



**UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN ISIXHOSA:  
FOSTERING GRADE 3 LEARNERS' IMAGINATION AND CRITICAL  
THINKING THROUGH FOLKTALES**

**BY**

**MLAMLI BARA**

*A thesis submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Education Degree in  
Language and Literacy Education*

**SUPERVISOR: PROF. V. NOMLOMO**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the use of folktales in enhancing literacy development among Grade 3 isiXhosa-speaking learners in one Western Cape primary school. It was inspired by my quest to explain the low literacy performance levels of Foundation Phase learners, especially those taught through the medium of African languages. Although learners are taught in their mother-tongue in this phase, the reported national literacy results do not reflect this educational advantage. Education reports continually indicate low literacy levels in the Annual National Assessments (ANAs). Underdeveloped literacy skills are likely to have a negative impact on the child's academic progress throughout and beyond the schooling years.

This study focused on the use of folktales in fostering imaginative and critical thinking as folktales present language in its natural state. They are regarded as the best tool for whole language and literacy development. Folktales are central to the indigenous knowledge system (IKS) which is an educational and cultural tool that exposes children to oral literacy, even before they acquire literacy.

My enquiry is premised on the idea that technology should not replace the indigenous knowledge that may be acquired through folktales. Instead, deeper sustainable research into the role of folktales in children's acquisition of indigenous knowledge is of paramount importance for generating creative and analytical responses and for understanding the role of folktales in young children's education.

For these reasons this study applied qualitative research methodology to investigate how teachers make use of folktales to enhance Grade 3 learners' literacy skills in isiXhosa. It drew on Sociocultural Theory to explore their pedagogical strategies in this endeavour.

The findings show that folktales are oral epistemic tools which may be utilised to foster a learner-centred approach that promotes learners' ability to grasp ideas. The study concludes that folktales are instruments of pedagogical, social and cultural knowledge which may be used across the curriculum.

**KEYWORDS:** Folktale, Early Literacy, Oral Literacy, Imagination, Critical thinking, Foundation Phase, IsiXhosa, Indigenous Knowledge Systems



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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late great-grandparents, Nomvo, Nolast and Nomtem Wilson Bara, Nontuthuzelo Margaret Mehlomakulu, and to my late father, Sicelo Reuben Manona.



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## DECLARATION

I, Mlamli Bara, declare that

**EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT: FOSTERING GRADE 3 LEARNERS’  
IMAGINATION AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS THROUGH FOLKTALES**

is my own work which has not been submitted for degree or examination purposes at any other university, and that all sources I have cited or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged in complete references.

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Mlamli Bara

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January 2021



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This has been a challenging project, breaking new ground through its focus on isiXhosa traditional folktales as an interdisciplinary social pedagogy. Sincere gratitude goes to Professor V. Nomlomo for her indispensable unwavering support. The visionary philanthropical quality of her oversight ensured that I accomplish the completion of this task.



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## LIST OF LESSONS

Lesson 1: Ibhayisekile yokuqala (Story: ‘The first Bicycle’)

Lesson 2: Ukubhala ileta yobuhlobo (Writing a friendly letter)

Lesson 3: Ukufundwa kwesicatshulwa (Reading of comprehension)

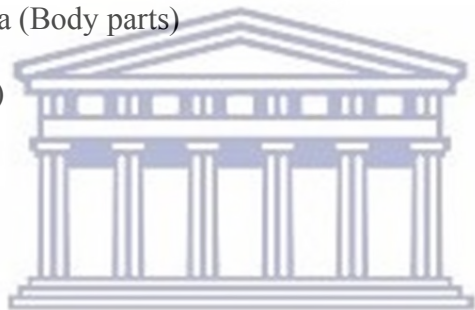
Lesson 4: Ubizelo (Spelling activity)

Lesson 5: Ukubalisa ibali (Storytelling)

Lesson 6: Ukusetyenziswa kolwimi (Language Use)

Lesson 7: Amalungu omzimba (Body parts)

Lesson 8: Intsomi (A folktale)



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Table 1: Teachers' demographic profiles

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Table 3: Lesson illustration

