

**THE IDENTIFICATION OF SPELLING DIFFICULTIES OF
LEARNERS IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE WITH TSWANA AS
MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION**

By

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(Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree)

**MASTER OF EDUCATION
(LEARNER SUPPORT)**

**IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LEARNER SUPPORT
AT THE NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY**

STUDY LEADER: PROF. DR. P DU TOIT

POTCHEFSTROOM

2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the following people who contributed to the completion of this study:

- My study leader, Prof. P du Toit, for her guidance, never ending patience, encouragement and support throughout. For her professionalism and consistency during this study.
- My beloved husband Joseph John for his loving support and encouragement during my period of study.
- My parents, Tony and Delores Fielding for their support and unconditional love throughout my studies.
- My "in-laws" Joe and Ethne' for their support and assistance and for their helpfulness with my son Joseph Conner.
- The library personnel of the North West University for their professional assistance.
- Above all, I give the glory and honour to God who provided me with wisdom, perseverance and good health.

ABSTRACT

This study links with the White Paper 6 on learners with special educational needs, which requires public schools to accommodate learners with diverse needs, as far as possible in inclusive education. The success of the inclusive education depends on the ability of educators to identify and support barriers to learning, for which they will have to be trained. Such in-service training will be aimed at the identification of barriers to learning or learners with diverse learning needs, specifically in the Foundation Phase.

The purpose of this study was to determine what knowledge Foundation Phase educators possess in the identification of spelling difficulties experienced by learners with Tswana as medium of instruction, but for whom Tswana mostly is a first additional language. The literature study was therefore focussed on language learning, spelling difficulties in an additional language, and assessment in the Foundation Phase.

The empirical research included a sample of teachers in the Foundation Phase in the North-West Province, regarding their identification of spelling difficulties in a first additional language. The empirical data were accumulated by means of an open-ended questionnaire, which was qualitatively analysed in terms of the teachers' knowledge of and skill in the identification and support of spelling difficulties in an additional language, in a classroom with Tswana as medium of instruction. The results indicated that the spelling difficulties they experience are the same as other learners who experience spelling difficulties in an additional language. The results also indicate that the educators lack sufficient knowledge and skills with regard to the identification and support of spelling difficulties. In-service training for Foundation Phase educators in the identification of spelling difficulties and the support thereof is a necessity.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION, STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, AIMS OF THE STUDY,
METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY, CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS,
AND PROGRAMME OF THE STUDY

1. INTRODUCTION

Education policy as indicated by the Revised Curriculum Statement (SA, 2002b), requires that the learning outcomes of all learners – also learners with special educational needs [LSEN] – in each of the three school phases, be assessed in terms of specific standards. Policy on the development of professional capacity of all educators in curriculum development and assessment, is described in Education White Paper No 6 (Special Needs Education) (SNE) (SA, 2001c: 49) as follows: “We will require that all curriculum development, assessment and instructional development programs make special effort to address the learning and teaching requirements of the diverse range of learning needs, and that they address barriers to learning that arise from language and the medium of instruction; teaching style and pace; time frames for the completion of curricula; learning support material and equipment; and assessment methods and techniques.” According to Hargrave and Senechal (2000:88), the insufficient language efficiency to learn, the large numbers of primary school learners that leave school early (Vermaak, 1995:12) and the insufficient achievement of school beginners (Lemmer, 1996:332) are all *inter alia* identified as barriers to learning and as causes of education difficulties, or diverse learning needs.

This study forms part of a bigger research project with the aim to design and implement an in-service training program for the Foundation Phase educator in the support of LSEN (Learners with Special Education Needs). The study links with the National Education Policy Act (SA, 1996), which requires public schools to accommodate learners with special education needs, or learners with diverse needs, as far as possible in inclusive education. The success of inclusive education depends on the efficacy of in-service training of the Foundation Phase educator in the identification of learning difficulties as barriers to learning, or learners with diverse learning needs, in the Foundation Phase (SA, 2001a:49).

Before such in-service training can be supplied to the Foundation Phase educators it must first, be established how the Foundation Phase educators currently identify diverse learning needs. This project will focus on the Foundation Phase. Learners' performance in the Literacy Learning Area has to be identified in order for learner support to be offered, should their performance be indicative of inadequate progress.

According to an article written by Moshoeshe, Monare and Sapa (2001:1) in the local newspaper, many educators in the Eastern Cape are not in possession of appropriate education qualifications, not to mention a lack of training in the diverse needs of learners. The article indicated that not even the principals (3 527) in the Eastern Cape had a minimum three-year qualification. According to this article the Education Labour Relations Council promised to look at professional development for educators (Moshoeshe, Monare & Sapa, 2001:1). The question can therefore be asked if any appropriate education training in the diverse needs of learners has since evolved.

The researcher herself is employed as educator at a school where Tswana is the medium of instruction. Tswana is however not necessarily all the learners' home language, and in many cases it is their First Additional Language (FAD). These learners may therefore experience difficulties in Tswana as the language of learning in the Foundation Phase in that school. (The research was performed at another school than where the researcher is employed, but with the same circumstances pertaining to Tswana as the medium of instruction). South Africa has 11 official languages, and many learners therefore come from homes with diverse languages and not necessarily one mother tongue. The result is that in many cases not all learners receive education in their mother tongues in the Foundation Phase, in any school. The purpose of this research was to determine educators' ability to identify diverse needs in the Foundation Phase, in mother tongue, but the learners attending this specific school where Tswana is the medium of instruction, do not necessarily have Tswana as home language. For these learners, Tswana may be regarded as their first (or even second) additional language. Nevertheless, the focus of the study is on the educators and not on the learners themselves. The focus is on determining the knowledge and skills of educators in the identification of barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase that may arise from any diverse need, including the medium of instruction. As indicated, the medium of

instruction may be either the mother tongue or a first or second additional language of the learners.

Because literature on Tswana as a First Additional Language is not available, literature on English as First Additional Language was consulted for the purpose of this study. Specifically English as First Additional Language is a barrier to learning for many learners in the Foundation Phase, in South Africa as well as in other countries. Literature on the difficulties experienced by learners in a second language (English) may therefore be regarded as applicable for this study, because for the learners in this school with Tswana as medium of instruction, Tswana may be regarded as their first additional language. The relevant literature consulted for this study is therefore about the barriers experienced by learners who receive instruction in English as second language (ESL). Identification and support for learners who experience ESL barriers, may be regarded as relevant to other first additional languages. The identification and support of barriers experienced in a first additional language, e.g. ESL, will be discussed in Chapter 3.

As stated above, educators do not all have the appropriate training in the identification and support of learners with diverse needs. Therefore Foundation Phase educators need to be empowered to effectively support such learners, in order to give execution to the policy of the Department of Education. In this study the focus will be on learners with spelling difficulties in Tswana in the Foundation Phase, for many of whom Tswana may be regarded as their First Additional Language (FAD). The potential contribution of the greater research project lies in the fact that specifically Foundation Phase educators' knowledge and skill in the support of learners with diverse needs will be enhanced through the in-service educator-training programme, which is envisaged to eventually be implemented throughout South Africa.

In the Foundation Phase, Literacy is one of the three Learning Areas (the other two being Numeracy and Life Skills). Rohl and Rivalland (2002:19) state the importance for "... early identification of literacy difficulties, early intervention and other forms of support..." in the Foundation Phase. Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) point out the benefits of early identification of diverse learning needs and how it will help to cancel out long term learning difficulties. Felton and Pepper (1995) support Rohl and Rivalland (2002) in that early identification will lead to effective intervention. Only then the

outcomes of the Literacy Learning Area will be reached, as described in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (SA, 2002c:16). These outcomes will be discussed in Chapter 2.

According to the RNCS issued by the Department of Education (DoE) (SA, 2002b:8), educators of Foundation Phase learners should be capable of identifying any barriers or diverse needs learners may experience, and should also be capable of supporting these needs. The Education White Paper 6 on SNE (SA, 2001c:49) describes the policy concerned with the development of the professional capabilities of each educator in curriculum and assessment as follows: "We will require that all curriculum development, assessment and instructional development programs make special effort to address the learning and teaching requirements of the diverse range of learning needs, and that they address barriers to learning that arise from language and the medium of instruction; teaching style and pace; time frame for the completion of curricula; learning support materials and equipment, and assessment methods and techniques."

According to Rademeyer (2004:1) learners are displaying more and more difficulties with language and spelling. Some high schools are offering bridging courses in reading and writing to try and rectify this problem, which originated from being left unattended to in the Foundation Phase. In a later article Rademeyer (2005:2) also stresses that it is best to start education in the mother tongue. The most important concepts, ideas and thoughts are formed in the mother tongue. When a learner later chooses to switch over to another (second) language in school, it is easier to translate and use the concepts of the second language. If you cannot read (in whatever language) you cannot learn.

Mrs Naledi Pandor, Minister of Education, confirmed the statements in an article written by Jahguide Heyman (2005:6), that learners should access education in the language of their choice. Language is not only a communication tool, but defines who you are, where you come from and where you are heading. It is imperative for learners to understand the medium of instruction in order to be proficient in that language. Pandor further emphasized (Joubert, 2004:17) the importance of learners being taught in their mother tongue during the first three years of school. Mother tongue serves as a powerful foundation to learn new concepts in a second language.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the light of the discussion above, the research question to be investigated in this study can be stated as follows:

What are the knowledge and skills of Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province concerning the identification of spelling difficulties in Tswana as the medium of instruction?

From this main question the following sub-questions can be derived:

- 2.1 What knowledge and skills do these educators possess in the identification of spelling difficulties of Foundation Phase learners, for whom Tswana is probably their First Additional Language?
- 2.2 What kind of spelling difficulties (in Tswana as probable first additional language) do Foundation Phase learners in the North-West Province experience?

3. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to determine the following:

The knowledge and skills of Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province concerning the identification of spelling difficulties in Tswana as the medium of instruction.

From this main aim the following sub-aims are to determine the following:

- The knowledge and skills that these educators possess in the identification of spelling difficulties of Foundation Phase learners, for whom Tswana is probably their First Additional Language
- The kind of spelling difficulties (in Tswana as probable first additional language) that Foundation Phase learners, in the North-West Province experience.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Literature overview

A literature overview will be conducted about the manifestation of spelling difficulties in a First Additional Language, or second language (in the Foundation Phase), and of educators' identification thereof. First Additional Language will be referred to as FAD throughout the rest of this study, even though the literature consulted may be on Second Language, but then it will be indicated as such in the relevant chapters (2 & 3).

The literature overview in chapter 2 will deal with the educational dispensation in South Africa, educational provision for learners with diverse needs, policies on languages and FAD learning, and assessment in the Foundation Phase. Supporting barriers to learning of learners with diverse needs, through appropriate learning and teaching support mechanisms in the Foundation Phase, as described by education policy, will also be discussed.

The literature overview in chapter 3 will deal with the identification and support of spelling difficulties in FAD, through description of the symptoms of spelling difficulties in FAD or second language, of Foundation Phase learners.

4.2 Empirical study

4.2.1 Aim

The aim of the empirical research is to collect data about the knowledge and skills of educators in the Foundation Phase in the North-West Province, on the identification of spelling difficulties experienced by learners in Tswana as a first additional language.

4.2.2 Research design

The empirical research will encompass a qualitative enquiry into educators' identification of spelling difficulties that learners experience in Tswana as a FAD, as their medium of instruction.

4.2.3 Measuring instrument

This data will be obtained through an open questionnaire regarding educators' knowledge and skills in the identification of spelling difficulties (in a FAD). The research will be qualitative in nature, and the responses of the educators, as obtained from the questionnaires, will be analyzed in terms of themes obtained about the educators' knowledge and skills with regard to the identification of spelling difficulties.

Videos were made of Foundation Phase learners in a school with Tswana as medium of instruction. There are three videos depicting a Grade 1, 2 and 3 learner respectively, who each displays obvious literacy difficulties (reading and spelling in Tswana) in the classroom situation. These learners also exhibit noticeable behavioural patterns, which can be associated with the mentioned difficulties. It would therefore presumably be easy for the educators to notice and identify these obvious difficulties from the videos.

The Grade 1, 2 and 3 questionnaires all contain questions about the difficulties that the respective learners manifest on the videos. The educators are required to fill in the respective questionnaires about the difficulties as observed on the videos.

4.2.4 Method of data acquisition

The data will be obtained by analyzing the above-mentioned questionnaires with open questions regarding the manifestation of spelling difficulties in Tswana in the Foundation Phase.

4.2.5 Population and sample of participants

Since it is not possible to use the total population of Grades 1, 2 and 3 educators in all the primary schools in the North-West Province, a convenience sample of the population will be taken. This convenience sample will consist of Foundation Phase educators in the Potchefstroom district only, because these schools' learner, and educator populations are representative of the wider population of Foundation Phase learners and educators in the North-West Province, in the sense that the learners have Tswana as first or additional language; they live within as well as outside the boundaries of Potchefstroom city; and the educators

instruct Tswana as mother tongue, but also have to adapt to learners for whom Tswana is their FAD.

The size of the sample consists of three primary schools in the North-West Province with Tswana as medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase. Three educators per school, one each in Grade 1, 2, and 3, in each of the three sample schools, will be required to complete the questionnaire concerning the identification of spelling difficulties in Tswana. Therefore a total of nine educators will participate in this study through completion of the respective questionnaires. The results from all nine questionnaires will be reflected in chapter 4 of this study.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The results of this research will be representative of educators' identification of spelling difficulties in Tswana mother tongue as well as FAD learners, only in the Potchefstroom district of the North-West Province. It is therefore not representative of educators in the whole of South Africa.

6. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The concepts described below are how the key concepts have to be understood as applicable in this study, in the context of this study.

Spelling

At the simplest level spelling is the association of alphabetic symbols, called graphemes, with speech sounds, called phonemes (the smallest identifiable sounds in speech) (Montgomery, 1997:1).

Spelling Difficulties

Difficulties experienced with mastering the range of skills and abilities needed in order to spell (Montgomery, 1997:1).

Literacy

Literacy is the ability to read and write for different purposes. It is part of a general ability to make sense of one's world (SA, 2002d:127).

Literacy difficulties

Difficulties experienced in mastering the ability to read and write (Montgomery, 1997:1).

Foundation Phase

The first phase of the General Education and Training Band (Grade R, 1, 2 and 3). It focuses on learners' primary skills, knowledge and values, in so doing laying the foundation for further learning (SA, 2002d:122).

Identification

The awareness and recognition of the symptoms of difficulties/barriers to learning/diverse needs. Identification should lead the educator to the realization that the specific barrier or need that has now been recognized, has to be assessed in more detail with specific measures, in order to determine what would be the applicable measures of support for the learner. Identification and assessment may overlap in one sense, and may also overlap with the support rendered in another sense. Identification, assessment and support can all be regarded as intervention measures therefore intervention does *not only* refer to support measures.

Barriers to learning / learners with diverse needs

Barriers to learning is defined as anything that prevents a learner from achieving the outcomes for each grade, in terms of the appropriate learning skills, knowledge and attitudes for that grade, and therefore also from progressing to higher grades. According to the Essential English Dictionary (Collins, 2000:57) barriers are described as 'a problem that prevent people from moving from one area to another.' In this study barriers to learning refer to problems or difficulties, which prevent or obstruct learners from achieving the necessary learning outcomes, in any learning area. In the Foundation Phase it is the three mentioned learning areas. Examples of common barriers to learning are inter alia: learners with sensory disabilities, learners who do not understand the medium of instruction or the content as presented in a specific school, learners for whom specific teaching mechanisms are not effective, inappropriate assessment for specific learners, etcetera (SA, 2002:9). Learners who experience any such barriers, or even those learners who do *not* experience any barriers, all are learners with diverse needs. Therefore every individual learner has diverse learning needs, which have to be accommodated or supported by the educator.

Learner Support

Due to all the diverse needs of all learners, all learners require learner support if they are to overcome their particular barriers (e.g. the particular contextual, social and individual disadvantages and difficulties they face [Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:321]), or merely to satisfy their diverse learning needs, if they are to progress in school at all. Educators therefore have to adapt their teaching methods or apply alternative measures to support individual learning needs.

7. CHAPTER DIVISION

The programme of this study will comprise of the following:

Chapter 1: Introduction, statement of the problem, aims of the study, methodology, limitations of the study, clarification of concepts, and programme of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature overview of the education dispensation regarding the Literacy Learning Area in the Foundation Phase.

Chapter 3: Literature overview of literacy (spelling and language) development, as well as the manifestation of spelling difficulties in English (FAD) in the Foundation Phase, and educators' identification thereof.

Chapter 4: Empirical investigation and results.

Chapter 5: General summary, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

THE EDUCATIONAL DISPENSATION IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Foundation Phase is the first phase of the General Education and Training Band and comprises Grades R0, 1, 2 and 3. It focuses on primary skills, knowledge and values and in so doing lays the foundation for further learning. There are three Learning Programmes (the planning for the whole year) in the Foundation Phase: Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills. These three Learning Programmes have an integral part to play in the development of an inclusive education (IE) system (SA, 2002a:4). Inclusive Education is defined and discussed later on in this chapter.

