just twenty-one years of democratic government.

Most South African learners are taught in their mother tongue at the beginning of their formal schooling and then they switch to a different language of learning and teaching in Grade 4. That different language is in most cases English. As already indicated above, this study sought to explore and determine an approach that best develops and promote reading skills in English.

### **3.6 ASSESSMENT OF INTERMEDIATE PHASE LEARNERS READING SKILLS**

I had to assess and establish learners' level of reading before I could come up with an intervention for the experimental groups. It is appropriate to understand what is meant by reading assessment in the context of this study. "Assessment is a continuous planned process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about the performance of learners, using various forms of assessment. It involves four steps: generating and collecting evidence of achievement; evaluating this evidence; recording the findings and using this information to understand and thereby assist the learner's development in order to improve the process of learning and teaching"

(National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (General), Subject Assessment Guidelines Languages: 2008). However, it is imperative to ponder on a number of issues raised by Alderson (2001), who asserts that research into reading assessment has commonly been divided into the two main constellations of variables; that is, those within the *reader* and those significant aspects of the *text*. Thus, the readers' (learners) circumstances and text were carefully considered before reading assessment could be undertaken.

Questions have been asked about reading, especially with regard to reading assessment. According to Resnick and Resnick (1992), assessments have assumed a larger and more central role in almost every aspect of schooling than ever before although the effects of tests on teaching and learning have been questioned by some (Shepard, 1989). Perhaps it is worth pondering the following question: "Another way of thinking about this question is to wonder what we really are measuring when we think we are assessing students' interactions with text?" (Harrison & Salinger, 2002: xi). However, assessment of reading has thus far, being done through reading comprehension tests. Harrison, Bailey, and Dewar (2002) echo the same sentiments with regard to great prominence being given to comprehension test as a method of testing reading. Nevertheless, measuring reading levels has not gone without some controversy. The validity and reliability of the comprehension tests has been the subject of debate. The most critical issue about assessment and/or measuring reading is that it could and should shed some light in terms of determining best practice in teaching reading skills. The report on the ANA of 2014 indicates that, in order to assess the level of reading fluency of their learners, teachers need a curriculum-based measurement, a set of standardised and well-researched procedures for assessing and monitoring their learners' reading proficiency and progress. (Report on the ANA of 2014, grades 1 to 6 and 9, 2014:20) This source indicates that the use of norms in reading assessments enables the teacher to make the following didactic interventions:

- "Identify learners likely to need extra or alternative forms of reading instruction;
- Identify learners who are not demonstrating adequate progress and may require additional or different forms of instruction, and

- Evaluate the effectiveness of different forms of instruction for struggling readers and provide direction for developing more effective instructional programmes for those challenged learners” (The report on ANA, 2014: 20).

According to Harrison *et al.* (2002), when assessing reading, it should be noted that the ‘meaning’ of a word is not fixed, because ‘meaning’ is a social as well as a linguistic phenomenon, as a result of which it varies subtly within each context of production and interpretation, hence, it is possible for the reader to attach meaning that differs from the assessor. Harrison *et al.* (2002), emphasise the principle of local rather than global, subjective rather than the objective, and of valuing a range of methodological discourses which appear to have a good deal of potential in reading assessment. Salinger and Campbell, (1998) affirm that reading is a dynamic, complex interaction among three elements: the *reader*, the *text*, and the *context*.

Emanating from the above discussion, it became very clear to me (the researcher) that credible reading assessment should be multidimensional in approach. This approach is indeed, in line with the view that recognises that readers bring diverse stores of background knowledge to their reading and that reading is in no way a simple, one-dimensional skill that can be measured validly by items with one best answer. The researcher holds the view that learner’s cultural background and contextual circumstances are critical factors under which assessment should take place.

### **3.7 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I have discussed the current debate regarding the teaching of reading and available practices to its teaching. The literature reviewed has revealed the reading gap that exists in the intermediate phase, especially in the rural areas. I have explored the teaching of reading of English as FAL and language of teaching and learning. The chapter looked at what other scholars have had to say regarding teaching approaches which have been employed in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. Issues about reading in South African schools as well as reading disparities between rural and urban were also raised in this chapter. Scholars such as Naidoo,

Dorasamy, and Reddy (2012), advocate for the strengthening of the reading programmes to suit the reading levels of learners in schools. Finally, I explored assessment of reading using comprehension tests. The chapter also explored other means through which reading assessment could be done. The next chapter deals with methodology and research design of the study.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology is a systematic way in which a research problem is solved. In other words, it is a science of studying how research is done in a scientific way. Thomas (2012: 40) argues that “methods used in educational research should emerge from questions, rather than being prescribed in advance”. Further, he advocates methods as being the “servants to questions and not the other way around” (Thomas 2012:38). In this study research methods emerged from the research objectives stated in chapter 1 section 1.4. Hence, the study adopted a mixed method approach within a case study design. Though case study is widely known to belong to the qualitative research paradigm, Creswell (2003) mentions six major mixed-method research designs; one of which is the convergent parallel design that accommodates case study. In this study, I employed convergent parallel design as both quantitative and qualitative strands were used concurrently and equally. The convergent parallel design is suitable for this study as it allowed me to compare and contrast quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings for corroboration and validation purposes. In the convergent parallel design, “the researcher collects and analyses both quantitative and qualitative data during the same phase of the research process and then merge the two sets of results into an overall interpretation” (Creswell, 2003). “In gathering both forms of data at the same time, the researcher seeks to compare both forms of data; to search for congruent findings (For example, how the themes identified in the qualitative data collection compare with the statistical results in the quantitative analysis” (Creswell, Plano Clark, Guttman & Hanson, 2003: 217-218).

Concurring with Creswell (2003) is Morse (1991), who states that simultaneous triangulation represents the concurrent use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in which there is inadequate interaction between the two sources of data during the data collection phase, but the findings complement one another at the data

interpretation stage. Nonetheless, the study employed an embedded mixed-method at the design level to fit the context of the larger qualitative framework of the case study. The mixed-method in this study is fixed as both quantitative and qualitative approaches are prearranged and planned at the start of the research process (Creswell, 2003).

The choice of quantitative-qualitative mix for this study is in accordance with (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Bazeley & Jackson 2013; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). According to Johnson and Christensen (2014) in a mixed method study, numbers can be used to add accuracy to words, pictures and narratives. Mixed-method is a research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both quantitative and qualitative approaches and methods in a single study or a program of inquiry (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). The combination of these research paradigms, in the design of this study, is mainly informed by the nature of the research objectives, which emanated from the research problem stated earlier.

As mentioned before, quantitative approach was necessary to enable the implementation of a questionnaire that was administered to teachers, offering English in the intermediate phase. The intention of the questionnaire was to determine the teacher's experience in relation to an appropriate approach for teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase. Furthermore, in terms of the quantitative strand, learners' reading skills were tested through a comprehension test before and after the intervention.

In the same vein, the qualitative research approach was selected as the appropriate approach in this study. Its purpose was to explore and determine, through interviews, the experiences of intermediate phase English teachers in relation to what they regard as an appropriate approach for teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) maintain that qualitative research methodology aims to understand human behaviour and experience better. This is in line with Krathwohl (2009), who contends that qualitative approach allows the use of open-ended questions in the interviews in order to gather data for exploring the thoughts and

perceptions of the research participants. To complement and triangulate data collected through interviews, I impartially observed learners while they were reading grade prescribed texts. Thus, in line with Creswell (2003), I opted for the mixed methods in which pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as to different forms of data collection and analysis in the mixed methods study.

The table below shows data collection instruments employed to collect quantitative and qualitative respectively in this study. Quantitatively, the following data collection instruments were employed; questionnaires, comprehension test (pre and post-test). Qualitatively I employed the use of observation, interviews and document analysis.

**Table 4.1:** Data Collection Matrix

<b>Research Objectives</b>	<b>Research Design</b>	<b>Data Collection Instrument(s)</b>
To explore practical classroom experiences of the intermediate phase English teachers.	<b>Qualitative</b>	<b>Observations</b>
To explore through practical classroom experiences of the intermediate phase English teachers, which approach best promotes and develops reading skills in the rural schools' intermediate phase.	<b>Qualitative &amp; Quantitative</b>	<b>Interviews</b>
To assess and determine the reading levels of the intermediate phase learners.	<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Comprehension test (pre and post-test)</b>
To explore the experiences of intermediate phase English teachers regarding which approach best promotes and develops reading skills in the rural schools'.	<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Questionnaire</b>

### **4.2.1 Quantitative Research Techniques**

According to Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen (2010) quantitative techniques involve collecting statistical and numerical data by the researcher. Quantitatively, I employed pre-test and post-test to establish the reading levels of grade 4 learners in the intermediate phase before and after the intervention. According to Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Liwen, and Lowden (2011) experimental research design involves making an investigation into the impact of an intervention through measuring before (pre-test) and after (post-test) by strategically employing two groups of participants. These groups were experimental group (those who receive/took part in the intervention) and the control group (a group whose members share similar characteristics with the experimental group but did not receive/take part in the intervention). However, in this study I used four experimental groups, which were subjected to a different reading approach each as mentioned in section 4 above. Justification behind assigning learners to different experimental groups lies in their homogeneity. All members of the experimental and control groups were in the same grade, were of the same age, read the same texts, they lived in the same rural area and were taught by the same teachers. The use of pre- and post-testing enabled me to observe phenomena objectively, which are varied while others are kept constant (Zimney, 1961). All the groups, including the control group, were subjected to pre-testing and post-testing. After a period of seven weeks, I assessed the reading progress of each group to ascertain and determine which approach yielded better results in terms of promoting and developing reading skills. This was done through a comprehension test.

As already stated in section 4.1 above, a closed-ended questionnaire was administered to intermediate phase teacher participants offering EFAL. The purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain (a) teacher participants biographical information (b) their perceived best approach/es for teaching reading skills. Descriptive quantitative techniques provided charts, graphs, and tables which give readers a shortened picture of the data (Neuman, 2003: 331). Through the tables and the charts the reader is given evidence collected by the researcher and learns what is in it.

### **4.2.2 Qualitative Research Techniques**

Qualitatively, learner participants were subjected to observation while reading grade prescribed texts before and after the intervention. It cannot be denied that teachers play a central role in teaching learners how to read. Hence, teacher respondents were interviewed using open-ended questions about an appropriate approach for teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase. It should be noted that the purpose of a case study is to describe in-depth the experience of one person, a group, community or institution. This qualitative part of the study is in line with Fox and Bayat (2007) as it focused on groups of grade 4 learners in one school and intermediate phase teachers. Furthermore, in agreement with McMillan and Schumacher (2010), Merriam (2002), Denzin and Lincoln (1998) the study was confined to a case as it dealt with a limited number of units of analysis, within a single group or an institution. This led to contextualisation of the problems being investigated.

### **4.2.3 Sample selection**

“Sampling decisions are more complicated in mixed methods research because sampling schemes must be designed for both the qualitative and quantitative research components of these studies” (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007:281).

Utilising a mixed-method research design, I followed a mixed sampling framework proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007). According to Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007), the mixed sampling framework includes a time orientation criterion that allows the quantitative and qualitative phases to occur concurrently. The duo further state that “If the goal is not to generalize to a population but to obtain insights into a phenomenon, individuals, or events (as will often be the case in the qualitative component of a mixed methods study), then the researcher purposefully selects individuals, groups, and settings for this phase that maximize understanding of the underlying phenomenon. Thus, many mixed methods studies utilize some form of purposeful sampling” (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007: 287).

In his report, Spaul (2013: 39) states that “all of the available evidence suggests that many South African children are acquiring learning deficits early on in their schooling careers and that this is the root cause of underperformance in later years. They do not master the elementary numeracy and literacy skills in the foundation and intermediate phases; they are precluded from further learning and engaging fully with the grade-appropriate curriculum”. This impelled me to engage intermediate phase learners (and teachers) as research participants. The sample of the population was grade 4 learners (with an average age of nine years) from one conveniently selected school in Motupa circuit. In line with Patton (1990), the sample of learners was purposively selected because of similar characteristics. 90.2 Percent of the learners speak Northern Sotho as their home language. The above is also in line with the sample selection procedure as recommended by Johnson and Christensen (2014) notion of the homogeneous sample. Johnson and Christensen, (2014) state that the more homogeneous a population, the smaller the sample size can be; hence, the sample selection for this study was guided by the following summary:

**Table 4.2:** Sample of learner research participants

<b>Sample of research participants</b>				
<b>Each participant measured on variables to be matched</b>				
<b>(age, same grade, gender, locality and same teachers)</b>				
<b>Experimental Group 1</b>	<b>Experimental Group 2</b>	<b>Experimental Group 3</b>	<b>Experimental Group 4</b>	<b>Control Group 5</b>

In consultation with the university statistician, a sample size for this study was determined by using an online sample determiner known as Raosoft. This was done as follows: The number of learners enrolled for grade 4 in 2017 was 102. According to the Raosoft, the sample of 82 learners sufficed for a population of 102. To ensure that neither gifted, average nor slow learners are in the same experimental group, I used attendance register, which is alphabetically arranged, to allocate each learner to a particular group. For the intervention purposes a sample of grade four learners as

determined by Raosoft was divided into four experimental groups as per the first four reading approaches, the 5th one being the control group. All learners from each experimental group and the control group were observed while reading grade prescribed texts before and after the intervention process. The grade prescribed text was subjected to the Flesch-Kincaid readability test, which has been confirmed as reliable by a number of authors, researchers and organizations worldwide. However, the experimental groups as well as the control group all undertook the pre- and post-test. In terms of the teacher participants, six intermediate phase EFAL teachers of the same school were also conveniently sampled. Employing the mixed methods research ensured triangulation, hence a concurrent design was found to be appropriate as the quantitative and qualitative data can be triangulated. As noted by Creswell, Guttman and Hanson (2003) who report that:

In concurrently gathering both forms of data at the same time, the researcher seeks to compare both forms of data to search for congruent findings (e.g., how the themes identified in the qualitative data collection compare with the statistical results in the quantitative analysis (Creswell, 2003: 217-218).

Concurrent mixed methods design examined attitudes toward reading and reading strategies and skills among intermediate phase teachers administering questionnaire containing closed-ended items (e.g., Likert-format responses that measure teachers' experience with regard to best approach to teaching reading) and open-ended questions during the interview (i.e., that elicit qualitative information about the reading approach that best promote and develop reading skill in the intermediate phase). Hence, the researcher settled for mixed method design that is conducted concurrently. As noted earlier, the purpose of mixing the quantitative and qualitative approaches is to triangulate and complement the research findings.

### **4.3 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

Initially the questionnaire was administered to teachers attached to the school at which data was collected. However, it was later extended to other teachers offering English First Additional Language (EFAL) within the circuit.

Motupa circuit has twenty primary schools. The teacher population offering EFAL in the intermediate phase within the circuit is sixty. According to the Raosoft sample determiner, 42 teachers are sufficient as a sample of the teacher population within the circuit. Hence, Yin (1994) states that case study is done in a way that includes the views of the *actors* in the case under study. “Although many others share responsibility for creating a supportive learning environment, it is the teacher who has the greatest opportunity and most direct responsibility for providing the instruction that inspires and enables the child to become a lifelong reader” (Ministry of education 2003:11). Table 4.3 below is intermediate phase EFAL teachers’ age distribution.

**Table 4. 3:** Sample of Intermediate phase EFAL teachers’ age distribution

	<i>Teacher participants’ Age</i>			
	30-39	40-49	50-59	Total
Male	0	11	10	21
Female	0	9	12	21
Total	0	21	21	42
Percentage	0%	50	50	100

There were 42 teacher participants 21 of who were males whilst the other 21 were females. Table 4.4 below reflects teachers’ gender distribution.

**Table 4.4:** Teachers’ gender distribution

<b><i>Gender</i></b>	<b><i>Frequency</i></b>	<b><i>Percentage</i></b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>

There were 102 grade 4 learner participants of whom 57 were males whilst 45 were females. Their average age was 9 years which was the highest at 48 Percent.

**Table 4. 5:** Intermediate phase learners' age distribution

<b>Age</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Male</b>	2	20	19	13	3	57
<b>Female</b>	4	29	5	7	0	45
<b>Total</b>	6	49	24	20	3	102
<b>Percent</b>	6%	48%	24%	20%	3%	100%

#### **4.4 STUDY SITE**

The research site is situated in the north eastern part of Limpopo province in South Africa. It is a rural village in Motupa, which is found in Mopani area, one of the five districts in Limpopo province. Tzaneen, Phalaborwa, Hoedspruit, Modjadjiskloof and Giyani are the major towns found in this district. The research participants and sample were drawn from Motupa circuit, located 22 kilometers to the north-east of Tzaneen. Motupa is one of the 24 circuits in Mopani district in Limpopo province.

The circuit has twenty primary schools; that is, 19 public primary schools and one private. Due to practical considerations, such as ease of access and travelling costs, only (1) school was conveniently selected for the study. The selected school had a total of 686 learners of which 102 were grade four learners. The school is a non-fee quintile one<sup>1</sup> which serves a socio- economically disadvantaged community found in a rural area.

The school has an administration block which amongst others, boasts the following; principal's office, deputy principal's office, two offices for foundation and senior phases H.O.Ds, well-equipped kitchen, store-room, strong-room, boardroom, two rest rooms, photo-copying room and the reception area, all air-conditioned. It has electricity appliances such as television set, radio and over-head projector. There are enough desks and chairs for use by learners. The school has twenty-one classrooms one of which is used as a staff room. During the first quarter for 2017, the school had 16

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<sup>1</sup> South African schools are classified according to Norms and Standards funds allocated by government depending on their location. Quintile 1 Schools are those found in disadvantaged areas, lack resources, serve poor communities, hence, they get higher allocation in terms of Norms and Standards funds.

teaching staff members, including the principal. Though four members of the staff have been co-opted into School Management Team (SMT), the principal is the only official member of management. However, due to the shortage of staff, seven classrooms lay unused. There is also a modest hall for occasions such as grade 7 fare-well functions and parents meetings.

The school has running water from a borehole. It neither has a laboratory, computer centre nor library. Though not a state of the art school, in terms of rural standards, it is amongst the best few in the area.

#### **4.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

Yin (1994) listed six sources of evidence for data collection in the case study protocol:

- documentation,
- archival records,
- interviews,
- direct observation,
- participant observation, and
- physical artefacts.

Three of these six sources of data were employed in this study:

- observations,
- interviews and
- documentation.

However, as a convergent parallel design, I administered a pre- and post-test to the learner participants and closed-ended questionnaire to the teacher participants respectively. According to Johnson and Christensen (2014) mixing of different methods of data collection is an excellent way of conducting high quality research.

### **4.5.1 Observation**

“There appears to be an assumption that by Grade 4 learners can read, even the majority of South Africa’s learners who face the challenge of doing so in an additional language” (Reed, 2015:14). I engaged in participant observation of the learners reading a grade prescribed text during the initial stage of the study to establish their actual reading levels. My role as a participant observer is in line with Conrad and Serlin (2006) as I gained access to their natural setting while learners were reading. Participant observation of learners from each experimental group reading a grade prescribed text was undertaken after completion of the intervention. Qualitative research involves observing relevant phenomena in their natural settings and writing field notes without predetermining what is to be observed. I was guided by an observation checklist, sometimes referred to as error count test, to observe learners reading a grade prescribed text (See Appendix 4A). The following was used as guidelines for observing learners whilst reading grade prescribed text as per recommendation by Foundations for Learning Intermediate Phase Languages Lesson plans First term Grade 4, DoE (2008): See annexures 4a and 4b.

- If the learner makes fewer than five errors, group him/her with above average readers.
- If the learner makes between 5 and 10 errors, group him/her with average readers.
- If the learner makes more than 10 errors, group him/her with below average readers.

Foundations for Learning Intermediate Phase Languages Lesson plans first term Grade 4 (DoE, 2008: 24).

#### **4.5.1.1 The Rationale for using observation**

Observation provided me with first-hand experiences of a setting. This allowed the researcher to draw on personal knowledge during the formal interaction with the research participants.

Observations gave me the chance to learn things that participants would otherwise be unwilling to talk about in an interview due to their sensitivity.

Observation enabled me to gather knowledge relating to the social world by observing and participating in “natural or real” life settings.

#### **4.5.2 Interviews**

Interviews were implemented following the directions of Mason (2009). In accordance to scholars such as Petre and Rugg (2007) as well as Maree (2007), I employed the use of interviews. The aim was to explore the participants’ experience regarding which strategy yielded better results in terms of promoting and developing reading skills in the intermediate phase. According to Johnson and Christensen (2014), a qualitative interview allows the researcher to enter into the inner world of another person and gain an understanding of the person’s perspective. Further, Johnson and Christensen (2014) assert that the strength of the interviews is that a researcher can freely use probes to obtain clarity or additional information. Johnson and Christensen (2014) also explains that open-ended questions in the interviews should allow natural flow of behaviour, while using a wide and deep angle lens to explore, examine and determine the best reading strategy from the perspective of teachers.

Patton (2002:345) contend in favour of interviewing when he maintains that we cannot observe everything such as the feelings, thoughts, interactions and behaviours that have arisen at some point in time. Glanz (2006: 67) is of the opinion that interviews allow the researcher to study about the intricacies of participants’ experiences from their own point of view. The aim of an interviewer is to comprehend participants’ experiences and perceptions related to a given situation in a non-threatening way. Interviewer provides the opportunity to evaluate the validity of the participants’ answers by observing non-verbal indicators, which is particularly useful when discussing sensitive issues (Gordon 1975). Through personal interview, I followed a set of preconceived questions. Harrison, Bailey and Dewar, (1998) also concur with Patton (2002:345) when suggesting that interviews offer a basis for exploration which is potentially fruitful, for a number of reasons: interviews can be open-ended and

dynamic; audio-taped data can be stored, retained and played back later for comparison and discussion.

The interviews were found to be suitable to be used as research instrument in this study because of the following:

- Interviews allowed the interviewer to use probes which enabled the research respondents to explain vague or incomplete answers.
- The open-ended questions provide participants with every chance to describe and explain what is most significant to them.
- An Interview guide/schedule employed in this study ensured that all relevant features of the research are covered in the interviews.
- Field notes taken during the interview session and the tape recorded conversations allowed the researcher to capture data as seen by the respondents.

#### **4.5.3 Comprehension test (pre- and post-test)**

One of the areas for language testing research has been methods: their validity, reliability and factors affecting their use (Alderson, 2000). Faced with the challenge of deciding on the type of questions to ask, I settled for the recommendations by Alderson (2000), who advises that good reading tests are likely to employ a number of different methods, possibly even on the same text. Hence, this source believes that it is important to understand there is no one best method for testing reading. Thus, I opted for a multiple methods approach. The following techniques were used; cloze, multiple-choice, sentence completion, matching list and short answer questions. Care was taken to make sure that simple language is used in framing questions for each item. The text from which the test was set was grade prescribed and was subjected to the Flesch-Kincaid readability test. However, different texts were used for both the pre-test and the post-test. Each experimental group was subjected to a particular reading approach for a period of seven weeks. The difficulty of the questions was varied. Questions of the lower-order level involved finding a direct reference from the text. Higher-order level questions were about giving one's own opinion, evaluation, and

critical reading. The middle-of-the-road questions included understanding meaning in context. The results of the pre-test and post-test are expressed through frequency tables and percentage graphs to produce detailed summaries of the data.

#### **4.5.4 Questionnaire**

I implemented the use of a questionnaire to obtain data on the perceptions, thoughts and beliefs of the teacher participants with regard to an appropriate approach that yields better results for promoting and developing reading skills in the rural school's intermediate phase. Questionnaire consisting of a 5-point-Likert scale was used as instrument for data collection. In line with Hofstee (2006), teachers were asked to rate appropriate approaches to teaching reading skills. A rating scale ranging from, strongly disagree to strongly agree was utilised. Strongly disagree indicated that there is a serious problem with a particular approach as it did not yield the expected results. The teachers questionnaire (Section A), comprised enquiries about biographical information, while Section B questioned the teacher's perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs regarding which reading strategy best promotes and develops reading skills (see Appendices B1, B2 and B3).

The usefulness of the questionnaire was ensured by presenting the questionnaire to subject experts whose advice was used to improve on the initial questions. It is suggested by scholars such as Rowe and Wright (2001) that professional opinions in predicting the effectiveness of research instruments are vital. Concurring with Rowe and Wright is, Lancaster, Dodd and Williamson (2004) who indicate the significance of pilot studies in increasing the effectiveness of data collection tools. Hence, the questionnaire in the study was piloted with the help of English subject advisor in Motupa circuit as she works with teachers on daily basis.

#### **4.5.5 Documents**

Documents have been a source of data and provide evidence of what actually happens. Document analysis can include a diversity of documents, that is, newsletters, news releases and minute books. I analysed official documents, which in this case

were learners' reading record sheets of their actual reading levels, recorded by the teachers.

The intention was to compare learners' marks awarded by class teacher with those I allocated to the same learners whilst I observed them reading grade prescribed texts.

## **4.6 DATA CAPTURE AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.6.1 Quantitative Data**

The data obtained quantitatively, (for instance; comprehension test and questionnaires), was subjected to frequencies and percentages' analyses. In analysing quantitative data, I employed descriptive statistics. The results are expressed through frequency tables and percentage graphs which produced detailed summaries of the data. With regard to questionnaires meant for teacher respondents, I employed a rating scale ranging from; strongly disagree to strongly agree (Hofstee, 2006).

### **4.6.2 Qualitative Data**

I followed Kvale's (1983) guidelines for a qualitative research interview when analysing the gathered data. Audiotaped interviews were transcribed. I listened to the recordings while simultaneously reading the transcribed interview. This was followed by identifying emerging patterns and themes that are relevant to the research context. Hence, different themes were identified and coded, analysed line by line as per the transcripts of the interviews (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011). I made a comparative analysis of links between themes and relevant literature. The analytical process and procedures was as candid as possible. A conclusion was drawn on the identified themes.

In line with Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2011), I used qualitative data analysis through organising, explaining, and accounting for the data presented, giving sensible interpretations of the manner in which participants defined situations. I familiarised myself with data by playing and replaying audio recordings, paying attention to words

and sentences expressed in participants' words so as to convey the core of their speech and actions (De Vos *et al.* 2011). The data were examined in relation to the perceptions of the teachers on an approach that they believe best promote and improve learners' reading skills.