Table 4: Storytelling

Table 4: Time-allocation



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANA:	Annual National Assessment
BA:	Bachelor of Arts
CAPS:	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
DoE:	Department of Education
DBE:	Department of Basic Education
EFA:	Education for All
FP:	Foundation Phase
FLP:	Family Language Policy
HOD:	Head of Department
HIV/AIDS:	Human Immune Virus-Amino-Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HDE:	Higher Diploma in Education
ICT:	Information Communication Technology
IKS:	Indigenous Knowledge System
JPTD:	Junior Primary Teachers' Diploma
NCS:	National Curriculum Statement
NEEDU:	National Evaluation Education Development Unit
PRAESA:	Project for the study of Alternative Education in South Africa
SGB:	School Governing Body
SE:	Systemic Evaluation
RNCS:	Revised National Curriculum Statement
UNESCO:	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCED:	Western Cape Department of Education
ZPD:	Zone of Proximal Development

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# CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE CONTEXT

## 1.1 Introduction and Background

With the adoption of the South African democratic Constitution in 1996, official status was conferred upon eleven South African languages, thereby ensuring that all of these languages may be used in social and institutional domains, including education and government departments. However, what actually happens is that African languages are used as languages of learning and teaching in the Foundation Phase (Grades R-3) only, and a shift to English as a medium of instruction occurs in Grade Four. This implies that many children acquire early literacy in their home languages in South Africa and in many countries on the African continent.

Language teaching in the Foundation Phase (FP) emphasises language and literacy development, and numeracy skills. For example, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) aims at developing learners' literacy skills through reading and writing, particularly in the learners' mother-tongue or home languages (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The CAPS suggests that there should be rich integration with regard to language and literacy learning, numeracy and lifeskills as these are the only learning areas taught in the Foundation Phase. More time is supposed to be allocated to language and literacy learning. For example, ten hours are allocated for language teaching and learning in Grade R, and seven to eight hours for Grades 1-3 (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The CAPS document recommends that teachers use forms of assessment proactively to reflect learners' progress. It suggests possible intervention strategies for struggling learners.

This implies that in schools literacy and numeracy are targeted by the national government for improvement as they are seen as key learning areas for socio-economic development. In 2009, during his State of the Nation Address, the President of the Republic of South Africa stated that by 2014, 60% of learners in Grades 3, 6 and 9 should perform at an acceptable level in Languages and Mathematics (Department of Education, 2010:09). The accepted level is a minimum of 50%. Numerous efforts are made to support the literacy and numeracy learning and teaching of young

learners in the Foundation Phase. For instance, in 2008 the Department of Education introduced the 'Foundations for Learning Campaign' which focused on teachers in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases. They were inducted into this campaign and materials were distributed in schools.

In 2008 and 2009 trial runs for the Annual National Assessment (ANA) were conducted to expose teachers to better forms of assessment (Department of Education, 2010). The ANA objectives were to make a contribution towards improved learning in schools and to provide necessary information to the planners, the Minister of Education and the teachers. Hence ANA focused on literacy and numeracy and it encouraged teachers to use appropriate standards and methods by which to assess learners (Department of Education, 2010:10). Through ANA, districts were able to identify which schools needed extra support. ANA also encourages greater parental involvement to improve the learning process as it informs parents and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) about which subjects or learning areas require special attention.

In 2011 the Department of Basic Education distributed literacy and numeracy workbooks to schools. The purpose of this enterprise was to ensure that schools lacking learning resources and photocopying facilities were supported through the provision of worksheets. These workbooks consist of a variety of activities intended to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills (Department of Basic Education, 2012). They generally follow the curriculum policy guidelines for the concepts teachers should focus on when assisting learners to comprehend a given text or task. Concepts are introduced in relation to targeted skills required in each grade, as outlined in the curriculum.

The workbooks help teachers to monitor learners and to prepare them for the format they will encounter in various standardized types of assessment (Department of Basic Education, 2012). However, there is concern about whether teachers adhere to policy guidelines in the delivery of their lessons.

Although teachers undergo training through workshops and literacy materials which are made available in schools, these efforts reflect only a slight improvement in the ANA results between 2011 and 2014. Given that children are taught through the medium of their mother tongue in the

Foundation Phase, this is disturbing. The national literacy average performance in 2011, 2012 and 2013 was above 50% in Grades 1 and 2, and 35% in Grade 3 in 2011. Nevertheless, an improvement was revealed in 2012 and 2013 as the accepted pass rate of 50% had been achieved in Grades 1 and 3. This occurred before the ANAs were discontinued in 2014.