The White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education is primarily aimed at changes in the schooling sector but also serves as a policy framework to guide systemic changes in all levels of the education system, as also indicated in the White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (ECD) (SA, 2001b). White Paper 6 also outlines the Minister of Education's commitment to providing educational opportunities for those learners who have experienced barriers to learning or dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education system to accommodate their diverse learning needs (SA, 2001a:6). This White Paper (6) states that attention needs to be focused towards addressing those barriers within each sector, namely the ECD sector, Foundation Phase, Intermediate and Senior Phase, which limit access to educational provision and/or which prevent particular learners from being able to participate equally in the learning process. This involves putting in place appropriate support mechanisms that will equip the specific sector to meet the full range of learning needs. It also involves providing support to those who may require it. The policy is particularly concerned with addressing barriers and meeting the needs of those learners most vulnerable to the experiences that inhibit learning. The White Paper recognizes that these learners especially are the black disabled learners (SA, 2002:5).

This chapter focuses on the educational dispensation in the Foundation Phase in South Africa. It includes aspects such as policies from the RNCS and White Paper 6 on

languages and language learning, the Literacy Learning Programme, and assessment in the Foundation Phase. Barriers to learning in this programme and the support thereof will be discussed in Chapter 3.

In the next section the curriculum policy in South Africa will be described, specifically in terms of the Foundation Phase, as well as assessment in the Foundation Phase.

2. THE CURRICULUM POLICY IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 Introduction

Curriculum change in post-apartheid South Africa started immediately after the election in 1994 when the National Education and Training Forum began a process of syllabus revision and subject rationalization where the main purpose was to lay the foundation for a single national core syllabus (SA, 2002e:4). In terms of White Paper 1, it emphasized the need for major change in education and training in South Africa in order to normalize and transform teaching and learning in South Africa – to move from content, knowledge based, pre-determined and rigid curriculum to a new learner and learning centered, contextualized and flexible Curriculum 2005. White Paper 1 also stressed the need for a shift from the traditional aims-and-objectives approach to outcomes-based education. White Paper 1 promoted a vision of “a prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice” (SA, 2002e:4).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No 108 of 1996) provides the basis for curriculum transformation and development, in terms of all the White Papers (1 - 6). The Constitution expresses the nation’s social values and its expectations of the roles, rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic South Africa. The RNCS seeks to embody these values in the knowledge and skills it develops. The kind of teacher that is envisaged in this regard, is a key contributor to the transformation of education in South Africa. The RNCS envisions educators who are qualified, competent, dedicated and caring. They will be able to fulfil the various roles, outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators (Government Gazette No 20844). These include being

mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of Learning Programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and Learning Area or Phase Specialists (SA, 2002d:3).

The kind of learner that is envisaged by the RNCS (and constitution) is one who has an awareness and understanding of the rich diversity of cultures, beliefs and worldviews within which the unity of South Africa is manifested (SA, 2002d:7). The curriculum seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen (SA, 2002d:3).

The RNCS therefore is an embodiment of the nation's social values, and its expectations of roles, rights and responsibilities Principles underpinning the RNCS that are crucial for working towards the aims of the education system (SA, 2002e:10-13) are:

- Social Justice
- A Healthy Environment
- Human Rights
- Inclusivity
- Outcomes-based Education
- A high level of skills and knowledge for all
- Clarity and Accessibility
- Progression and Integration

Inclusivity specifically deals with a number of social justice and human rights issues, and at the same time taps into the rich diversity of learners and communities for effective and meaningful decision making and functioning for a healthy environment. Schools are encouraged to create cultures and practices that ensure the full participation of all learners irrespective of their cultures, race, language, economic background and ability. All learners come with their own experiences, interests, strengths and barriers to learning, which need to be accommodated.

The RNCS consists of eight Learning Area statements. A Learning Area is a field of knowledge, skills and values, which has unique features as well as connections with other fields of knowledge and Learning Areas. The eight learning areas are:

- Languages
- Mathematics
- Natural Sciences
- Technology
- Social Sciences
- Arts and Culture
- Life-Orientation
- Economic and Management Sciences

The Foundation Phase consists of the following three Learning Programmes (SA 2003b:27):

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Life Skills

The RNCS also indicates that Learning Programme should be organized as follows:

- Planning for the whole phase. This is called a **Learning Programme**
- Planning for a year and grade within a phase. This is called a **Work Schedule**
- Planning for groups of linked activities or single activities. These are called **Lesson Plans**

A Learning Programme is a phase-long plan that provides a framework for planning, organizing and managing classroom practice for each phase. It specifies the scope for teaching, learning and assessment for the phase and is a “structured and systematic arrangement of activities that promote the attainment of Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards for the Phase” (SA, 2002c). A Learning Programme is a tool for ensuring that the Learning Outcomes for each Learning Area are effectively and comprehensively attended to in a sequential and balanced way across the phase. A Learning Outcome is a description of what (knowledge, skills and values) learners should know, demonstrate and be able to do at the end of the General Education and Training Band. A set of Learning Outcomes should ensure integration and progression in the development of concepts, skills and values through the assessment standards. Learning outcomes do not prescribe content or method (SA, 2002c:14).

Assessment Standards are grade specific and show how conceptual progression will occur in a Learning Area. They embody the knowledge, skills and values required to achieve Learning Outcomes. Assessment Standards do not prescribe method. The difference between a Learning Outcome and an Assessment Standard is that a Learning Outcome can and will, in most cases, remain the same from grade to grade while Assessment Standards change from grade to grade (SA, 2002c:14).

Learning outcomes and assessment standards were designed down from the critical outcomes to developmental outcomes. The critical and developmental outcomes are outcomes that are derived from the Constitution and are contained in the South African Qualifications Act (1995). They describe the kind of citizen the education and training system should aim to envisage. The critical outcomes (SA, 2002c:11) envisage learners who will be able to -

- identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking.
- work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organization and community.
- organize and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.
- collect, analyze, organize and critically evaluate information.
- communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and /or language skills in various modes.
- use Science and Technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
- demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The Literacy Learning Programme in terms of language skills in the Foundation Phase, and the development of literacy skills, will be described next.

2.2 Language skills in the Foundation Phase

Education Policy, as based on Section 3(4)(m) of the South African Schools Act (Act 27 of 1996) states that –

- all learners shall offer at least one approved language as a subject in Grade 1 and Grade 2;
- from Grade 3 (Std 1) onwards, all learners shall offer their language of learning and teaching and at least one additional approved language as subjects;
- subject to any law dealing with language in education and the Constitutional rights of learners, in determining the language policy of the school, the governing body must stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism through using more than one language of learning and teaching, and/or by offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects, and/or applying special immersion or language maintenance Programmes, or through other means approved by the head of the provincial education department.

The Literacy Learning Programme aims to do precisely that, in terms of the fact that it covers all 11 official languages as both Home Languages (HL) and First Additional Languages (AL) for the Foundation Phase, to make provision for the rich language diversity that exists in South Africa.

The Languages Learning Area Statement in the SA (2002d:4) distinguishes between Home Language and First Additional Language for the Foundation Phase, as follows:

- The Home Language Assessment Standards assume that learners come to school able to understand and speak the language. These standards support the development of this competence, especially with regard to various types of literacy (reading, writing, visual and critical literacies). They provide a strong curriculum to support the language of learning and teaching.
- The first Additional Language assumes that learners do not necessarily have any knowledge of the language when they arrive at school. The curriculum starts by developing learners' ability to understand and speak the language. On this foundation, it builds literacy. Learners are able to transfer the literacies they have acquired in their home language to their first additional language. The curriculum provides strong support for those learners who will use their first additional language as a language of learning and teaching (LOLT). By the end of Grade 9, these learners should be able to use their home language and first additional language effectively and with confidence for a variety of purposes, including learning.

It is necessary to distinguish between Home and Additional Languages, as above, to ensure that the relevant Assessment Standards are achieved in each language. While it is not necessary to have a rigid division between the teaching of Home and Additional Languages in the classroom, the educator must see to it that the learners are assessed against the Assessment Standards relevant to the respective language requirements, in Home Language or Additional Language (SA, 2003a:20-21).

Learners develop their Home Language or Additional Languages spontaneously, by listening to and interacting with others in their environment. They practice, develop and perfect their literacy skills through play, stories, and varied opportunities to interact with the world. They begin their literacy development from their first interactions with reading, writing, print and audio-visual media in the language environment in which they grow up. Literacy development involves a gradual process of improving various language-related skills. Mistakes should be viewed as a natural part of the learning process. Learners' literacy skills will therefore become increasingly accomplished when they are given the opportunities to use and develop them (SA, 2003a:50). Literacy is linked to personal empowerment and is essential for social and cultural interaction. In order to develop cognitively, learners need to develop the ability to use language to communicate their thinking, ideas, feelings and experiences, and to use a variety of communication forms to do this, including the use of audio-visual media and technology. Learners need to explore how language and literacy impacts on their social development and cultural beliefs.

Literacy in the Foundation Phase in South Africa covers all 11 official languages (Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, IsiNdebele, IsiXhosa and isiZulu), as both Home Languages and First Additional Languages for the Foundation Phase, to make provision for the rich language diversity that exists in South Africa (SA, 2002e:19). The learning experiences provided must encourage learners to understand and respect diversity. Learners need to be encouraged to link classroom experiences with languages and cultures in their homes.

Literacy is linked to personal empowerment and is essential for social and cultural interaction. In order to develop cognitively, learners need to develop the ability to use language to communicate their thinking, ideas, feelings and experiences, and to use a

variety of communication forms to do this, including the use of audio-visual media and technology. Learners need to explore how language and literacy impacts on their social development and cultural beliefs.

The Literacy Learning Programme enables learners to think creatively, critically and reflectively, to access, process and communicate information while building the foundations for a range of additional literacies. The following kinds of literacies appear in the SA (2003c, 41) as examples of literacies to be fostered in the Foundation Phase:

- Cultural Literacy: Cultural, social and ideological values that shape our 'reading' of texts.
- Critical Literacy: The ability to respond critically to the intentions, contents and possible effects of messages and texts on the reader.
- Visual Literacy: The interpretation of images, signs, pictures and non-verbal (body) language, etc.
- Media Literacy: The 'reading' of i.e. TV and film as cultural messages.
- Numerical Literacy: The ability to use and interpret numbers.
- Computer Literacy: The ability to use and access information from computers.

Therefore the main purpose of a Literacy Learning Programme is to enable learners to communicate effectively either in spoken or written/visual format as reflected by the Learning Outcomes in the RNCS (SA, 2002e:26) Learners will be able to:

- Process information: Through the Literacy Learning Programme learners are provided with opportunities to comprehend and respond to a range of texts, including both print and non-print media.
- Communicate ideas and information: The Literacy Learning Programme provides learners with opportunities to manage and exchange ideas, and to communicate these with precision, clarity and creativity.
- Establish relationships between self and society: The Literacy Learning Programme allows learners to develop an understanding of themselves and their world by becoming aware of how people use language for various purposes such as working with others and establishing relationships within the school and community.
- Access information: Reading and Viewing and Writing provides access to information, life-long learning and work opportunities.

- Creative expression and performance presentation: The Literacy Learning Programme allows learners to experience themselves through various art forms and to develop their ability to express their creative thoughts and ideas.

The formal teaching time allocations for the Learning Programmes in the Foundation Phase (SA, 2003a:31) are as follows:

- Literacy 40%
- Numeracy 35%
- Life Skills 25%

While a Literacy Learning Programme is developed at some point in time, it is not fixed for all time (SA, 2003a:51-52). Foundation Phase educators should develop the Literacy Learning Programme jointly as a team and reflect on its appropriateness and effectiveness for every learner. This should occur regularly, to ensure that Continuous Assessment will take place effectively. Assessment is described next.

3. ASSESSMENT

3.1 Purpose of assessment

The education policy defines assessment as the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about a learner's achievement, as measured against nationally agreed outcomes for a particular phase of learning. It involves four steps: generating and collecting evidence of achievement, evaluating this evidence against the outcomes, recording the findings of this evaluation, and using this information to assist the learner's development and improve the process of learning and teaching (SA, 2004:32). Identification of possible barriers can therefore be seen as the essential prerequisite for the formal assessment process to commence.

Assessment should provide indications of learner achievement in the most effective and efficient manner, to ensure that learners progress in their integration and application of knowledge and skills. Assessment should also help learners to make judgments about their own performance, set goals for their own progress, and provoke further learning (SA, 2002b:18).

The purpose of assessment is that it will serve to -

- determine whether the learning required for the achievement of the specific outcomes is taking place and whether any difficulties are being encountered;
- report to parents and other role-players and stakeholders on the levels of achievement during the learning process and to build a profile of the learner's achievement across the curriculum;
- provide information for the evaluation and review of learning Programmes used in the classroom;
- maximize learners' access to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values defined in the national curriculum policy;
- enhance individual growth and development, monitor the progress of learners and facilitate learning;
- find out what a learner knows, understands and/or can do;
- make judgments based on valid and appropriate evidence – these judgments should then enable educators to make well-informed decisions about what a learner needs to learn next;
- give an indication of the success of the Programme, including how appropriate resources have been applied;
- encourage learners to go beyond simple recall of data or facts;
- close the gap between the classroom and the real world;
- include opportunities for learners to perform tasks and solve problems; and
- make provision for adaptive methods of assessment;
- include a variety of techniques. Some assessment techniques are presented next.

3.2 Some assessment tools (techniques, instruments and approaches) for the Foundation Phase

The following serve as some examples of tools and techniques for general assessment (SA, 2003a:34), which can be applied in the identification of literacy (spelling) difficulties:

- **Observation**

Educators constantly observe learners informally to assess the learners' understanding and progress, during their individual, pair and group activities. The

observation includes 'perceptual' monitoring their literacy progress by way of listening to their conversations and discussions, and noticing their literacy behaviour in terms of their reading and writing correctly with fluency and comprehension.

- **Written work**

All written work, including formal work like worksheets and informal work like scribbled notes, should be regarded as suitable for identification and assessment of literacy progress or barriers experienced by any learner. Activities that require learners to present anything in writing should be planned in such a way that learners' performance (the written work) is reflected clearly when assessed against the Assessment Standard(s) for the activity.

- **Performance-based assessment**

Learners are required to demonstrate skills, knowledge or values, which deal with observable tasks. For assessment of spelling performance, learners can be instructed to create and produce written products, through which they can demonstrate their knowledge and skills in spelling. The criteria for any assessment task should be clearly spelled out to the learners beforehand. The end *product*, as well as the *process* that the learners use to complete the task, should be assessed. Such tasks could include:

- individual or group projects which integrate different activities and a range of skills
- presentations (drawings, paintings, recitals, constructions);
- investigations;
- practical exercises or demonstrations in which learners demonstrate manual or behavioural skills;
- singing and movement activities (i.e. games);
- role-play: rehearsed and unrehearsed.

- **Interviews (Oral questions)**

Evidence is obtained on a learner's ability to listen, interpret and communicate ideas and knowledge during an interview i.e. a planned dialogue between the educator and the learner, or during an informal conversation. Two assessment methods are combined in 'interviewing': observation and talking. The formal 'interview' must be well planned and the educator should make notes of what is observed of the learner's behaviour.

- **Self-assessment**

In self-assessment, learners get the opportunity to reveal what they think and how they feel about themselves, how they feel about their work and/or how they have met the criteria for the task.

- **Group assessment**

The number of group members can vary from two to approximately ten learners. All evidence of the learners' performance or achievement in the group should be stored in individual portfolios of each learner. A learner should have a portfolio for all three Learning Programmes. The date on which the task is completed should be indicated clearly as it can inform the educator about the learner's development (SA, 2003b:34) throughout the year.

The outcomes of the literacy learning area for the Foundation Phase are presented next. These outcomes set out below, should be assessed as described above.

4. LITERACY LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE FOUNDATION PHASE

The learning outcomes below are for English Home Language as well as English First Additional Language. There are six Learning Outcomes, which depict what learners are expected to achieve in either their home language or in a first additional language. These Learning Outcomes give educators a clear indication of what should be assessed.

4.1 Learning Outcomes for English Home Language as well as English First Additional Language

Learning Outcome 1: Listening

"The learner will be able to listen for information and enjoyment, and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations." (SA, 2002d:12). As much as possible, learners should listen to the additional language pitched at the correct level. Active listening is central to learning, as well as for building respectful relationships. Listening enables learners to increase their knowledge of their own language and other languages and cultures (SA, 2002c:11).

Learning Outcome 2: Speaking

"The learner will be able to communicate confidently and effectively in spoken language in a wide range of situations." (SA, 2002d:12). Learners will begin to express themselves in the additional language in simple ways. They should begin to communicate across cultural and language boundaries. They should learn through experience that multilingualism is personally and socially enriching (SA, 2002c:11).

Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing

"The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts." (SA, 2002d:12).

Reading is essential for language development, for learning to write, for enjoyment and for learning about the world. Reading texts provide the starting point for integrated teaching and learning of other language skills (SA, 2002c:11).

Learning Outcome 4: Writing

"The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes." (SA, 2002d:11). Writing is closely linked to reading and is an essential tool for learning across the curriculum. Learning to write well in the additional language is crucial if learners are to study some of their other Learning Areas in the language (SA, 2002c:12).

Learning Outcome 5: Thinking and Reasoning

"The learner will be able to use language to think and reason, as well as to access, process and use information for learning." (SA, 2002d:11). Learners will begin to understand concepts and will learn skills and strategies for thinking and accessing information in their other Learning Areas. It is vital that learners can do this in their additional language, if they are to use this language to study some of their other Learning Areas (SA, 2002c:12)

Learning Outcome 6: Language Structure and Use

"The learner will know and be able to use the sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts." (SA, 2002d:11). Grammar and vocabulary are

the building blocks of language. It could therefore be said that vocabulary is the key to fluency (SA, 2002c:12).

The above description was about the six learning outcomes in the Literacy Learning Programme. Next it will be indicated how the six outcomes are integrated.

4.2 Integration of Learning Outcomes

In order for the learner to be competent in spelling, all the learning outcomes described above should be achieved successfully as they are all relevant to spelling. The way in which words are heard, pronounced and read, all influence the way in which the learner interprets and sounds the words. Each Language Learning Outcome is equally important as one cannot function without the others. When we use language, we integrate knowledge, skills and values to express ourselves. A central principle of the Language Learning Area Statement is therefore the integration of knowledge, skills and values through the creation and interpretation of oral, written or visual texts. When designing a Learning Programme, the Learning Outcomes will usually be integrated. Learning Outcomes 1 and 2 (Listening and Speaking) are always grouped together. Learning Outcomes 3 and 4 (Reading and viewing, and Writing) are often linked, while Learning Outcomes 5 and 6 (Thinking and Reasoning, and Language Structure and Use) give the knowledge base without which the first four Learning Outcomes would make no sense (SA, 2003a:47). This means that the six outcomes can be integrated through the use of texts, which in turn link the Literacy Learning Area with other Learning Programmes. The learner could e.g. read and view a picture book on animals or food types, in the Literacy Area, which provides a link to the Natural Science and/or Life Skills Learning Areas (SA, 2003a:48).

Learners should be able to use writing skills to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas for both themselves and the intended audience. In the Foundation Phase they begin to develop or build onto their emergent literacy awareness. They need to develop the knowledge that through writing they can be the authors of their own meanings. (Learning to write is therefore much more than learning handwriting. However, young learners also need to develop the skills of physically forming the letters in a legible way.) Learners have to learn gradually how to use writing conventions such as spelling,

punctuation and text structures, in order to convey their own meanings through writing (SA, 2003a:45-46).

Learners should be able to transfer many of the writing skills learnt in their Home Language, to the First Additional Language. However, they will need to learn additional vocabulary and grammatical knowledge to supplement writing skills learnt in their Home Language (SA, 2003a:46). The development of language and spelling skills are described in chapter 3.

Educators can encourage and develop the writing skills of learners by -

- encouraging and supporting learners to do a wide range of reading (both by themselves and with others);
- reading and performing stories, songs and poems to help make language come alive for young learners;
- giving learners frequent opportunities for writing and representing thoughts graphically or in other creative ways;
- developing learners' vocabulary and language use.

In the previous section the outcomes of Learning Outcome 4 (Writing) were described. Next the assessment standards for writing will be presented.

5. ASSESSMENT STANDARDS RELATED TO LEARNING OUTCOME 4: WRITING

Assessment Standards are set out for each grade. This study focuses on Grades 1, 2 and 3. Therefore the assessment standards for each of these grades, related to Learning Outcome 4 (Writing), will be presented below. The Assessment Standards provided below are for Home Language as well as First Additional Language, as described in the RNCS Grades R-9 (Schools), Languages: English - Home Language, and English - First Additional Language.

5.1 Assessment Outcomes for Learning Outcome 4 (Writing): Home Language

Grade 1

"The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes." (SA, 2002c:40).

Assessment Standards:

We know this outcome has been achieved when the learner -

(a) writes with increasing legibility:

- manipulates writing tools like crayons and pencils effectively
- develops letter formation and handwriting skills (drawing patterns, tracing and copying words)
- forms letters of the alphabet successfully

(b) does pre-writing:

- creates and uses drawings as a focus for writing
- responds to a picture by writing simple sentences
- discusses with classmates (in pairs or groups) topics and ideas for writing.

(c) writes for different purposes:

- compiles lists
- writes simple labels or captions for drawings
- creates simple texts such as birthday cards (with written and visual text)
- uses simple strategies for getting and recording information, such as carrying out a survey of how many languages are spoken in a group
- organizes information in simple graphical forms, such as a chart or roster
- collects suitable pictures and graphics to illustrate text.

(d) drafts and revises:

- contributes ideas to a group writing a story (initially with educator as scribe)
- revises a draft of the group's story to be clearer and more interesting
- writes and reads own draft to educator and classmates, and starts, to make revisions.

(e) writes so that others can understand, using writing conventions:

- uses letters to form single words and short sentences
- leaves spaces between words
- uses left to right, top to bottom orientation to print
- writes own sentences, with the support of writing frames where necessary
- starts to use basic punctuation (capital letters and full stops)

(f) begins to build vocabulary and starts to spell words so that they can be read and understood by others:

- writes words that represent familiar people, places and things
- spells common words correctly
- attempts to spell unfamiliar words using knowledge of phonics
- builds own word bank and personal dictionary

Grade 2

"The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes." (SA, 2002c:41).

Assessment Standards:

We know this outcome has been achieved when the learner -

(a) uses pre-writing strategies to initiate writing:

- participates in group brainstorming activities to get ideas for writing
- shares ideas with classmates and educator
- chooses a topic to write about that is personally significant and that is suitable to the learner's age and circumstances

(b) writes for different purposes:

- writes drafts and short texts for various purposes:
- lists, such as tasks for the week
- simple expressive texts such as thank you cards and letters
- simple informational texts such as recipes
- simple recounts of personal experiences and events
- simple stories

- poems and songs
- writes a title that reflects the content

(c) revises writing:

- discusses own and others' writing to get or give feedback
- makes attempts at editing own writing (e.g. deleting or adding words to clarify meaning, checking and correcting spelling and punctuation)
- revises own writing after talking with others

(d) publishes (makes public) own writing:

- shares work with others by reading it aloud and/or displaying it in the classroom
- makes own books or contributes to class anthologies.

(e) builds vocabulary and starts to spell words so that they can be read and understood by others:

- experiments with words drawn from own language experiences
- spells common words correctly
- uses homophones with increasing accuracy (e.g. one/won, for/four, too/to,)
- attempts to spell unfamiliar words using knowledge of phonics
- builds word bank and personal dictionary
- uses dictionary to check on spellings and meanings of words.

(f) writes so that others can understand, using appropriate grammatical structures and writing conventions:

- uses writing frames that show different kinds of sentence and text structures
- uses basic punctuation (capital letters and full stops)
- experiments with other punctuation marks such as exclamation and/or question marks
- uses some narrative devices (e.g. once upon a time, the end)
- applies knowledge of grammar
- uses some information text structures, such as recipes

(g) writes with increasing legibility:

- uses handwriting tools effectively
- forms letters clearly and easily
- writes with greater ease and speed as a result of frequent practice.

Grade 3

"The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes." (RNCS.)

Assessment Standards:

We know this outcome has been achieved when the learner -

(a) uses pre-writing strategies to initiate writing:

- uses various pre-writing strategies to gather information and choose a topic (e.g. brainstorming, free writing, talking with friends, visual images)
- begins to plan writing

(b) drafts a piece of writing for different purposes;

- selects a text form to suit the purpose and audience (e.g. diary entry to record feelings about an event)
- writes a selection of short texts for different purposes (e.g. one or two paragraph stories, simple book reviews, recipes, letters, dialogues, instructions)
- where appropriate, writes a title that reflects the content

(c) revises own writing:

- discusses own and others' writing to get or give feedback
- edits own writing (e.g. deleting or adding words to clarify meaning, re-ordering sentences, checking and correcting spelling and punctuation)
- revises own writing after getting feedback from others

(d) publishes (makes public) own writing:

- shares work with others by reading it aloud and/or displaying it in the classroom
- shares writing with intended audience, such as family or friends (e.g. letters, messages, instructions)
- makes own books or contributes to class anthologies.

(e) builds vocabulary and spells words independently:

- varies vocabulary for interest and specific purposes
- experiments with and manipulates words from stories, reading, media, jokes, oral language of friends and others
- builds word bank and personal dictionary
- uses dictionary to check spellings and meanings of words
- uses knowledge of phonics and spelling rules to write unfamiliar words.

(f) uses appropriate grammatical structures and writing conventions:

- begins to group sentences into paragraphs
- uses punctuation appropriately (capital letters, full stops, question marks, commas, apostrophes, exclamation marks)
- applies knowledge of grammar
- uses knowledge of other texts as models for writing
- uses narrative structure
- uses informational text structures, such as experiments

(g) writes legibly:

- writes with ease and increasing speed as a result of frequent practice
- completes a writing task within a set time

The Assessment Standards for First Additional Language (SA, 2002d:36) are described next. Learners are not expected to have the same knowledge and skills required as for Home Language. The assessment standards are therefore less than for home language

5.2 Assessment Standards for Learning outcome 4 (Writing): First Additional Language

Grade 1

"The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes" (SA, 2002d:36).

Assessment Standards:

We know this outcome has been achieved when the learner -

- copies familiar words and short sentences (e.g. labels or titles for own drawings).
- uses simple, familiar words to complete sentence 'frames' (e.g. 'My name is...', 'I like...', 'I do not like ...').
- writes lists with titles (e.g. 'My Friends').

Grade 2

"The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes."

Assessment Standards:

We know this outcome has been achieved when the learner -

- chooses and copies a caption which accurately describes a picture.
- writes a caption for a picture
- completes sentences by filling in missing words.
- writes sentences using a 'frame' (e.g. 'I like...')
- puts jumbled sentences in the right order and copies them.
- uses punctuation – capital letters and full stops.
- uses phonic knowledge to begin to spell words correctly.
- spells familiar words correctly from memory
- identifies and corrects spelling errors in familiar words
- writes familiar words from dictation
- writes words in alphabetical order (e.g. in a personal dictionary).
- writes lists (e.g. shopping lists).
- writes headings for lists (e.g. animals: dog, cow, sheep).

Grade 3

"The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes."

Assessment Standards:

We know this outcome has been achieved when the learner -

- writes individual words such as labels
- enters words in a personal dictionary

- spells common words correctly
- writes lists and gives them headings (e.g. insects: ants, bees, butterflies).
- writes sentences using a 'frame' (e.g. 'I can...')
- writes own sentences without a 'frame' (e.g. expressing feelings and personal opinions).
- uses punctuation, e.g. commas, question marks and exclamation marks.
- sequences and copies sentences to make a paragraph
- writes short formulaic texts (e.g. invitations or greetings cards).
- with support, writes a short dialogue
- using a 'frame', writes a simple recount (e.g. 'Yesterday, I Then I....

6. SUMMARY

Chapter two comprised a description concerning the following:

- The Literacy Learning Area in the Foundation Phase in South Africa
- Assessment of literacy (specifically writing [spelling]) in the Foundation Phase.

Chapter 3 will comprise a discussion of the development of language and spelling, as applicable to either home or first additional language. The identification and support of spelling difficulties in the Foundation Phase will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 3

LANGUAGE AND SPELLING DEVELOPMENT, IDENTIFICATION OF SPELLING DIFFICULTIES, AND THE ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT THEREOF

1. INTRODUCTION

Many people never experience difficulties with spelling. These people easily learn within the first two years of schooling regardless of the different methods used by different schools. Some learners even learn to read and write before school, seemingly without having been directly taught before school. This chapter focuses on the difficulties which some learners experience with spelling, and how to identify and support such difficulties.

This chapter will deal with language development, as a prerequisite for spelling development. The identification and support of spelling difficulties will also be described. The writing and spelling outcomes that Foundation Phase learners have to achieve were described in the previous chapter. The spelling difficulties that may occur during the Foundation Phase, as obtained from a literature overview, and presented in this chapter as the 'signs' for the identification of spelling difficulties, will contain a description of the kinds of spelling difficulties often evident in the Foundation Phase. After that the regularly implemented spelling support approaches for such spelling difficulties will be presented, as also obtained from the literature.

2. LANGUAGE AND SPELLING DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Language development

Research (Masterson & Crede, 1999; Masterson & Apel, 2000; Apel & Masterson, 2001; Gaskins (1996); Ehri (2000); Cress, O'Hara & Donnelly, 1996:315) indicates that spelling should not be viewed as a rote, visual memory activity, but as one of the most complex forms of language. According to Ehri (2000) spelling and reading share the same underlying language knowledge. Spelling (and reading) draws upon an individual's knowledge of phonology (awareness of the sounds), orthography (sound-symbol relationships, (awareness of letter patterns and spelling rules), morphology (awareness of word parts), and phoneme/grapheme relations (awareness of corresponding letters and sounds). Therefore the educator should have the necessary knowledge of language, across the developmental span of language acquisition (Apel, Masterson & Hart, *in press*; Trieman & Bourassa, 2001).

This language developmental span encompasses listening, speaking, reading and writing. When learners begin learning an additional language, they acquire it mainly through listening (SA, 2002d:9). They often listen to stories with built-in repetition of new words and structures. Learners slowly start to make sense of what they hear. They begin to pick up words, structures, sounds and ways of communicating by merely listening. Learners, at the initial stages of language development, have a greater understanding of the language than their actual ability to speak the language. Eventually, as they grow in confidence and understanding, they will begin to speak. Learners will communicate through speech by firstly:

- using formulaic language (greetings: hello or good-bye);
- repeat frequently used words and phrases (I'm eating, or Let's play);
- respond to simple questions with one or two word answers (no thank you, or yes please);
- sing simple songs;
- perform action rhymes;
- in order for learners to become confident users of a language, they need to be praised and encouraged constantly (SA, 2002d:9).

According to Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004:395) spelling achievement is only influenced modestly by reading and writing, and that spelling instruction is definitely necessary for learners to acquire needed skills. Spelling instruction is much needed for learners who experience barriers in spelling. It is therefore of utmost importance for educators to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify learners who experience such difficulties.

Failure in the acquisition of reading, writing, or spelling skills might affect a learner's social relations, if classmates, friends, parents and educators do not understand what the learner is experiencing, thereby reacting with disapproval and thus giving a learner the feeling of failure in every respect. The resulting occurrence may be failure in academic performance, which in turn will also have a negative effect, in causing more problematic social relations, and perhaps leading on to total scholastic failure, which in turn may result in emotional problems, low self-esteem, frustration or behavioural problems such as aggression. The final result is a vicious cycle repeating itself.

Valtin and Naegele (2001:36) are of the opinion that spelling competency in the Foundation Phase develops through a sequence of spelling phases, and that learners with spelling difficulties tend to stay in the earlier phases of this sequential development longer than other learners. Some learners' experience and show signs of spelling difficulty. Particularly when under stress like time or achievement pressure, when writing long or difficult words, or when concentration begins to flag towards the end of a task, learners frequently regress to an earlier phase of spelling development. In phases 1 and 2 sight words are often written with reversal or omission of letters or with errors in the sequence of letters. In phase 3 irregular sight words are spelled phonetically (rokit instead of rocket in the English language). In phase 4 learners try to catch all sounds of their pronunciation and in phase 5 over-regularizations can occur. The six phases are:

Phase 1: Figurative Strategies.

The focus here is on perceptually discriminative features: either imitating writing behaviour of adults (scribbling) or representing features of the object (drawing). Learners have no concepts of words or phonemic awareness at this phase. When scribbling, however most learners show that they have grasped some important aspects of print: linearity, boundaries, irregularities in graphic structures etc. Some learners think that the message is in the pictures they draw.

Phase 2: Logographic strategy: drawing arbitrary sequences of letters of letter-like forms (pseudowords).

In this phase learners have gained more figurative knowledge of print. When asked to write a certain utterance they produce strings of idiosyncratic characters or conventional letters phonetically **unrelated** to the utterance. When asked to write 'I am a girl', poor spellers could possibly write 'I am u gel'.

Phase 3: Beginning phonetic strategy: Skeleton Writings.

Here, the very first signs of alphabetic writing become recognizable. With growing awareness of the sound structure of words, learners begin to represent some articulatory salient sounds. Frequently every syllable is indicated by at least one letter (e.g. "Mnamdanela" for "my name is Daniela"). Words or letters are often missing.