## **4.7 QUALITY ASSURANCE**

As already mentioned in section 4.1, the study adopted a convergent parallel design, which adopts quantitative and qualitative approaches equally. In the same vein, the quality assurance in this study was achieved through applying quality measures associated with both quantitative and qualitative strands. For the quantitative part of the data, reliability and validity were ensured, whilst for the qualitative strand, trustworthiness, dependability, and generalisability was ensured. Healy and Perry (2000) concur with Golafshani (2003) by asserting in a mixed methods study it is essential to understand and blend necessary criterion for quality.

### **4.7.1 Reliability**

According to Golafshani (2003) the term 'reliability' is a notion used for testing or assessing quantitative research. To establish reliability of the study findings, the researcher ensured that the items in the interview guide are similar and consistent to all the research participants.

Johnson and Christensen (2014) maintain that research reliability is present when the same results would be obtained if the study were conducted again. In addition to the above, the researcher ensured that the sample of learners observed whilst reading grade prescribed text remains the same before and after the intervention. The sample of learners shared the same background in terms of the following; same class, age, come from the same community and taught by the same teachers. There was no significant difference in the total number of female and male participants in the participation. Consistency during data collection process was brought about reliability of the findings of the study.

### **4.7.2 Validity**

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) state that triangulation is often mentioned as one of the central methods of 'validating' the research. The researcher established validity by employing different research methods and sources of data. In accordance to Golafshani (2003), who concurs with Ritchie and Lewis, the use of multiple methods, such as tests, questionnaire and documents analysis, led to findings that are more valid.

The above is in line with McMillan and Schumacher (2010), who maintain that corroboration can be brought about by triangulating findings using data collected from a variety of sources such as questionnaire, documents analysis as well as pre- and post-testing in order to confirm interpretations. The pre and post-test were used to measure and establish the learners' levels of reading before and after the intervention. The test comprised of different techniques with the same items, as there is no single best method for testing reading, Alderson (2000). In line with Kirk and Miller (1986) the researcher ensured that the test used to measure the learners' reading levels before and after the intervention is consistent and similar.

Hence, Golafshani (2003) maintains that the means of measurement should be accurate and measure what they are intended to measure.

### **4.7.3 Trustworthiness**

To safeguard reliability in qualitative research, scrutiny of trustworthiness is crucial. Seale (1999). Hence, quality in qualitative strand of the study was ensured by my trustworthiness. Data collected through various methods of data collection such as interviews and observations, was recorded with the utmost honesty and kept safe for perusal and verification by any interested party through proper channels. Thus, qualitatively, I, in line with Seale (1999) ensured that reliability of the study is ensured through trustworthiness of the research report, which is central to issues usually discussed as validity and reliability in the quantitative approach

#### **4.7.4 Dependability**

Closely related to trustworthiness is dependability. According to Miles and Huberman, (1994) dependability means that the process of the study is consistent and reasonable over time and across researchers and methods. To bring about dependability in the study, I ensured that the interview guide had similar items to all the research participants. The interview guide was piloted to make sure that it digs for relevant information being unambiguous. Open ended questions in the interview allow me to use probes to obtain clarity or additional information from the perspective of the research participants. However, without altering the individual responses of the research participants, the researcher followed similar methods when analysing and interpreting data gathered through open ended questions during the interviews.

#### **4.7.5 Generalisability**

Tellis, (1997) reports that; generalisability of the case study has often been criticised on the fact that it is not applicable to larger population and not widely applicable in real life. Data collected through observation of real-life context is applicable to larger population in similar context. Hoepfl (1997) states that; qualitative researchers seek illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to situations that are the same. Yin (1994), states that there is more to a protocol than the instrument. Thus, employing the same data collection instruments to research participants whilst following the set procedures ensured that the same study applied to the different study site with different research participants under similar circumstances achieves the same results.

### **4.8 PILOT STUDY**

According to van Teijlingen and Hundley (2002) the term 'pilot study refers to pre-testing of a particular research instrument such as a questionnaire or an interview guide. A pilot study is implemented to determine whether the items in the draft questionnaire are well phrased and formulated. This assisted me to deal with the following:

- Developing and testing suitability of research instruments;
- Assessing the viability of a (full-scale) study;

- Establishing whether the sampling frame and techniques are operative;
- Identifying logistical problems, which might happen using proposed methods;
- Assessing the proposed data analysis procedures to uncover potential problems.

#### **4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), there is an increasing concern about the ethical aspects of social sciences research. Both the researcher and participants must have a perfect understanding concerning the privacy of the results and findings of the study, McMillan and Schumacher (2010), Maree (2007). Prior to the study, informed consent was obtained from all the research participants. All responses were treated confidentially, in line with established consideration for research data handling and dissemination, that is, all participants remained anonymous. Parents of learner participants were called and given full explanation about the aim of the research project. In brief, I adhered to the following most important ethical standards of research:

- Confidentiality, anonymity and freedom of participation.
- All participants were required to complete and sign consent/assent form.
- Consent form was signed by parents of the learner participants.
- The participants were well-versed with the fact that their participation is voluntary and that they are free to terminate their participation at any stage without any penalties.

Finally, upon approval, the university ethics committee issued an ethics certificate before the study could be undertaken.

#### **4.10 SUMMARY**

In conclusion, I have employed the mixed methods research (quantitative and qualitative) paradigm advocated by Creswell, (2003). (Creswell, 2003: 12) maintains that, “for the mixed methods researcher, pragmatism opens the door to multiple

methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as to different forms of data collection and analysis in the mixed methods study". Following the mixed methods research the study was conducted within the confines of case study. Case study allows the researcher to concentrate on group of individual or a single institution in gathering data. In this study, I deal with a group of learners from one institution.

Data collection instruments and how they are applied are clearly stated out in this chapter. I also described how these data collection instruments were applied in this study. In the following chapter, I present the collected data.

## CHAPTER 5

### DATA PRESENTATION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present both raw quantitative and qualitative data in the light of the aim and objectives outlined earlier in Chapter One. For brevity, quantitative data is presented in tables, and graphs, each of which is preceded by a brief explanation. For quantitative data to be clearer and meaningful, I have converted it into percentages. Qualitative data has been transcribed and; conclusions arrived at based on the prevailing patterns and identified themes.

In section 4.5 I have given a brief description of the sample site and its location. It is, however, imperative to give a synopsis of contextual factors of the sample site before I dwell on data presentation. The department of education's staff-establishment policy requires that a school should have 20 teaching staff, including the principal. The selected school from which data was collected is under-staffed and my assumption is that this affects teaching of reading negatively.

Teaching and learning are severely affected during the second and third weeks of the first quarter as there is training taking place from 12 o' clock for selection of learners who are to take part in the athletics 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of February meetings. This put a strain on the already under-staffed teachers as some of them have to assist in identifying athletes. The time table is generally/often not followed as some of the teachers have not reported for duty due to either personal or work related matter, hence, my presence at the school came as a big relief. Thus, I had all the time I needed to work with the learner participants to observe them whilst reading grade prescribed text and implement the intervention. However, during the intervention process, there were some interruptions due to community protest on the relating to the inaccessible road to the school, hence I have had to add two more days to cover days that were lost.

## 5.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA

In this study, the quantitative approach was employed to descriptively quantify and analyse the use of available approaches employed during the teaching of reading in the intermediate phase. Second, it was employed in the structured questionnaire administered to the teachers, which sought to quantify the teachers' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes towards the use of teaching approaches as prescribed by CAPS.

Quantitatively, I gathered data from learners by administering pre and post-test. The pre-test was meant to establish grade 4 learners' reading levels before employing the intervention. The pre-test provided actual baseline information that can be compared to post-test data. The comprehension passage, from which the test was set, was read in class prior to the test without alerting learners that they will be writing a test based on it. The school had an enrolment of 686. Of the 686 enrolled learners at the school, 102 with an average age of nine were registered in grade 4 in 2017.

Despite the availability of seven unused classrooms, all 102 grade 4 learners were squeezed in one classroom due to the shortage of teaching staff. However, I requested to use the unused classrooms for learners to write the test. The unused classrooms were also made available to use for individual groups whilst they were being taught reading using a specific reading approach. The first week and part of the second week were used to observe sampled learners whilst reading grade prescribed text. An agreement was reached with class-teachers and the pre-test was administered on a Friday morning during the first week of the first term. Of the 102 learners registered in grade four, 82 were sampled as per Raosoft sample determiner whilst 20 served as the control group. Table 5.1 below shows the number of learners sampled.

**Table 5.1:** Number of Learners Sampled

<b>No of learners enrolled at the school</b>	<b>No of learners in grade 4</b>	<b>No of learners sampled</b>	<b>Control group</b>
686	102	82	20

I established the learners' age to ascertain whether it correlates with their grade level. Under normal circumstances, Grade 4 learners' age is supposed to be nine years. Indeed, the average age of grade 4 learners was found to be nine years. The nine-year-old learners were in the majority making 48 Percent of grade four. Table 5.2 below reflects grade 4 learners' age distribution.

**Table 5.2:** Grade 4 learners' age distribution

<b>Age</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Male</b>	2	20	19	13	3	0	57
<b>Female</b>	4	29	5	7	0	0	45
<b>Total</b>	6	49	24	20	3	0	102
<b>Percent</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 5.2.1 Data from learners' pre-intervention test.

A total of 102 grade 4 learners wrote a pre-test which was meant to establish their level of reading and comprehension. The comprehension passage from which the test was set, is an African folktale, "The first drum" (page 82) adapted from Grade 4 English First Additional Language (Hayley, 2011). As already indicated in section 4.6.3, I opted for a multiple methods approach which involved the following techniques; cloze, multiple-choice, sentence completion, matching list and short answer questions. The learners' overall performance in the pre-test was displeasing. Table 5.3 below depicts pre-test individual raw score of all grade four learners.

**Table 5.3:** Pre-test raw score of all grade four learners

<b>Learner No</b>	<b>Score</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>48</b>
	<b>Pre-intervention Test</b>	<b>Post-intervention Test</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>
			<b>6</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>Withdrawn</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>59</b>
			<b>10</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>43</b>

11	14	36	42	0	0
12	25	38	43	59	52
13	34	50	44	29	64
14	0	A	45	25	45
15	65	81	46	34	39
16	4	9	47	2	10
17	38	48	48	44	20
18	8	43	49	6	Withdrawn
19	27	41	50	53	A
20	0	0	51	31	48
21	12	30	52	91	66
22	12	36	53	15	25
23	0	Withdrawn	54	6	23
24	6	7	55	0	7
25	4	0	56	26	50
26	31	32	57	68	73
27	25	50	58	2	11
28	4	41	59	53	64
29	19	39	60	25	30
30	8	41	61	55	61
31	77	64	62	15	6
32	27	25	63	9	48
33	36	59	64	0	11
34	4	16	65	2	25
35	23	7	66	26	50
36	51	11	67	2	20
37	25	23	68	21	9
38	57	64	69	12	0
39	25	43	70	85	64
40	36	55	71	6	30
41	55	64	72	60	41

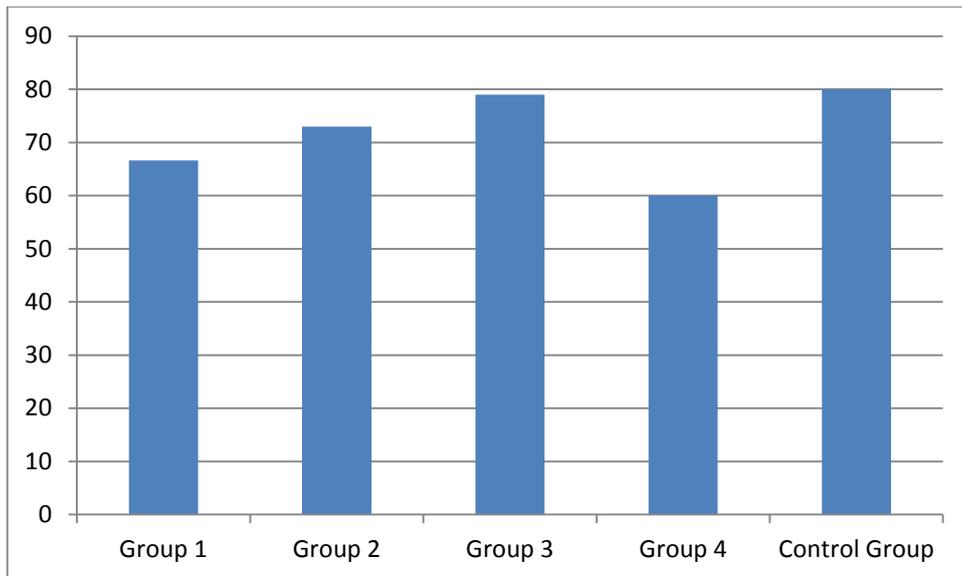
<b>73</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>74</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>75</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>76</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>77</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>78</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>79</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>80</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>81</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>82</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>83</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>84</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>85</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>86</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>87</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>88</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>89</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>90</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>91</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>92</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>93</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>94</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>95</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>96</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>97</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>98</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>99</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>100</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>101</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>102</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>9</b>

On average, learners scooped 30.4. Table 5.4: below reflects total scores and the average for the pre-test results.

**Table 5.4:** Total scores and average for the pre and post-test results

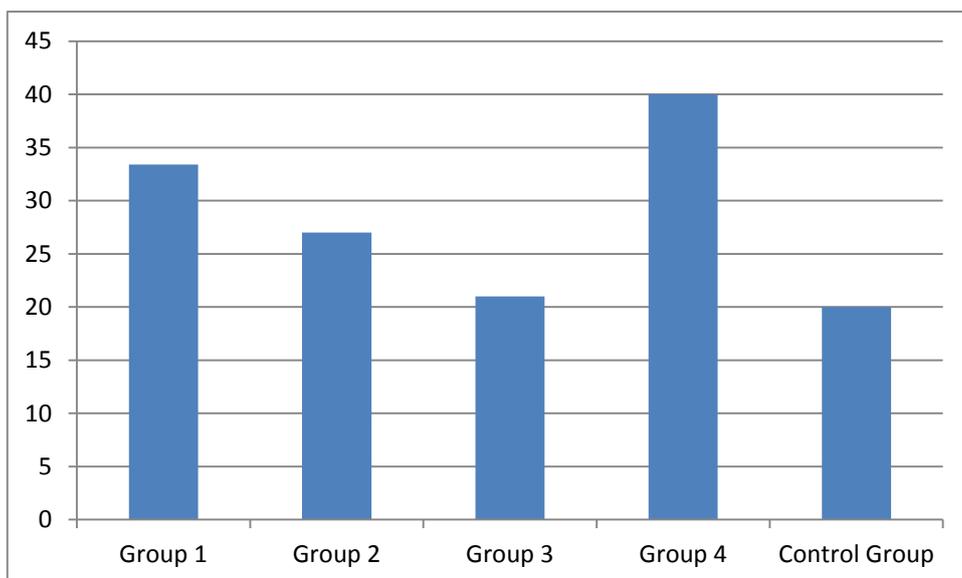
<b>Total Number of Learners (N)</b>	<b>Before the test</b>	<b>After the test</b>
		<b>102</b>
<b>Total scores</b>	<b>2974</b>	<b>3486</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>37</b>

After the consolidation of the pre-intervention test and pre-intervention error-count test results (observation of learners whilst reading grade prescribed text), a large number of learners were found to be unable to read. The bar graph in Figure 1 below reflects individual group performance in the pre-intervention test. Prior to the intervention, group 5, which is the Control Group had the highest percentage of learners who could not read at 80 Percent whilst the least was group 4 (Group Guided reading) which stood at 60 Percent. It is worth noting that in all the groups, over 60 Percent of learners could not read. In fact, three of the five groups had over 70 Percent of learners who could not read. The five groups are labelled as follows: group 1 is Phonemic Awareness (PA), group 2 Read Aloud (RA), group 3 Shared Reading (SR), group 4, Guided Group Reading (GGR), and group 5 is Control Group.



**Figure 5.1:** Pre-intervention percentages of learners who could not read

As already indicated at the beginning of this section, learners' overall performance in the pre-test was disconcerting. Only group 4 (Group Guided Reading) had an undignified 40 Percent of learners who could read at age and grade level before the intervention; that is being able to read a simple text fluently, notwithstanding limited comprehension. In all other groups, the percentage of learners who could read was below 34 Percent. Figure 5.2 below reflects the percentage of learners who could read in each group before the intervention.



**Figure 5.2:** Pre-intervention percentage of learners who could read

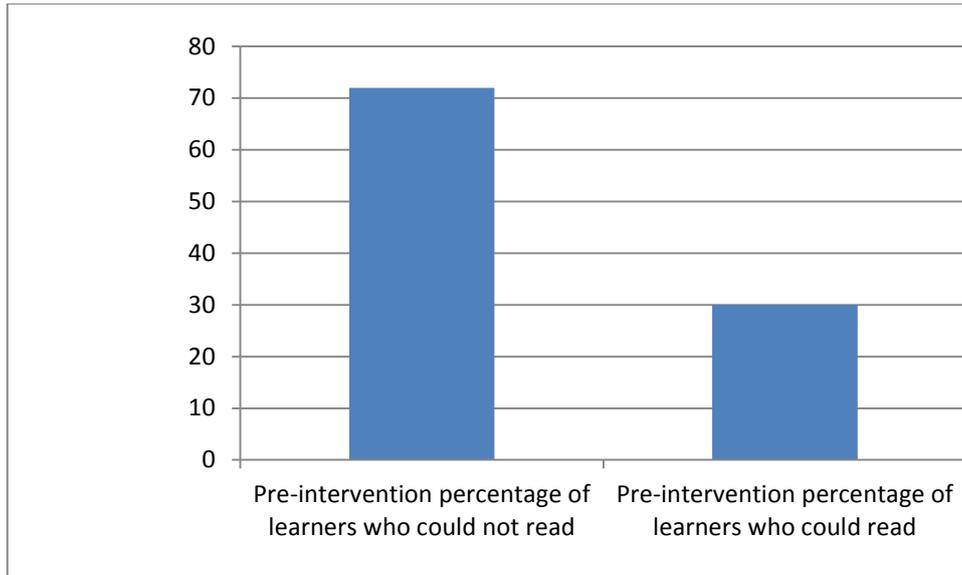
Data gathered from the pre-intervention test and pre-intervention error-count test (observation of learners whilst reading grade prescribed text) show that 63 Percent of learners in group 1 could not read, particularly because they scored between 0 and 29 Percent in comprehension test. Learners who obtained a score of between 0 and 29 Percent in group 2 and 3 are 53 Percent and 74 Percent respectively. These are percentages of learners who were found to be unable to read at grade level in group 2 and 3. Pretorius, Jackson, Mckay, and Spaul, (2016) assert that many learners enter the Intermediate Phase with very poor decoding skills and can hardly read texts at all, let alone understand them. Percentage of learners who could not read in group 4 and control group (Group 5) stood at 55 Percent respectively. The number of learners who obtained between 0 Percent and 39 Percent in all the groups is 72 out of 102, which represents 71 Percent of the learners. These are learners who could not utter a single word or read below age cohort and grade level before the intervention. The results concur with Spaul (2013: 6), who informs that 2011 pre-PIRLS results revealed that Grade Four learners from rural areas and townships are two to two and a half years behind urban learners in reading. Only 30 learners, which is 29 Percent, were able to obtain above 40 Percent. Surprisingly, 4 learners, who represent only 4 Percent, passed the test with distinction, obtaining between 80 and 100 Percent. Table 5. 5 below show individual group performances in terms of 0 Percent to 100 Percent.

**Table 5. 5:** Summary of individual groups’ pre-intervention test scores

Percentage	Pre-intervention test scores							Total
	0-29%	30-39%	40-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70-79%	80-100%	
Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
No of learners in Group 1 Phonemic (PA)	15	0	2	3	2	2	0	24
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>62.5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>0%</b>	
No of learners in Group 2 Read Aloud (RA)	10	2	2	2	1	0	2	19

<b>Percentage</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	
No of learners in Group 3 Shared Reading (SR)	14	1	0	1	1	1	1	19
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	
No of learners in Group 4 Guided Group Reading (GGR)	11	3	0	4	2	0	0	20
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	
No of learners in Group 5 (Control Group)	11	4	0	2	1	1	1	20
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Total No of learners in all groups	61	10	4	12	7	4	4	102
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>59.8%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>100%</b>

DoBE, CAPS (2012) envisages that learners should be able to read a simple text fluently in grade 3. In the pre-intervention test, 72 learners, which are 71 Percent of all grade 4 learners, could not read as depicted in figure 5.3 below. Only a dismal 29 Percent of learners could read at an acceptable level. This is a cause for concern which requires concerted effort to be taken for effective approaches towards teaching reading in the intermediate phase. Figure 5.3 below is a reflection of all grade 4 learners who could not read and those who could before the intervention in terms of percentages.



**Figure 5.3:** Pre-Intervention Percentage of Grade 4 learners (Reading Ability)

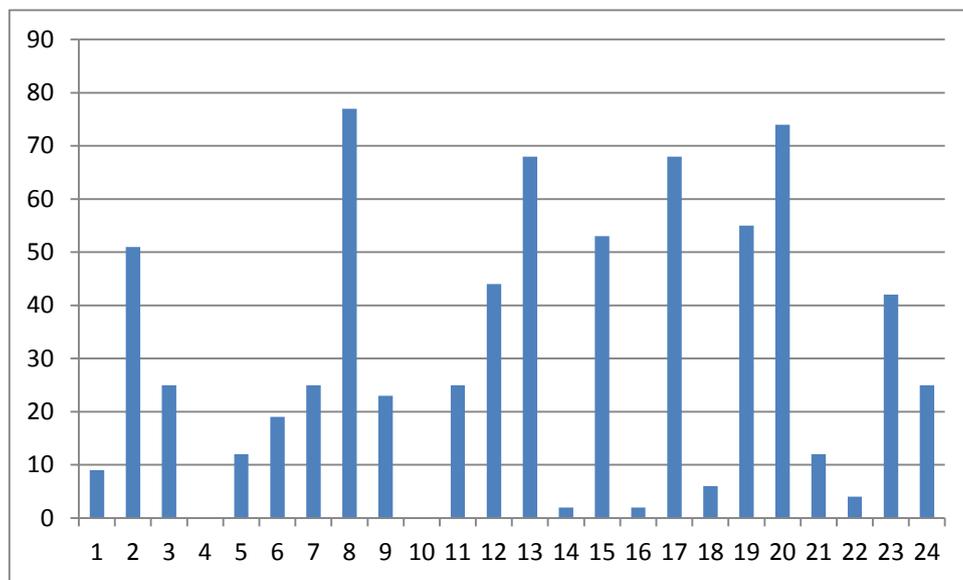
Table 5.6 below shows individual group performance of learners who could read and those who could not before the intervention in terms of percentages.

**Table 5.6:** Pre-Intervention Details of Learners' Reading Ability

	Number of learners who could NOT read	Percentage	Number of learners who COULD read	Percentage	Total
<b>Group 1 Phonemic Awareness</b>	15	63%	9	37%	24
<b>Group 2 Read Aloud</b>	14	73%	5	27%	19
<b>Group 3 Shared Reading</b>	15	79%	4	21%	19
<b>Group 4 Guided Group reading</b>	12	60%	8	40%	20
<b>Group 5 Control Group</b>	16	80%	4	20%	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>		<b>30</b>		<b>102</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>71%</b>		<b>29%</b>		<b>100%</b>

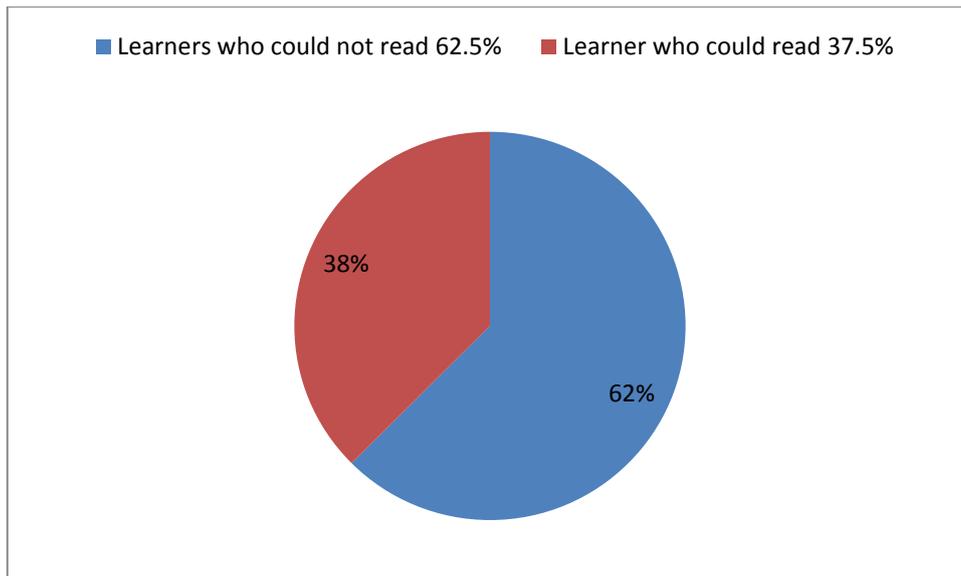
I divided grade 4 learners into 5 groups. Each group was taught reading applying a different approach for a period of seven weeks. This was meant to determine which one of the four main approaches yield better results for promoting and developing reading skills. As already indicated, at the end of the seven weeks period, learners were subjected to a comprehension test to establish which of the four groups is the most improved.

Figure 5.4 below shows that in group 1 (Phonics Awareness), 15 learners out of 24 were identified as being unable to read as they scored below 30 in the pre-test. This constitutes 63 Percent of learners who could not read in this group before the intervention was implemented. Out of the seven learners who scored 50 and above, only 2 scored above seventy whilst another 2 scored above sixty. This is 8 Percent of the learners in this group. The bar graph below (Figure 5.4) depicts Group 1's (PA) individual learner raw score in the pre-intervention test.