It has been reported in the diagnostic assessment of 2013 that Foundation Phase learners across the spectrum tended to make similar mistakes. Learners frequently showed poor reading comprehension skills and often failed to recount events of a story in the appropriate sequence (Department of Basic Education, 2013). Also, learners could not read and re-arrange words in a syntactically correct way. Learners were unable to write sentences about pictures. In Grades 2 and 3 learners showed poor knowledge of the past and present tenses. They seemed confused about nouns and pronouns. In Grade 3 learners demonstrated insufficient knowledge of the correct use of the concord (Department of Basic Education, 2013).

The ANA reports of 2011 and 2012 also showed many learners lacked the capacity to read with comprehension. They were not able to produce meaningful written sentences. They lacked the ability to make correct inferences from information provided in the text. Their knowledge of the grammar was very limited with regard to tense, and the use of verbs in singular and plural forms. They struggled with the spelling of frequently used words (Department of Basic Education, 2013). Moreover, it is important to note that these learners experienced all these literacy difficulties in their home languages.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (2002) spells out the importance of language and literacy education as a critical component of the curriculum. Language, literacy and writing constitute the foundation for other important literacies.

Appropriate linguistic competence thus forms a medium for other learning areas in the curriculum such as Mathematics and the Social Sciences. It encourages intercultural understanding; it gives learners access to perspectives other than their own and engenders a critical understanding of the concept of culture. It stimulates imaginative and creative activity, and thus promotes the goals of

arts and culture. In addition, it provides ways of communicating information and promotes many of the goals of Science, Technology and Environmental Education. What is more, it develops the critical tools necessary for young people to become responsible citizens (Department of Education, 2002).

Folklore is an aspect of Arts and Culture which encompasses various genres such as folktales, songs, idioms and proverbs; these require interpretation and application. With regard to oral literacy, folktales are central to African cultural traditions. Sell (1991) argues that orality and literacy are not two culture types that exclude each other, but are elements which can co-exist. However, Sell (1991) also concedes that certain forms of literary discourse are set in the oral form rather than in the written medium.

An aspect of oral narration pertinent to Sell's insights – and to the argument in this thesis – is offered by Scollon who states that oral narration precedes the skill of the reading and writing (Scollon, 1981). Furthermore, the scope of oral language according to Mompara and Meyiwa, is wide as it constitutes riddles, rhymes, songs, folktales, proverbs, legends and myths (Mompara, 2009; Meyiwa et al., 2013).

Children often imagine the story content with respect to both the creator and receiver of the story, and this enhances children's cognitive development and critical thinking. However, research on how teachers make use of isiXhosa folktales to promote Foundation Phase learners' imagination and critical thinking skills is very limited. It is against this background that this study investigated the role and use of folktales in enhancing literacy development among Grade 3 isiXhosa-speaking learners at a primary school in the Western Cape where the medium of teaching and learning is isiXhosa.

## **1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RATIONALE**

Unsurprisingly, the Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (2006:30) stresses the significance and value of literacy in a person's life. Fundamentally, literacy strengthens the

capabilities of individuals because it supports further learning. And since literacy is a key outcome of education, it is thus difficult to separate the benefits of literacy from those of education (EFA Report, 2006: 135). For this reason, literacy is perceived as a fundamental human right.

In South African education, literacy is the focal point of the current discourse (Department of Basic Education, 2012). However, literacy teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase remains a challenge despite its being taught in both teachers' and learners' home languages. As stated earlier, the ANA reports reveal poor literacy performance by Foundation Phase learners. There are various reasons associated with this deficiency, such as a poor reading culture, ineffective or inappropriate teaching strategies, poverty etcetera, all of which impact on literacy teaching and learning.

While the curriculum prescribes storytelling as a literacy teaching strategy for young children (Department of Basic Education, 2012), and acknowledges it as a key aspect of literacy in the Foundation Phase (Department of Basic Education, 2012), there has been very limited research in South Africa that focuses on story-telling for literacy development in African languages.