Phase 4: Phonetic-articulatory strategy.

At this phase, learners have grasped the principle of the alphabetic code and know most of the letters. Observations show that learners, when analyzing the sound structure, orient themselves primarily to articulatory cues, saying the words slowly out loud and

trying to catch all sounds of their pronunciation (e.g. the word 'deraw' for 'draw', or 'sixx' for 'six').

Phase 5: Phonemic strategy with first use of orthographic patterns.

Learners begin to segment phonemically at this phase. Mainly under the influence of print, learners develop the phonemic classification system. Through reading experience, learners also detect inconsistencies between sound and orthographic patterns of a word. Example: In English, the phonetically written 'letis' becomes 'lettuce'. On this level, many mistakes arise because learners wrongly apply specific orthographic regularities where they are not needed. An example of such over-generalizations is 'iruce' for 'iris', or 'wheet' instead of 'wheat'.

Phase 6: Complete phonemic strategy, influenced by orthographic and morphemic information of words.

At this phase the learners have learned important orthographic and morphemic knowledge and apply it consistently to unfamiliar words. Learners now possess a large vocabulary of learned words that they can spell automatically.

Learning difficulties describe a number of symptoms, which can include problems with listening, speaking, reading, writing and spelling. The important thing to remember is that when learners with learning difficulties are given the right learning tools and support, it is possible for them to perform as their peers do (De Benedictis, Jaffe & Segal, 2005:3). Educators should always remember that learners with learning difficulties do not have low intelligence. However his or her academic performance is below what one would expect of someone of their intelligence, age, and grade level. The learner may score poorly on tests but the low scores are due to a problem with learning and not intelligence.

Spelling difficulties can be regarded as even a more sensitive indicator of language difficulties, because spelling is the last of four in the hierarchic development of language. Lerner (2002) points out that learners' may use contextual, structural, or configuration clues in a text when reading, whereas spelling offers no opportunity to draw on such clues in reproducing a word, since there is not text to provide clues. Spelling therefore is dependant on the learner's already existing knowledge of the structure of language. This is presented next.

2.2 Structure of language

Learners need to understand the relation between letters and sounds in order to spell correctly. For learners to simply write a passage without paying attention to spelling and correct language usage is defeating the object of literacy. Incorrect spelling and language usage can be barriers to comprehensible writing, in as much that the reader cannot understand the meaning of the writer, due to difficulty in deciphering the incorrectly spelt words or the incorrect language usage. Spelling requires from the writer a certain knowledge of the structure of language, in terms of graphemes, phonemes and morphemes.

Spelling is the association of letters or alphabetic symbols, called **graphemes** (the smallest identifiable element in writing), with sounds or phonetic symbols, called **phonemes** (the smallest identifiable element in speech). This association of speech symbols with the alphabet symbols is called '**phonics**'. Sometimes the association is direct, giving, in English, simple regular spellings, such as d-o-g or c-a-t.

Knowledge of **morphemes** is also required. Morphemes are the smallest meaningful elements of speech (affixes), represented in writing by single syllables or even letters, which in isolation or added to a word can be meaningful or change the original word's meaning. Morphemes or affixes are presented in the root of a word, as well as the pre- and suffixes of words. A prefix is an element placed *before* a word or root to make another word of different form or meaning, e.g. possible/impossible. A suffix is an element that is placed *after* a word or root to make a word of different meaning or function, e.g. go/going. A word can also contain both pre- and suffixes, e.g. decide/indecisive.

In order to spell well a number of language processing skills are needed (Lerner, 2002):

- Learners need to know the graphemes and phonemes that letters represent.
- They need to discriminate between similar looking letters, e.g. m/n, and be able to copy them correctly.
- Learners need to be able to hear and correctly pronounce the word they want to spell.

- Learners have to remember the phonemes in the correct sequence as they heard it in a pronounced word, as well as which letters represent those phonemes. Plenty of handwriting practice also reinforces the 'muscle memory' of letter sequences.
- If the phonemes can be represented by alternative spellings learners have to decide which to choose for a particular word and then learn these patterns, e.g. the phoneme [f] can be spelt as 'fish' or as 'enough'.
- There may be irregularities such as silent letters, which they also need to learn by heart, since there is no rule to regulate silent letters, e.g. 'knife'. Learners need to employ their own strategies to remember these spellings just as they remember names or any other information.
- Learners need to consider each affix separately – learners need to learn to look at the internal structure of the words, e.g. 'in/decisive'.
- Learners often need to think about associated words they know that are spelt the same way, e.g. going/walking.

Another barrier for FAD learners is not being able to identify pronunciation distinctly enough to spell words. This is a particular problem with vowel sounds and other sounds that do not have direct equivalents in the learner's own home language, e.g. in Setswana the letters /hl/ are often pronounced as [sh]. The [o] sound in Setswana is often pronounced as [oo] as in mosimane-boy, or the letter 'u' on its own without the 'silent e', is often pronounced as [oo] as in nku-sheep and thutlwa-giraffe. Therefore, Setswana learners often forget to add the 'silent e' to short vowels in English, in order to make them long sounding vowels. In English the letters 'ph' are pronounced as 'f' but in Setswana 'ph' never takes on the 'f' sound. The letter 'v' in Setswana is often pronounced as 'f'. In English we often add an 's' or 'es' to a word to indicate plural, e.g. 'boots' or 'peaches', but in Setswana a prefix is always added to the word to indicate plural, e.g. lerapo-bone, *marapo*-bones, nko-donkey, *dinko*-donkeys. Language confusion is often a barrier in the development of spelling abilities.

As the RNCS policy document for Tswana First Language in the Foundation Phase was not available during the course of this study, the assessment standards and learning outcomes for Tswana First Language have not been mentioned. Several people from various Departments of Education were contacted, but unfortunately the document could not be located at any of the departments.

As language and spelling development go hand in hand, any barrier in the development of either may cause spelling difficulties. There are also other factors, which may cause spelling difficulties, and these can be grouped into either extrinsic (outside the learner) or intrinsic (within the learner) causes. Such causes are indicated briefly below, as they have to be taken into account in the identification, assessment and support of spelling difficulties, as described later on in this chapter.

2.3 Causes of language and spelling difficulties

2.3.1 Extrinsic causes

Any of the following causes outside the learner can contribute to the spelling difficulties experienced by various learners:

- Ineffective teaching methods, e.g.:
- not enough time spent on teaching spelling;
- the assumption of some educators that spelling rules should have been mastered in the preceding grades already and therefore need not be attended to in the current grade;
- not enough time in class for spelling control;
- ineffective language education in mother tongue in the home by primary caregivers;
- ecosystemic factors e.g. poverty, travel distances to school, poor learning facilities in the home, family disruption, etcetera.

2.3.2 Intrinsic causes

Any of the following causes within the learner can contribute to spelling difficulties experienced by various learners:

- the learner has no self-confidence in his own spelling ability
- no interest in writing in general and as a result of no motivation to spell correctly
- fear of failure and stress
- poor knowledge of language structure (morphology, phonology, syntax, phoneme/grapheme relation) in mother tongue as well as FAD
- limited vocabulary
- poor cognitive control (metacognition) of own writing and spelling processes and products

- poor perceptual skills, visual and auditory
- physical barriers e.g. learners with cerebral palsy, etcetera.

Spelling difficulties commonly experienced by learners are described next, as the 'signs' that educators should identify – be on the look-out for – in the classroom.

3. SIGNS FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

Educators need to have a thorough understanding of the expected outcomes to be able to identify spelling difficulties experienced by any learner. (Refer to chapter 2: Assessment Standards and Learning Outcomes). The longer a spelling difficulty goes unnoticed, the more difficult it will be to support the learner with the problem, and the more at risk the learner will be to develop other behavioural problems. Early identification of spelling difficulties is therefore dependent on the educator's keen observation and knowledge of behaviour that is characteristic of a learner experiencing a (spelling) difficulty, e.g. learners who constantly look around or never complete tasks. According to Culata, Tompkins and Werts (2003:52), no person is in a better position for the early detection of spelling difficulties than the classroom educator. The educator is with the learners throughout the school day and in a key position to identify and further assess those with spelling difficulties. Knowledge of the symptoms or characteristics or 'signs' of specific spelling difficulties is essential to sensitize the educator to the existence of such difficulties experienced by any learner

The most common error patterns of spelling difficulties, with examples, are listed below (Wallace & McLoughlin, 1988:168; Ehri, 2000; Trieman & Bourassa, 2000). These examples are applicable to all FAD learners, as all learners tend to make similar mistakes. Knowledge of these error patterns will assist educators in identifying spelling difficulties:

Addition of unnecessary letters

- Not dropping final l in contractions:
useful/usefull, until/until, wonderful/wonderfull
- Adding letters according to phonetic similarity:
Drinking/drinking
- Confusion with plurals

Dogs/doges, ladies/ladyies

Omission of necessary letters

- Problems with silent letters:
Knee/nee, limb/lim, wrap/rap, gnome/nome
- Problems with ng-ending:
Sing/sin, going/goin, longing/lonin
- Problems with silent 'h':
Rhinoceros/rinoceros
- Omission of 'silent e'
Glue/glu, wide/wid

Reversals

- Digraphs:
lion/loin, mouse/muose, friend/friend
- Consonants:
bed/ded, bear/pear, mat/maf
- Interchange of letters showing visual similarity:
how/who, gun/gnu, witch/which
- Interchange of letters in words:
left/felt, stop/spot, grab/brag
- Reversal of whole words:
saw/was, god/dog, pear/reap

Phonetic overgeneralization

- Problems with homophones:
son/sun, there/their, pear/pair, fare/fair
- Phonetic spelling:
quack/kwac, rough/ruff, medicine/medsin
- Problems arising from faulty pronunciation:
Flower/flier, etcetera/eccetera

Confusion of letters

- Confusion of diphthongs:

near/neer, laid/layd, boat/bowt

- Confusion of consonants:
dog/dock, rough/ruf, fixed/fixt
- Confusion of y and ie:
ladies/ladys, babies/babys
- Confusion of long and short vowels:
sad, sadder, saddest/sad, sader, sadest,
- Confusion of nk and ng:
wink/wingk, bank/bangk, drink/dringk
- Confusion of sounds and alphabet names:
bat/bate, meet/met, read/red
- Confusion of v and f:
five/vife, live/life, wife/wive

When the educator has identified the above possible spelling difficulties, these difficulties can be assessed with further strategies, as described below, to establish more details about the identified errors, if necessary.

4. ASSESSMENT OF THE IDENTIFIED SIGNS OF SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

Spelling errors can be assessed by the educator by way of performance-based assessment, informal phonemic awareness assessment, formal and informal spelling tests, and assessment of metacognition during spelling activities. Each of these are described next.

4.1 Performance-based assessment

Performance-based assessment can be applied by the educator to establish more detail about the specific spelling errors described above. (Wasowicz, Apel & Masterson, 2003; Ehri, 2000; Trieman & Bourassa, 2000). The learner may perform written or oral tasks on instruction of the educator, with the aim to ascertain the learner's (lack of) (written and oral) knowledge of language structure, as cause of the specific errors:

- Confusion of letters: assess morphological knowledge through segmentation of speech sounds, and matching letters to sounds.

- Confusion of letters: assess phonological knowledge through discrimination of speech sounds: recognition of meaningful sound contrasts (e.g. bed/dab) compared to sounds that sound alike (e.g. bed/beg).
- phonetic spelling: assessment of knowledge of letter-sound relations, letter patterns) and spelling rules.
- phonetic spelling: assess phonic knowledge of individual letters (sounds) of correctly spelled words.
- errors in word syllables: assess knowledge of morphology through the description of the meaning and spelling of prefixes and suffixes.

4.2 Phonemic Awareness Assessment

The following procedures can be implemented by educators to assess phonemic awareness in FAD of learners in the Foundation Phase.

There are formal standardized tests available for the assessment of learners' spelling ability. These tests are however not advisable for implementation in the South African context, as they are intended to compare learners' results with those of the peer group, which is not in correspondence with South African educational policy as described in chapter 2, as this policy adheres to inclusive education and outcomes-based education, which promotes individual learner progress. Such formal tests are moreover mostly standardized according to the American context and therefore are not suitable for assessment in South African education.

The South African educator who wishes to assess phonemic awareness in the English language, whether it be home or first additional language, is advised to rather implement informal spelling assessment approaches. These focus on specific spelling errors concerning phonetic spelling, thereby allowing the educator to gain information of every learner's specific task performance. This can be assessed, by presenting the learner with cards on which individual letters are printed in lower and upper case (on separate cards). The learner can then be asked to say the name and sound of each letter, presented in random order.

Various other phonemic awareness tests are also available for identifying specific sound difficulties. Although not developed in South Africa, they are informal tests, which can

be implemented in any way, to assess the specific phonemic difficulties of every individual learner.

- **Bradley & Bryant's sound categorization test**

This test measures the learners' sound and rhyme awareness. It consists of strings of four three-phoneme words. There are ten sets of words to assess awareness of sounds in three different phoneme positions, namely beginning sound, middle sound and end sound. All of the items are monosyllabic, with the majority conforming to a consonant-vowel-consonant structure, e.g. 'bag'. In each set of four words, all words have one phoneme in one position in common ('o'), and all but one word have another phoneme in one position in common ('r'), e.g. 'rot', 'rod', 'box', 'rock'.

- **Klein (2004b) designed a rhyme assessment test.** This test can be administered by the educator in the following manner:

Directions:

I am going to say two words: cat-fat. I want you to tell me if the two words sound alike. This is called a rhyme. Let me show you.

Model:

Cat and fat have the same sound at the end, so they rhyme. Cat and mop do not rhyme because they do not have the same sound at the end.

Share:

Listen to these two words: pail-tail. Now say the two words with me: pail-tail. Put your thumbs up if the two words rhyme.

Listen to these two words: cow-pig. Now say the two words with me: Put your thumbs down if they do not rhyme.

Assess:

Listen to these sets of words. Thumbs up if they rhyme. Thumbs down if they do not rhyme. Here we go:

- fin-win
- rug-mug
- hat-dress
- pan-man
- bird-book

- lock-rock
- bet-get
- cup-dog

- **Phoneme Blending Test (Perfetti *et al.*, 1987)**

This test can be used to assess the learners' ability to combine isolated phonemes into words. There are eight words. The words increase in difficulty, starting with a common two-phoneme word (e.g. see) and ending with two four-phoneme words (e.g. stop and speak).

- Klein (2004a) also designed a **phoneme blending** assessment test.

Directions:

I am going to say all the sounds in one word. I want you to tell me the word that you hear when you put these sounds together. You say it fast. Let me show you.

Model:

If I say /p/ /i/ /g/, the word is pig.

Share:

Now try to put the sounds together with me. Say it fast. If I say /c/ /a/ /t/. What word do you hear? Yes, the word is cat.

Assess:

Listen to the sounds and tell me the word these sounds make:

- /d/ /o/ /g/
- /m/ /a/ /n/
- /b/ /i/ /g/
- /f/ /a/ /n/
- /r/ /u/ /n/
- /n/ /e/ /s/ /t/
- /j/ /u/ m/ /p/
- /p/ /l/ /ay/

- **Phonemic Segmentation Test (Yopp, 1988)**

This test measures the learners' ability to articulate the sounds of a word separately, in their correct sequence. There are twenty-two test items and three to four practice items. The items are all real words ranging from two to four letters in length.

Directions:

- Have one test sheet for each learner in the group
- Assess learners individually in a quiet place
- Keep the assessment playful and game-like
- Explain the game to the learner exactly as the directions below specify.
- Model for the learner what he or she needs to do with each of the practice words.
Have them break up each word into its own sequential sounds.

Model:

The educator says to the learner:

Today we're going to play a word game. I'm going to say a word and I want you to break up the word into its sounds. You are going to say the word slowly, and then tell me each sound in the word in sequence. For example, if I say "old", you should say "oooo-llll-d" (the educator says the sound not the letters!!) Let's try a few words together.

Share:

The practice items are *ride*, *go*, and *man*. The educators should help the learner with each sample item, segmenting the item for the learner if necessary and encouraging the learner to repeat the segmented words. Then the learner is given the 22-item test. If the learner responds correctly, the educator says, "That's right." If the learner gives the incorrect response, he or she is corrected. The educator provides the appropriate response. The educator circles the numbers of all correct answers. If the learner breaks up a word incorrectly, the educator gives the correct answer.

Assess:

Test items: circle those items that the learner correctly segments; incorrect responses may be recorded on the blank line following the item.)