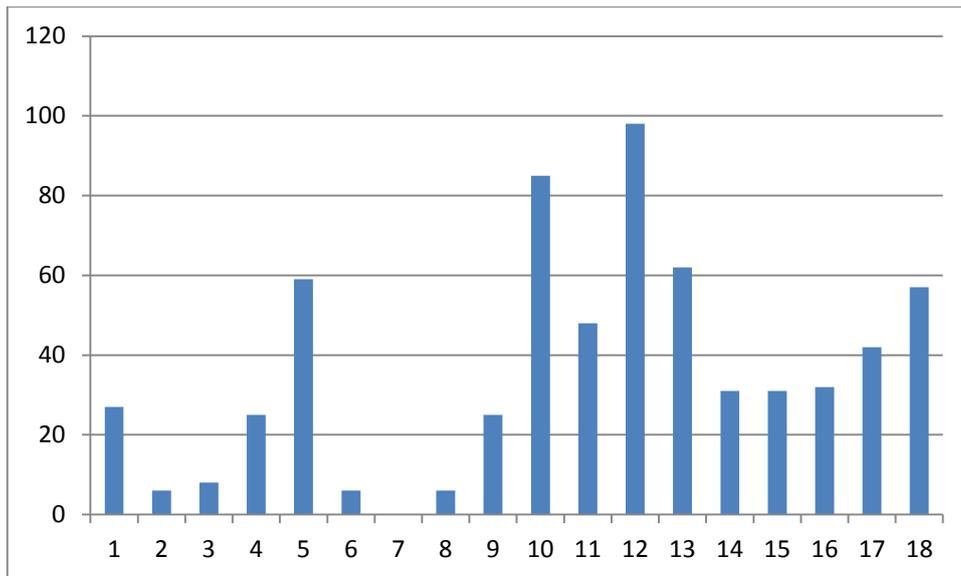
**Figure 5.4:** Group 1 (PA) Individual learner pre-test raw scores.

Over all, only nine learners in group 1, which is 38 Percent, read at an acceptable level. 15 learners which are 63 Percent in group 1 read below their age cohort and grade level. The pie chart in Figure 5.5 below shows percentages of learners who could not read and those who could in group 1 (PA) prior to the intervention.



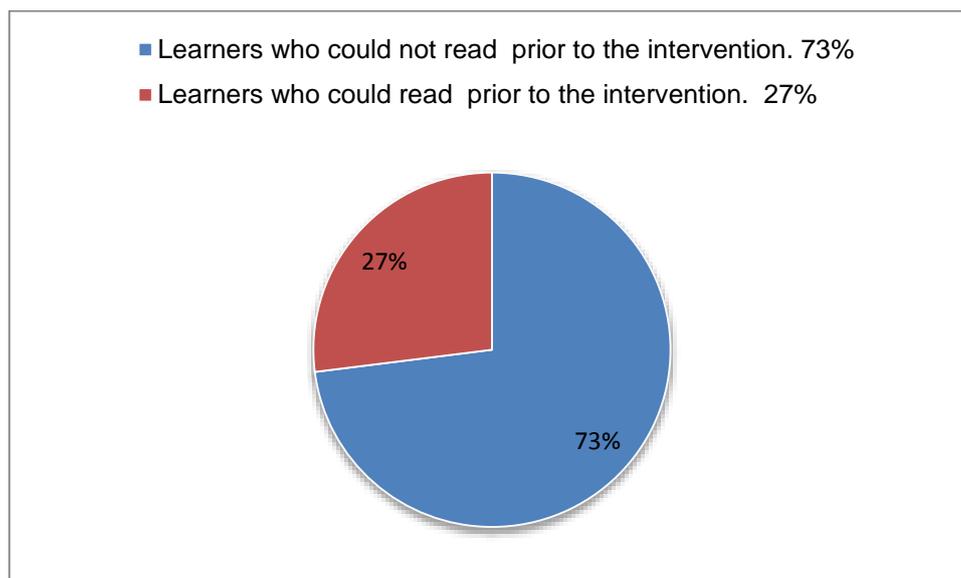
**Figure 5.5:** Pre-Intervention Percentage of learners' Reading Ability – Group 1

In Group 2 (Read Aloud), there were two learners who performed exceptionally well in the pre-intervention comprehension test. Learner No 13 scored 98 Percent whilst learner No 11 settled for 85 Percent. However, this excellent performance is overshadowed by the low performance of 14 learners who scored below 40 and that is 73 Percent of the learners who could not read in this group before an intervention was administered. The bar graph in figure 5.6 below depicts Group 2's (RA) individual learner raw score in the pre-intervention test.



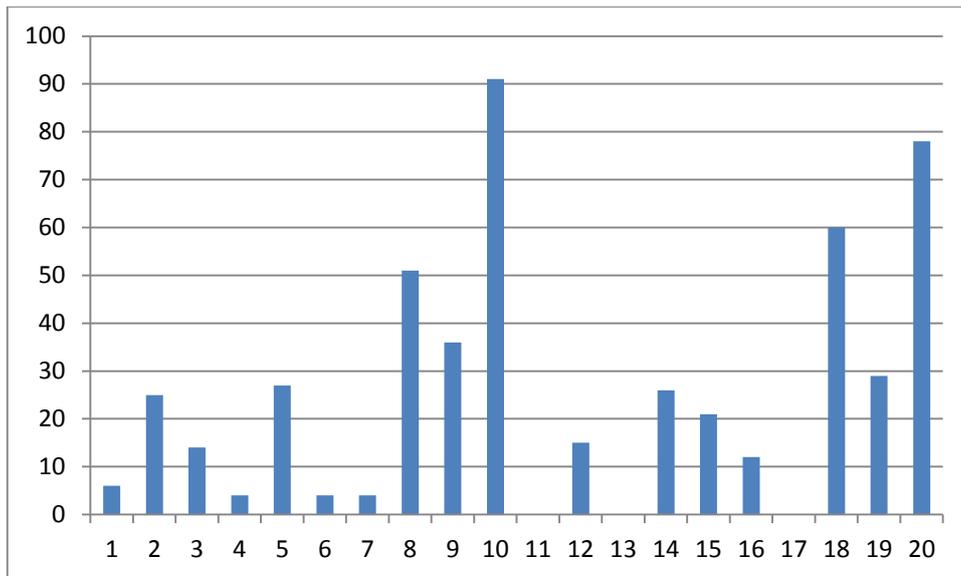
**Figure 5.6:** Group 2 (RA) Individual learner pre-test raw scores.

The pie chart in Figure 5.7 below shows percentages of learners who could not read and those who could in Group 2 (RA) prior to the intervention.



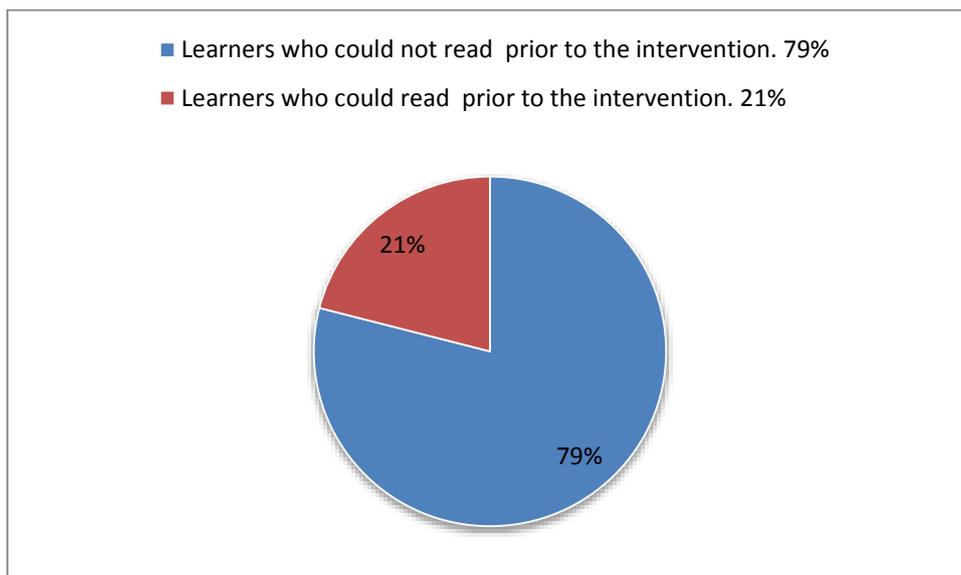
**Figure 5.7:** Pre-Intervention Percentage of learners' Reading Ability – Group 2

The bar graph in figure 5.8 below depicts Group3's (Shared Reading) individual learner raw score in the pre-intervention test.



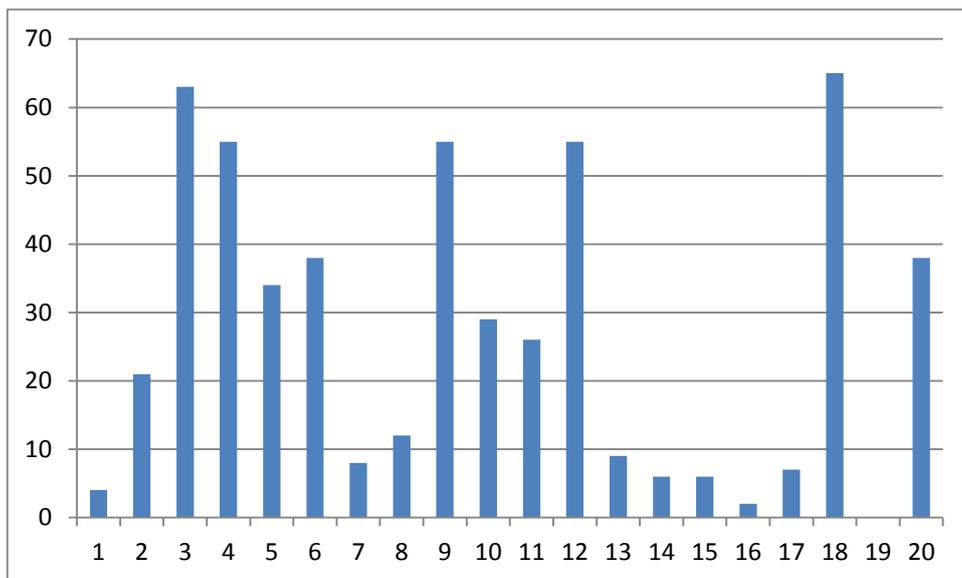
**Figure 5.8:** Group 3 (Shared Reading) Individual learner pre-test raw scores.

Prior to an intervention, 15 learners scored below 30 in Group 3 (Shared Reading); which represents 79 Percent of learners who could not read in this group. Only 4 learners scored above 40, which represents 21 Percent of learners who read at age and grade level in group 3 (SR). The pie chart in Figure 5.9 below shows percentages of learners who could not read and those who could in Group 3 (SR) prior to the intervention.



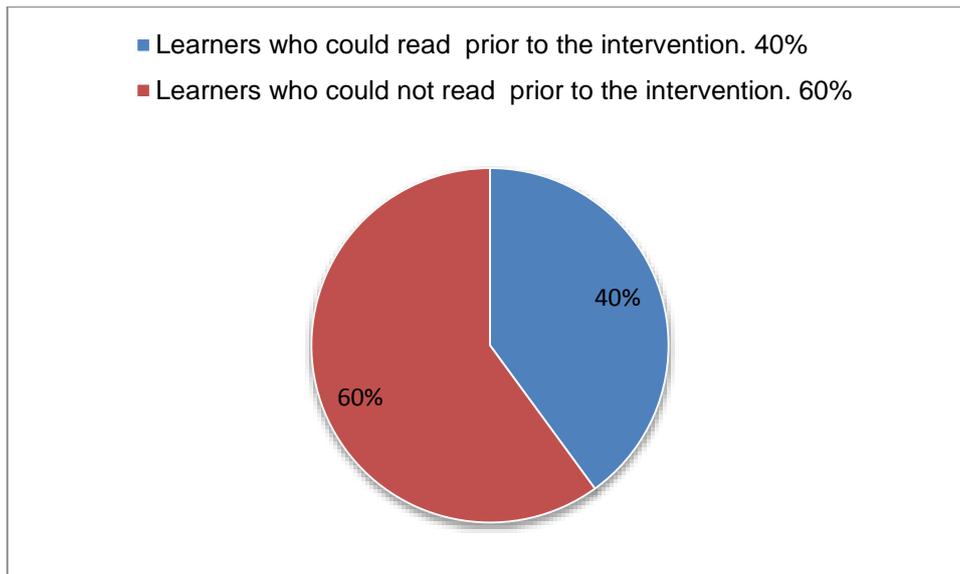
**Figure 5.9:** Pre-Intervention Percentage of learners' Reading Ability – Group 3

Five learners scored above 40 in group 4 (GGR) in the pre-intervention test. This is just 25 Percent of learners who could read in this group. 12 learners read below age and grade level and that represent 60 Percent of learners in this group. Eight learners read at an acceptable level that constitutes 40 Percent of learners in this group prior to an intervention. The bar graph below Figure (5.10) depicts Group 4's (GGR) individual learner raw score in the pre-intervention test.



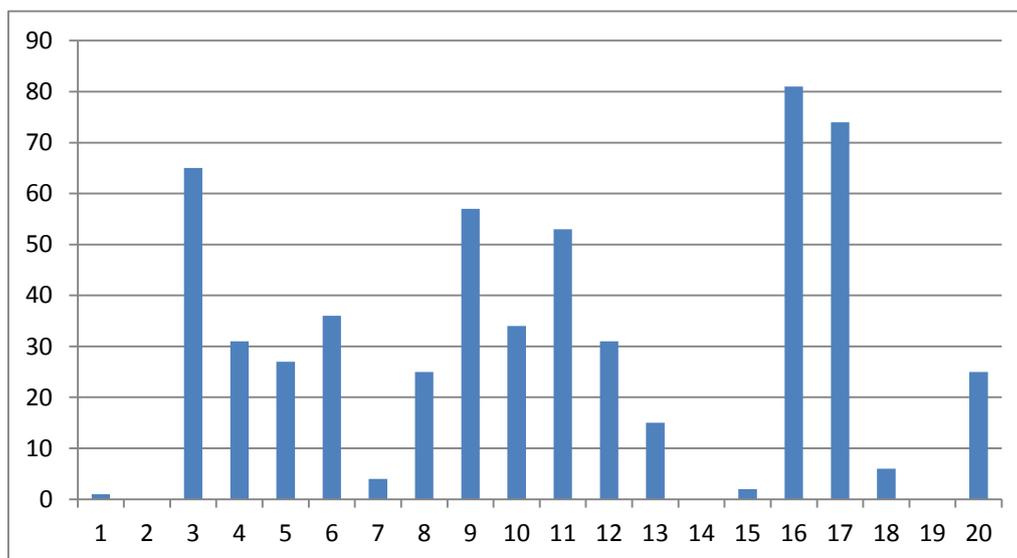
**Figure 5.10:** Group 4 Guided Group Reading (GGR) Individual learner pre-test scores.

The pie chart in Figure 5.11 below shows percentages of learners who could not read and those who could in Group 4 (GGR) prior to the intervention.



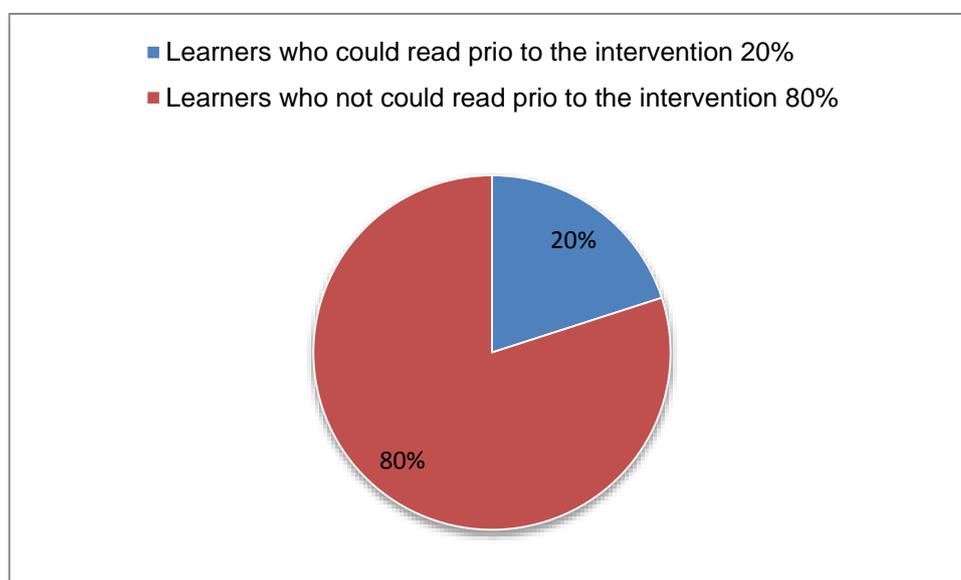
**Figure 5.11:** Pre-Intervention Percentage of learners' Reading Ability - Group 4 (Guided Group Reading)

The control group also wrote the pre-intervention test. Figure 5.12 below shows individual learner raw score in the control group. Five learners in this group were able to obtain a score of 50 and above. This is just 25 Percent of the learners in this group. The remaining 15 learners obtained below 40 scores which represent 75 Percent of the learners in this group. This is an indication that majority of learners in this group could not read. The bar graph Figure (5.12) below depicts Group 5's (Control Group) individual learner raw score in the pre-intervention test.



**Figure 5.12:** Group 5 (Control Group) Individual learner pre-test scores

A total of 16 learners, which represent 80 Percent in the Control Group, could not read prior to the intervention whilst only 20 Percent could. The pie chart in Figure 5.13 below shows percentages of learners who could not read and those who could in Group 5 (Control Group) prior to the intervention.



**Figure 5.13:** Pre-Intervention Percentage of learners’ Reading Ability - Group 5 (Control Group)

Tables 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11 below show the individual learner’s raw scores in the pre and post-test and; pre and post-reading error-count test scores in each group.

**Table 5.7:** Pre & Post-intervention Test Scores and Reading Error-count Test Scores - Group 1 (Phonics awareness)

Learner No	Name of learner removed	Age	Gender	Home Language	Pre-intervention test scores	Pre-intervention reading errors	Comments	Post-intervention	Post-intervention reading errors	Comments
1		9	F	Spd	9	6	Can't read	48	4	Can read
2		9	F	Spd	51	11	Can read	Withdrawn		
3		9	M	Spd	25	8	Can't read	38	4	Can read
4		11	M	Spd	0	11	Can't read	0	11	Can't read
5		9	F	Spd	12	8	Can't read	36	10	Can't read
6		8	F	Spd	25	9	Can't read	50	7	Can read
7		9	M	Spd	19	8	Can't read	39	10	Can't read
8		9	F	Spd	77	2	Can read	64	3	Can read
9		11	F	Spd	23	11	Can't read	7	10	Can't read

10		11	M	Spd	0	11	Can't read	0	11	Can't read	
11		9	F	Spd	25	4	Can read	45	8	Can read	
12		9	F	Tsg	44	10	Can't read	20	11	Can't read	
13		9	F	Spd	68	0	Can read	73	3	Can read	
14		9	F	Spd	2	9	Can't read	11	11	Can't read	
15		10	M	Spd	53	4	Can read	64	8	Can read	
16		10	M	Spd	2	9	Can't read	20	11	Can't read	
17		9	F	Spd	68	4	Can read	64	4	Can read	
18		12	M	Spd	6	11	Can't read	0	11	Can't read	
19		9	M	Spd	55	3	Can read	48	10	Can read	
20		9	M	Spd	74	4	Can read	43	10	Can't read	
21		9	M	Spd	12	9	Can't read	9	4	Can read	
22		10	M	Spd	4	8	Can't read	14	11	Can't read	
23		9	M	Spd	42	10	Can't read	59	5	Can read	
24		10	M	Spd	25	11	Can't read	14	11	Can't read	
		<b>Total</b>			<b>721</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>766</b>			
		<b>Average</b>			<b>30.0</b>		<b>Average</b>	<b>33.3</b>			
		<b>SDTV</b>					<b>SDTV</b>				
<b>Total number of learners who COULD NOT read before the intervention</b>					<b>16</b>	<b>Total number of learners who COULD NOT read AFTER the intervention</b>					<b>12</b>
<b>Percentage</b>					<b>67%</b>						<b>52%</b>
<b>Total number of learners who COULD read before the intervention</b>					<b>8</b>	<b>Total number of learners who COULD read AFTER the intervention</b>					<b>11</b>
<b>Percentage</b>					<b>33%</b>						<b>48%</b>

**Table 5.8:** Pre & Post-intervention Test Scores and Reading Error-count Test Scores  
- Group 2 (Read Aloud)

No	Names of learners removed	Age	Gender	Home Language	Pre-intervention test scores	Pre-intervention reading errors	Comments	Post-intervention test scores	Post-intervention reading errors	Comment
1		9	F	Spd	27	9	Can't read	48	8	Can read
2		10	F	Spd	0	10	Can't read	Withdrawn		
3		10	M	Spd	6	5	Can't read	7	11	Can't read
4		10	M	Spd	8	9	Can't read	41	11	Can't read
5		11	M	Spd	25	7	Can't read	43	5	Can read
6		10	F	Spd	59	3	Can read	52	4	Can read

7		11	M	Spd	6	11	Can't read	Withdrawn		
8		9	M	Spd	0	10	Can't read	A	7	
9		11	M	Spd	6	9	Can't read	23	11	Can't read
10		10	F	Spd	25	9	Can't read	30	3	Can read
11		9	M	Spd	85	2	Can read	64	3	Can read
12		9	F	Tsg	48	4	Can read	43	9	Can read
13		9	F	Spd	98	2	Can read	88	0	Can read
14		9	M	Spd	62	4	Can read	57	5	Can read
15		9	M	Spd	31	8	Can't read	52	9	Can read
16		9	M	Spd	31	8	Can't read	32	9	Can't read
17		11	M	Spd	32	9	Can't read	64	2	Can read
18		10	M	Tsg	42	6	Can't read	48	9	Can read
19		10	F	Spd	57	4	Can read	57	2	Can read
	<b>Total</b>				<b>648</b>		<b>Total</b>	749		
	<b>Average</b>				<b>31.1</b>		<b>Average</b>	47		
	<b>SDTV</b>						<b>SDTV</b>			
	<b>Total number of learners who COULD NOT read BEFORE the intervention</b>				<b>14</b>		<b>Total number of learners who COULD NOT read AFTER the intervention</b>			<b>4</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>				<b>73%</b>		<b>Percentage</b>			<b>25%</b>
	<b>Total number of learners who COULD read after the intervention</b>				<b>5</b>		<b>Total number of learners who COULD read AFTER the intervention</b>			<b>12</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>				<b>27%</b>		<b>Percentage</b>			<b>75%</b>

**Table 5.9: Pre & Post-intervention Test Scores and Reading Error-count Test Scores - Group 1 (Shared Reading)**

No	Age	Gender	Home Language	Pre-intervention test scores	Pre-intervention reading errors	Comments	Post-intervention Test scores	Post-intervention Reading errors	Comments
1	9	F	Spd	6	10	Can't read	16	9	Can read
2	11	M	Spd	25	8	Can't read	43	9	Can't read
3	9	F	Spd	14	10	Can't read	36	9	Can't read
4	9	M	Spd	4	10	Can't read	9	11	Can't read
5	10	M	Spd	27	8	Can't read	41	5	Can read
6	11	F	Spd	4	11	Can't read	0	10	Can't read
7	11	M	Spd	4	8	Can't read	41	9	Can't read
8	8	F	Tsg	51	4	Can read	11	3	Can read
9	11	M	Spd	36	10	Can't read	55	7	Can read
10	9	F	Spd	91	3	Can read	66	0	Can read
11	11	F	Spd	0	8	Can't read	7	9	Can't read
12	11	F	Spd	15	8	Can't read	6	9	Can't read
13	9	M	Spd	0	7	Can't read	11	9	Can't read
14	9	F	Spd	26	8	Can't read	50	8	Can read
15	11	M	Spd	21	6	Can't read	9	5	Can read
16	8	M	Spd	12	7	Can't read	0	9	Can't read
17	9	F	Tsg	60	4	Can read	41	9	Can't read
18	10	M	Spd	29	6	Can't read	32	3	Can read
19	8	M	Spd	78	3	Can read	57	0	Can read
Total marks obtained				503			531		
Average				26.4			28		
SDTV									
<b>Number of learners who COULD NOT read BEFORE the intervention</b>				<b>15</b>	<b>Number of learners who COULD NOT read AFTER the intervention</b>				<b>10</b>
<b>Percentage</b>				<b>79%</b>	<b>Percentage</b>				<b>53%</b>
<b>Number of learners who COULD read BEFORE the intervention</b>				<b>4</b>	<b>Number of learners who COULD read AFTER the intervention</b>				<b>9</b>
<b>Percentage</b>				<b>21%</b>	<b>Percentage</b>				<b>47%</b>

**Table 5.10:** Group 4 Guided Group Reading (GGR) Pre and post-intervention test scores; pre and post-intervention reading error-count test.