It is alleged that most stories told to children are Eurocentric (Bloch 1996, Prosper 2012). These stories are incompatible with the socio-cultural experiences of the children, which are often embedded in African folktales. According to Nomlomo and Sosibo (2016), it appears that the pedagogical value of folklore is not fully understood and utilized to support children's literacy development in African languages.

Given the low literacy performance in many South African schools where African languages are used for literacy teaching, this study assumes that traditional isiXhosa folktales are under-utilized to support and enrich Grade 3 learners' literacy skills. This study thus sets out to investigate whether teachers make use of isiXhosa folktales to stimulate Grade 3 learners' imagination and critical thinking skills.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The major question guiding this study is:

How can isiXhosa folktales be used as part of storytelling to enhance Grade 3 learners' imagination and critical thinking skills in literacy teaching?

The following sub-questions have been used to explore the main research question.

- 1) How do traditional folktales feature in the Foundation Phase language curriculum?
- 2) What is the role and value of folktales in literacy teaching and learning?
- 3) How do teachers make use of isiXhosa folktales to support learners' imagination and critical thinking skills?

#### **1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this study is to investigate how teachers use folktales to enhance Grade 3 learners' creative and critical thinking skills. The objectives of the study are:

- 1) to examine and analyze the content of the Foundation Phase language curriculum with regard to folktales as part of literacy teaching and learning;
- 2) to observe teachers' pedagogical strategies in using isiXhosa folktales to stimulate Grade 3 learners' imagination and critical thinking skills;
- 3) to observe how Grade 3 learners make meaning of isiXhosa folktales; and
- 4) to determine innovative ways of using isiXhosa folktales for literacy teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted through the use of a qualitative approach that will be discussed at length in Chapter 3. Briefly, a qualitative approach is relevant for a situated activity that requires the observer to be innovative (Silverman, 2001). Thus this approach suited the enquiry. According to Creswell (2001) and Silverman (2001) the strength of qualitative research is that it affords the researcher the facility of analyzing events or activities in their natural setting. For this reason, the

qualitative approach was relevant to this study as it enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the manner in which traditional isiXhosa folktales are used with Grade 3 learners to develop the cognitive, imaginative and investigative skills so needed in academic pursuit and the cultivation of critical consciousness.

Qualitative research is premised on the idea that knowledge is socially constructed by individuals through their interaction in their social world. This approach enabled me to probe and to gauge the core of the problem as it involved the participants in the research activity directly. In the context of this study, I was able to observe how the teacher interacted with her learners in the language and literacy lessons. My observations were guided by the research questions I set out.

The data collection methods used in this study included semi-structured interviews with the Principal and one Grade 3 teacher who also served as the Head of Department (HOD). The other data collection methods were observations and Document Analyses. These research instruments were used to get an in-depth understanding of how isiXhosa traditional folktales are used in the Foundation Phase. The details on how the study was conducted are discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

It is hoped that the research findings of this study will draw attention to serious learning barriers, especially those affecting reading for meaning-making, writing a paragraph or text, summarizing and constructing a story. Furthermore, the findings of this study might provide schools with a holistic understanding of how traditional isiXhosa folktales can make learning practical and interesting for learners who encounter reading, and other learning difficulties.

The final report of this study will thus be made available to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) officials, Curriculum Advisors, schools, teachers and parents of the Grade 3 learners who participated in the study. My purpose is to strategize ways in which Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) may be integrated into the mainstream language and literacy

curriculum. In this way teachers will be exposed to pedagogies that could use folktales to enhance learners' language and literacy development in their home language (isiXhosa), and to foster enjoyment in learning.

## **1.7 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

This study consists of five chapters as summarized in the section that follows.

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and a background to the study. It highlights the problem statement, the research aims and the objectives that underpin the study. I present the research questions that guided the progress of the study, the research methodology and significance of the study.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter explores international, continental and national literature on folktales as a major component of and resource in the literary world. It also presents the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that guided the study.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

This chapter discusses the methodological and research paradigm relied on in this study. It also deals with data collection methods and ethical considerations. As indicated, data was collected by means of interviews, observations and document analysis.

### **Chapter 4:**

In this chapter, I present data obtained from the participants. I also analyze this data in relation to the research questions and objectives of the study.