- | | |
|---------|-----------|
| 1. dog | 12. lay |
| 2. keep | 13. race |
| 3. fine | 14. zoo |
| 4. no | 15. three |
| 5. she | 16. job |
| 6. wave | 17. in |
| 7. grew | 18. ice |

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 8. that | 19. at |
| 9. red | 20. top |
| 10. me | 21. by |
| 11. sat | 22. do |

A blend contains two or three phonemes in each of these and each should be articulated separately. Hence, item 7 on the test, *grew*, has three phonemes /g /r/ /ew/. Digraphs such as /sh/ in item 5, *she*, and the /th/ in item 15, *three*, are single phonemes. Item 5 therefore has two phonemes and item 15 has three phonemes. If a learner responds with letter names instead of sounds, the response is coded as incorrect, and the type of error is noted on the test.

Learners who obtain high scores segmenting all or nearly all of the items correctly may be considered phonemically aware. Learners who correctly segment some items are displaying emerging phonemic awareness. Learners, who are able to segment only a few items or none at all, lack appropriate levels of phonemic awareness. Without intervention, those learners scoring very low on the test are likely to experience difficulty with spelling.

Yopp (California State University, Fullerton) grants permission for this test to be reproduced.

- **Test of Auditory Analysis Skills (Rosner, 1995)**

This test assesses the learners' ability to change words by analyzing, identifying and removing phonemes and syllables from two-syllable words, of which each syllable is also an independent word, e.g. 'say sunshine without shine'. The test progresses to more difficult items such as multi-syllable words, without separate meaning of the syllables, e.g. 'say cucumber without the [cu] sound, or removing a phoneme from the beginning, middle or end of a word, e.g. "say stale without the [t] sound". To respond correctly, the learner must analyze the phonemes of the word, search for and identify the [t] sound in the word, remove it in his mind from the word, and say what is left – [syl].

4.3 Spelling tests

The most well known formal spelling test is probably the Schonell Spelling Test (Johnston & Watson, 1997:31), which was designed to determine the spelling age of learners. The educator reads a word from the list and the learner is requested to write them down. The number of correctly spelt words renders a spelling age of a specific learner.

This test, as other formal tests, however are not applicable in the South African education context, as learners in the same Grade are allowed to progress at their own tempo, regarding the expected outcomes for writing as described in chapter 2.

4.4 Assessment of metacognition during spelling activities

The learner may be asked the following questions during a spelling activity, in order to determine his/her use of meta-cognition:

- How would you describe your spelling on a scale from good to poor
- What types of spelling errors do you usually make? What word/s do you always write incorrectly?
- How do you know when you have spelt a word incorrectly? What do you do then?
- Why do you think you are a good/poor speller?
- Do you think spelling is important? Why?
- How do you try to spell a new word correctly?

Now that the educator has identified and assessed specific spelling difficulties a learner may experience, the educator should provide the applicable support strategies and techniques to the learner. Support for spelling difficulties is presented next.

5. SUPPORT FOR SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

5.1 Introduction

The pedagogic philosophy underlying support for spelling difficulties, according to Valtin and Naegele (2001:42), which should be employed by the educator who provides the spelling support to the learner, should encompass the following:

- Accept the learner and understand the motives for his or her difficulties and reactions.

- Offer support not only in spelling but also in listening, speaking and reading, as the hierarchic development of these language aspects was described above. Therefore combine the teaching of spelling strategies with teaching of effective listening, speaking and reading.
- Meet the needs of every individual learner by using different teaching approaches, methods, material and learning strategies.
- Provide a print-and media-rich environment with a wide range of books, games, posters, software, multimedia, educators' material, etcetera, at various degrees of difficulty and levels of interest. Take into consideration different cultural (language) and family backgrounds, and create opportunities for learners to talk about their experiences from their own backgrounds.
- Foster learners' enjoyment of spelling.
- Give immediate positive feedback on effort, focusing on a learner's strengths and achievements, while trying to detect (identify) further needs.
- Build self-confidence by matching the spelling tasks to the competencies of the learner.
- Foster change in the attitudes of parents and other educators in the school, by offering them information on the learner's progress.
- Perform continuous assessment of the learner's work, as a basis for follow-up support activities.
- Spelling support should be of individual nature to ensure progress.
- Systematic instruction in language structure is paramount, in terms of phonemic, orthographic and morphemic knowledge.

Spelling words that are relevant to learners' reading and writing activities can be easier to learn and learners may be more likely to see the importance of learning to spell these words. Learners could also apply their decoding skills in reading to the particular spelling lists. Educators should therefore ensure that all learners are able to read the words before they are required to spell them. Educators should shorten the list length of words for learners with spelling problems. A small number of words can be introduced daily, rather than providing a large list all at once. Educators could ask learners to practice a few words on Monday, then revise it on Tuesday and introduce a few more words after revision. This strategy enables learners to master words daily before new

words are introduced. Educators should ensure that the words themselves are not beyond the current abilities of the learners.

Instruction or teaching in spelling support is most effective when the instruction is performance-based, that is when it targets an individual learner's specific difficulties (Wilson, Rupley & Rodriguez, 1999). Performance-based instruction begins with an assessment that informs and directs the teaching process by identifying the most appropriate learning goals and instructional methods for each learner. The learner's pace of learning is accelerated because the educator has identified the specific difficulties errors as described above, and can therefore zero in on that learner's specific spelling needs with the most appropriate activities to address those needs. In this way spelling support can be explicit, systematic and intensive instruction targeted a specific difficulties.

Spelling support can be performed by way of the strategies described in the following sections.

5.2 Spelling support strategies

5.2.1 Motivating the learner to spell

The educator has a profound influence on the learner's attitude towards spelling. Certain behaviours and actions of the educator can have a positive and favourable effect on the learner. Educators in the Foundation Phase can take note of the following guidelines (Wilson, Rupley & Rodriguez, 1999) to promote a positive attitude towards spelling within the classroom situation.

- Allow learners to compile their own list of spelling words that they would like to be assisted with. Learners should identify these words from their own written work done in the classroom.
- Allow learners to guess how words are spelt, as long as he/she can give a reason for that particular choice of spelling.
- Ensure that learners understand that it is often only one letter spelt incorrectly and only one error that needs to be corrected. This will prevent the learner from feeling that he/she cannot spell anything correctly.
- Start the lesson with a word that the learner can spell easily. Example: his/her name, or words from the learner's field of interest.

- Let the learner write words used on a day-to-day basis of words from his/her own vocabulary.
- Let the learner try to write a word with his/her eyes closed.
- Let the learner identify another learner's spelling errors.
- Let the entire class revise and assess each other's written work. It provides a feeling of power and authority, which could be beneficial. However, when learners receive back their own written work covered with corrections made by somebody else, and moreover perhaps in red pen, it may be less pleasing and the educator will have to explain to that learner where he/she will have to apply more attention (metacognition) with the next written attempt.
- Educators may have a promotion sheet for every learner to indicate their performance after each spelling test. In this way learners are motivated to improve their spelling or to maintain a high standard.

To promote reading skill, educators must provide an environment that is rich in language at a level that learners can understand. New vocabulary should be constantly re-used and consolidated. Educators can help learners to:

- build vocabulary around topics and themes;
- take note of the way words are formed (e.g. happy/unhappy);
- relate new words to their equivalents in the home language (SA, 2002d:11).

Educators should have a print-rich classroom and a well-stocked classroom library. Learners should also see signs in their environment and understand that they signify something. Educators should provide learners with ample picture books with very simple captions. Learners should also keep a personal dictionary. As reading and writing are closely connected, it is through reading a great deal that learners learn to write (SA, 2002d:10). Learners should be encouraged to try to read and write in their additional language, even though the writing may look like scribbles on a page. Writing in the new language during the initial stages will consist mainly of:

- labelling things (e.g. their drawings);
- writing lists of various kinds;
- copying and writing sentences (SA, 2000d:10).

5.2.2 Performance-based support

The specific spelling errors established by way of performance-based assessment (see 4.1 above) can be supported by instruction aimed at those specific errors and the (lack of) linguistic knowledge underlying those errors, in the following way, according to Wasowicz, Apel and Masterson (2003):

- Learners who demonstrate spelling errors caused by poor word segmentation (= lack of morphological knowledge) will benefit from spelling instruction and practice in correct segmentation of syllables (=morphology).
- Spelling errors attributed to poor discrimination of speech sounds (=lack of phonological knowledge) signal the need for spelling instruction that fosters recognition of different sounds (=phonology).
- Learners whose spelling errors reflect deficits in phonics knowledge will benefit from guided self-discovery of letter patterns (=morphology), spelling rules and sound/letter association (=phonology).
- Learners whose spelling errors indicate limited vocabulary knowledge will benefit from explicit instruction in word meaning, coupled with careful attention to the individual letters of correctly spelled words.
- Learners whose spelling errors indicate a lack of knowledge about word parts, will benefit from spelling instruction that explicitly teaches the meaning and spelling of prefixes and suffixes, the relation between root words and affixes, and the rules for modifying words when adding an affix (prefix or suffix).
- Learners with inadequately developed mental images of words will benefit from spelling instruction that fosters careful attention to the individual letters of correctly spelled words (=morphology).

5.2.3 Sound Recognition

In the Foundation Phase spelling is based on sounds. It is imperative for the learner to know which sounds are represented by which symbols. Educators should have *charts* with all the letter/sound/ associations, on the wall. These should be practiced orally every day.

Educators can also make use of *flash cards* representing specific sounds. When these cards are flashed, the learner must read the sound. The educator must differentiate clearly between sounding and spelling a word.

5.2.4 Word Building

Several interesting and fun word building exercises can be used to improve spelling. Three methods of word building are described (Gunning, 2000):

Word Building with Sound Cards:

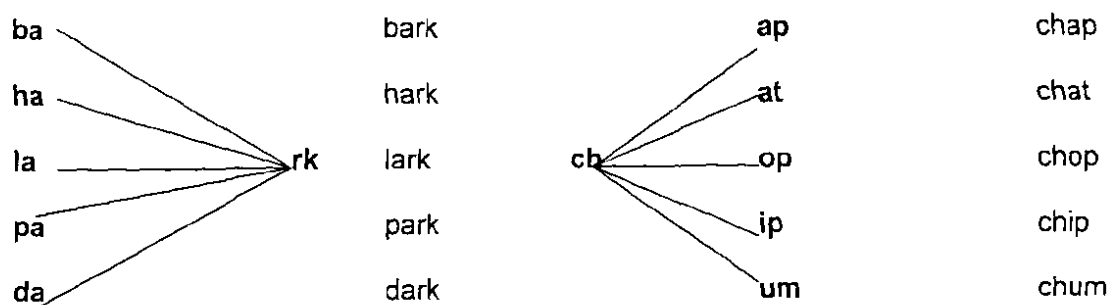
- A box containing individual sound cards is handed to the learner and he/she is requested to build words with the sounds: m a n
- The educator can say a sound, and the learner points out the sound symbol on the correct card
- Indicate a symbol and the learner has to say the sound
- Build words with the sounds orally
- Build words with the sounds (written)

Word Building with a Certain Sound:

Build a wall with e.g. the [ai]-sound: the learner writes an [ai]-word on a 'brick' of the 'wall' (or writing board):

| | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|------|--|-------|--|
| | | | sail | | | |
| wait | | mail | | | | |
| | faint | | | | saint | |
| paint | | plain | | | | |

Reinforcement of beginning or end parts of words:



5.2.5 Word Recognition

Words commonly recognized by most people as familiar words and which most often are used in their daily communication, are called high frequency words.

There are various techniques to teach the correct spelling of high frequency words:

- *Flash cards* with high frequency words can be flipped one by one in front of a learner.
- *Snap* can be played with a group of learners whereby the educator places a card on the table and the first learner to correctly say the word on the card may keep the card. Once all the cards have been dealt, the learner with the most cards is the next group leader.
- *Bingo* can be played for word recognition. Each learner receives a chart with 12 words. Each chart contains the same words but they vary in sequence. The educator flashes the first word and if that word appears on the chart of one of the learners, the learner places a marker on the word in the block. The educator flashes all the cards one by one. The learner who completes his/her chart first is the next group leader.
- How to introduce and teach new words:
 - Write the word clearly and correctly on the writing board
 - Pronounce the word distinctly while writing it
 - Explain the meaning of the word. Ask the learner(s) to use the word orally in a sentence
 - Indicate the syllables in the word
 - Let the learner(s) write the word on paper a few times while saying it softly
 - Ask the learner(s) to look at the word, close their eyes and try to form a visual image of it in their minds
 - Learners now write the word on paper
 - Learners write a sentence containing the word.
 - Learners now write the word on paper
 - Learners write a sentence containing the word.

5.2.6 Word decoding (analysis and synthesis of words)

- The educator says familiar words, in syllables, but the learners must say the complete word (synthesis): ba-na-na banana, wa-ter-me-lon watermelon

- Learners must say compound words as separate words (analysis):

| | |
|-----------|----------------|
| shipwreck | ship and wreck |
| downfall | down and fall |
| bedroom | bed and room |
- Word Hospital: each learner can have his/her own word 'hospital' where all high-frequency words as well as other words, which have been incorrectly written, are kept on a chart, and read and written daily. As soon as the learner can write (spell) these words correctly, they are allowed to "go home".

5.2.7 Self-monitoring strategies

Self-monitoring strategies teach learners to self-monitor their attention to task and spelling performance. Learners can be taught to say the word, look at the model, and study the spelling. Then cover the model and try to copy the word from memory. Finally, look at the model and compare their spelling with that model. Repeat the steps until the spelling of the word is mastered (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2002:396).

In order for learners to be successful spellers, they need to engage in metacognitive activities everyday. Metacognition refers to higher order thinking which involves active control over the processes involved in learning. Activities such as planning how to spell a word and then evaluating the spelling are metacognitive in nature. Metacognition can simply be defined as "thinking about thinking" (Livingston, 1996).

6. SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher described the following:

- Language and spelling development
- Structure of language
- Causes of language and spelling difficulties
- Signs for the identification of spelling difficulties
- Assessment of the identified signs of spelling difficulties
- Support for spelling difficulties

In the next chapter the empirical research is described.

CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the empirical research in terms of the following aspects:

- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion of results

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Objectives of the empirical research

The main goal of this empirical research is to determine how educators identify spelling difficulties experienced by learners in a first additional language in the Foundation Phase in Grades 1, 2 and 3. This research was performed in a school with Setswana as the language of instruction, but for many of these learners Tswana is not their home language or even their first additional language. (That is why the literature study in chapter 3 was about first additional language and the difficulties experienced in a first additional language, and not about difficulties experienced in Tswana. Examples of confusion between Tswana and English pronunciation were described in chapter 3, though [paragraph 2.3])

2.2 Research design

This research is qualitative in nature. There are several qualitative research designs available for the researcher for qualitative research purposes. These designs differ from each other. Only the design relevant to this study is described below.

All qualitative approaches have two things in common. Firstly, they focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings – that is, in the 'real world'. Secondly, they involve studying those phenomena in all their complexity (De Vos, 2005:106; Leedy & Omrod, 2005:47).

As this research takes place in an educational setting, the researcher chose a qualitative research approach due to the fact that it serves the following applicable educational purposes for this study:

- *Exploration.* This is conducted to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or individual. The aim of this specific study is to come to an understanding of the phenomenon of how Foundation Phase educators identify spelling difficulties in schools with Tswana as medium of instruction.
- *Description.* This approach will reveal the nature of the classroom setting on which this study focuses. This classroom setting encompasses the teaching methods used by educators in the classroom, as well as the ability of the educators viewing the videos to identify learning difficulties within a classroom situation as portrayed on the videos.
- *Interpretation.* This will enable the researcher to gain insight into educators' skill and knowledge in the identification of spelling difficulties as well as the support thereof, within the classroom. It will enable the researcher to discover the problems that exist within the classroom situation when a learner displays spelling difficulties.
- *Verification.* This will allow the researcher to test the validity of the common assumption (see chapter 1) that many teachers in South Africa are not equipped with the knowledge and skill to identify and support learning difficulties in mainstream education.
- *Evaluation.* This will provide a means through which the researcher can judge the effectiveness of the educators' identification of spelling difficulties and the support thereof in the classroom situation.

The qualitative research design of this study is a content analysis design. A content analysis encompasses a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns or themes. Content analyses are typically performed on forms of human communication to obtain data, including videotapes of human interactions, transcripts of conversations, filled-in questionnaires, reports and documents.

A content analysis is systematic, and measures are taken to make the process as objective as possible. The following measures are typical (Leedy & Omrod, 2005:155):

- The researcher identifies the specific body of material (content) to be obtained from the data. In this research, the body of material encompasses data on the identification by educators of spelling difficulties in Foundation Phase learners, as obtained by way of questionnaires. The questionnaire as the measuring instrument in this study is described below.
- The researcher defines the characteristics or qualities to be examined in the empirical research, in precise, concrete terms. In this research, the aspects to be examined are spelling difficulties in terms of learners' behaviour, reading, spelling and written language errors, as obtained from the videos and described in the questionnaires by the educators.
- The researcher scrutinises the material. In this research it encompasses the teachers' answers to the open questions of the questionnaires (the data) that are to be scrutinised, or read in detail, after which the analysis of the data follows.
- If the material to be analysed involves complex or lengthy items, e.g. answers to open questions in questionnaires, the researcher breaks down each item into small, manageable segments that are analysed separately. In this research, each answer to each open question on the questionnaires is analysed separately, by identifying emerging themes in terms of educators' identification of the above difficulties, as filled in by the educators on each question in the questionnaire.