	Names of learners removed	Age	Gender	Home Language	Pre-intervention test scores	Pre-intervention reading errors	Comments	Post-intervention test scores	Post-intervention Reading errors	Comment
1		9	M	Tsg	4	11	Can't read	36	10	Can't read
2		9	F	Tsg	21	11	Can't read	48	5	Can read
3		11	F	Spd	33	9	Can read	20	5	Can't read
4		10	M	Spd	55	4	Can read	59	2	Can read
5		10	M	Spd	34	10	Can't read	50	2	Can read
6		12	M	Spd	38	4	Can read	48	6	Can read
7		9	F	Spd	8	7	Can't read	43	2	Can read
8		10	M	Tsg	12	8	Can't read	30	9	Can't read
9		10	F	Spd	55	3	Can read	64	2	Can read
10		9	F	Spd	29	9	Can't read	64	2	Can read
11		9	M	Spd	26	7	Can't read	50	3	Can read
12		9	F	Spd	55	3	Can read	61	4	Can read
13		9	M	Spd	9	5	Can't read	48	8	Can read
14		10	M	Tsg	6	6	Can't read	30	8	Can't read
15		11	F	Spd	6	9	Can't read	41	9	Can read
16		10	M	Spd	2	8	Can't read	20	11	Can't read
17		11	M	Spd	7	8	Can't read	43	6	Can read
18		9	M	Spd	65	2	Can read	39	6	Can read
19		8	M	Spd	57	3	Can read	16	10	Can't read
20		8	F	Spd	38	4	Can read	9	4	Can't read
<b>Total</b>					<b>590</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>819</b>		
<b>Average</b>					<b>29.5</b>	<b>Average</b>		<b>41</b>		
<b>SDTV</b>						<b>SDTV</b>				
<b>Number of learners who COULD NOT read BEFORE the intervention</b>					<b>12</b>	<b>Number of learners who COULD NOT read AFTER the intervention</b>				<b>7</b>
<b>Percentage</b>					<b>60%</b>	<b>Percentage</b>				<b>35%</b>
<b>Number of learners who COULD read before the intervention</b>					<b>8</b>	<b>Number of learners who COULD read AFTER the intervention</b>				<b>13</b>

Percentage	40%	Percentage	65%
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**Table 5. 11:** Group 5 (Control Group): Pre/ post-intervention and error-count test scores

No	Age	Gender	Home Language	Pre-intervention test scores	Pre-intervention reading errors	Comments	Post-intervention test scores	Post-intervention Reading errors	Comments
1	12	M	Spd	1	10	Can't read	A	11	
2	9	F	Spd	0	11	Can't read	A	5	
3	10	F	Spd	65	3	Can read	81	1	Can read
4	9	F	Spd	31	5	Fairly well	32	3	Can read
5	9	M	Spd	27	8	Can't read	25	7	Can't read
6	9	F	Spd	36	4	Can read	59	7	Can read
7	10	F	Spd	4	11	Can't read	16	7	Can't read
8	9	F	Spd	25	8	Can't read	23	10	Can't read
9	10	M	Spd	57	4	Can read	64	1	Can read
10	10	M	Spd	34	5	Fairly well	39	11	Can't read
11	9		Spd	53	3	Can't read	withdrawn		
12	10	M	Spd	31	3	Fairly well	48	4	Can read
13	8	M	Spd	15	9	Can't read	25	6	Can't read
14	9	M	Spd	0	11	Can't read	withdrawn		
15	11	M	Spd	2	12	Can't read	25	11	Can't read
16	9	F	Spd	81	1	Can read	36	5	Can read
17	9	F	Spd	74	1	Can read	59	1	Can read
18	9	M	Spd	6	10	Can't read	25	9	Can't read
19	10	M	Spd	20	10	Can't read	30	10	Can't read
20	9	M	Spd	25	7	Can't read	34	10	Can't read
Total				587			621		
Average				29.35			39		
SDTV									

Number of learners who COULD NOT read BEFORE the intervention	16	Number of learners who COULD NOT read AFTER the intervention	9
Percentage	80%		56%
Number of learners who COULD NOT read BEFORE the intervention	4	Number of learners who COULD read AFTER the intervention	7
Percentage	20%		44%

### 5.2.2 Data from learners' post-intervention test.

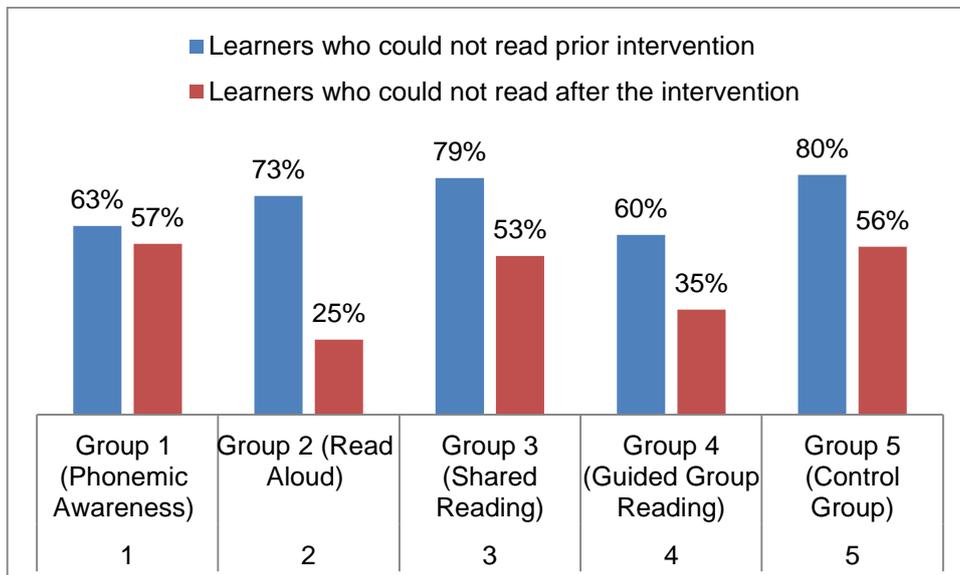
As an empirical study, I followed the philosophical frame of reference which is based on pragmatic knowledge claim. As already stated earlier on in chapter 4, I used experimental and control group by employing a particular intervention (reading approach) for each group. This led to the administering of pre and post-test.

According to Johnson and Christensen (2014), the control group is formed in such a way that the dependent variables are similar to those of the experimental group. Tables 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11 in section 5.2.1 above, reflect data from pre and post-intervention test.

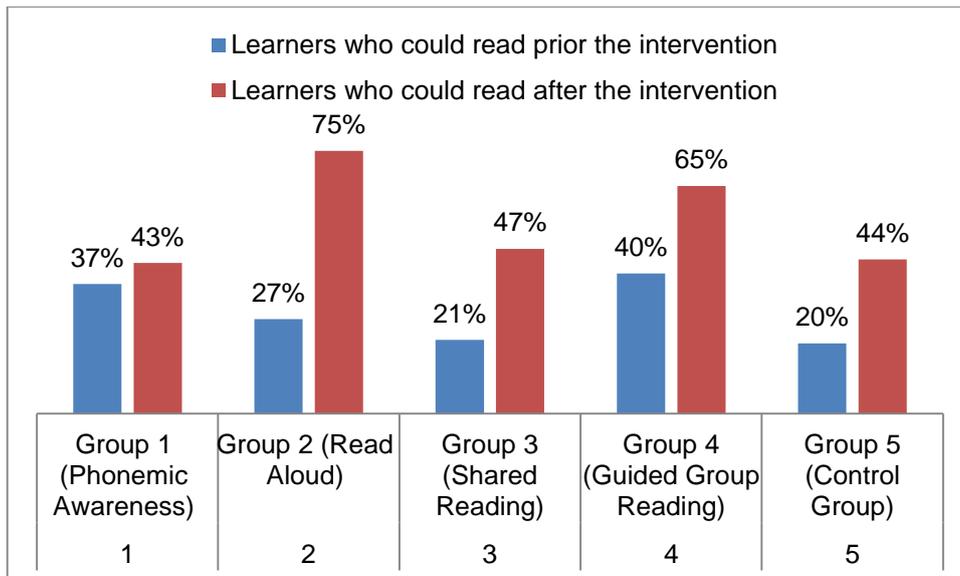
The learners' overall performance in the post-test is as shown in Table 5.12 below. The total number of grade 4 learners slanted/went down to 97 due to transfers of learners to other schools before the end of the first term. However, 94 learners wrote the post-test. On average, learners obtained **37** Percent in the post-test. Table 5.12 below reflects numbers and Percent of learners who could read and those who could not read in each group *before* and *after* the intervention. Remove the highlighted section above as well as in table below:

**Table 5.12: Learners' Reading Ability - before and after intervention.**

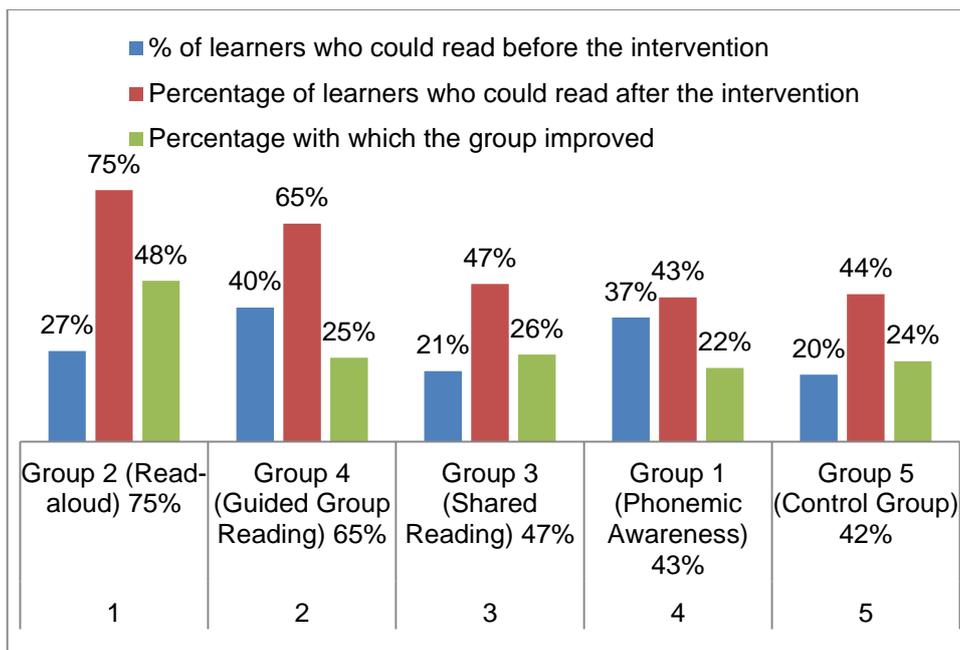
	Number of learners who could NOT read BEFORE the intervention		Number of learners who COULD read BEFORE the intervention		Total	Number of learners who COULD NOT read AFTER the intervention		Number of learners who COULD read AFTER the intervention		Total number of learners
		Percentage		Percentage			Percentage		Percentage	
Group 1 Phonemic Awareness	15	63%	9	37%	24	13	57%	10	43%	23
Group 2 Read-aloud	14	73%	5	27%	19	4	25%	12	75%	16
Group 3 Shared Reading	15	79%	4	21%	19	10	53%	9	47%	19
Group 4 Guided Group reading	12	60%	8	40%	20	7	35%	13	65%	20
Group 5 Control Group	16	80%	4	20%	20	9	56%	7	44%	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>		<b>30</b>		<b>102</b>	<b>43</b>		<b>51</b>		<b>94</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>71%</b>		<b>29%</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>46%</b>		<b>54%</b>		<b>100%</b>



**Figure 5.14: Learners' Reading Failure - before and after intervention.**



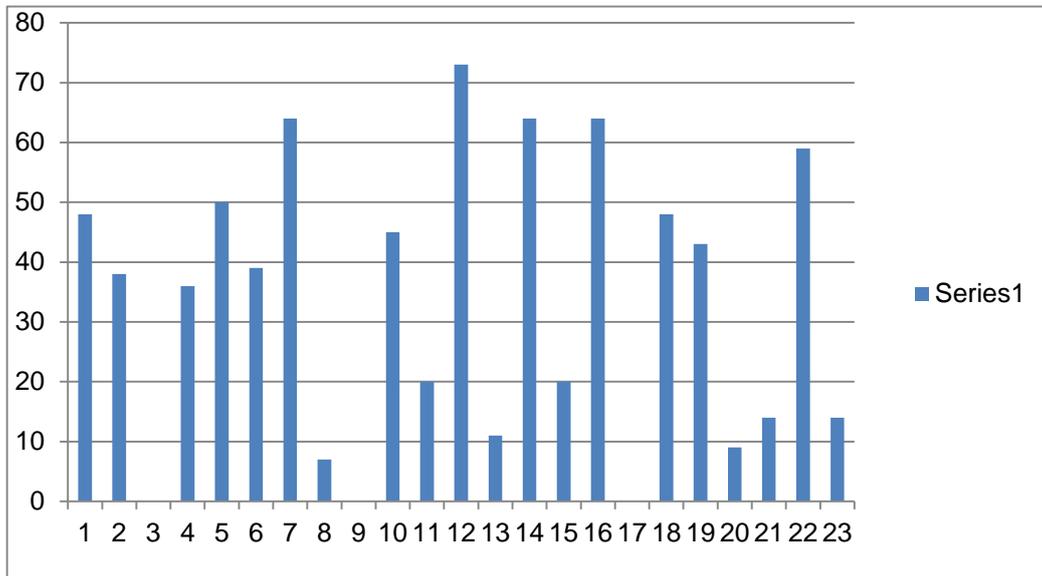
**Figure 5.15:** Learners' Reading Ability - *before* and *after* intervention



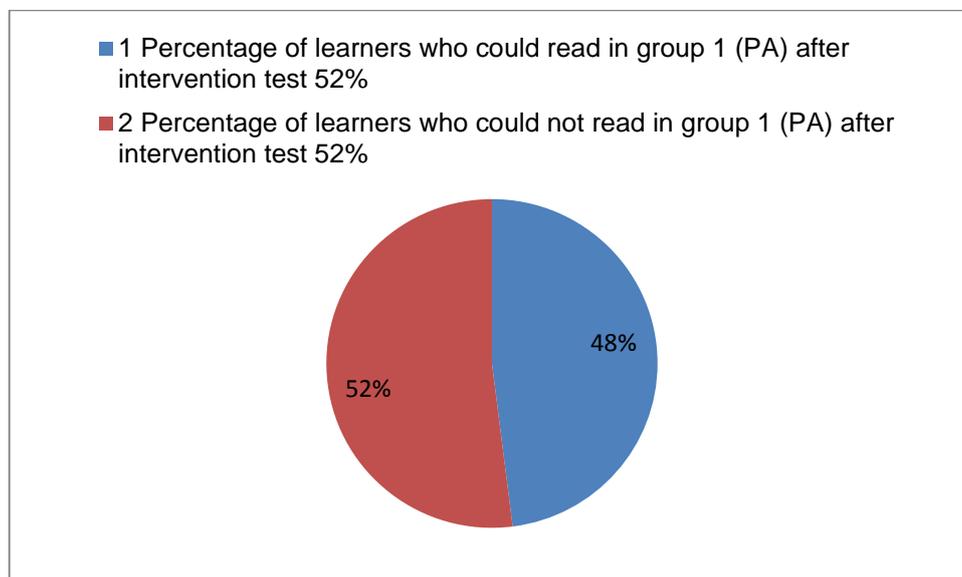
**Figure 5.16:** Reading progress in each group

Figure 5.17 below reflects individual learner's post-test scores in group 1 (PA). Out of 23 learners who wrote the post-test, 13 learners scored below 40 Percent, which is 57

Percent of learners in this group. Only 10 learners were able to score above 40 Percent and they represent 43 Percent in this group.

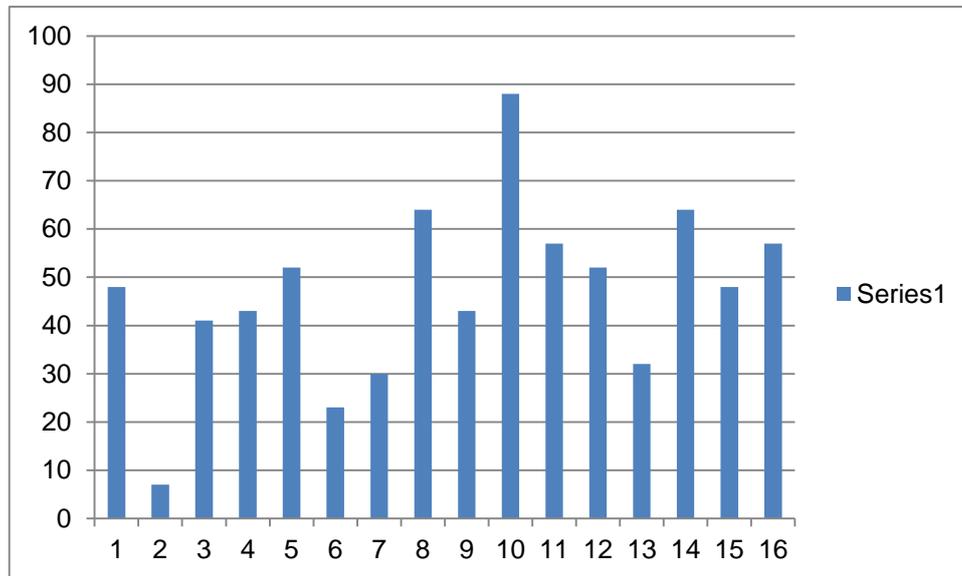


**Figure 5.17:** Group 1 (PA) Post-test individual raw score (Comprehension test)

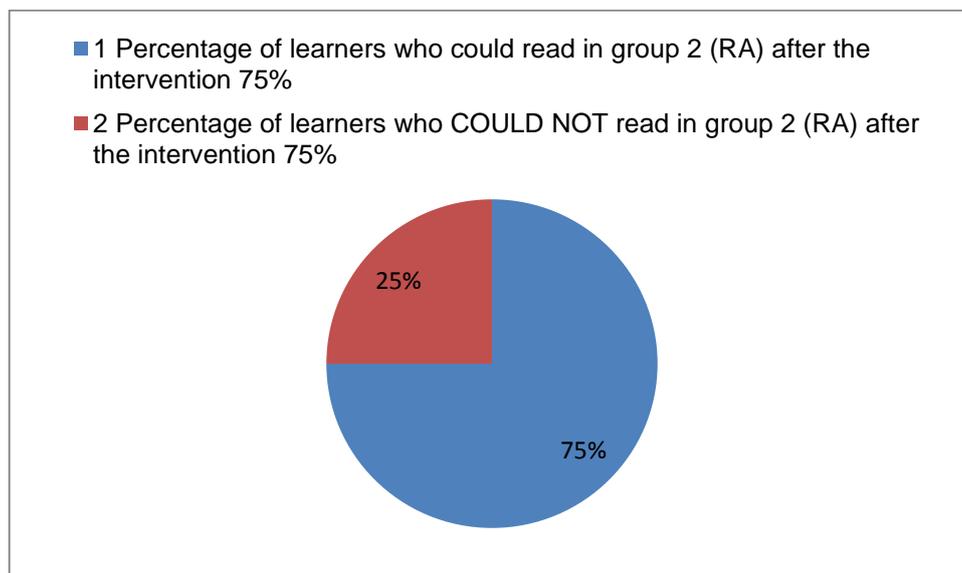


**Figure 5.18:** Group 1 Learners Reading Ability Post-intervention - Phonemic Awareness

Post-intervention comprehension test shows that in group 2 (RA) a significant number of learners, which is 12 out of 16 learners scored above 40 Percent and this is 75 Percent of learners in this group. However, 4 learners scored below 40 Percent and they represent 25 Percent. Figure 5.19 below shows individual learner's raw score in group 2 (RA)

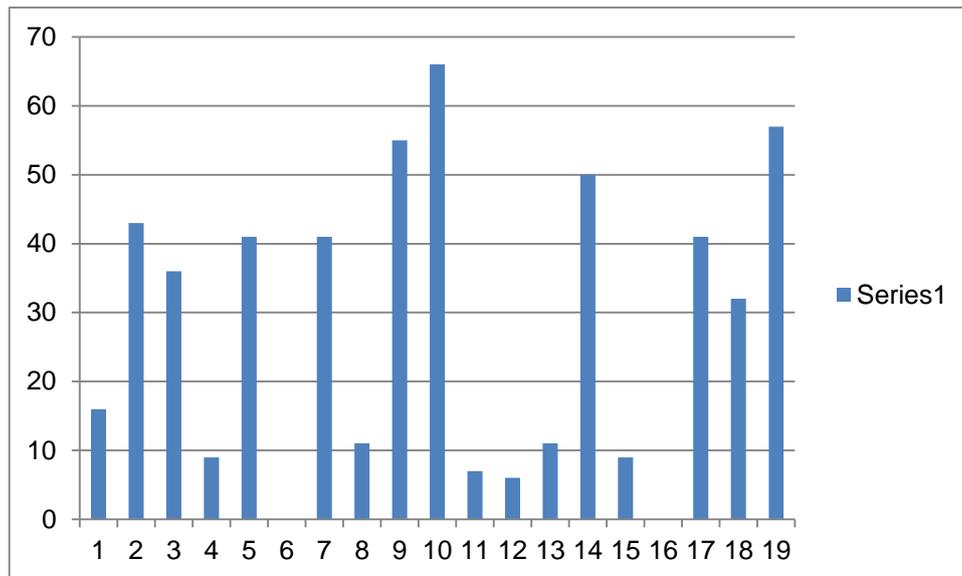


**Figure 5.19:** Group 2 (RA) post-test individual raw score (Comprehension test).

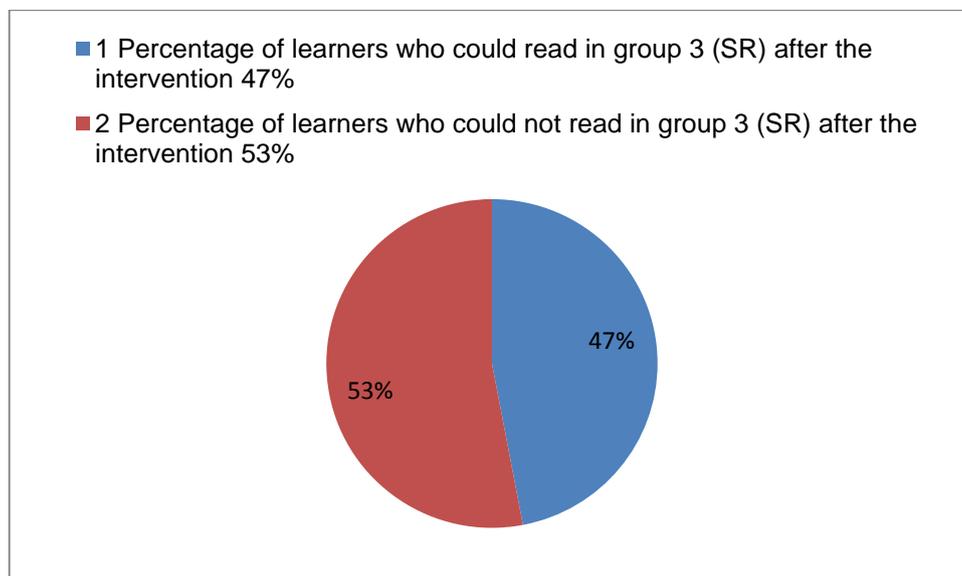


**Figure 5.20:** Learners Ability to Read – Post Intervention (comprehension test)

Group 3 (SR) had 10 learners scoring below 40 Percent and that is 53 Percent. 9 learners who represent 47 Percent scored above 40 Percent. This was a negligible improvement in this group.

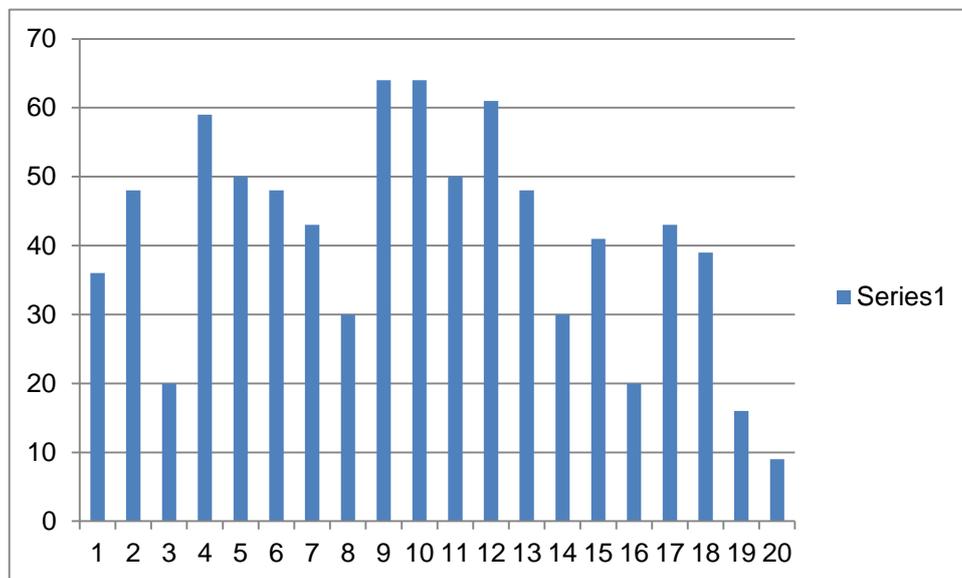


**Figure 5.21:** Group 3 (SR) post-test individual raw score (Comprehension test)

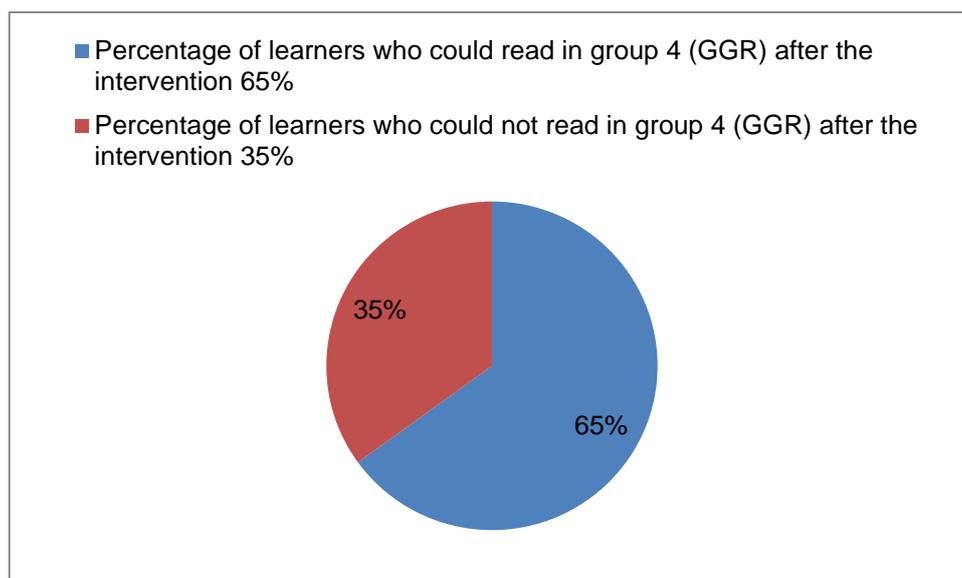


**Figure 5.22:** Learners' Reading Ability- Post-intervention.

Group 4 (GGR) performed fairly well. 13 learners who represent 65 Percent scored above 40 Percent as reflected in figure 5.23 below.