### **Chapter 5: Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations**



Chapter 5 discusses the findings that emanate from the analyzed data. It also provides recommendations and conclusions which are based on the findings.

## **1.8 SUMMARY**

This chapter has provided an introduction and background to the study. It presents an outline of the research problem, objectives and research questions that have been employed to guide the study. The chapter also briefly delineates the research approach and the data collection instruments used in addition to an overview of the contents of each chapter. The next chapter – Chapter 2 – consists of a review of the relevant literature and deals with the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that underpin this study.



# **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

As indicated in Chapter 1, the focus of this study is the role of folktales in enhancing Grade 3 learners' literacy development. To this end, Chapter 2 consists of an exploration and discussion of relevant international, continental and national literature. It includes an investigation into conceptual and theoretical frameworks pertaining to the importance of indigenous knowledge that may be encountered in narratives or folktales in particular. This is framed by the idea that folklore forms an important part of the cultivation of learning skills. A reliance on folktales is thus likely to provide children with opportunities for developing their language and literacy competence on terrain that is culturally and linguistically familiar. Hence, it is important that I begin by briefly discussing a conceptual understanding of how literacy is defined and perceived by different scholars.

## **2.2 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF LITERACY**

There are different definitions and models of literacy. One definition is that literacy is a dialogical process that encourages meaningful access to the written text (Prinsloo & Bloch, 1999). The most common understanding of literacy is that it is perceived as a social practice. The general concept shared by almost all literacy scholars is that literacy is a socio-cultural phenomenon (Prinsloo & Bloch, 1999). Thus, literacy, as a function in society, is not seen as a transfer of skills by the teacher to learners through activities, but as an interactive process between an adult and a child. The adult may be a parent, family member, community member or teacher.

The view of literacy as a social practice aligns with the idea of linguistic competence in society, demonstrable as viable for communication and for accessing information. Hence the importance of realizing that children's social interaction in family and community settings lays the groundwork for language learning and literacy development.

The UNESCO Report of 2006 presents the purpose in acquiring literacy in society as that of empowering people to engage in activities that allow them to read, write and numerate in order to function in a social context. Joeleepoo (2012) concurs with this view by claiming that literacy is probably the single most important part of education because it involves reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing to gain knowledge.

The Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (2006:30) defines literacy as:

a context-bound continuum of acquiring reading, writing and numeracy skills developed through the process of learning and application in schools and in other settings appropriate to youth and adults.

Another interesting explanation is the point made by Alexander and Wolfe (2006:6) that literacy is a relatively recent addition to human culture. They assert that humans have used oral language for perhaps four million years, but the ability to present the sounds of language in written symbols has existed for only 4000 to 5000 years.

In a similar vein, Alexander and Wolfe argue that speaking is a natural development but reading is unnatural – that speaking reflects a biological destiny, and that reading is difficult because it is an acquired skill (Alexander and Wolfe, 2005:7). The example they cite to prove this is that all learners struggling with writing nonetheless retain the ability to participate in oral activities. A perspective that appears to concur with this view is that the development of written language is linked to the development of spoken language in that the former is parasitic to the latter, and thus it is a second-order acquisition (Garton & Pratt, 1989). Garton and Pratt (1989) argue further that equally the development of written language skills influences facility in spoken language, as new language structures and functions are learned for writing which in turn, are adopted for speaking. However, the learning of reading and writing still depends on the prior learning of the spoken language.

It is for this reason that this study perceives traditional folktales as important tools that enhance oral and listening skills as they are often told verbally. In this way, folktales can be regarded as the

aspect of literacy that reflects the teachers' and learners' socio-cultural experiences. Folktales can be associated with the literacy models that are discussed in the section that follows.

## 2.3 LITERACY MODELS AND FORMS

There are two distinct models of approaches to teaching and learning literacy. These are explained by different scholars cited by the EFA campaign, Literacy for Life (2006). The models conceptualize literacy in the following ways:

- a) literacy as an autonomous set of skills
- b) literacy as applied, practical and situated
- c) literacy as a learning process and
- d) literacy as a text.