2.3 Population and sample

The population in this research encompasses all the Foundation Phase teachers in primary schools in the North-West Province, who teach Tswana in the Foundation Phase. The sample group for this research consists of nine (9) Foundation Phase teachers, employed in three primary schools in the Potchefstroom district, which is situated in the North-West Province, and which is selected because they are representative of the learner and educator population in the North-west Province, in terms of Tswana as language of instruction. Tswana is however not necessarily the home language of all the learners, but probably their first additional language.

The applicable method of sampling for this research is Purposive Sampling/Convenient Sampling. In purposive sampling, participants are selected for a particular purpose. In this research, the particular three schools were selected because they are representative of learners in the Foundation Phase who receive instruction through

Tswana, but for whom Tswana is probably their first additional language. The sample is also referred to as a convenience sample, because the North-West University is situated in Potchefstroom and the target schools are nearby. The participants were reachable, available and willing to participate in this research.

According to the Statistical Support Service of the North-West University, this sample size will suffice for this study, as the schools and educators of the sample are representative enough of schools in North-West whose language of instruction is Tswana. The data is therefore presumed to reach a saturation point soon enough. A larger sample is therefore not necessary.

The three educators from the Foundation Phase in each of the three schools were requested to view the videotapes and fill in the questionnaires. One educator each from Grade 1, 2 and 3, in all three schools (= 9 teachers), participated in this empirical study.

2.4 Implementation of the empirical research

A letter was presented to the Department of Education in the North-West Province, requesting permission to perform the research in schools in the North-West Province. (See Addendum A, p 85). Consent was also received from the Department (See Addendum B, p 88). The principals of the selected sample schools were then contacted and the above-mentioned letters were issued to each of them, requesting permission to conduct the research in their schools. (See Addendum C, p 90) After consent was granted, the nine teachers in the three selected schools were approached and requested to view the videos, and then to answer the questionnaire (See Addendum D, p 92) provided on each video. The teachers viewed the videos and filled in the questionnaires in their own time and at their own pace. The researcher thereafter collected the questionnaires personally. Subsequently each question was qualitatively analyzed. The results of this analysis are presented below (see paragraph 3).

2.5 Measuring instruments

Questionnaires are implemented to obtain data on the knowledge and skill of educators in Grades 1, 2 and 3, in the identification of spelling difficulties in Tswana, but which probably is the first additional language of many of the learners. The questionnaires used in this research were compiled based on the theoretical information acquired from

the literature study as described in chapters 2 and 3, as well as on the actual language and spelling behaviour in Tswana that the learners manifest on the video.

A questionnaire with open questions is used as the measuring instrument for this research. Open questions are implemented to give the participants the opportunity to express their own experiences and observations. Participants can complete the questionnaire at their own pace. They issue a written response to every question on the questionnaire, and may decide to leave certain questions unanswered. Participants usually provide unique answers to open questions.

The questionnaires were presented to educators who teach in Tswana in the Foundation Phase, in English, so that they could answer them in English too. The questionnaires comprise a variety of questions concerning the identification of written and oral difficulties in the Tswana Literacy Learning Area, as experienced by learners in the Tswana language, but for whom Tswana probably is their first additional language. (There are also questions about mathematics in the questionnaires, because the learners manifest mathematics difficulties too on the videos, but these are not the focus of this study and therefore not discussed.)

The videos illustrating learners experiencing spelling difficulties in the Literacy Learning Area in Tswana, were issued to the selected schools. After viewing the videos, the teachers filled in the questionnaires, in English, so that the results can be read and analysed by the researcher (or any other analyst) who cannot read Tswana. The focus of each question in the questionnaire is described below (par. 2.5.1).

There are several reasons to justify the use of videos in this research:

- The use of videos proves to be more practical in nature, as the educators can view the videos in their own time and at their own pace.
- There are no other variables or other learners in the video to distract the educators while observing the one learner in the video. This is far more practical than expecting the participating educators in the study to be physically present during an authentic lesson conducted by another educator in a real classroom. Viewing and reviewing of the videos also lessens the possibility that information may be overlooked due to distracting factors like interruptions or unforeseen circumstances in

any real classroom. Should the teachers by any chance experience distractions or interruptions whilst viewing the videos, they can always rewind the video and view it as often as desired.

- The video depicts specific and obvious spelling difficulties *only*, and no other regular classroom activities, so that it is possible for the educators to focus their attention on the identification of spelling difficulties only, as directed by the instruction on the questionnaires (see Addendum D, p 92).
- Videos are user friendly and save time in any research situation – several participants can view and review a video simultaneously, for the duration of time that they wish, instead of separately attending real lesson presentations.

The *purpose* of all the questions in all the questionnaires about the learners in the videos, is to establish the teachers' knowledge and skill in the identification of the specific aspects in each question. The *focus* of each question is described next. The Grade 1, 2 and 3 questionnaires are described separately, as the questions for the three grades vary in sequence. However, although the sequence differs, the questionnaires for all three grades are seemingly the same. The learners on the videos also display the same or similar types of behaviour.

2.5.1 Focus of each question in the questionnaires

Grade 1 Questionnaire

Question 1: What aspects in his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?

The focus of this question is specific aspects of the learner's behaviour that are evident on the video, which indicate that the learner is experiencing difficulties. The educators must write down what they observe about his behaviour.

Question 2: What kind of oral reading errors does he make?

The focus is the obvious oral reading errors made by the learner while reading out loud, which the educators must write down.

Question 3: What other (than reading) difficulties do you observe that may handicap him during the lesson?

The focus is other difficulties the learner experiences in terms of language and overall development. Educators must write down any physical, emotional or other general difficulties experienced by the learner.

Question 4: What kind of errors does he make in his written work (compare the pages of his writing)?

The focus is the obvious writing errors made during written work, as displayed on the video, which the educators must write down.

Question 5: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?

The focus is the various language difficulties (language, reading and writing) the learner displays on the video, for which the educator must write down appropriate assessment approaches and techniques, which he/she is aware of and could possibly use for further investigation.

Question 6: Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher? (Answer “yes” or “no”). How? (If you answered “Yes”)

The focus is the teaching methods used by the educator in the video, and whether the participants can evaluate these methods, in order to write about possible other more effective teaching methods they are aware of and could use to explain the lesson content in another way to the learner.

Question 7: With which language, reading and writing difficulties would you assist him?

The focus is on summarising or listing again the difficulties already named in questions 2, 3 and 4 (language, reading and writing), to make sure the educators are sure of the specific difficulties they would support the learner with.

Question 8: With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?

The focus is the educator's awareness of various approaches and techniques, which can be used to support the learner in the video, so that they can write about these techniques.

Grade 2 Questionnaire

Question 1: What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

The focus of this question is specific aspects of the learner's behaviour that are evident on the video, which indicate that the learner is experiencing difficulties. The educators must write down what they observe about her behaviour.

Question 2: What kind of errors does she make while writing words dictated by fellow learners (compare the blue paper displayed on the video)?

The focus is on whether the learner can correctly write words she hears, as pronounced by fellow learners. The educators must write about this auditory ability of the learner.

Question 3: What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap her during the lesson?

The focus is other difficulties the learner experiences in terms of language and overall development of the learner. Educators must write down any physical, emotional or other difficulties experienced by the learner.

Question 4: What kind of errors does she make while writing dictation on the board?

The focus is the obvious writing errors she makes while writing on the board, which may be different or other than those as displayed in her written work, as in question 2, which the educators must write down.

Question 5: What kind of errors does she make while reading the words she wrote herself just previously?

The focus is the learner's reading ability to read her own written work, which is supposed to be already familiar to the learner and therefore should be read fluently. The educators must write about it in this question.

Question 6: What kind of errors does she make while reading the words another learner wrote on the board?

The focus is the learner's reading ability to read other people's written work, as in real reading, which is supposed to be not familiar to her, but which she has already read while looking on when the learner wrote it on the board already – the assumption being that she should be able to read it more fluently than new or unfamiliar reading material. The educators must write about it in this question.

Question 7: What kind of writing errors does she make while writing words dictated by the teacher and that are already written on the board (compare the white page)?

The focus is the learner's ability to correctly write the words she simultaneously hears and sees on the board. The educators must write about the learner's visual and auditory skills in writing.

Question 8: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?

The focus is the various language difficulties (language, reading and writing) the learner displays on the video, for which the educators must write down appropriate assessment approaches and techniques, which he/she is aware of and could possibly use for further investigation.

Question 9: Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher? (Answer 'Yes' or 'No')

The focus is the teaching methods used by the educator in the video, and whether the participants can evaluate these methods, in order to write about possible other more effective teaching methods they are aware of and could use to explain the lesson content in another way to the learner.

Question 10: With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

The focus is the educator's awareness of various approaches and techniques, which can be used to support the learner in the video, so that they can write about these techniques.

Grade 3 Questionnaire

Question 1: What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

The focus of this question is specific aspects of the learner's behaviour that are evident on the video, which indicate that the learner is experiencing difficulties. The educators must write down what they observe about her behaviour.

Question 2: Describe her style of silent reading while reading on the board to copy on her work sheet.

The focus is the observable behaviour (eyes and body posture while looking at the board) of the learner while she is silently reading work written on the board to copy in writing.

Question 3: What kind of oral and reading errors does she make?

The focus is the obvious oral reading errors made by the learner while reading out loud, which the educators must write down.

Question 4: What kind of writing errors does she make (compare her written letter on the work sheet)?

The focus is the obvious writing errors made during written work, as displayed on the video, which the educators must write down.

Question 5: What kind of errors does she make while writing words dictated by fellow learners (compare the blue page?)

The focus is on whether the learner can correctly write words she hears, as pronounced by fellow learners. The educators must write about this auditory ability of the learner.

Question 6: What kind of writing errors does she make while writing words, dictated by the teacher and already written on the board (compare the white paper)?

The focus is the learner's ability to correctly write the words she simultaneously hears and sees on the board. The educators must write about the learner's visual and auditory skills in writing.

Question 7: What kind of errors does she make while writing dictation on the board?

The focus is the obvious writing errors she makes while writing on the board, which may be different or other than those as displayed in her written work, as in question 2, which the educators must write down.

Question 8: What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap her during the lesson?

The focus is other difficulties the learner experiences in terms of language and overall development. Educators must write down any physical, emotional or any other difficulties experienced by the learner.

Question 9: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?

The focus is the various language difficulties (language, reading and writing) the learner displays on the video, for which the educators must write down appropriate assessment approaches and techniques, which he/she is aware of and could possibly use for further investigation.

Question 10: Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher? (Answer 'Yes' or 'No')

The focus is the teaching methods used by the teacher in the video, and whether the participants can evaluate these methods, in order to write about possible other more effective teaching methods they are aware of and could use to explain the lesson content in another way to the learner.

Question 11: With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

The focus is the teachers' awareness of various approaches and techniques, which can be used to support the learner in the video, so that they can write about these techniques.

Question 12: Which language, reading and writing difficulties would you assist her with?

The focus is on summarising or listing again the difficulties already named in questions 2 to 7 (language, reading and writing), to make sure the educators are sure of the specific difficulties they would support the learner with.

In the light of the focus of each question as described above, there are possible correct answers that can be expected from the educators on each question. These are presented next. As the questionnaires for all three grades are seemingly the same, the possible correct answers for all the grades will be similar or in most cases the same.

2.5.2 Possible correct answers to each question in the questionnaires

The following possible correct answers are derived from the literature in chapter 3 on reading and language difficulties, as well as from the real behaviour exhibited by the learner on each video.

Grade 1 questionnaire

1. What aspects of his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?
 - Clowning around
 - Learner's could possibly experience difficulty with manipulating writing tools effectively.
 - Looking around and looking puzzled
 - Fidgeting
 - Frowning and erasing
 - Not working
 - Not participating in class activities
 - The learner is possibly not learning at the same pace as other learners
2. What kind of oral reading errors does he make?
 - Wrong letter identification

- Wrong letter discrimination
 - Poor pronunciation and poor letter/sound correspondence
 - Wrong letter order in words
 - Poor word/picture matching
- 3. What other (than reading) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap him during the lesson?**
- Eye problems
 - Poor handwriting
 - Poor language
 - Concentration problem
 - Poor manipulation of writing tools
 - Possible hearing difficulties
 - Possible problems with crossing the midline
- 4. What kind of errors does he make in his written work (Compare the pages of his writing)?**
- Wrong letter shape
 - Wrong letter order in words
 - Wrong letter discrimination
 - Poor spacing between words
 - Possible confusion with left to right, top to bottom orientation to print
 - Lack of punctuation (capital letters and full stops)
 - Learner does not revise own writing
- 5. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?**
- Test with look-and-say words
 - Listen to the learner carefully
 - Observation (listening to and looking carefully at the learner)
- 6. Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher? (Answer 'yes' or 'no') How? (If you answered 'Yes')**
- Learner must first explain what he understands before the teacher continues

- The teacher can make use of flashcards
 - Drill work can be done more intensively
 - The teacher could possibly speak slower and explain instructions more clearly.
- 7. With which language, reading and writing difficulties would you assist him?**
- Speaking
 - Letter identification and discrimination
 - Letter formation
 - Letter/sound correspondence
 - Handwriting
 - Letter order in words
 - Word/picture matching
 - Pronunciation
- 8. With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?**
- Create a story or song to reinforce the specific sound
 - Make sure the learner can identify and sound the letter correctly before moving on to words
 - Give the learner several fine motor skill exercises to assist with handwriting problems
 - Continuously praise and encourage learners in order to build up their self-confidence.

Grade 2 Questionnaire

The possible correct answers for Grade Two and Three will be described below.

- 1. What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?**
- Clowning around
 - Looking around and looking puzzled
 - Fidgeting
 - Frowning and erasing

- Not working
 - Not participating in class activities
 - Possible difficulty with manipulation of writing tools.
 - Poor response to questions
- 2. What kind of errors does she make while writing words dictated by fellow learners (Compare the blue page)?**
- Omits letters
 - Wrong letter order in words
 - Wrong letter shape
 - Poor spacing between letters and words
 - Possible poor orientation to print (top to bottom, left to right)
 - Fails to revise own writing
- 3. What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap her during the lesson?**
- Lack of concentration
 - No self confidence
 - Possible eye problems
 - Possible hearing problems
 - Possible difficulty with crossing the midline
- 4. What kind of errors does she make while writing dictation on the board?**
- Wrong letter order in words
 - Wrong letter formation
 - Poor handwriting
 - Poor spacing between letters and words
 - Fails to revise own writing
 - Writes very slowly and with difficulty
- 5. What kind of errors does she make while reading the words she wrote herself just previously?**
- Wrong letter identification

- Wrong letter discrimination
 - Poor pronunciation
 - Poor letter/sound correspondence
 - Lack of confidence
6. **What kind of errors does she make while reading the words another learner wrote on the board?**
- Wrong letter identification
 - Wrong letter discrimination
 - Poor pronunciation
 - Poor letter/sound correspondence
 - Uneasy and lack of confidence
7. **What kind of writing errors does she make while writing words dictated by the teacher and that are already written on the board (compare the white page)?**
- Wrong letter formation
 - Wrong letter identification
 - Poor handwriting
 - Wrong letter order in words
 - Poor letter/sound correspondence
 - Poor spacing between letters and words
8. **With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?**
- Test the alphabet and the sounds
 - Test look-and-say words
 - Listen to the learner carefully
 - General observation
 - Test eye span
 - Test hearing ability
 - Test crossing the midline

9. **Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher? (answer 'yes' or 'no') How? (If you answered "Yes")**
- Learner must first explain what he sees before the educator continues
 - The educator can make use of flashcards
 - Drill work can be done more intensively
10. **With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?**
- Create a story or song to reinforce the specific sound
 - Make sure the learner can identify and sound the letter correctly before moving on to words
 - Give the learner several fine motor skill exercises to assist with handwriting problems
 - Possibly speak slower and more clearly.
 - Instructions could possibly be explained more carefully
 - Praise and encourage the learner in order to build self-confidence.