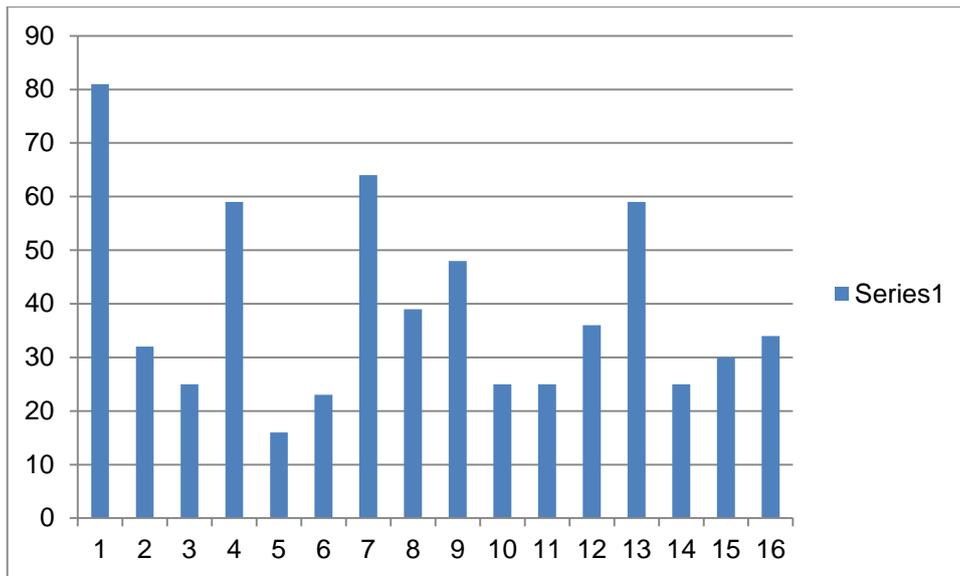


**Figure 5.23:** Group 4 (GGR) post-test individual raw score (Comprehension test).

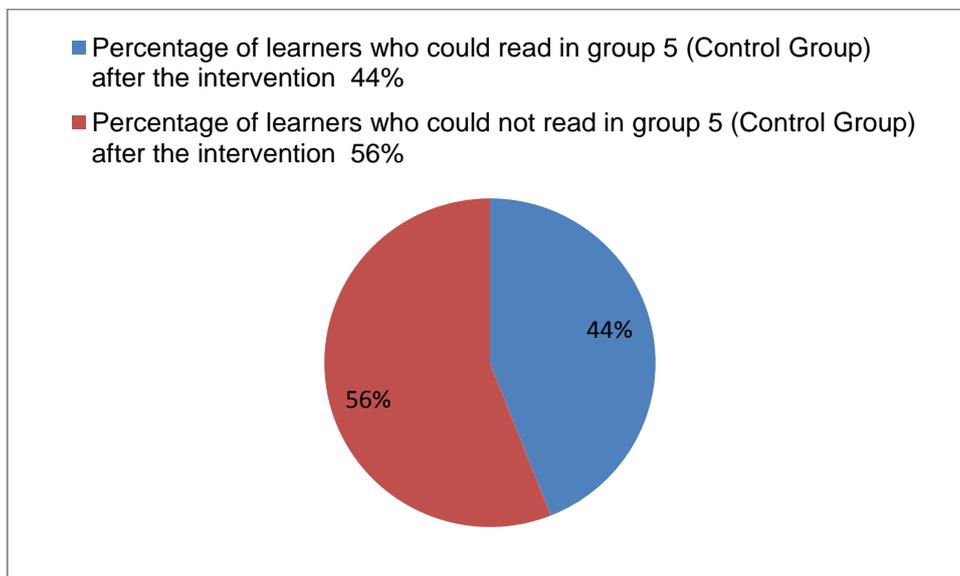


**Figure 5.24:** Learners Reading Ability - Post-intervention (GGR)

Group 5 (Control Group) had the least improvement compared to the pre-test. 9 learners scored below 40 Percent and they represent 56 Percent. 44 Percent of learners scored above 40 Percent in this group. Figure 5.25 below shows individual learner scores in the post-test.



**Figure 5.25:** Post-test individual scores (Comprehension test) - Control Group



**Figure 5. 26:** Learners’ Ability to Read – Post-intervention (Control Group)

### 5.2.3 Data from teachers’ questionnaire

In section 4.1 I have mentioned that this study adopted a convergent parallel design as one of the mixed-methods research designs advocated by Creswell, (2003). I, therefore, collected both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently during the data collection process. I employed the use a questionnaire to extract quantitative data from intermediate phase teacher participants. Section A of the questionnaire elicited teachers' biographical information. Table 5.13: below shows intermediate phase

teacher participants' biographical data. From Table 5.13 below, it can be inferred that the teacher participants are generally well qualified.

**Table 5.13:** Teacher participants 'biographical data

Highest Academic Qualification	Matric		ACE		B.A		B.Ed.		B.Ed. (Hons)		Masters		TOTAL
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Gender	9	5	3	3	3	5	3	2	2	6	1		42
Professional Qualification	PTC		PTD		SPTD		STD		HED		OTHERS		TOTAL
	1	2	5	5	11	6	5	3		1	1	2	

**Table 5.14:** Participants' teaching experience

No of years	1 to 5		6 to 15		16 to 25		26 to 35		35 and above		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Years of experience as a teacher	0	2	11	6	7	6	3	7	0	0	42
Years of experience as an English teacher	5	5	11	9	3	7	2	0	0	0	42

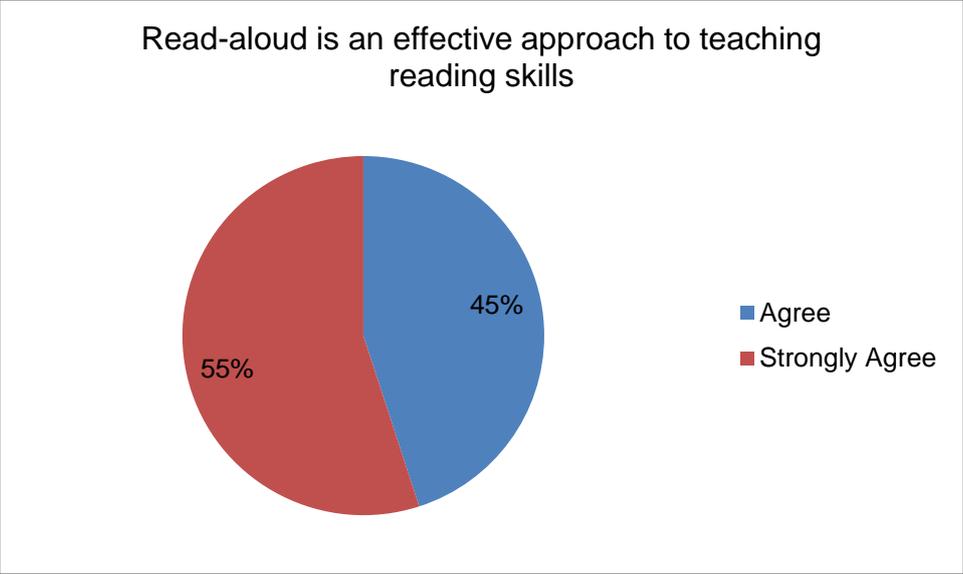
**Table 5.15:** Teachers' age distributions

	<i>Teacher participants' Age</i>			
	30-39	40-49	50-59	Total
<b>Male</b>	0	11	10	21
<b>Female</b>	0	9	12	21
<b>Total</b>	0	21	21	42
<b>Percentage</b>	0%	50	50	100

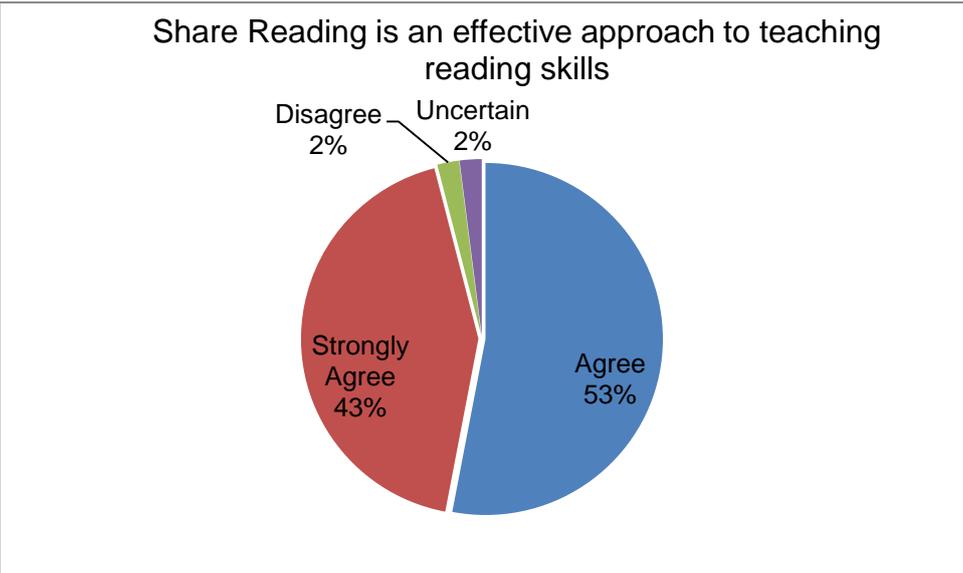
Relevant information on teachers' attitudes, understanding, and use of different approaches to teaching reading was collected via Section B which consisted of B1, B2, and B3. During the intervention process, I concurrently collected data from the teacher participants using Section A (biographical data) and Section B3 which were administered from the second week of the first quarter. Sections B1 and B2 were also administered to teacher participants over a period of time in the subsequent weeks during data collection.

#### **5.2.3.1 Data generated from teachers' questionnaire: Section B1.**

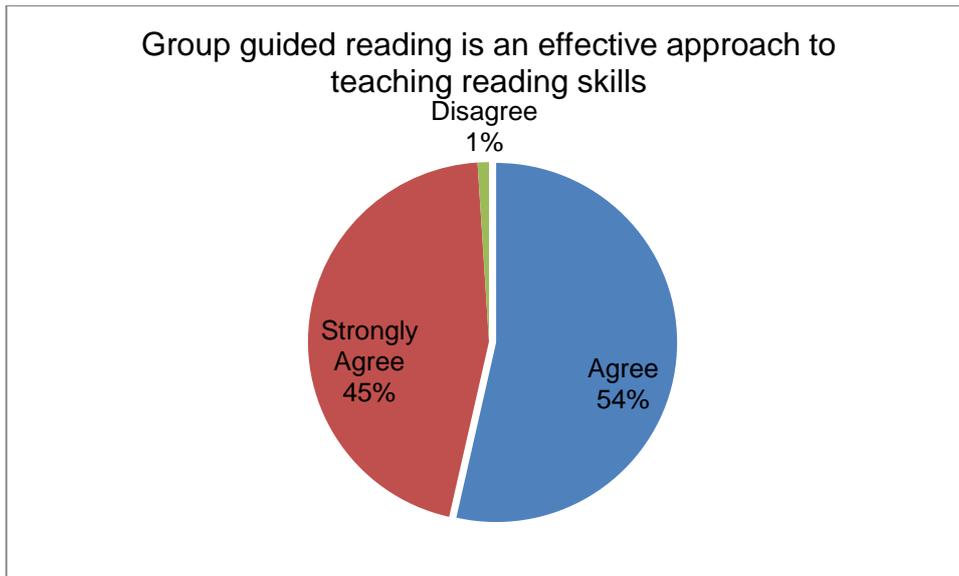
In line with Hofstee (2006), teachers were asked to rate appropriate approach/es to teaching reading skills. A rating scale ranging from, strongly disagree to strongly agree was utilised. Generally, the pattern of teachers' responses to this section of the questionnaire revealed that majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that all four approaches of teaching reading are effective towards teaching reading skills. Figures 5.27, 5.28 and 5.29 below reflect that overwhelming majority agreed that Read-aloud, Shared Reading, and Guided Group Reading are effective approaches to teaching reading skills.



**Figure 5.27:** Teachers' perceptions about Read-aloud

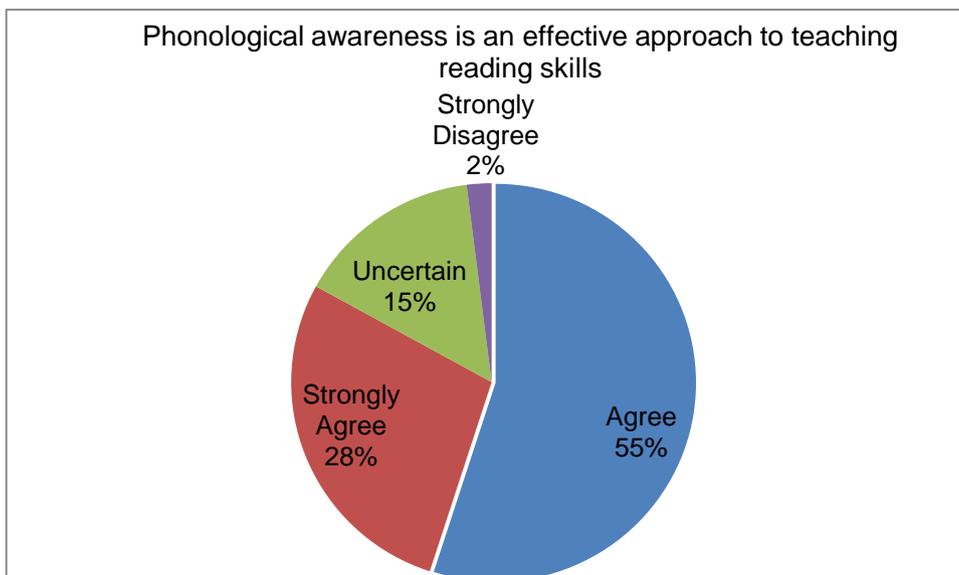


**Figure 5.28:** Teachers' perception about Shared Reading



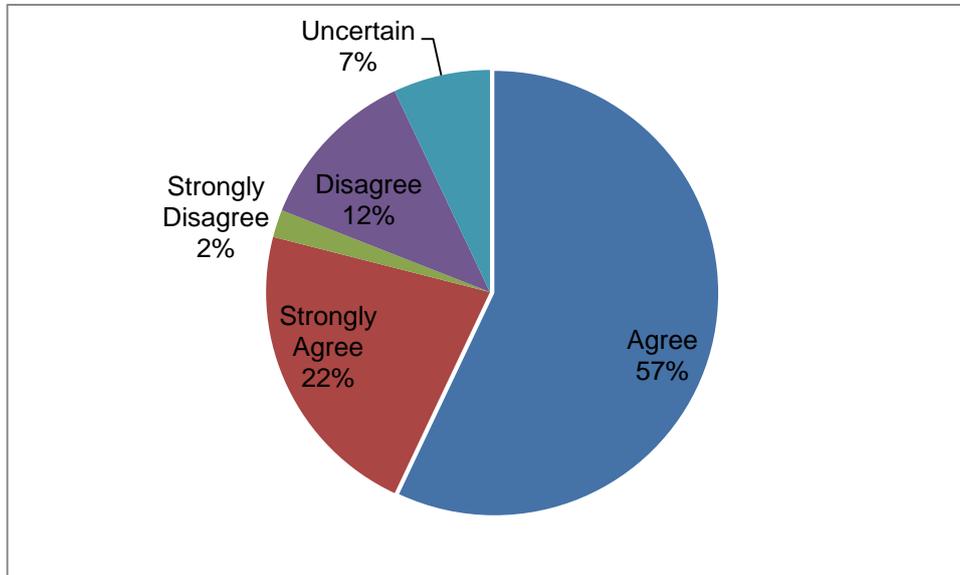
**Figure 5.29:** Teachers' perception about Guided Group Reading

It is only with items 4, 5 and 6 that a negligible Percent of teachers was uncertain, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements. Figure 5.30 below depicts that only 30 Percent of teachers disagreed that Phonological awareness is an effective approach to teaching reading skills whilst only 15 Percent were uncertain. A negligible 2 Percent disagreed that Phonological awareness is an effective approach to teaching reading skills.



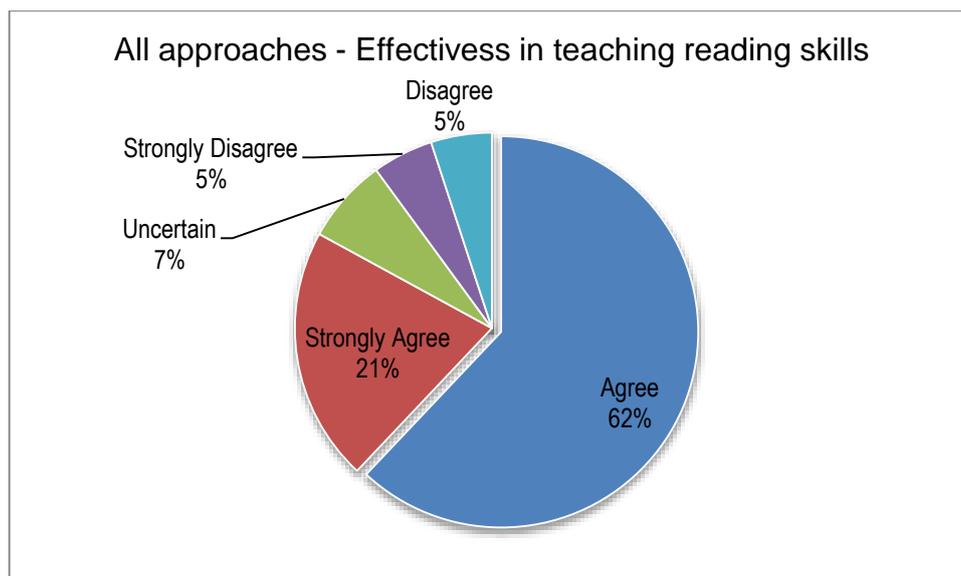
**Figure 5.30:** Teachers' perceptions about Phonemic Awareness

Figure 5.31 below reflects that 79 Percent of teachers felt that no single approach is inherently wrong or right towards teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase. 12 Percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement while only 7 Percent was uncertain. Only a negligible 2 Percent disagreed with the statement.



**Figure 5.31:** Teachers' perceptions of all reading approaches

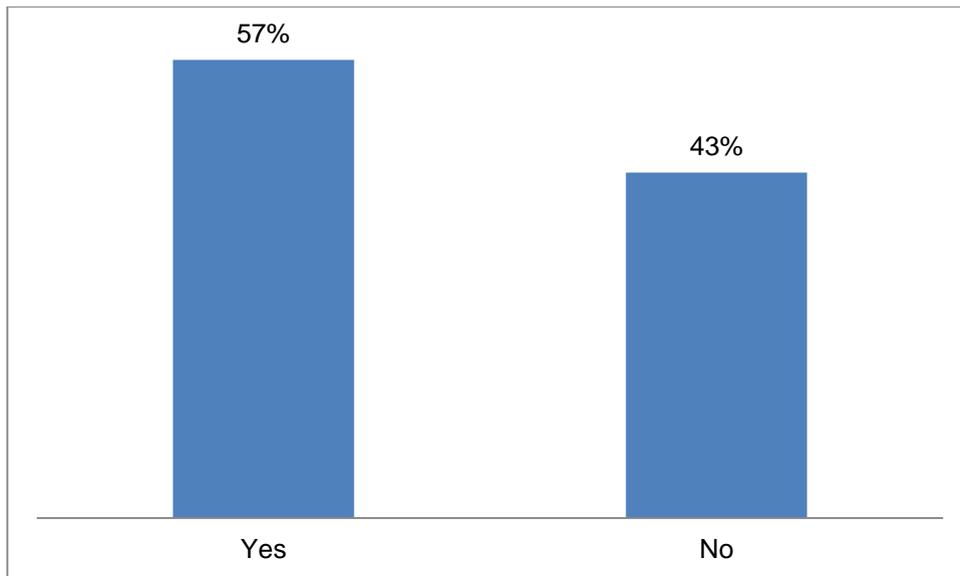
It is worth noting that 10 Percent of the teachers disagreed that all approaches are effective towards teaching reading skills while 7 Percent was uncertain as depicted in Figure 5.32 below. Nevertheless, 62 Percent of teachers felt that all approaches are effective towards teaching reading skills.



**Figure 5.32:** Teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of all approaches

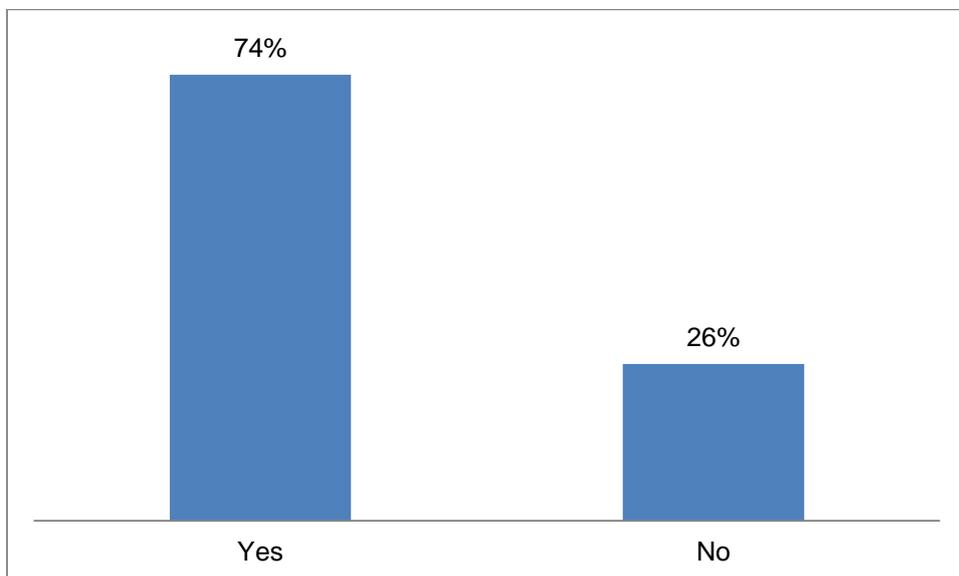
### 5.2.3.2 Data generated from teachers' questionnaire: Section B2.

Teachers' knowledge, understanding and use of available reading approach was determined by making a tick in the appropriate box (either yes or no box) that best describes their (teachers) experiences for the items. Figure 5.33 below reflects teachers' usage of available reading approaches in relation to the following statement: *I use some, and not all available reading approaches to teach reading skills.* 57 Percent of teachers admitted to using some and not all available approaches. 43 Percent ticked the no option, which implied that they used all available reading approaches.



**Figure 5.33:** Teachers' usage of available reading approaches

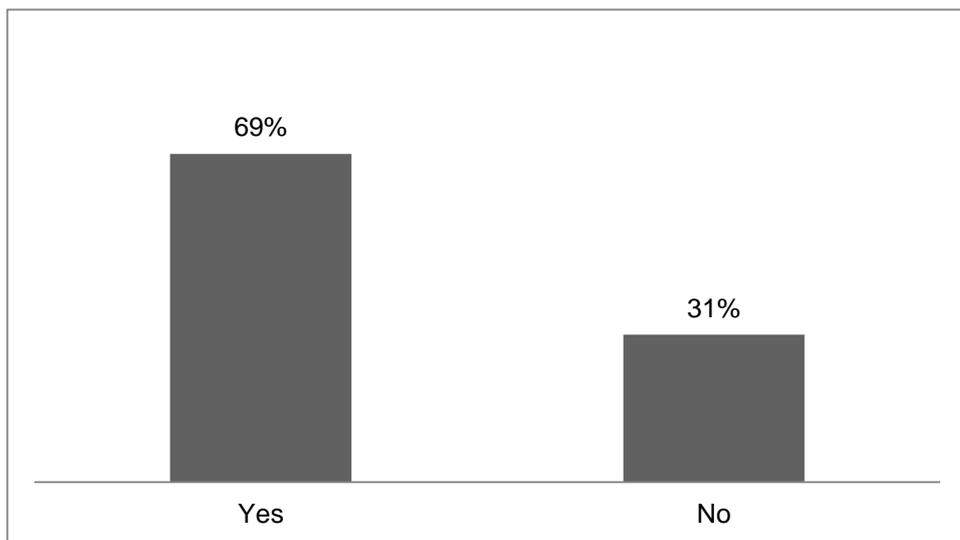
Contrary to the responses to item 1 of this section of the questionnaire, which sought to explore whether teachers use all available reading approaches, the number of those who use all available approaches rose from 43 Percent to 74 Percent. Startling responses to items which posed the same question differently.



**Figure 5.34:** Teachers' usage of available reading approaches

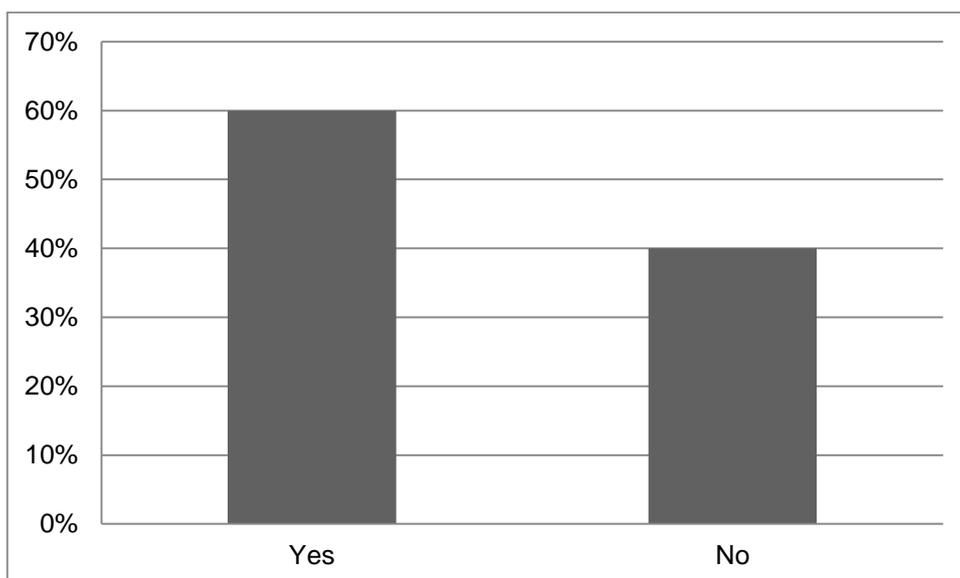
Item 3 of Appendix 2 Section B2 sought to find out whether teachers do indeed know all available reading approaches. The majority of teachers, which is 69 Percent of the population, admitted that they know all approaches. However, 31 Percent indicated

that they do not know all available reading approaches. Figure 5.35 below reflects teachers' responses to item 3.