These four literacy models are also depicted as a broad framework for research that seems to accommodate almost all the theoretical descriptions of literacy practices and approaches. In an attempt to seek a 'whole language approach' to literacy empowerment and development of young learners, the four theoretical literacy approaches are briefly explained in the next section.

### 2.3.1 Literacy as an autonomous set of skills

The most common understanding of literacy is that it is a set of skills, in particular, the cognitive skills of reading and writing. These sets of skills are said to be independent of both the context in which they are acquired and the background of the person who acquires them. Scholars continue to disagree on the best way to acquire literacy. Some advocate the 'phonetic' approach and others promote 'reading for meaning' which is sometimes referred to as the 'reading wars' (Adams, 1993; Goodman, 1996; Street, 2004).

The emphasis on meaning has given way to a 'scientific attention' to phonetics, word recognition, spelling and vocabulary. This approach relies on research in the cognitive sciences focused on important features of human memory, for example, how the brain processes reading; and

techniques such as phonological awareness, assessed by giving faster reading tasks (Abadzi, 2003b, 2004).

A tendency to favour the ‘scientific’ principle of phonetics has given rise to the claim that writing is the transcription of speech and hence ‘superior’ to it. Similarly, some researchers claim that the alphabetic system is technologically superior to other script forms since it is phonetic rather than pictographic in denoting meaning (Olson, 1994).

Such views are founded on assumptions about the cognitive consequences of learning to read and write (Street, 2004). In fact, it is argued that the cognitive dimension reflects broader societal development, so that literacy becomes a condition or an instrument for economic growth, and is seen as a transition from an ‘oral’ to a ‘literate’ culture (Goody, 1977; Ong, 1992; Olson, 1977, 1994).

This implies that even the art of writing and reading is a manifestation of the oral tradition. When books became readily available in public schools, learners were taught to read, and less emphasis was placed on traditional storytelling. In the light of such debates, this study seeks to understand how teachers use oral folktales to support reading and writing literacy in the Grade 3 classroom.

The ideological model is distinct in that it renders an advanced culturally sensitive view which takes into account the local literacy practices that differ from one context to another (Street, 2003). This model claims that literacy is a social practice and not simply a technical and neutral skill. Literacy is always embedded in socially constructed knowledge and principles of morality. According to Street (2003), literacy can be viewed as a communicative and socio-political historical practice that constructs and produces the existing power structures. This could mean that at times most literacy produced or reproduced may cherish the interests or ideas of capitalist ruling classes in society. For example, the arrival of colonial missionary education had a negative impact on indigenous education in 18<sup>th</sup>-century South Africa and in most parts of the African continent.

### **2.3.2 Literacy as applied: practical and situated**

According to Bhola (1994), literacy may also be defined in terms of the subject-matter and the nature of the texts that are produced and consumed by literate individuals, as texts differ by subject and genre. For example, textbooks, technical or professional publications and fiction vary in terms of the complexity of language used, and by the ideology they invoke or represent (UNESCO, 2006).

Certain scholars have acknowledged the limitations of the skills-approach to literacy and have attempted to focus on the application of these skills in relevant ways (Freire, 1974). This has resulted in the development of the notion of 'functional' literacy (Freire, 1974).

Literacy might be applied in certain located spaces for specific purposes in society – to serve one particular class and to marginalize another. Hence the notion of functional literacy is sometimes associated with the ideological model and with the notion of critical literacy and Freire's (1974) concept of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy advocates that participants be engaged in dialogical learning, that they reflect on what they have learned, and that they are able to give their own perspective so that they may proceed to the next issue in this learning cycle.

It may be due to the epistemic structure of stories, that there is a belief that traditional oral storytelling is the fountain of all forms of knowledge construction and learning, including the art of reading and writing.

### **2.3.3 Literacy as a learning process**

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of human learning describes learning as a social process and contends that human intelligence originates in society or culture (UNESCO, 2006). The main

theme of Vygotsky's theory is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky believes that everything is learned at two levels: firstly through interaction with others, and secondly, through integration into the individual's mental construction. Complementary to this assertion is Ntuli's (2013) view of folktales as performance-based oral literature, a form of interaction between the storyteller and audience.