Grade 3 Questionnaire

1. **What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?**
- Clowning around
 - Looking around and looking puzzled
 - Fidgeting
 - Frowning and erasing
 - Not working
 - Not participating in class activities
 - Possible poor manipulation of writing tools
 - Poor response to questions and instructions
2. **Describe her style of silent reading while reading on the board to copy on the worksheet.**
- Eye problems
 - Poor letter identification
 - Poor letter/sound correspondence

- Confusion
 - Lack of self-confidence
 - Lack of interest
3. **What kind of oral reading and language errors does she make?**
- Wrong letter identification
 - Wrong letter *discrimination*
 - Poor letter/sound correspondence
 - Wrong letter order in words
 - Eye problems
 - Poor language
4. **What kind of writing errors does she make (compare her written letter on the work sheet)?**
- Poor handwriting
 - Wrong letter shape
 - Wrong letter *identification*
 - Poor spacing between letters and words
5. **What kind of errors does she make while writing words dictated by fellow learners (compare the *blue page*).**
- Poor letter/sound correspondence
 - Wrong letter order in words
 - Wrong letter *discrimination*
 - Eye problems
 - Fails to revise own writing
 - Poor spacing between words
 - Writes with difficulty (possible poor manipulation of writing tools)
 - Fails to complete work in time
6. **What kind of writing errors does she make while writing words, dictated by the teacher and already written on the board (compare the *white paper*)?**
- Wrong letter formation

- Wrong letter identification
- Poor handwriting
- Wrong letter order in words
- Poor letter/sound correspondence
- Fails to complete work
- Possible poor manipulation of writing tools

7. What kind of errors does she make while writing dictation on the board?

- Wrong letter formation
- Wrong letter order
- Poor handwriting
- Wrong letter identification
- Poor letter/sound correspondence
- Lack of basic punctuation (full stops, commas, capital letters)

8. What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap her during the lesson?

- Lack of concentration
- No self confidence
- Possible eye problem
- Possible hearing problems
- Possible problems with manipulation of writing tools

9. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?

- Test the alphabet and the sounds
- Test the look and say words
- Listen to the learner carefully
- General health observation
- Test eye span
- Test hearing ability
- Test crossing the midline
- Test memory

10. **Would you explain the lesson material to her in another way than the teacher? If answered "yes", explain how.**
- Learner must first explain what he sees before the educator continues.
 - The educator can make use of more flashcards
 - Drill work can be done more intensively
 - More individual attention
11. **With what approaches or techniques would you assist her?**
- Create a story or song to reinforce the specific sound
 - Learners with difficulties could possibly be seated in the front of the classroom
 - Make sure the learner can identify and sound the letter correctly before moving on to sounds or words
 - Give the learner several fine motor skill exercises to assist with handwriting problems.
 - Praise and encourage the learner in order to build self-confidence
 - Understand that not all learners learn at the same pace.
 - Explain the work slowly and carefully
 - Use a tape recorder to record the learners while reading in order for them to listen to how they read.
 - Select reading and spelling materials in which language has a natural flow, repetition, and rhythm even rhyme.
12. **Which language, reading and writing difficulties would you assist her with?**
- Letter identification
 - Pronunciation
 - Letter shape
 - Handwriting exercises
 - Letter discrimination
 - Letter/sound correspondence
 - Letter formation exercises
 - Language usage rules
 - Vocabulary extension activities

The results of each questionnaire, as the teachers filled it in, are presented next.

3. RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The results as provided by all three educators on the Grade 1, 2 and 3 questionnaires respectively, are quoted below verbatim. The reader should note that the number of answers per question differs. This is due to some educators giving several answers to one question, and others not answering that question at all. Therefore the number of answers listed below each question is not indicative of the number of educators. Each Grade was assigned three educators to answer the questionnaire as described earlier, but these three did not necessarily supply one answer each. Neither did they answer the same number of several answers each. Therefore, each answer is quoted separately in a separate line. Even when one teacher supplied more than one answer, each answer is quoted separately.

The rationale for presenting the answers in this way, and not per teacher, is that a *global* impression can be gained of the *total responses on each answer, of the Foundation Phase teachers as a group, and not as individuals*. The total number of possible correct answers of the group of teachers is therefore the aim of the investigation, and not whether each individual teacher answered each answer correctly or not.

Grade 1

1. What aspects in his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?

2.

- "Lacks facilitation from the educator. The lesson is boring."
- "When the lesson starts he's busy with his chair and book case, he lost concentration."
- "Laterality: begin to right [sic] at his right handside [sic]. Auditory perception [sic]. He hears what the teacher is saying but cannot give meaning."

2. What kind of oral reading errors does he make?

- "Not yet ready for reading consonants. Not ready for using double consonants."

- "He doesn't know exactly what is expected of him especially [sic] the sound 'R'."
 - "He does [sic] poor Auditory memory. Takes time to repeat what he has heard."
3. **What other (than reading) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap him during the lesson?**
- "Lack of pictures. Picture that the learner can associate the letter with. Play-way method."
 - "Assessment techniques that the teacher uses makes it difficult for the learner to respond."
 - "He convert [sic] certain letters when writing his own name, e.g. 'm' to 'w'."
4. **What kind of errors does he make in his written work (compare the pages of his writing)?**
- "No concentration."
 - "Video has poor footage."
 - "He has problem with directionality."
5. **With what kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?**
- "Look and say. Listening. Observation."
 - "Give the learner a chance to come up with her own words. Make a short story with words with "x" stressing them then he can give to the teacher after the story."
 - "Remedial work."
6. **Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher? (Answer 'Yes' of 'No')**
- "Yes"
 - "No"
 - "No"

How? (If you answered "yes")

- "He must observe first and say what he sees."
7. **With which language, reading and writing difficulties would you assist him?**
- "Observation, speaking, listening, writing."
 - "Stick to home language don't mix with additional it makes the learner confused." [sic]
 - "Speaking skills, fine motor skills, reading skills, listening skills."
8. **With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?**
- "Create a song about the sound. Show many pictures that go along with the picture. Play method."
 - "Make sure that the learner knows the letter x before you move to words."
 - Fine motor skills-will let him do a lot of finger excercises.[sic]. Reading skills-will engage him with excercises [sic] relating to visual discrimination. Listening."

Grade 2

1. **What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?**
- "Omiton [sic] of letters."
 - "She loose concentration cause the lesson is more centered to her." [sic]
 - "She can't read. To look around before writing. Lacks concentration."
2. **What kind of errors does she make while writing words dictated by fellow learners?**
- Unanswered.
 - "The footage is poor I can't see clearly."
 - "She omits some letters. Spacing."
3. **What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap her during the lesson?**

- Unanswered
 - "Reading, viewing, listening, speaking, writing."
 - "No confidence."
4. **What kind of errors does she make while writing dictation on the board?**
- "Omission [sic] of letter."
 - "She copies words from the board while the teacher is dictating words."
 - "Spacing of letters."
5. **What kind of errors does she make while reading the words she wrote herself just previously?**
- "Lack of concentration."
 - "She hesitates and reads silently before she can't read aloud. She's holding the paper incorrectly while reading."
 - "She forget [sic] the words."
6. **What kind of errors does she make while reading the words another learner wrote on the board?**
- "None."
 - "She can read what the learners wrote on the board."
 - "Always need help from other learners."
7. **What kind of writing errors does she make while writing words dictated by the teacher and that are already written on the board?**
- Unanswered
 - "I can't see the worksheet clearly."
 - "Some letters are written on top of the others (no spacing)."
8. **With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?**
- "Remedial."
 - "Give her more words starting with 'kgw'. Give her a story with more words in it starting with 'kgw' then she must give them to you orally."

- "Flash cards. Phonics."
9. **Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher? (Answer yes or no)**
- "No"
 - "No"
 - "Yes"
- HOW? If you answered "yes"**
- "By using flashcards, words and pictures. Drill work, transcription."
10. **With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?**
- Unanswered.
 - "Intervention."
 - "By using flash cards and pictures."

Grade 3

1. **What aspects in her behaviour indicate that she is having difficulty?**
- "She is hesitant before she starts. Shows brevity on her face and letters are not visible enough. She looks around before writing and lacks concentration."
 - "Looking around as if there is no lesson going on. Looking for help from the facilitator's side. Plays with fingers and thinks that the lesson is boring. Does not follow instructions and does not follow the stories."
 - "Works slowly. Does not sit still, up right, keeps moving on chair. Looks anxious when her name is called and a question is posed. Inattentive, eyes are on the video camera. Fidgets, plays with ruler, eats rubber, pages and the corner of a book. Frowns when reading, this shows that she has difficulty with something. She is not sure of the answers, so she looks around for help from learners."
2. **Describe her style of silent reading while reading on the board to copy on her work sheet.**
- Unanswered

- "Could not hear what she was reading."
 - "Takes a long time to read a word. Lips are moving while reading. Head is moving while reading."
- 3. What kind of oral reading and language errors does she make?**
- "Unable to read. She waits for the teacher to say a word for him to repeat. Doesn't know where to start reading."
 - "Does not follow where to read. Points to words when reading. Does not recognize words in reading piece."
 - "Sounds words. That is the only way to read. Reading does not make sense. Keeps looking around."
- 4. What kind of writing errors does she make (compare her written letter on the work sheet)?**
- "Doesn't start with the address on the right place."
 - "Teacher couldn't see the worksheet on the video."
 - "Spacing problem. Can't form the letters correctly. Writes for long periods and doesn't comprehend what has been written."
- 5. What kind of errors does she make while writing words dictated by fellow learners (compare the blue page)?**
- Unanswered
 - "Omits some letters."
 - "Spacing"
- 6. What kind of writing errors does she make while writing words, dictated by the teacher and already written on the board (compare the white paper)?**
- "No or poor spacing, write letters on top of each other."
 - "Transcribes from board but doesn't understand what he is writing. Uses parts of words and combines it with other words and nothing makes sense."
 - "Spells incorrectly when transcribing. Very slow in transcribing. Errors in the use of capital letters and mix capital letters and small letters. Poor handwriting."

7. **What kind of errors does she make while writing dictation on the board?**
- “Spacing of letters.”
 - “Wrong word order.”
 - “Poor hand writing.”
8. **What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap her during the lesson?**
- “She doesn’t compare her work to the teacher’s work, but rather copies what other learners have written. She has no self-confidence. She couldn’t read her own work and cannot read aloud.”
 - “Concentration is poor.”
 - “Auditory memory-she can’t recall what was said. Visual memory – can’t recall what she saw. Karabo depends on other learners. She lacks the ability to carry out instructions.”
9. **With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?**
- “Reading problem: Which makes her refer to what others have written. This event delays her writing speed. Oral reading: Monitor the types of processing strategies she uses-observe. The three stages of reading: before reading, during reading and after reading.”
 - “Cloze procedure: materials are prepared by omitting words randomly or selectively. The learner chooses a word suitable for the missing one.”
 - “Flash cards. Phonics – look and say.”
 - “Write the short letter maybe only two lines to find out is she can read what she wrote.”
 - “Involve them in groups and see if they can gain self-confidence.”
 - “Start to teach vowels and then add consonants.”
 - “Remedial classes. Give letters to build words with. Scramble the words and ask them to build meaningful words. Start with 3 letter words.”

10. Would you explain the lesson material to her in another way than the teacher? If answered "yes", explain how.

- "Yes."
- "Show her an example of the letter."
- "Ask her where to start writing."
- "She must fill in some parts of the address, body and conclusion of the letter."
- "Flash cards."
- "Drill work."
- "Word and picture."
- "Transcription."
- "Observe first and say what you see."
- "Find out what fore knowledge is."
- "Work in groups."
- Unanswered
- "No."

11. With what approaches of techniques would you assist her?

- "Observe her models. Check laterality. Use flash cards and pictures."
- "Create a song about the sound. Show pictures that go along with the sound."
- "Use a play method. Give her a lot of reading material to read. She must write her own short passage and read it to herself."
- "Individual remedial classes. Praise the learner whenever there is an improvement."

12. Which language, reading and writing difficulties would you assist her with?

- "Observation, speaking, listening and writing."
- "Choose materials and books that are suitable and easy for her. Give her a lot of written work from what she has read."
- "Use a tape recorder to record the learner while reading in order for her to listen to how she reads. Select materials in which language has a natural flow, repetition, rhythm and rhymes. Build her vocabulary by directing to lessons or objects in the environment."

The meaning of the above results will now be discussed.

4. DISCUSSION OF THE EMPIRICAL RESULTS

If the results quoted above are compared with the possible correct answers (see section 2.5.2 above), it is evident that the educators omitted several correct answers to some of the questions, together with those questions correctly answered. This is briefly discussed below, per Grade.

Grade 1:

The learner's behaviour was observed and described by three educators. When they had to identify and write about the written errors, the educators displayed very little knowledge. Directionality and poor concentration were mentioned. This can be taken as correct, although not provided in the 'possible correct answers' section, as poor concentration and difficulties with directionality definitely are causes of poor writing, and may inhibit writing ability. However, no mention was made of incorrect letter discrimination, incorrect letter order in words or incorrect letter formation. One educator said "He convert letters" – it is not clear what the educator means by this.

Based on these answers provided, the researcher could say that this question was not answered correctly and the three educators are not equipped with sufficient knowledge to *identify* writing errors. With regard to intervention and *support*, 'remedial work' was mentioned but no detail was given as to what type of remediation or how it could be done. One educator mentioned assisting the learner with fine motor skills and using the 'play method' but no explanation was given. Another educator mentioned 'engaging the learner in reading activities relating to visual discrimination'. Several of the other answers were not applicable to the question asked. It seems as though the educators have heard of some of the terminology, but lack practical real knowledge or experience of it. Their knowledge seems to be very vague and limited.

Grade 2:

This learner was observed by three other educators, also in order to determine spelling and writing difficulties. One educator mentioned 'spacing' and two educators mentioned omitting letters. These answers are correct but no mention was made of incorrect letter formation, incorrect letter order and poor discrimination of letters and sounds.

These Grade 2 educators displayed even less knowledge about identification of writing difficulties than the Grade 1 (and 3) educators. One educator never answered several of the questions, while the other two said that the video footage was unclear and therefore did not answer some of the questions. The words 'flash cards, phonics and pictures' were given as answers to several questions. When they had to write about approaches and techniques to support the learner, one educator answered 'remedial' and the other 'intervention' only, and *no descriptions* were given. The third educator did not answer the question at all. It seems as though the Grade 2 educators definitely *lack the knowledge and skills to identify and support* spelling difficulties.

Grade 3:

Three other educators observed this learner. They displayed a *positive amount of knowledge* with regard to *identification and intervention*. One educator said the learner omits letters, while all three educators mentioned poor spacing. One educator mentioned incorrect letter formation, and the other two mentioned poor comprehension of written work. Poor handwriting and errors in the use of capital letters and punctuation was also pointed out. One educator mentioned the learner's lack of orientation to print, by commenting on the handwriting that starts from the learner's right hand side instead of from left to right. Incorrect word order, poor auditory and visual memory were noted as well. The only answers omitted were poor letter/sound identification and incorrect letter order in words. Support strategies were given and most of the questions were answered correctly. It seems as if the Grade 3 educators possess an acceptable amount of knowledge and skills needed to identify and support learners with spelling and writing difficulties.

Conclusion

Several educators in the Foundation Phase indicated that the learners experienced difficulties with concentration. They commented on learners' fidgeting, looking around and looking puzzled and anxious. These answers indicate that the educators are aware of aspects of behaviour which influence learner performance and indicate possible learning difficulties. Educators failed to indicate other abilities that could handicap the learner during the lesson such as eye problems, hearing, and physical health problems.

The educators seemed to know very little about other abilities, which could inhibit learning.

The researcher can therefore conclude that many of the respondents lack sufficient knowledge and skills with regard to identifying and supporting spelling and writing difficulties. Most educators gave brief answers and failed to explain support strategies in detail. This poses uncertainty as to whether the educators really know how to apply support strategies or not. It seems that the main area of concern would be the lack of knowledge and skills needed to identify and support writing difficulties.

It is important to note that none of the educators indicated the possibility that Tswana probably is a first additional language for these learners, and that this could be the cause of the learners' lack of language knowledge, which resulted in the language and spelling difficulties.

5. SUMMARY

In this chapter the methodology of the empirical research, results of the research, and the discussion there, were discussed:

In the final chapter the findings and conclusions will be presented

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to determine the knowledge and skills Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province possess concerning the identification of spelling difficulties in learners. The study focused on the manifestation of spelling difficulties in learners in the Foundation Phase and the educators' identification thereof. The learners in this study receive instruction in Tswana, but for most of them Tswana is an additional language.

In this chapter, a summary of the previous chapters will be given, as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

2. SUMMARY

In chapter 1 the problem statement as well as aims of the study were presented. The proposed methods for the research were outlined, definitions of terms were presented and the programme of the study was indicated.

In chapter 2 the education dispensation in South Africa in the Foundation Phase was described, focusing on Literacy in the Foundation Phase. The implications of an inclusive education system were dealt with and assessment tools and techniques described. This chapter concludes with the language learning outcomes and assessment standards in Home Language and First Additional Language, as relevant to literacy and spelling.

In chapter 3 the results gained from the literature review were presented: These include literacy and language development, spelling difficulties, the various possible causes of spelling difficulties, and support strategies for spelling difficulties.