**Figure 5.35:** Teachers' knowledge of approaches to teach reading skills.

I assumed that teachers may know all approaches to teaching reading skills but not understand them. Thus item 4 of appendix 2 section B2 sought to explore whether teachers do understand all teaching approaches. 40 Percent of the teachers conceded that they do not understand all reading approaches. Figure 5.36 below depicts teachers' responses.



**Figure 5.36:** Teachers' responses

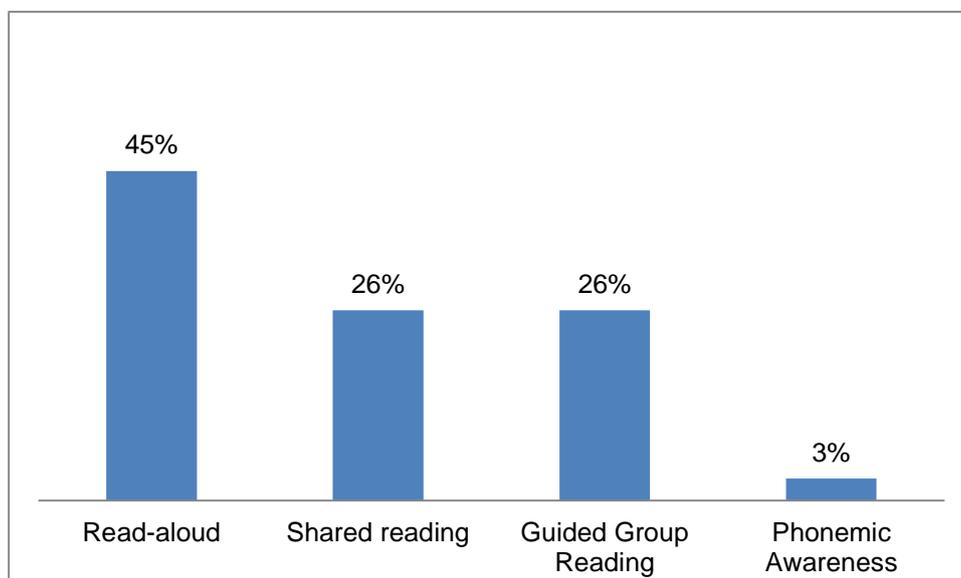
### 5.2.3.3 Data generated from teachers' questionnaire: Section B3

Section B3 focussed on the following three items:

- Which approach do teachers find easy to use when teaching reading in the intermediate phase.
- Which approach do teachers find difficult to use when teaching reading in the intermediate phase.
- Which approach do teachers find effective to use when teaching reading in the intermediate phase.

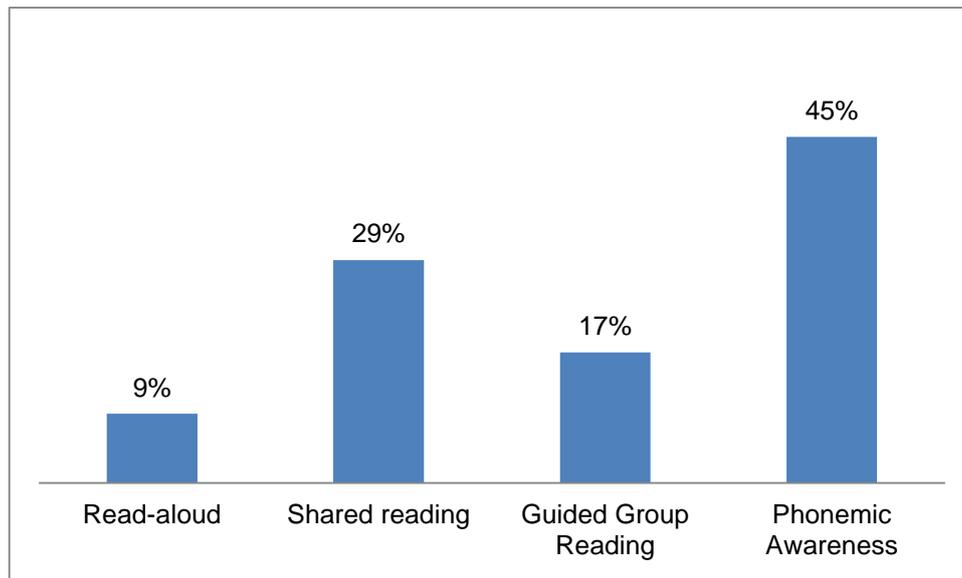
In the first item, teacher participants were requested to select one approach which they found easy to use when teaching reading from the following options: Phonemic Awareness; Reading Aloud; Shared Reading; Guided Group Reading.

Table 5.37 below shows that majority of teachers, 45 Percent, indicated that they find it easy to use Read-aloud to teach reading skills whilst the remaining 48 Percent was split at 26% and 26% for Shared Reading and Guided Group Reading respectively. Only a negligible 3% indicated that they find it easy to use Phonemic Awareness.



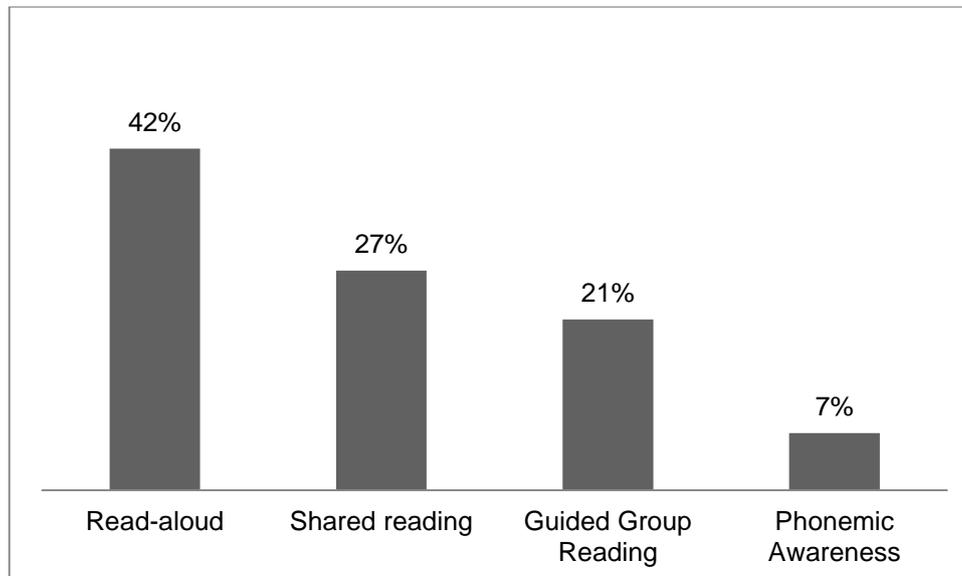
**Figure 5.37:** An approach which teachers find easy to use

Item 2 of appendix 2 section 3 was meant to establish which approach do teachers find difficult to use to teach reading skills. 45 Percent of the teachers indicated that they find Phonemic Awareness difficult to use when teaching reading skills. 55 Percent was split between Read-aloud, Shared Reading, and Guided Group Reading as reflected in figure 5.38 below.



**Figure 5.38:** Approach that teachers find difficult to use

In item 1, 45 Percent of teachers had indicated that they find Read-aloud easy to use to teach reading skills. Similarly, item 3 sought to explore the teachers' beliefs and perceptions about an effective approach to teaching reading skills. Once again, 45 Percent of the teachers indicated that Reading-aloud is an effective approach to teaching reading skills. The remaining 55 Percent was split as depicted in figure 5.39 below.



**Figure 5. 39:** Teachers' perceptions about an effective approach to teaching reading skills

### 5.3 QUALITATIVE DATA

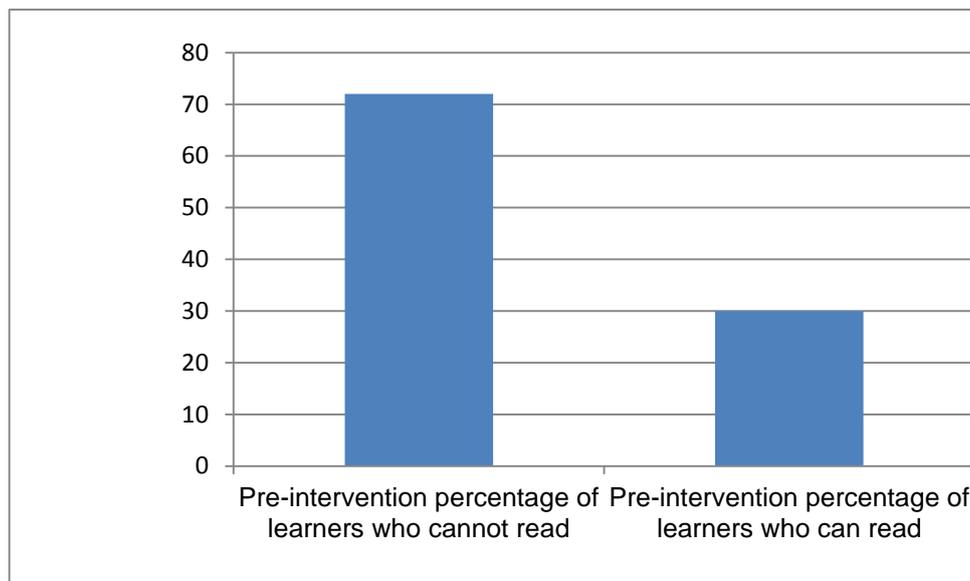
#### 5.3.1 Data generated from pre-intervention observation of learners whilst reading grade prescribed text.

Of the 102 learners registered in grade four, 82, as per Raosoft sample determiner, were subjected to an error-count test. A low score is an indication that a learner has committed fewer errors and he/she reads read comfortably at grade level. A higher score is an indication that the learner has faltered with between 5 and 10 errors, which is an indication that a learner is unable to read at an acceptable age and grade level. It is beyond the scope of this study to have transcribed all 82 learners reading, nevertheless, more than 70 Percent of sampled learners faltered with between 5 and 10 errors from each group.

What emerged as a disturbing feature of my observation during error-count test prior the intervention was that a large number of learners would neither read nor utter a single word. A few of those who read fairly-well would not observe punctuation marks such as commas and question marks as they read continuously until the end of either

a sentence or a short paragraph. Some learners would skip/jump words they could not read whilst others would just get stuck.

Only 29% of learners could read at an acceptable level. Figure 5.40 below shows the percentage of learners who could not read and those who could before the intervention.



**Figure 5.40:** Percentage of learners' Reading Ability - Grade 4

### **5.3.2 Data generated from post-intervention observation of learners whilst reading grade prescribed text.**

For comparison purposes, all groups were once again subjected to an error-count test. I wanted to find out which group had improved the most in relation to an approach that was used to teaching them reading. My observations of the error-count test were validated by the post-intervention test. It is worth noting that my post-intervention observation of the error-count test was marked by significant number of learners who could read at an acceptable level. Table 5.17 below reflects consolidated results of pre and post-intervention error-count test and comprehension test.

**Table 5.17: Learners Reading Ability (Pre- and Post – Intervention).**

	Number of learners who could NOT read BEFORE the	Percentage	Number of learners who COULD read BEFORE the	Percentage	Total	Number of learners who COULD NOT read AFTER the intervention	Percentage	Number of learners who COULD read	Percentage	Total
Group 1 Phonemic Awareness	15	63%	9	37%	24	12	52%	11	48%	23
Group 2 Read Aloud	14	73%	5	27%	19	4	25%	12	75%	16
Group 3 Shared Reading	15	79%	4	21%	19	10	53%	9	47%	19
Group 4 Guided Group reading	12	60%	8	40%	20	7	35%	13	65%	20
Group 5 Control Group	16	80%	4	20%	20	9	56%	7	44%	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>		<b>30</b>		<b>102</b>	<b>42</b>		<b>52</b>		<b>94</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>71%</b>		<b>29%</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>45%</b>		<b>55%</b>		<b>100%</b>

### 5.3.4 Data generated from document analysis (Class Teacher’s Compilation).

According to Briggs and Coleman (2007), documents have been valuable sources of data and provide evidence of what actually happens in class. I compared the learners’ performance in post-test with read-aloud mark sheet compiled by the teacher and found out that they corroborated. The actual data generated from documents (read-aloud mark sheet) is provided in section in section 6.3.3 for data analysis table.

## 5.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented both raw quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data is presented in graphs and tables whilst qualitative data is presented in a descriptive nature. In the next chapter, I analyse and discuss findings of the study.

## CHAPTER 6

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Five I have provided charts and tables to give readers a summarised picture of the quantitative data collected before and after the intervention. Qualitative data which had been collected through interviews with intermediate phase teachers were transcribed verbatim. I also narrated my observation of learners (error-count test) whilst reading grade prescribed text before and after the intervention. Lastly, I presented data gathered from analysis of first quarter reading mark sheet that was compiled by grade 4 EFAL teachers.

In this chapter, I analyse quantitative and qualitative data presented in the previous chapter. This is followed by integration/consolidation of the two set of data analysis into one coherent whole. Hence, Sandelowski, (2000: 252) states that:

Linking the results of qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques is accomplished by treating each data set with the techniques usually used with that data; that is, qualitative techniques are used to analyse qualitative data and quantitative techniques are used to analyse quantitative data. For example, constant comparison, qualitative content, and narrative analysis techniques are used to analyse interview data, whereas one or more statistical techniques are used to analyse data from instruments. The results of the qualitative analysis of qualitative data and of the quantitative analysis of quantitative data are then combined at the interpretive level of research, but each data set remains analytically separate from the other.

One of the purposes for mixing quantitative and qualitative data identified by Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) is triangulation (i.e., quantitative findings are compared to the qualitative results). Furthermore, “concurrent mixed methods data collection strategies have been employed to validate one form of data with the other form” (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 118). Mixed-method can be employed to validate findings using quantitative and qualitative data sources. As indicated earlier in chapter

4, I have employed the convergent design that enabled me to compare findings from quantitative and qualitative data that had been collected at roughly the same time. The two types of data provided validation for each other and also generated a solid foundation for drawing conclusions about the intervention employed in each group.

## **6.2 ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA**

### **6.2.1 Analysis of learners' pre and post-intervention test**

As reflected in figure 5.3 in chapter 5 section 5.2.1, quantitative results from learner's pre-intervention comprehension test show that a large proportion of learners performed poorly. During the pre-intervention observation (error-count test), of learners whilst reading grade prescribed text, 71 Percent of all grade 4 learners could not attempt or finish reading a sentence in the grade prescribed text prior to the intervention. This finding correlates with a report by Fengu (2017) who states that "by grade 4, about 70 Percent of pupils in poor schools perform below the international benchmark" (Fengu, 2017: 8). Furthermore, this pre-test finding concurs with findings of a study by Spaul, (2013:6).who used 0.5 standard deviations of National School Effectiveness Study (NSES) and found out that:

Children fall further and further behind the curriculum leading to a situation where remediation is almost impossible in high school since these learning gaps have been left unaddressed for too long. The analysis of pupils in the Eastern Cape showed that while pupils are already 1,8 years behind the benchmark by Grade Three, this grows to 2,8 years behind the benchmark by Grade Nine, making effective remediation at this higher grade improbable. Given that these learning deficits are acquired early on in children's schooling careers (i.e. in primary school), it is imperative to also identify and remediate these learning gaps early on, before they become insurmountable learning deficits and lead to almost certain failure and drop-out.

Learner's post-intervention comprehension test shows that there was a noticeable increase in the number of learners who could read at grade level. After the intervention, a significant number of learners in the Read-aloud group read with negligible errors and displayed some understanding in the comprehension test. Methodological foundation on which comparison was made is based on the following:

- Pre and post-intervention test results were comparable because the level of difficulty and types of questions was maintained.
- The other factor that brought about comparability is the fact that, each group had the same learners who were taught over the same number of weeks by the same teacher (Researcher).

The group that had the highest percentage of learners who could read after the intervention was group 2 (Read-aloud). Before the intervention, Read-aloud group had 73 Percent of learners who could *not read*, but after the intervention, this group had only 25 Percent who *could not* read. However, an important anomaly I observed during the intervention with Read-aloud group was that I would deliberately read out a word that is not in the text being read and some learners would blindly read after me. This reveals that learners might chorus after the teacher without relating what they pronounce with what they see in the text. Nevertheless, Read-aloud group improved significantly from 27 Percent of learners who *could read* before the intervention to 75% after the intervention, which is an increment by 48 Percent. This is an indication that Read-aloud yielded good results and therefore it is an effective approach towards developing and promoting reading skills in the rural intermediate phase. This finding is validated by teacher responses in the questionnaire; for example; in chapter 5 section 5.2.3.1 figure 5.27 showed that of 100 Percent teacher participants agreed that Read-aloud is an effective approach to teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase. 45 Percent of the teachers agreed whilst 55 Percent strongly agreed that Read-aloud is an effective approach to teaching reading skills.

Learners in group 4 (Guided Group Reading) also had some significant improvements. Before the intervention, this group had 60 Percent of learners who *could not read* but after the intervention the number of learners who *could not read* diminished to 35 Percent. Table 6.1 below reflects a summarised analysis of learners who *could not read* prior to and after the intervention in each group in percentages. The percentage of learners who could read, and those who could not was determined by the number of learners who passed/failed the pre-intervention comprehension test, and the post-intervention comprehension tests. Obtaining a pass/fail mark demonstrates either an understanding of the text read or the lack thereof.

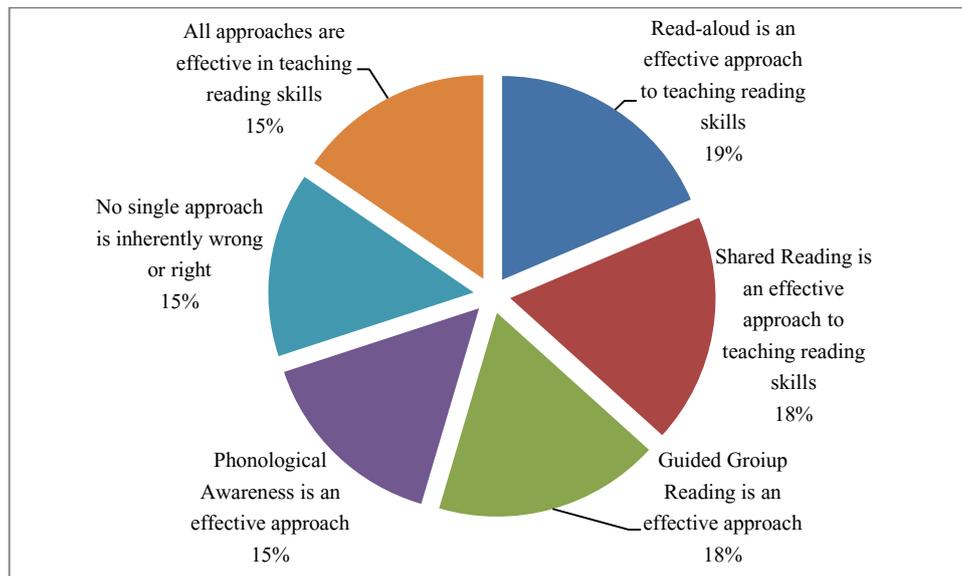
**Table 6.1: Individual group's progress - Comprehension Test Results.**

Group Position	Group No	Group Name	Percentage of learners who <i>could not</i> read PRIOR the intervention	Percentage of learners who <i>could not</i> read AFTER the intervention	Improvement level by percentage
1	2	Read-aloud	73%	25%	48%
2	4	Guided Group Reading	60%	35%	25%
3	3	Shared Reading	79%	52%	26%
4	5	Control Group	80%	56%	24%
5	1	Phonemic Awareness	67%	58%	16%

### 6.2.2 Analysis of quantitative data from teachers' questionnaire

Section B1 of the questionnaire sought to explore attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs that EFAL teachers hold as to which approach do they think is effective towards teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase. Keeping in mind the aim of this study, which is investigating and determining an effective approach which yields better results in developing and promoting reading skills to teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate, I employed the use of the questionnaire to extract data from teacher participants as they are teaching reading practitioners. This is based on the assumption that available approaches as advocated for by Teaching Reading in the Early Grades (2008) and prescribed by CAPS (2012) have not yet been tested as to which one does yield better results. Although there were some contradictions in the teachers' responses to the questionnaire, their choices were important because they validated findings from post-intervention observation of learners (error-count test), and the post-intervention comprehension test administered to learner participants. Figure 6.1 below reflects the responses of the teacher participants in terms of percentages

regarding the effectiveness of each of the approaches is concerned towards teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate phase.



**Figure 6.1:** Teacher participants' responses - Section 2 B1 of the Questionnaire.

Figure 6.1 above shows that teachers revealed almost an equal preference for all approaches to teaching reading in terms of their effectiveness. Despite inconsistencies in the teachers' responses in terms of knowing, understanding, and using all available approaches, in this study they (teachers) view all approaches as being effective towards teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase. The question is: how do they arrive at the conclusion that all approaches are effective whereas 31 Percent conceded that they do not all available reading approaches? Further, 40 Percent indicated that they do not understand all available reading approaches. Inconsistency in the teachers' responses to section (B2) of the questionnaire is worrisome. I interpret this as revealing some lack of understanding of reading approaches by teacher participants in this study.

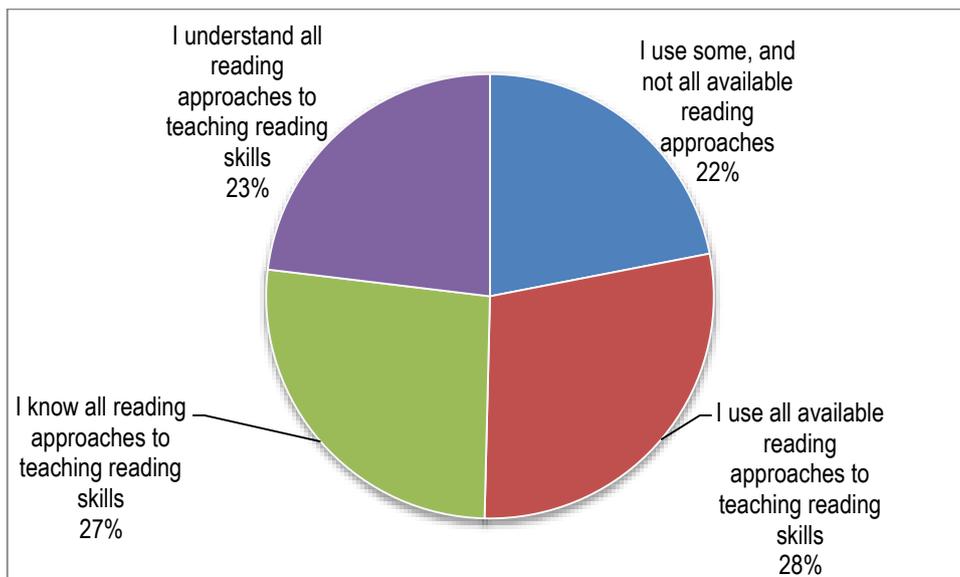
Section (B2) of the questionnaire sought to explore the teachers' knowledge, understanding, and usage of available approaches to teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate phase. Table 6.2 below reflects teacher's responses to each of the statements in terms of either ticking Yes or No.

**Table 6.2:** Teacher usage of reading approach

Item No	Focus item	Teacher's choice	
		Yes	No
1	I use some, and not all available reading approaches to teach reading skills.	57%	43%
2	I use all available reading approaches to teach reading skills.	74%	26%
3	I know all reading approaches	69%	31%
4	I understand all reading approaches.	60%	40%

In general, teachers' responses reflected an understanding of the different reading approaches. However, figure 6.2 below shows that 22 Percent of the teachers in this study indicated that they used some, and not all available approaches to teaching reading skills. My interpretation is that, in this study some teachers are not familiar with all available approaches to teaching reading skills.

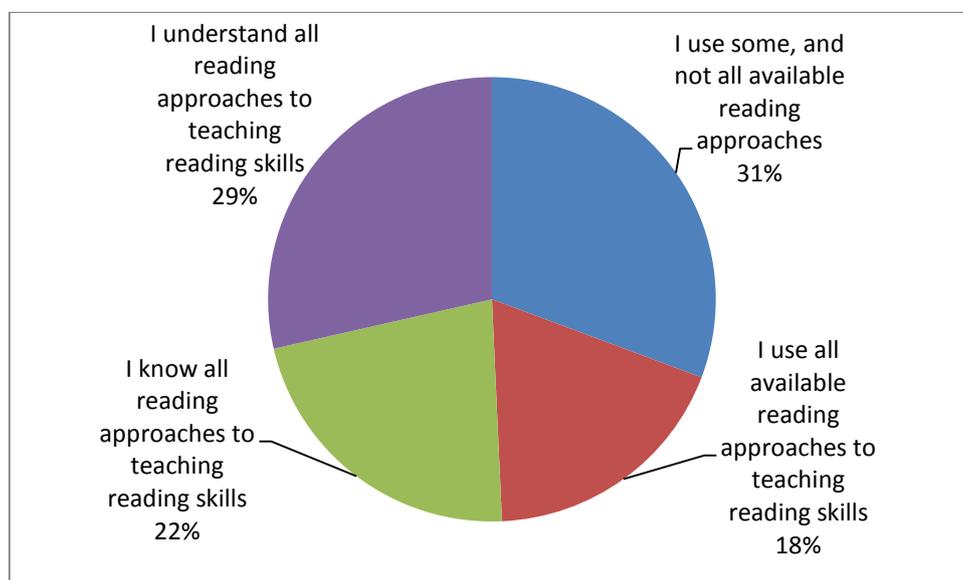
Figure 6.2 below reflects percentage for those who ticked the YES option which indicate that they agree to the statement.



**Figure 6.2:** Percentage of teacher participants who agreed

What is notable with figure 6.2 above is the fact that; for each statement less 30 Percent of the teachers ticked the yes option, which reveals that a small percentage of teachers in this study are well versed with available teaching approaches. Almost the same Percent (28% and 27% respectively) of the teachers indicated that they know and use all available reading approaches whilst 23% indicated that they understand all available approaches. However, 22% of the teachers conceded that they use some and not all available reading approaches to teaching reading skills. These divergent views by teachers might suggest that there is little knowledge and understanding of reading approaches. This concurs with the claim by Lenyai (2011) who states that a lack of knowledge in the approaches and methods of teaching reading could lead to teachers' choice of inappropriate content use of unsuitable teaching approach.

Figure 6.3 below reflects teacher's responses to each of statements in terms for those who ticked the NO option to each of the statements, which indicated that they disagree with the statement.



**Figure6.3:** Teachers' knowledge and understanding of teaching approaches

Figure 6.3 above shows some contradictions from the teachers' responses. Teachers who ticked the no option concede that; neither do they know, understand, nor use the said approach in the statement. This is a worrisome observation which cast some doubts on their (teacher participants) ability to apply available reading approaches as recommended by various experts such as the Ministry of education (2003), and prescribed by CAPS.

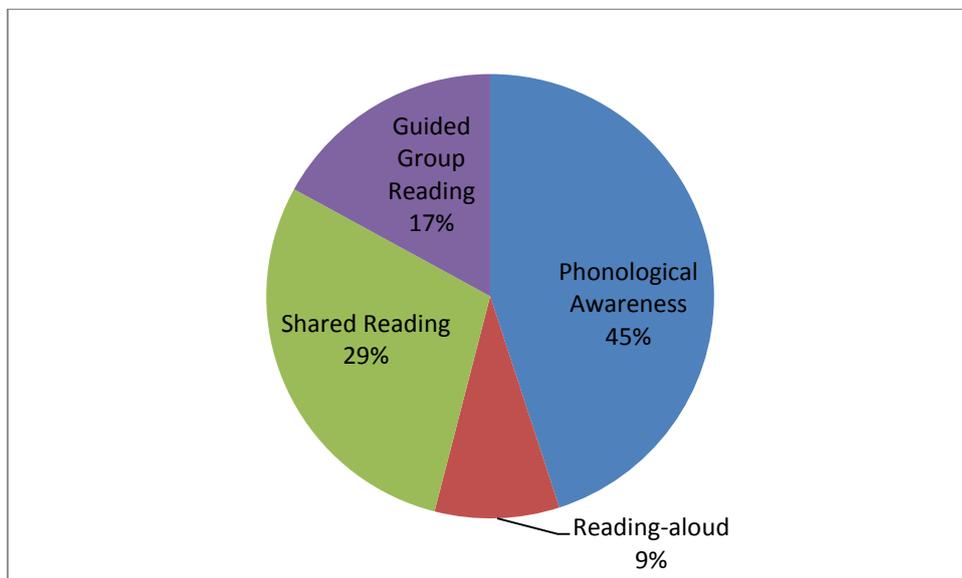
Section B3 of the questionnaire sought to explore the approach which teachers find either easy or difficult to use when teaching reading skills. Table 5.37 in chapter 5 shows that majority of teacher participants, (while responding to item 1 of section B3) that is 45 Percent, found Read-aloud easy to use when teaching reading skills. This finding is corroborated by post-intervention observation of learners (error-count test) whilst reading grade prescribed texts. 75 Percent the learners in group 2 (Read-aloud) could read after the intervention as compared to only 27 Percent prior the intervention. Further, the teacher participants' responses to item 1 of section B3 of the questionnaire is validated by the post-intervention test in which 12 out of 16 learners in group 2 (Read-aloud) scored above 40 Percent. In other words, 75 Percent of the learners in group 2 (Read-aloud) could read after the intervention.

De Clerq and Shalem (2014) note that research on professional knowledge suggest that to teach well, teachers need a specific knowledge of what they teach, and wide-ranging sense of varied methods of teaching. Item 2 of section B3 of the questionnaire sought to explore which approach teachers found difficult to use when teaching reading skills. The majority of the teacher participants at 45 Percent indicated that they find Phonemic Awareness difficult to use when teaching reading skills. The other 55 Percent of the teachers were unequally split between RA, SR, and GGR. Indeed, in the post-intervention comprehension test, learners in group 1 (Phonemic Awareness) did not perform that well. After the intervention 57 Percent of the learners could read whilst 43 Percent could still not read. During the intervention, I discovered that learners did not know that there could be a difference between the name of a letter and its sound.

Once again, the stark contradictions in the teachers' responses to the questionnaire might suggest that teachers have little knowledge and understanding of some of these reading approaches, particularly Phonemic Awareness. Echoing the same sentiments is Spaul (2013) as cited by Naidoo, Reddy, and Dorasamy, (2014:158) who asserts that:

Many educators simply possess a modest understanding of teaching reading. Educators are not familiar with methods of teaching reading which may be suitable to the learning approach of all learners.

These contradictions convinced me to assert that teachers are not well versed with some of the reading approaches, particularly, Phonemic Awareness; this is in spite of the fact that, scholars such as Bryant and Goswami (1987); Reynolds (1998) and Ministry of education (2003) concur that Phonics Awareness is the most crucial foundation for learning to read English. My assertion that teachers are lacking in their knowledge and understanding of Phonemic Awareness as an approach to teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase is reflected in figure 6.4 below which summarises teachers' perceptions about an approach they perceived to be the most difficult to use when teaching reading skills.



**Figure 6.4:** An approach which teachers find difficult in teaching reading skills

Figure 6.4 above shows that majority of teachers in this study, which is 45 Percent; find it difficult to apply Phonological Awareness as an approach to teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase. This revelation makes me to conclude that teachers in this study are not well versed with Phonological Awareness as an approach to teaching reading. This is a cause for concern as this approach has been recommended by scholars such as Reynolds (1998), who asserts that phonemic awareness is the most vital approach for learning to read English.

### **6.3 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **6.3.1 Data from observation of learners whilst reading grade prescribed text (error-count test).**

Prior the intervention, 71 Percent of learners in group 1 (PA) faltered with between 6 and 11 possible errors during the error-count test, which is an indication that they were reading below the appropriate grade level and age cohort. The average score of group 1 (PA) learners was 7.5 prior the intervention and went up to 8 after the intervention. Post-intervention observation of PA group regressed. There was a slight move from 71 Percent to 70 Percent of learners who still could not read at grade level. It should be noted that these percentages are based on error-count test results that have not been consolidated with comprehension test administered to learners before the intervention.

The error-count results are interpreted as follows:

- Learners making fewer than five errors were reading at comfortable grade level.
- Learners making between 6 and 9 errors were reading below grade level.
- Learners, who make more than 10 errors were below the grade level and were reading far below par.

As stated in Chapter One section 1.4, one of the objectives of this study was to assess the reading levels of the intermediate phase learners. Table 6.5 below reflects levels

of reading prior and post–intervention observation of learners reading grade prescribed text (Error-count test) in group 1 (Phonemic Awareness).

A. represents learners, who scored between 1-5 and are reading at grade level (independent reading).

B represents learners, who scored between 6-10 and are reading below grade level (instructional reading).

C represents learners, who scored above 10 and are reading far below grade level (frustration reading).

**Table 6.3:** Pre and post–intervention Reading Levels

Pre-intervention error-count test results			Post-intervention error-count test results	
<i>Levels</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A	7	29	7	30
B	9	38	3	13
C	8	33	13	57
Total	24	100	23	100

Table 6.3 above shows that the percentage of learners who could not read at an acceptable level as per the error count actually went up, from 33 Percent to 57 Percent. This might not come as a surprise since teachers too, conceded that they find Phonemic Awareness (See section 6.2.2 figure 6.4) difficult to use. Based on this observation, I am convinced and therefore conclude that; indeed, teachers in this study are not well versed with phonemic awareness as an approach to teaching reading skills.

Table 6.6 below reflects levels of reading prior and post–intervention observation of learners reading grade prescribed text (Error-count test) in group 2 (Read-aloud).

**Table 6.4:** Pre and post–intervention Reading Levels (Read-aloud)

<b>Pre-intervention test results</b>			<b>Post-intervention test results</b>	
<i>Levels</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A	7	37	8	47
B	9	47	6	35
C	3	16	3	18
Total	19	100	17	100

In this group (Read-aloud), the number of learners who read at grade level (independent reading) during an error-count test grew from 37 to 47 Percent whilst those who read at an instructional level dwindled from 47 Percent to 35 Percent. This is worth noting because the observation resonates with teacher participants' responses during the interviews as they indicated that Read-aloud is the best approach to teaching reading skills.

Table 6.5 and Table 6.6 below show that the trend in the level of reading in group 3 (SR) and group 4 (GGR) was similar to group 2 (RA). Percentage of learners who read at grade level in group 2 (RA) grew from 37 Percent prior intervention to 47 Percent after the intervention whilst group 3 (SR) and group 4 grew from 21 Percent to 31 Percent and 40 Percent to 50 Percent respectively. Once again it should be noted that these percentages are based on observation of learners during the error-count test only and not consolidated with pre and post-intervention comprehension test results. Table 6.7 below reflects levels of reading prior and post–intervention observation of learners reading grade prescribed text (Error-count test) in group 3 (Shared reading).

**Table 6.5:** Pre and post–intervention Reading Levels (Shared reading)

Pre-intervention error-count test results			Post-intervention error-count test results	
<i>Levels</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A	4	21	6	31
B	10	53	11	58
C	5	26	2	11
Total	19	100	19	100

It is worth noting that in group 3 (Shared reading); the number of learners who could read at grade level after the intervention went up 21 Percent to 31 Percent. This improvement confirms Zama (2014) who claims that the teacher helps the learner in decoding unfamiliar words and gradually they are (learners) are given the opportunity to take over the task of reading. This finding is in line with Vygotsky’s learning theory which supports the idea that learning is boosted through the social interaction between the learner and the teacher.

Table 6.8 below reflects levels of reading prior and post–intervention observation of learners reading grade prescribed text (Error-count test) in group 4 (Guided Group Reading).

**Table 6.6:** Pre and post–intervention Reading Levels (Guided Group Reading)

Pre-intervention error-count test results			Post-intervention error-count test results	
<i>Levels</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A	8	40	10	50
B	9	45	7	35
C	3	15	3	15
Total	20	100	20	100

In group 5 (Control group) there was insignificant development in terms of the number of learners observed whilst reading grade prescribed text after the intervention. Percentage of learners who could read before and after the intervention remained static. Table 6.9 below reflects levels of reading prior and post-intervention observation of learners reading grade prescribed text (Error-count test) in group 5 (Control Group).

**Table 6.7:** Pre and post-intervention Reading Levels (Control Group)

Pre-intervention error-count test results			Post-intervention error-count test results	
<i>Levels</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A	9	45	7	39
B	4	20	5	28
C	7	35	6	33
Total	20	100	18	100

Table 6.7 above shows group 5's (Control Group) performance deteriorated whilst they were observed reading prescribed text. It should be noted that this group did not take part in intervention, hence, there were 9 learners who read at grade level, and however, in the post intervention observation of learners reading prescribed text, the number dwindled to 7.

### 6.3.2 Data from interviews with teacher participants

Eisner (1991) states that the narrative method is one of the most typical approaches used to obtain and interpret qualitative information on educational phenomena. The responses by teachers during the interviews were analysed and considered in relation to the literature on the current discourse of learners' in/ability to read and reading approaches. Data extracted from the interviews with teacher participants explained some of the findings which emerged from the questionnaire analysis. In the questionnaire, 100 Percent of teachers ticked RA whilst 98 Percent ticked GGR as an effective approach respectively. During the interviews, teachers indicated that RA is

an effective approach. RA group had the highest percentage of learners whose reading had improved tremendously after the intervention at 75 Percent. During the interviews, none of the teachers ever mentioned Phonemic Awareness as an effective approach to teaching reading skills. All-embracing themes that emerged from interviews with teacher participants are the following:

- Read-aloud reading emerged as the dominant approach employed regularly by most teachers to teach reading skills in rural intermediate phase, alas its understanding.
- A noticeable number of teachers said they employ the use of Guided Group reading on regular basis whilst an insignificant number use Shared Reading.

For example; the following responses by teacher D and E, respectively, bare testimony to what teachers perceived to be the most effective approach in teaching reading skills.

Teacher D was female aged 54. Her highest academic qualification is B.A degree whilst professionally she holds Primary Teacher's Certificate (PTC) which she complemented by Secondary Education Diploma (SED). She had 31 years of teaching experience and eight as an EFAL teacher. What came as a surprise is; she had not received any training for CAPS implementation.

**Researcher:** *We have got eh ... phonemic awareness whereby learners are taught sounds of letters, we also have guided group reading, we also have read aloud and we also have shared reading, which one of those do you think is the most effective?*

**Teacher D:** *[Reading aloud]*

**Response by teacher D to item 1:** *I probed the respondent to give a reason for her answer to item 1.*

**Teacher D:** *[Reading aloud, mm ... as a teacher I will be able to ... to identify eh ... eh the pupils or learners' problems when they read aloud, then I can ... can help them, because I can hear them, how to pronounce words, how to read fluently]*

Teacher E was female aged 43. Her highest academic qualification is B.Ed. whilst professionally she holds Senior Primary Teacher's Diploma (SPTD). She had 10 years of teaching experience and eight as an EFAL teacher. She too had not received any training for CAPS implementation.

This study is based on schema theoretical frame of reference which has dominated and heavily influenced reading research and teaching practice. As stated earlier in chapter 2 efficient readers are said to make use prior knowledge of content as well as textual features stored in schemata to make sense out of the text (Rumelhart, 1977, Goodman, 1984). This theory resonated with the response by teacher E during the interviews. Here-under is how she responded to item 1 of the interview:

**Teacher E:** *[Laughed for some time and thereafter calmed down] [E ma ke thome ke tshehe, o wa tseba gore ke eng? O ka re ke mamtloane]* Loosely translated it means let me laugh first, it is like we are playing.

**Researcher:** *That's very interesting, I like it. No, it is not, it is not. As you know mem I am here to conduct research regarding reading approaches in the intermediate phase. You know very well that we have got quite a number of reading approaches that have been prescribed by CAPS and as you would know we have got Guided Group Reading, we have got Shared Reading, we have got Read Aloud and we have got Phonemic Awareness. Those are the four main ones. Now my first question to you is; which reading approach do you think is the most effective in promoting and developing reading skills in the intermediate phase?*

**Teacher E:** *[Reading-aloud]*

**Researcher:** *Reading-aloud, ok, perhaps mem, do you have any particular reason for choosing Reading Aloud as the most effective approach for teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase?*

**Teacher E:** *[Yes, my reason might be ... our learners in ... are in deep in the rural areas and then they don't practice this so we have to read and they must read pronounce these words properly en they must read it aloud so that we can hear what they are saying]*

The implication here is that rural learners are only exposed to written and spoken English at school as compared to their urban counter-parts, hence their daily experiences do not relate to what they are confronted with in the classroom. This resonates very well with the assertion by Gardiner (2008) that rural learners have little opportunity to live, think and work in a language environment beyond that of their home language since they are in sporadic contact with languages like English at fluent and proficient levels.

In relation to GGR, teacher C and F had the following to say respectively: Teacher C was male aged 52. His highest academic qualification is Grade 12 (Matric) whilst professionally he holds Senior Teacher's Diploma (STD). He had 23 years of teaching experience and four as an EFAL teacher. He had received training for CAPS implementation. Here-under is how he responded to the interview:

***Teacher C's response to item 1*** which sought to find out which of the four approaches is the most effective.

***Teacher C:*** [Group reading is the best]

***Researcher:*** Group reading, in other words, you are talking about Guided Group Reading.

***Teacher C:*** [Yes]

***Teacher C's response to item 2;*** which was meant to probe for further response in support of the answer he gave for item 1.

***Researcher:*** Alright, now sir, do you have any particular reason for choosing Guided Group reading? ***Teacher C:*** [When learners are reading in groups they are reading in an active way, they are competing, they do not fail at all]

Hereunder are the excerpts of interviews with teachers B and D respectively, which testified what teachers believed to be an effective approach to teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase. These excerpts also serve to explain teachers' knowledge and understanding of reading approaches.

Teacher B was male aged 47. His highest academic qualification is matric (Grade 12), professionally he holds B.Ed. (Hons). He had 22 years of teaching experience and only five years as an EFAL teacher. He, however, had been trained for CAPS implementation. Teacher B responded to item 1 of the interview as follows:

**Researcher:** *the first question reads as follows: Which reading approach do you think is the most effective in promoting and developing reading skills?*

**Teacher B:** *[Guided group reading]*

**Researcher:** *Guided group reading, ok, do you perhaps have any particular reason for choosing Guided Group Reading?*

**Teacher B:** *[Yes]*

**Researcher:** *Could you kindly just elaborate on that one, please?*

**Teacher B:** *[When learners eh ... read in groups, they can maybe know eh ... how to point sentences en then punctuation en also eh ... maybe paragraph eh ... what paragraph are is en the eh ... they will spell words correctly. They will be guiding learners to ... how to spell words]*

Teacher B's responded to item 3 which sought to find out which approach does he employ on regular basis to teach reading skills as follows:

**Teacher B:** *[Eh ... I read from the book, where learners follow; en the thereafter eh learners read, with class with class read, en then after that I group them in groups. That's how I usually do.*

**Researcher:** *Say you read, and then thereafter you let the learners read after you.*

**Teacher B:** *[I ... I firstly I read, en then I while learners following sentence, read the sentences there after learner read, then I group them after they read aloud]*

**Researcher:** *In other words what you are doing is reading aloud or shared reading?*

**Teacher B:** *[I think is both]*

Responses by teacher D

**Researcher:** Which reading approach do you think is the most effective for promoting and developing reading skills?

**Response by teacher D to item 1:**

**Teacher D:** [Eh ... ka na di reading skills tsela, ...di examples tsa tsona? Nna ke di lebetse] (Eh ... by the way, those reading skills; what are the examples? I have forgotten them).

**Teacher D:** [Reading aloud]

**Response by teacher D to item 1:** I probed the respondent to give a reason for her answer to the previous question.

**Teacher D:** [Reading aloud, mm ... as a teacher I will be able to ... to identify eh ... eh the peoples or learners' problems when they read aloud, then I can ... can help them, because I can hear them, how to pronounce words, how to read fluently]

### 6.3.3 Document Analysis

Documents provide evidence in the form of records. In this study, I analysed official mark sheet compiled by EFAL teacher in grade 4 at the data collection site. However, it should be noted that documents could have some limitations with which the researcher has to deal with, for example, being unreliable, inaccurate or biased. In each group, I picked up one learner in the following categories; learners who performed extremely well, average, and those who performed poorly in the post-intervention test. I compared the learners' performance in post-test with read-aloud mark sheet compiled by the teacher. Table 6.10 below reflects a comparison of learners' post intervention test scores with Reading-aloud mark sheet compiled by EFAL teacher during the first term.

**Table 6. 8: A comparison learners' post-test performance with read-aloud mark sheet compiled by the teacher.**

Group Name	Level of competency	Learner No	Marks obtained in post-comprehension Test	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter loud-reading marks as per mark sheet compiled by class teacher	Remarks
			Total	Total Mark	
			100	10	
Group 1 (Phonemic awareness)	Competent	15	64	9	
	Average	11	25	8	
	Poor	4	0	5	
Group 2 (Read-aloud)	Competent	13	88	10	
	Average	18	48	10	
	Poor	11	6	8	
Group 3 (Shared reading)	Competent	10	66	10	
	Average	18	32	10	
	Poor	16	0	5	
Group 4 (GGR)	Competent	9	64	10	
	Average	15	41	10	
	Poor	20	9	7	
Group 5 (Control Group)	Competent	3	81	10	
	Average	10	39	8	
	Poor	7	16	6	

## 6.4 CONSOLIDATION AND INTERPRETATION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

**Table 6.9: Consolidation of quantitative and qualitative data**

	<b>Observation, interviews and documents analysis</b>		
Differences			
	Observation	Interviews with teachers	Documents analysis
Similarities	<p>1. A majority of learners could not read prior the intervention.</p> <p>2. Group 2 (RA) had the highest % learners who could read after the intervention.</p> <p>3. GGR was the second best performing group in the post test.</p> <p>4. During Read-aloud and Shared reading, learners just follow the teacher without being sure that the words they are saying are actually in the text.</p>	<p>1. Teachers stated that majority of learners cannot read.</p> <p>2. Teachers stated that Read-aloud is the most effective approach towards teaching reading skills.</p> <p>3. 50% of teachers stated that GGR is the most effective approach towards teaching reading skills.</p> <p>4. Learners need to be closely monitored as they just point at the text without reading.</p>	

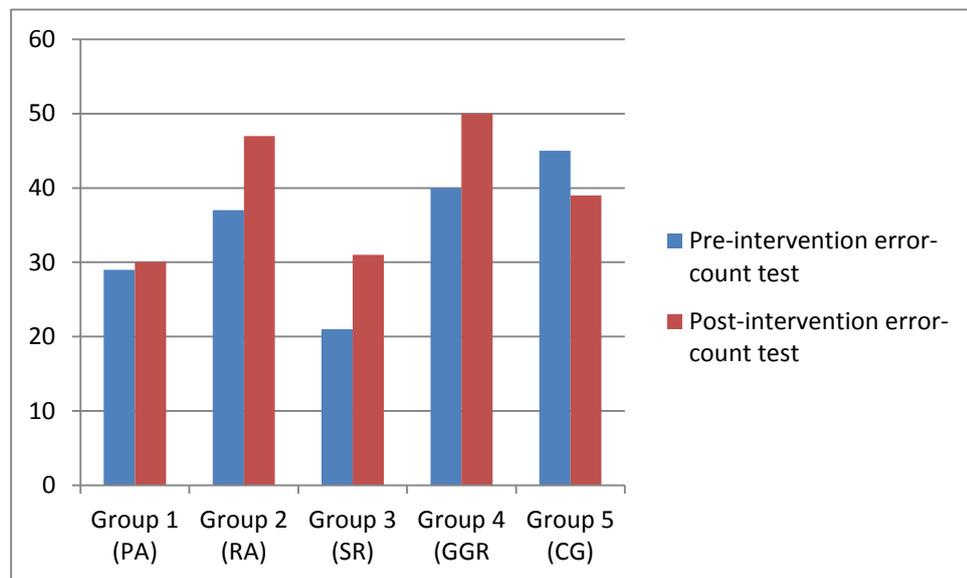
## 6.5 DISCUSSION

The findings reported in this study were generated from pre and post-intervention tests administered to grade 4 learners. The four groups were taught reading skills employing different reading approaches to each for a period of seven weeks within the same school. The performance of learners in the pre-intervention test reveals that they read; if ever they did, prescribed text with very little comprehension. This was demonstrated by low marks obtained by a large number of learners in the pre-test in all groups. The low marks are an indication that learners comprehended very little which might suggest that they simply could not read the text or read it below grade level and age cohorts. This was also confirmed by pre-intervention observation of learners whilst reading grade prescribed text (error-count test). Van der Berg (2015), analysis of the results shows that “the learning gap between children from rich and poor schools is already very wide by grade 4. Most disturbingly, grade 4 results across the system look similar to those for the bachelor’s pass in matric. This implies that potential access to university, with all the advantages that such access confers in the labour market, is largely predetermined by grade 4” (Van der Berg (2015)

The findings presented in section 6.2.1 Table 6.1 and figure 5.15 in section 5.2.2 of chapter 5 show clearly that learners in group 2 (Read-aloud) had the highest percentage of learners who could read after the intervention, thus, convincing me to conclude that it is the most suitable approach to teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate phase. This assertion is corroborated by teacher responses during the interviews as shown in section 6.3.2 above. The fact that teachers stated during the interviews that Read-aloud is an effective approach concur with findings of the study by Naidoo, Dorasamy & Reddy (2012) which reveals that majority of teachers prefer teaching reading as a whole class activity.

There was also some remarkable improvement in the number of learners who could read in group 4 (Guided Group Reading) post-intervention. During the interviews, 50 Percent of teacher respondents indicated that Guided Group Reading (GGR) is the most effective towards teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase. Considering only post error-count, GGR (group 4) had the highest percentage of learners who

could read after the intervention. Thus, as an approach for teaching reading skills, GGR cannot and should not be ignored.



**Figure 6.5:** Pre and post-intervention error-count results

The above findings corroborate with the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training's (2005: 14) report which appropriately cautioned that:

While the evidence indicates that some teaching strategies are more effective than others, no one approach of itself can address the complex nature of reading difficulties. An integrated approach requires that teachers have a thorough understanding of a range of effective strategies, as well as knowing when and why to apply them.

Secondly, there were some striking differences within and between teachers' responses to the questionnaire. This raised some doubts about teachers' knowledge and understanding of reading approaches. Hence, teacher B in the interview had this to say:

**Teacher A:** *[Nna ke bona o ka re (I think that) we need people to help us, particularly ba na bale ba di curriculum advisors, (particularly those curriculum advisors) eh ..., to come regularly and giving us workshops.*

The response indicates that the teachers are not regularly work-shopped with regard to reading approaches as recommended by the Ministry of education (2003) on, early reading strategy and prescribed by CAPS. The response by teacher A is an indication that there is a need for on-going teacher workshops. This assertion is in line with Rose (2006), who reports that most teachers have received no previous training in teaching reading.