In chapter 4 the results from the empirical research were presented and discussed. This chapter further deals with the conclusions and recommendations.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The main goal of this study was to determine what knowledge and skills educators in the Foundation Phase in the North-West Province possess concerning the identification of learners' difficulties in spelling, with Tswana as medium of instruction, but for which learners Tswana probably is their first additional language. To be able to reach this goal, the manifestation of spelling difficulties in the Foundation Phase experienced by learners with Tswana as medium of instruction, also had to be established.

According to the results of the empirical research, it is apparent that educators in the Foundation Phase, at these particular schools in the Potchefstroom district, are not equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify and support learners who experience spelling difficulties in Tswana, which is probably their first additional language. A summary of the results is presented, to illustrate this conclusion

It is important to note that none of the educators indicated the possibility that Tswana probably is a first additional language for these learners, and that this could be the cause of the learners' lack of language knowledge, which resulted in their language and spelling difficulties.

The educators did make mention of spelling and writing difficulties, but how to support these difficulties, received no comments. It is therefore apparent that some educators are aware of the difficulties experienced by learners, but lack the knowledge and skills to effectively identify, assess and support these particular difficulties.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations will be presented in terms of relevancy for educators and learners, parents, the community, and the Department of Education

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS

4.1.1 Teaching and learning practices are very often based on educators' personal preferences, convenience, resources available and other practical complications. These

complications include large classes and a lack of knowledge and skills on behalf of the educators themselves. Educators should try to involve the learners on a more regular basis (daily) during teaching and learning activities. Educators should use a variety of teaching/learning methods and not just settle for rote learning. Educators should have the ability to modify tasks for learners with diverse needs. In so doing, educators can make it clear that they value all skills and abilities presented by learners. Educators should also strive to provide opportunities for daily success for learners.

4.1.2 To be able to render the necessary education to learners with diverse needs, specifically spelling difficulties, educators need in-service (as well as pre-service) training in the identification and support of spelling difficulties.

4.1.3 In the African culture, respect has a specific cultural meaning and behaviour code. For example, learners very seldom look at the educator's eyes, as eye contact in some cultures is considered cheeky. As mentioned in chapter 2, South Africa has 11 official languages and diverse cultures are often placed in the same classroom setting. This could restrict relaxed and spontaneous learning. Educators should therefore try to make learners feel as secure and accepted as possible without offending cultural beliefs. Eye contact, an appropriate joke and appropriate occasional touching of learners at the correct time and place, can often provide encouragement and enhance a feeling of acceptance. Learners of all the cultures should however be taught that they are free to ask for assistance and explanations at any given time, as it is the educators' role to reteach and support. Spelling specifically should be enjoyable and not just a formal activity.

4.1.4 The medium of instruction can and does restrict language learning. Educators should ensure that they are familiar with the medium of instruction, even as an additional language, and have necessary resources available for teaching and learning, in both home languages and additional languages. Educators can make many of the resources themselves; these can include pinning up on the wall of alphabet charts, sight words, or pictures with written notes.

4.1.5 Many learners in South Africa do not enter school with the requisite literacy skills such as recognizing various sounds and shapes of letters. This could often be due to

the fact that parents or caregivers are illiterate and therefore do not have books or other literate materials in their environment. Many learners in South Africa are not introduced to written work before reaching Grade R. This study mentions the importance of early childhood development in South Africa. It is imperative for children to be exposed to literacy activities as early as possible in order for them to cope with literacy activities at school. Recommendations for parents in this regard follow below.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS

4.2.1 All parents should get involved with the activities of the school and their child's academic requirements. Parents should be aware of any possible difficulties experienced by their children. Parents who are illiterate could attend family literacy programmes provided at schools or in the community.

4.2.2 At home parents should spend more time with their children, to establish and maintain literacy skills and to reinforce spelling skills learnt at school. Parents should continuously encourage good spelling and spelling habits in their children.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY

4.3.1 The community needs to understand the diverse needs of learners in the schools and to support these needs in order for learners to develop optimally. This will require information and training of the community, preferably by the schools themselves.

4.3.2 In a developing country such as South Africa where unemployment, poverty and illiteracy are rife, it can be stated that provision of quality education for all learners, including those who experience barriers to learning, is a formidable task. The community can assist in education by offering assistance and support to the teaching staff and by getting involved in in-service training programmes for the educators.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

4.4.1 More time and money (where possible) should be invested in the Foundation Phase so that illiteracy and deprivation of education in the home may be compensated

for as early as possible. ECD in the Foundation Phase could be enhanced in this way, and the amount of early school leavers reduced.

4.4.2 The Department should place more emphasis on the preparation of educators in a professional capacity, through pre-service training in the first place, even if it necessitates a longer period of professional study. This includes training in the diverse needs which may be experienced by learners. Most importantly for this study, it includes in-service training in the identification and support of spelling difficulties. If the Government could design a model and training manuals for the identification and support for barriers to learning, an effective inclusive education system is possible. The ultimate aim of the bigger research project of which this study forms part of, is in fact the design of such an in-service training model, with the assistance and support from the Government.

4.4.3 The availability of resources in schools should be looked at more meticulously, as many schools at present have very limited resources.

4.4.4 The Department should ensure that learners receive Foundation Phase education in their actual home language and not in an additional language, as research strongly suggests that learners are disadvantaged by having to acquire literacy in an additional language.

5. CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this research will contribute towards the provision of in-service training for Foundation Phase educators, specifically in the identification and support of spelling difficulties.

ADDENDUM: A
PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Dr Mvula
District Director
Northwest Department of Education
POTCHEFSTROOM

Tel (018) 018 299 1884
Fax (018) 018 299 1888

5 May 2004

Dear dr Mvula

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

I hereby request permission to conduct research in 30 primary schools in Potchefstroom and district, for my research project, titled:

Outcomes-based assessment of learners with special educational needs: An in-service training programme for teachers in the Foundation phase in the Northwest Province.

A research grant was allocated to me jointly by the NRF and the University of the Northwest for this research project, which has to be executed during this present school term. The research encompasses that video tapes as well as questionnaires be presented to the Foundation phase teachers in the 30 primary schools in the Northwest Province. These teachers (**Grades 1, 2 and 3 teachers in each of these 30 schools**) will be requested to look at the videos and fill in the questionnaires, about the learners in the videos. The videos are about one learner each in Grade 1, 2 and 3, performing class activities in reading, writing and mathematics. The video recordings each are more or less 20 minutes long, of each of the Grade 1, 2 and 3 learners, in an Afrikaans, English, Tswana and Northern Sotho speaking class.

The teachers' role in the research will entail the looking at the video recordings and filling in the questionnaire – one Grade 1 teacher in each of the 30 schools (total 30 teachers) will look at the video of a Grade 1 learner; one Grade 2 teacher in each of the 30 schools (total 30 teachers) will look at the video of a Grade 2 learner; and one Grade 3 teacher in each of the 30 schools (total 30 teachers) will look at the video of a Grade 3 learner. After watching the video, each teacher has to fill in the questionnaire about that learner's learning and classroom behaviour on the video. The aim of the watching of the videos is for the teachers to **identify any symptoms of any possible learning difficulties** from the learners' activities and written work, and to fill in corresponding questions in the questionnaire, about the specific learner's learning behaviour as evident on the video. From the answers obtained from the questionnaires I will be able to determine the teachers' present amount of knowledge and skill in identifying symptoms of learning difficulties. The ultimate aim of the research will then be to compile an in-service training programme for Foundation phase teachers in the identification of learning difficulties in the classroom.



Permission is therefore requested for the following:

- that **30 schools** are selected to take part in the research, issued to me with the names of the schools, **8 in each of the 4 mentioned mediums of teaching**, their **physical as well as postal addresses**, and their **telephone and fax numbers**.
- to conduct the research among **90 Foundation phase teachers** (3 teachers – Grade 1,2 and 3 – in each of these 30 schools) in Potchefstroom and district.
- that these 30 schools have to be **representative of four language groups in the Northwest Province: English, Afrikaans, Tswana and Northern Sotho**. This means that approximately 8 schools in each of these 4 languages have to be selected – that the medium of teaching in these schools therefore have to be these 4 languages: **8 schools with English as medium, 8 schools with Afrikaans as medium, 8 schools Tswana, and 8 schools Northern Sotho**.

It takes about **45 minutes** to watch the video and fill in the questionnaire, which the **teachers can do after hours** on their own private video machines at home, or wherever they have access to video machines. **It therefore does not have to be done during school hours at all, but may be done on the school premises, after hours**, if the school has **video facilities available**. Some of the the 90 teachers will therefore have to be willing to **stay after school for one day only**, to watch the video and fill in the questionnaire, if they do not have private video facilities at their homes. I will mail or personally deliver the videos and questionnaires to the 90 teachers at the 30 schools, after which the videos and questionnaires have to be returned to me.

Anonymity and confidentiality is of course guaranteed, as no names of teachers or schools have to be filled in on the questionnaire. The research entails participation of **teachers only; no learners**. The aim of the research is to obtain a general indication of how teachers presently identify learning difficulties, in order to eventually design the in-service training programme for teachers. The schools will benefit from the research by contributing towards the establishment of the training programme, from which all Foundation phase teachers ultimately may benefit, to improve their knowledge and skill in the identification of learning difficulties. I also envisage that these trained teachers may ultimately become facilitators as well in their own right, in the training of their colleagues in the early identification of learning difficulties, to prevent school failure and dropout later on in learners' school careers.

I therefore request your permission on this matter urgently, in order to fulfil my financial and time-fixed obligation towards the NRF and the University of the Northwest.

Thank you for your kind consideration of my request.

Yours sincerely



PROF PETRUSA DU TOIT

ADDENDUM: B

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS



Department of Education
Lefapha La Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

Private Bag X 919
Potchefstroom, 2520
Tel (018) 297 8294/99
Fax (018) 299 8290



NORTH WEST PROVINCE

SOUTHERN REGION

Enq: M. Mwel
E-Mail: mmweli@nwpe.gov.za

To : Prof. Du Toit
University of the North West

From : Mr H M Mwel
Executive Manager

Date : 11 August 2004

Subject : PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Your correspondence to my regarding the above matter refers.

Permission is herewith granted for you to conduct research in schools as per your request. This Department will very much appreciate it if you can furnish me with a copy of the Research itself and/or a report on how you undertook the research.

Wishing you well in your endeavors.

Yours sincerely

MR H M MWELI
EXECUTIVE MANAGER
SOUTHERN REGION



Re a dira mo dikolong □ Ops werk in ons skole □ We are working in our schools □ Re a seketša dikolong
Sivasebenz' azikoleni □ Ha tina eswikoiveni □ Re a shunta zwikoleni □ Sila sebenta etikoleni



ADDENDUM: C

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL



THE PRINCIPAL
PRIMARY SCHOOL
POTCHEFSTROOM

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
EDUCATION

Tel (018) 018 299 1884

Fax (018) 018 299 1888

5 May 2004

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in the research project of the University of the Northwest, on the identification by Grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers of learners with learning difficulties. Permission from the Department of Education has already been obtained, and a copy of that letter is enclosed for your notice.

The research entails that one each of a Grade 1, 2 and 3 teacher in your school will watch a video of a learner with learning difficulties, and then fill in a questionnaire about the learner on the video. That means that the Gr 1 teacher will watch the video of the Gr 1 learner, the Gr 2 teacher the video of the Gr 2 learner, and the Gr 3 teacher the video of the Gr 3 learner, and thereafter each teacher fills in his/her separate questionnaire about the learner on the video that he/she has watched. It should take about 45 minutes to watch the video and fill in the questionnaire, which the teachers can do after hours on their own private video machines at home or wherever they have access to video machines. It therefore does not have to be done on the school premises, but of course it will speed up the research if your school does have video facilities available on your premises, for the teachers' use, as it is an official matter permitted by the Department of Education.

Anonymity and confidentiality is of course guaranteed, as no names of teachers or schools are mentioned anywhere. The aim of the research is to obtain a general indication of how teachers presently identify learning difficulties, in order to design an in-service training programme for teachers. Your school will benefit from the research by contributing towards the establishment of the training programme, from which all Foundation phase teachers ultimately may benefit, to improve their knowledge and skill in the identification of learning difficulties. I also envisage that these trained teachers may ultimately become facilitators as well in their own right, in the training of their colleagues in the early identification of learning difficulties, to prevent school failure and dropout later on in learners' school careers.

Enclosed please find three videos, one each of a Gr 1, 2 and 3 learner with an accompanying questionnaire on each video, which the three teachers please have to



watch and fill in, and **return the whole package** (videos and questionnaires) in the enclosed envelope. I will arrange to deliver and fetch it personally to and from your school. I request that you be so kind to please have the teachers finish the questionnaires by (date). The successful progress of the research project is dependent on your kindly returning the package by this date.

Thank you again for your cooperation. It is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



prof PETRUSA DU TOIT

RESEARCHER

ADDENDUM: D
QUESTIONNAIRES

QUESTIONNAIRE

IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN GRADE ONE IN A TSWANA CLASS

Please look at the video of the boy in the dark sweater in the middle of the picture (Itumeleng). Then please answer the following questions about the possible learning difficulties you observe as experienced by him in his oral and written work in two separate lessons, namely in mathematics and in language. Images of his written work (approximately one minute per page) in each lesson will be displayed in between or at the end of each lesson. The duration of the video is 15 minutes (mathematics lesson) and 11 minutes (language lesson), thus 26 minutes in total.

MATHEMATICS

1. What aspects in his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?

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2. What mathematical concepts does he not comprehend in oral work?

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3. What other (than mathematical) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap him during the lesson?

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4. What errors does he make when writing mathematics in his book (compare the pages of his written work)?

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5. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his mathematics difficulties?

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6. Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher?

(Answer "Yes" or "No")

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How? (If you answered "Yes")

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7. With which mathematical difficulties would you assist him?

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8. With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?

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| LANGUAGE |
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1. What aspects in his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?

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2. What kind of oral reading errors does he make?

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3. What other (than reading) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap him during the lesson?

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4. What kind of errors does he make in his written work (compare the pages of his writing)?

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5. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?

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6. Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher?
(Answer "Yes" or "No")

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How? (If you answered "Yes")

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7. With which language, reading and writing difficulties would you assist him?

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8. With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?

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QUESTIONNAIRE

IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES
IN GRADE TWO IN A TSWANA CLASS

Please look at the video of the girl in the dark sweater in the front of the picture (Connie). Then please answer the following questions about the possible learning difficulties you observe as experienced by her in her oral and written work in two separate lessons, namely in mathematics and in language. Images of her written work (approximately one minute per page) in each lesson will be displayed in between or at the end of each lesson. The duration of the video is 15 minutes (mathematics lesson) and 15 minutes (language lesson), thus 30 minutes in total.

MATHEMATICS

1. What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

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What mathematical concepts does she not comprehend in oral work?

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3. What other (than mathematical) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap her during the lesson?

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4. What kind of errors does she make when doing mathematics on the board?

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5. What kind of errors does she make when doing written work at her desk?

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6. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her mathematics difficulties?

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7. Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher?
(Answer "Yes" or "No")

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How? (If you answered "Yes")

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8. With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

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LANGUAGE

1. What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

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2. What kind of errors does she make while writing words dictated by fellow learners (compare the blue page)?

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3. What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap her during the lesson?

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4. What kind of errors does she make while writing dictation on the board?

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5. What kind of errors does she make while reading the words she wrote herself just previously?

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6. What kind of errors does she make while reading the words another learner wrote on the board?

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7. What kind of writing errors does she make while writing words dictated by the teacher and that are already written on the board (compare the white page)?

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8. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?

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9. Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher?
(Answer "Yes" or "No")

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How? (If you answered "Yes")

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10. With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

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QUESTIONNAIRE

IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES
IN GRADE THREE IN A TSWANA CLASS

Please look at the video of the girl in the dark sweater in the middle of the picture (Karabo). Then please answer the following questions about the possible learning difficulties you observe as experienced by her in her oral and written work in two separate lessons, namely in mathematics and in language. Images of her written work (approximately one minute per page) in each lesson will be displayed in between or at the end of each lesson. The duration of the video is 21 minutes (mathematics lesson) and 22 minutes (language lesson), thus 43 minutes in total.

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| MATHEMATICS |
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1. What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

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2. What kind of oral mathematical problems does she exhibit?

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3. What kind of written mathematical problems does she exhibit?

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4. What other (than mathematical) abilities do you observe to be deficient, while drawing the picture of the clock, that may handicap her during the lesson?

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5. What about the lesson material may contribute towards her having any difficulty?

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6. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her mathematics difficulties?

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7. Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher?

(Answer "Yes" or "No")

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How? (If you answered "Yes")

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8. With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

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| LANGUAGE |
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1. What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

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2. Describe her style of silent reading while reading on the board to copy the work on her work sheet.

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3. What kind of writing errors does she make (compare her written letter on the work sheet)?

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4. What kind of reading errors does she make while reading aloud her own letter?

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5. What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap her during the lesson?

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6. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?

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7. Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher?
(Answer "Yes" or "No")

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How? (If you answered "Yes")

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8. With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

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