One of the teachers interviewed explained the issue of overcrowding in the classrooms. He cited this as a hindrance towards helping individual learners. This is reflected hereunder in teacher B's own words:

*[Yes, I think teachers are aware, just because the learners are congested in class, you can't to ... maybe to identify them, they are many in the class, maybe if they were few you would be able to group them, but it is difficult to group those because...]*

50% of the interviewed teachers indicated that Guided Group Reading is the most effective approach. The following comments by two interviewed teachers attest to this:

**Researcher:** *Oh, Guided Group Reading, Mem do you have any reason for choosing Guided Group Reading?*

**Teacher A:** *[Yes]*

**Researcher:** *Could you kindly give me that reason?*

**Teacher A:** *[Because I will be able to ... to help each and every child in the group]*

**Researcher:** *Group Reading; Sir, do you have any particular reason for choosing Group reading?*

**Teacher F:** *[Yes]*

**Researcher:** *Could you kindly just tell me one or two reasons please?*

**Teacher F:** *[Eh ... group reading ... in group reading learners are correcting one another whilst they are reading]*

**Researcher:** *Learners correct one another whilst they are reading, that's number one.*

**Teacher F:** *[Then, Group reading encourages learners to compete in groups].*

The study revealed that, despite the fact that the four main reading approaches have been prescribed by CAPS, some teachers still struggle with the application of some of them. For example; teacher B had this to say in choosing Guided Group Reading as an effective approach:

**Researcher:** *The first question reads as follows: Which reading approach do you think is the most effective in promoting and developing reading skills?*

**Teacher B:** *[Guided group reading]*

**Researcher:** *Guided group reading, ok, do you perhaps have any particular reason for choosing Guided Group Reading?*

**Teacher B:** *[Yes]*

**Researcher:** *Could you kindly just elaborate on that one, please?*

**Teacher B:** *[When learners eh ... read in groups, they can maybe know eh ... how to point sentences en then punctuation en also eh ... maybe paragraph eh ... what paragraph are is en the eh ... they will spell words correctly. They will be guiding learners to ... how to spell words]*

This assertion is further explained by teacher C's response to item 1 of the interview as follows:

**Researcher:** *Which reading approach do you think is the most effective for and developing reading skills?*

**Response by teacher D to item 1:**

**Teacher D:** *[Eh ... ka na di reading skills tse la, ....di examples tsa tsona? Nna ke di lebetse] (Eh ... by the way those reading skills, ... I have forgotten them).*

## **6.5 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented analysis and discussions of data collected in Chapter Five. Though there were some contradictions by teacher participants during the interviews, pre-intervention comprehension test and pre-observation of learners whilst reading grade prescribed text (error-count test) revealed that, indeed, learners in rural

intermediate phase have reading deficiencies that need to be addressed differently. Due to contextual factors that prevail in the rural areas, not all prescribed reading approaches yield better results in teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate phase. Thus, based on findings of this study, emphasis should be on two reading approaches which are; Read-aloud and Guided Group Reading. However, this study does not in any way suggest that approaches that have not been found to be yielding positive results are inherently wrong. It should be noted that all of these approaches have been introduced to improve reading in South African schools.

## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to investigate and determine an effective approach to teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate phase. In this chapter, I present a summary of the findings and conclusions drawn from the study as well as the proposed recommendations. The aim of the study was to investigate and determine an effective approach to teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase of a rural school in Limpopo province. In chapter one, I have elicited the background as well as stating the aim of the study, study objectives and statement of the problem. This was followed by clarifying the significance of the study. The importance of reading was also highlighted. Chapter Two elucidated on philosophical underpinnings and theoretical framework. Chapter Three explored reading approaches and literature related to the teaching of reading in South African schools (Rural-Urban reading disparities) and elsewhere. Chapter Four presented the description of the entire site and thereafter presented the methods and design that were used for data collection. Chapter Five presented data whilst chapter 6 provided findings and discussion of the study.

As already indicated in the preceding paragraph, in this Chapter One present a summary of the findings. I also provide proposed recommendations towards teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate phase. I wish to categorically state that no single approach is inherently wrong or right, however, findings of this study suggest that Read-aloud reading is more suited to teaching reading in the context of rural intermediate phase. Hence, findings of this study are generalised to teaching reading skills to learners in the rural intermediate phase in South African schools.

Available literature on reading in/abilities in South African schools concedes that the problem lies in the primary schools. Various scholars; for example; Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul and Armstrong (2011) and Combrinck, Van Staden, and Roux (2014) concede that the problem of reading deficiencies begin in the primary

schools. Hence, Spaul (2013) states “the need to focus on the primary grades (and pre-primary grades) is not only driven by the fact that underperformance is so widespread in these phases, but also because remediation is most possible and most cost-effective when children are still young” (Spaul, 2013: 40).

## **7.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Realities of everyday teaching and devastating effects of separate and unequal education compound teachers’ lack of particular knowledge and reading approaches to teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate phase. In line with scholars such as Van der Berg (2015), Spaul (2013) and Ramalepe (2013) this empirical study revealed that, indeed, learners in rural intermediate phase read below age cohorts and grade level. The study also revealed that, despite the fact that experts advocate for phonemic awareness, teachers in rural intermediate phase rarely employ it when teaching reading skills. This suggests that teachers have a limited understanding of this approach.

In accordance with relevant literature reviewed in Chapter Three, it became abundantly clear that there is a need to determine which approach is effective towards teaching reading skills early on in rural intermediate phase. Further, the review of relevant literature revealed that it is difficult if not impossible to rectify reading deficits later on in the schooling life of a learner. As shown in Chapter Three, literature is abuzz with evidence of rural learners experiencing reading difficulties that get carried over to institutions of higher learning.

The four main approaches to reading (Phonemic awareness, Read-aloud, Shared Reading and Guided Group Reading) were tested through the employment of an intervention administered to individual groups of grade 4 learners applying a particular approach for seven weeks. In the light of the aim of the study, it is clear from data presented in Chapter Five that two approaches, that is, Read-aloud and Guided Group reading yielded better results in terms of developing and promoting reading skills in the rural intermediate phase. Results of post-intervention comprehension test show that the two groups who were taught reading whilst applying read-aloud and guided

group reading respectively had a remarkable improvement in terms of the number of learners who could read at grade level. Teachers' experiences with an effective approach were explored through interviews and questionnaire. The teachers' responses to the interview and questionnaire corroborated findings from learners' post-intervention comprehension test. Further, read-aloud and guided reading groups demonstrated their ability through significant differences when learners' reading levels were assessed through observations prior and post the intervention.

I, therefore, argue that read-aloud and guided reading should be considered as best practices and most effective approaches to teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate phase. Analysis of data from observations and results of the post intervention comprehension test gave conclusive evidence that read-aloud and guided group readings are the best practices for teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate phase.

### **7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Read-aloud and guided group reading should be prioritised when teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate phase.
- In Read-aloud, teachers should ensure that learners pronounce words properly.
- During read-aloud sessions, teachers need to closely monitor learners as they often blindly read after the teacher without making sure that words they read out are actually in the text.
- In guided group reading, teachers are able to provide assistance to smaller groups and individual learners.
- Teachers need on-going training on reading approaches, (teaching reading workshops) particularly Phonemic Awareness as it has been advocated by a number of scholars such as Reynolds (1998) and the Ministry of education (2003).

- It is recommended that teachers employ *Read-aloud* activities as often as possible.
- There is a need for more support from EFAL subject advisors in the interpretation and implementation of approaches to reading.
- Reading clubs should be introduced at schools and in the communities.

#### **7.4 CONCLUSION**

Study after study has revealed disconcerting levels of reading in poorer and remote areas of South Africa. This state of affairs necessitates teachers in rural areas to reinforce reading approaches that best suit their context. This shall enhance reading levels of learners in their schools. Findings of this study serve as an eye-opener to education planners, subject advisors and teachers in the field of teaching reading skills in the rural intermediate phase. This state of reading calls for an urgent need for further and wider studies in the field of teaching reading skills both in the foundation and intermediate phases in rural areas. Hence, findings of this study are generalised to teaching reading skills to rural intermediate phase learners.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Faculty Approval of Proposal



**University of Limpopo**  
Faculty of Humanities  
Executive Dean  
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa  
Tel: (015) 268 4895, Fax: (015) 268 3425, Email: richard.madadzhe@ul.ac.za

DATE: 11 August 2016

**NAME OF STUDENT:** RAMALEPE, MP  
**STUDENT NUMBER:** [200208445]  
**DEPARTMENT:** PhD – Language Education  
**SCHOOL:** Education

Dear Student

**FACULTY APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL (PROPOSAL NO. FHDC2016/1300)**

I have pleasure in informing you that your PhD proposal served at the Faculty Higher Degrees Meeting on 26 June 2016 and your title was approved as follows:

**TITLE: TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING READING SKILLS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE - A CASE STUDY OF A RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Note the following:

<b>Ethical Clearance</b>	<b>Tick One</b>
Requires no ethical clearance Proceed with the study	
Requires ethical clearance (Human) (TREC) (apply online) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	√
Requires ethical clearance (Animal) (AREC) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	

Yours faithfully

**Prof RN Madadzhe**

**Executive Dean: Faculty of Humanities**

**Director: Dr S Maoto**

**Supervisor: Dr TE Mabila**

*Finding solutions for Africa*

## Appendix 2: Ethical Clearance Certificate



University of Limpopo  
Department of Research Administration and Development  
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa  
Tel: (015) 268 2212, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email:noko.monene@ul.ac.za

### TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 03 November 2016

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/179/2016: PG

**PROJECT:**

Title: Towards an effective approach to teaching reading skills in the Intermediate phase: A case study of a rural primary school  
Researchers: Mr MP Ramalepe  
Supervisor: Dr TE Mabila  
Co-Supervisor: N/A  
School: Education  
Degree: PhD in Language Education

  
PROF TAB MASHEGO  
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

**Note:**

- i) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.
- ii) The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.  
PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

*Finding solutions for Africa*

## Appendix 3: Permission from the H.O.D - Limpopo Provincial Government.



**LIMPOPO**  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

---

**DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION**

*Enquiries: Dr. Makola MC, Tel No: 015 290 9448. E-mail: [MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za](mailto:MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za)*

**P O BOX 4319  
GA-KGAPANE  
0838  
RAMALEPE MP**

**RE: Request for permission to Conduct Research**

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct a research has been approved- **TOPIC: TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING READING SKILLS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE: A CASE STUDY OF A RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL.**
3. The following conditions should be considered
  - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
  - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with both the Circuit Offices and the schools concerned.
  - 3.3 The conduct of research should not anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
  - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the forth term.
  - 3.5 During the study, the research ethics should be practiced, in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
  - 3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.
4. Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.
5. The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Page 1 of 2

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**Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700  
Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494**

***The heartland of southern Africa - development is about people!***

Make witness.

*[Handwritten Signature]*

Student ID  
Acting Head of Department

*[Handwritten Signature]*

Date

## Appendix 4: Permission to conduct the Study

RAMALEPE M.P

Email: [mammoniramalepe@gmail.com](mailto:mammoniramalepe@gmail.com)

Cell No: 083 321 4059

Student No 2003 06183

P. O. Box 4319

Ga-Kgapane

0838

2016.10.14.

The Circuit Manager

Motupa Circuit

TZANEEN

0855



Dear Sir,

### APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE SCHOOL UNDER YOUR JURISDICTION:

I, Mammoni Petrus Ramalepe, student No 2003 06183, attached to the University of Limpopo in the school of Education, hereby wish to apply for permission to conduct my Doctoral Research (PhD) in the field of Language in Education (English) at a school under your jurisdiction (Mabje-a-kgoro Primary school).

My topic is: *Towards an Effective Approach to Teaching Reading Skills in the intermediate phase: A Case Study of a Rural Primary School.*

The project shall take six weeks during the first school term in 2017. The project shall not in any negative way affect teaching and learning activities at the selected school. My promoter is Dr T. E. Mabila. You are welcome to contact him at the following telephone number 015 – 268 2397 or 0738477397.

I hope you shall find the above to be in order and give it a prompt and positive response.

Yours sincerely

Ramalepe MP (Mr).

Permission granted to do research at  
Mabjea-kgoro Primary

Circuit manager 14/10/2016

## Appendix 5: Permission to Administer the Additional Teacher Questionnaire

Ramalepe MP  
Email: [mammoniramalepe@gmail.com](mailto:mammoniramalepe@gmail.com)  
Cell No: 083 321 4059  
Student No: 2003 06183

P.O.Box 4319  
Ga-Kgapane  
0838  
24 July 2017

The Circuit Manager  
Motupa Circuit  
TZANEEN  
0855

Dear Sir

### APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO ADMINISTER A QUESTIONNAIRE TO LANGUAGE TEACHERS AT THE SCHOOLS UNDER YOUR JURISDICTION:

I, Mammoni Petrus Ramalepe, student No 2003 06183, attached to the University of Limpopo in the School of Education, hereby wish to apply for permission to administer a questionnaire to teachers at schools within your circuit for my Doctoral Research (PhD) in the field of Language in Education.

***My topic is: Towards an Effective Approach to Teaching Reading Skills in the intermediate phase: A case Study of a rural Primary School.***

My promoter is Dr TE Mabila. You are welcome to contact him at the following telephone number 015 268 2491.

I hope you will find the above to be in order.

Yours Sincerely

Ramalepe MP (Mr)



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LIMPOPO PROVINCE MOTUPA CIRCUIT  28-07-2017 PRIVATE BAG X 4031 LAPULELE 0850 TELEPHONE 015 2682 MOPANI DISTRICT
---

Permission is granted to do research at selected schools within Motupa circuit.

*Thabepe  
Circuit Manager  
25/7/2017*

## Appendix 6: Consent Form - Teacher participants

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (full names and surname) am an intermediate phase teacher at \_\_\_\_\_ (full name of the school) have been fully informed about the research project in which I participate voluntarily. I understand that the research findings and recommendation shall not, in any negative way affect me personally. I understand that while the findings shall remain confidential, my name shall be withheld for anonymity.

I therefore agree to take part in this research project.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 7: Teachers' Questionnaire

### Section A: Teacher's biographical data

	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Teacher E	Teacher F
Gender						
Age						
Highest Academic Qualification						
Professional Qualification						
Years of Experience as a teacher						
Years of Experience as an English teacher						

### Section B1

Exploring and determining the best practice that teachers find to be the best for teaching reading skills in the rural schools' intermediate phase.

Item No.	Focus of item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Uncertain
1.	Read-aloud is an effective approach to teaching reading skills:					

2.	Shared reading is an effective approach to teaching reading skills.					
3.	Guided reading is an effective approach to teaching reading skills.					
4.	Phonological awareness is an effective approach to teaching reading skills.					
5.	No single approach is inherently wrong or right towards teaching reading skills in the rural areas.					
6	All approaches are effective in teaching reading skills in the rural areas					

## Section B2

Carefully read each statement in each item and respond by putting a cross in the appropriate box that best describes your experience for the items.

Item No	Focus	Teacher's choice	
		YES	NO
1.	I use some, and not all available reading approaches to teach reading skills		
2.	I use all available reading approaches to teach reading skills.		
3.	I know all reading approaches		
4.	I understand all reading approaches.		

### Section B3

Respond by putting a cross in the appropriate box representing the approach you find either easy or difficult to use to teach reading skills.

1. I find it <b>easy</b> to use the following approach to teach reading skills					
<i>Phonemic awareness</i>	<i>Reading aloud,</i>	<i>Shared reading</i>	<i>Group guided reading</i>	<i>Paired reading</i>	<i>Independent reading.</i>

2. I find it <b>difficult</b> to use the following approach to teach reading skills					
<i>Phonemic awareness</i>	<i>Reading aloud</i>	<i>Shared reading</i>	<i>Group guided reading</i>	<i>Paired reading</i>	<i>Independent reading.</i>

3. Which of the following is <b>effective approach</b> to teaching <b>reading skills</b> in the intermediate phase?					
<i>Phonemic awareness</i>	<i>Reading aloud</i>	<i>Shared reading</i>	<i>Group guided reading</i>	<i>Paired reading</i>	<i>Independent reading.</i>

### Appendix 8: Interview Guide

Interview guide for determining teachers' perceptions and experience regarding reading approach that best promote and develop reading skills:

- (a). Which reading approach do you think is more effective in promoting and developing reading skills?
- (b). Do you have any particular reason for your answer?
- (c). What reading approach do you use on a regular basis to teach reading skills?
- (d). Do you have any reason for choosing this reading approach?
- (e). Is there anything you would like to say regarding reading approaches or teaching reading skills in the intermediate phase?

**Appendix 9: Parental Consent Form.**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (full names and surname) am the parent/legal guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ (full names and surname of the learner) have been fully informed about the research project in which my child is a participants. I understand that the research findings and recommendation shall not in any negative way, affect my child. I understand that while the findings shall remain confidential, my child's name shall be with-held for anonymity. I therefore agree and give consent for my child to take part in this research project.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 10: Parental Consent Form (Northern Sotho translation)

**Foromo ya tumelelano le motswadi wa ngwana goba mohlakomedi wa semolao wa ngwana go tsea karolo go dinyakiseso tsa mabapi le go bala.**

Nna \_\_\_\_\_ (Main ka botlalo) ke motswadi/mohlakomedi wa semolao wa) \_\_\_\_\_

ke ile ka tsebiswa ka tirelo ya dinyakisiso tseo ngwana waka a ilego go tsea karolo. Ke kwisisetse ga botse gore diphihlelelo goba dipoelo tsa gona di ka seke tsa ama ngwana waka ka tsele yeo e sa swanelago. Ke kwisesa gabotse gore leina la ngwana waka le ka sephatlalatswe goba gona go tsebiswa. Go rialo ke dumelelane le taba ya gore ngwana waka e be motsea karolo ka mo gare ga di nyakiseso tse.

Boikano \_\_\_\_\_

Tsatsi kgwedi \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 11: Observation Checklist

Checklist for observation sampled learners while reading grade prescribed text before the intervention:

Group No: \_\_\_\_\_ Learner: \_\_\_\_\_

Age of learner: \_\_\_\_\_

Learner's home language: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: Four

1. Does the learner read with the correct pronunciation? .....Yes \No
2. Is there voice projection?.....Yes \No
3. Does the learner read fluently?.....Yes \No
4. Does the learner stumble?.....Yes \No
5. Does the learner do word-for-word reading? .....Yes \No
6. Does the learner stop at a few words? .....Yes \No
7. Does the learner observe the following punctuation marks?
  - 7.1 Full stops (.).....Yes \No
  - 7.2 Commas (,) .....Yes \No
  - 7.3 Exclamation marks (!) .....Yes \No
  - 7.4. Question marks (?).....Yes \No
  - 7.5 Quotation marks (" ") .....Yes \No

Total errors committed: \_\_\_\_\_

### Results of the above shall be interpreted as follows:

- If 80% of the learners in a particular group who have been subjected to a particular reading approach make fewer than 5 errors, it shall be an indication that the intervention using that approach has had good results and therefore is the best reading approach for that particular group.

- If 50% of the learners in a particular group who have been subjected to a particular reading approach make between 5 and 10 errors, then it shall be an indication that the intervention using a particular reading approach has been successful for that particular group.
- If 50% of the learners in a particular group who have been subjected to a particular reading approach make more than 10 errors, it will confirm that the intervention using a particular approach has not been successful for that particular group.

## Appendix 12: Learners' Pre-intervention Test

Learners 'test to establish their (learners) reading skills and comprehension before the intervention.

### Question 1 (Short answer questions)

1.1. What is the title of the story?

The title of the story is \_\_\_\_\_

2.2. Who is the main character?

The main character is \_\_\_\_\_

2.3. When did the story happen?

The story happened in \_\_\_\_\_

1.4. Who wrote the story?

\_\_\_\_\_ wrote the story.

1.5. How do we know that Prince Marimba was rich?

We know that Prince Marimba was rich because she

\_\_\_\_\_

### Question 2 Cloze type questions.

Refer to the read passage and fill in letters that have been left out in the following sentences

2.1. Su \_\_\_ \_\_\_ nly they heard a \_\_\_ tr\_\_\_ \_\_\_ ge sound

2.2. The kit \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ en worker asked to speak to \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ ess.

2.3. Princess had h\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ eds of cows and lived in a big \_\_\_ i \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ ge

### Question 3 Multiple-choice

3.1. The first drum was made from the **(head; drum; skin)** of a wildebeest.

3.2. The **(village people; the rich princess; the kitchen workers)** made the first drum.

3.3. The **(kitchen workers; the hunter; everyone)** killed the wildebeest.

3.4. In the story, **(Nobody; somebody; everyone)** loved the sound.

**Question 4** Sentence completion:

Through referring from the story, complete the sentences below

- 4.1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the author of the story.
- 4.2. The story happened \_\_\_\_\_ time ago.
- 4.3. Princess's surname is \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4.4. She cut a piece of skin and \_\_\_\_\_ it \_\_\_\_\_ over the bowl.

**Question 5A**

Match the following words with their correct meaning.

Column A	Column B
5.1. Kraal	<b>(A)</b> The daughter of a Queen and King
5.2. Princess	<b>(B)</b> A person who kills animals in bush for food.
5.3. Hunter	<b>(C)</b> A place for keeping cattle
5.4. Cow	<b>(D)</b> A female cattle

**Question 5B**

Match the following words with their correct antonyms (the opposite) from the passage:

Column A	Column B
5.5. Prince	
5.6. New	
5.7. Poor	
5.8. Wet	

**N.B** The questions above were set from an African folktale, "The first drum" (page 82) adapted from Grade 4 English First Additional Language (Hayley, 2011).

## Appendix 13: Learners' Post-Intervention Test

*Read the passage before attempting to answer the questions that follow:*

This was the fourth day that Maria was waiting. She had sat on the stoep from 8 o'clock in the morning until 4 o'clock in the afternoon on Monday, but the postman hadn't come. So on Tuesday, even though it was raining, she came and sat on the stoep at 8 o'clock in the morning again. Her mother came outside and said, 'Maria, don't be silly, come inside.'

"I can't," said Maria, "I know he'll come today. I'm sure he'll have something for me and he'll come tomorrow." But the postman didn't come. And at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, when the sun was beginning to set, her father came to call her. "Come inside, Maria." He said kindly, "Maybe he'll come tomorrow."

But Maria waited on the stoep the whole of Wednesday too and the postman didn't come. She tried so hard not to cry, but little tears rolled down her cheeks as she walked slowly inside. She couldn't believe that Granny would have forgotten.

### Question 1 Short answer questions

1.1. What is the day of the week in the reading passage?

---

1.2. Why does Maria's mother think she is being silly?

---

1.3. Why do you think Maria is not allowed to talk to strangers?

---

1.4. How do you know that Maria is not at school?

---

### Question 2 Cloze type questions:

Refer to the read passage and fill in letters that have been left out in the following sentences.

2.1. She got up sl \_\_\_ \_\_\_ y and started walking \_\_\_ \_\_\_ kly

2.2. She couldn't \_\_\_ el \_\_\_ ve that Granny would have \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_  
ten

**Question 3** Multiple-choice

- 3.1. Maria was expecting something from her (**mother; granny; father**).
- 3.2. Maria saw the stranger on (**Tuesday; Wednesday; Thursday**).
- 3.3. On Monday Maria sat on the stoep for (**four hours; six hours; eight hours**).
- 4.4. It rained in the morning on (**Monday; Tuesday; Wednesday**).

**Question 4** Sentence completion

- 4.1. Her mother came outside and said, “Maria, don’t be \_\_\_\_\_, come inside
- 4.2. Maria waited for the \_\_\_\_\_ for 4 days.
- 4.3. The post-man delivers \_\_\_\_\_ to our post box
- 4.4. A person you do not know and meet for the first time is a \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 5A**

Find correct synonyms (words that have the same meaning) from the passage:

Column A	Column B
5.1. Foolish	
5.2. Veranda	
5.3. Street	
5.4. Gently	

**Question 5B**

Matching: Find correct antonyms (the opposite) of the following words in column A below from the passage:

Column A	Column B
5.5. Quickly	
5.6. Woman	
5.7. Short	
5.8. Inside	

**N.B.** The questions above were set from a comprehension passage on page 102 in Grade 4 English First Additional Language (Learner’s book published by MacMillan, 2011.

## Appendix 14: Researcher applying Phonemic Awareness Approach



## Appendix 15: Researcher applying Guided Group Reading



**Appendix 16: The Researcher applying Shared Reading Approach**



**Appendix 17: Evidence of over-crowding in a Grade 4 class**



## Appendix 18: Newspaper cutting (Education, then Transformation)

# EDUCATION, THEN TRANSFORMATION

MSINDISI FENGU  
mfen@ieng.com

Government policy interventions aimed at solving inequality would not produce results if the country's dysfunctional education system wasn't fixed.

This was what Stellenbosch University economics professor Servaas van der Berg told delegates at a two-day conference in Pretoria organised by the Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development in the presidency's department of planning, monitoring and evaluation in partnership with the ELI.

Van der Berg was among academics and civil society groups who presented studies to policymakers on the National Development Plan agenda to reduce poverty and eliminate inequality by 2030.

The research work was supported by grant funding sourced through a partnership between government and the ELI.

Van der Berg's research, conducted with a 25-member team and titled Expanding Social Mobility Through Education, concentrated on social mobility and education, and reflected on the impact an unequal education system had on the labour market.

Van der Berg said the country had a

dual education system and labour market.

"The majority of schools are of low quality. Teachers are demotivated. There is very little evidence showing they are improving. Top jobs in the labour market are fed by former Model C school learners," he said in a presentation on Wednesday.

"No matter how government intervenes with social grants and black economic empowerment, that is not going to solve inequality in the labour market. Start with education."

The study found that out of every 100 pupils entering the education system, 60 write matric, 37 pass, 12 access university, six complete their degrees and only four move on to land high-earning jobs.

# ”

**No matter how government intervenes with social grants and BEE, that is not going to solve inequality in the labour market. Start with education**

Van der Berg said young black people, even if they were better qualified, did not have better employment prospects than the generation before them.

Asked about any impact had by Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, Van der Berg said: "We don't know what we have there. The impression one gets is not positive. It does not seem to be targeted by employers. Most parents don't want to send their children to TVET colleges. There are issues there and proper research is needed on TVET colleges."

Van der Berg said matric was still an important factor considered by employers.

And although the country's education

system was well equipped compared with that of Swaziland, "learners there outperform South African children in Grade 6 by a year".

The study also found that the influence of unions in the education system was identified among the problems needing to be resolved.

Other findings included that:

- By Grade 4, about 70% of pupils in poor schools perform below the international learning benchmark;
- By Grade 9, pupils in poor schools are two-thirds of a year behind their counterparts in former Model C schools;
- Degree holders earn three times more than matriculants;
- Pupils from weak schools earn much less than those from good schools; and
- The dualistic education system limits social mobility and perpetuates labour market inequality. It also perpetuates a "cycle of desperation".

The study noted that the persistence of inequality was an indictment on the education system's failure to overcome past injustices, despite the amount of money South Africa spends on education.

Van der Berg and his team noted that early interventions were crucial and there was a need to focus on getting reading right early in primary school.