Scribner and Cole (1981) define literacy as a set of socially organised practices, reproduced and disseminated by a system of symbols. By contrast, Freire (1974) offers a clear political definition of literacy. He views literacy as a process of 'conscientization' which involves 'reading the world' rather than just reading the 'word'. Freire (1974) stresses the significance of bringing the learner's socio-cultural realities into the learning process itself, and utilizing the learning in a dialogic and reflective mode in order to challenge the social processes that could conflict with accepted societal norms and values.

In the light of this, literacy learning entails a number of processes that begin in early childhood. Children learn language by interacting with their social environment which includes their families, friends and surroundings before they are formally taught to read and write at school.

#### **2.3.4 Literacy as a text**

Many studies indicate that the real benefits of practising literacy skills are to be discovered in their transformative power, that is, in how they empower individuals to read (UNESCO, 2006). Freire's theory expands on this perspective by pointing to 'critical literacy programmes (which) have the potential to change broader power relations by enhancing the assets and capabilities of the poor, as well as their sense of empowerment' (Freire and Macedo, 1987).

Drawing on ethnographic research, Freire and Macedo (1987) illustrate how the social embodiment of literacy has significant implications for both policy-makers and practitioners at national and local levels. They point out that individuals use literacy skills to serve a variety of purposes in their lives. For example, literacies may be used for practical purposes in

communication with government offices and officials, in reading medical instructions, completing applications, paying bills and extracting information from newspapers. People also use their literacy skills to read religious texts.

Literacy skills are useful in strengthening the relations between family and friends. They can be acquired through reading literature in magazines, short stories, novels and drama books. They enable people to keep diaries, to get involved politically and to learn about their ancestors and cultural heritage. In a nutshell, literacy practices are an integral part of people's socio-cultural lives and contribute to their sense of identity and self-worth. Literacy skills are acquired through a variety of texts and genres to which learners have to be exposed.

The section that follows offers a philosophical perspective on how the oral tradition of storytelling is to be better understood as the fountain of all forms of learning and knowledge construction. Essentially, the power of imaginative literary discourse is illustrated by the extent to which oral folktales form part of the traditional literature that stimulates people's imagination and thoughts.

#### **2.4 IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE: A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE**

From a philosophical point of view, imaginative literature is a source of a written verse, notably the fable (Daiches, 1981:52). The fable is described as a narrative in which the irrational – including inanimate objects – is used for the purpose of moral instruction. These objects are feigned to act and speak with human interest and passion. Hence in many instances, animals, birds, and some small creatures like ants and bees assume the human voice in a fable or story (Daiches, 1981).

According to Daiches (1981), Solon conveyed his wisdom not only in verse but also through fable. He used a fable to invent new ideas in law-making and law-dialogues in Twelve Tables. It is argued that the long history of Roman law begins with the Twelve Tables which were influenced by Solon, constituting the body of the city's laws that can be reconstructed with certainty (Steinberg, 1982). What is also interesting about Twelve Table laws is that they appeared so uncompromising with



regard to morality: even if a person had committed a petty crime the person would be severely punished for committing an immoral act in the community. For example, capital punishment or an 'Eye for an Eye' Acts were a manifestation of the Twelve Tables.

According to Solon, the great Greek lawgiver, untruths may be valuable as a means of communicating wisdom (Daiches, 1981). This implies that Greek mythology impacted on the creation of laws that govern society. In fact, what distinguishes these folktales from others is that they are generally stories about the world of imagination, about animals and humans with supernatural powers and abilities (Zin & Nasir, 2007).

Plato (347BC) invented stories to expand his philosophical enquiries on issues of mathematics and science, pertaining to matter, material and justice. He stated that anyone who wanted to rule over society must do mathematics. He distinguished between two levels of awareness, namely, opinion and knowledge. The higher level of awareness is knowledge, because it involves reasoning, rather than sense or experience.

Plato's (347BC) construction of the science of reasoning is derived from his image of darkness in the cave and the light (the sun) experienced by the individual outside the cave. This myth is perceived as a cradle of human reasoning. It is indeed fascinating and it is highly regarded in Rationalism or Scientific discourse. In fact, stories around the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries were the fountains of knowledge construction as well as being expressions of cultural identity and entertainment.

Specialists in literary theory, anthropologists and historians have used stories for more than half a century (Boyd, 1981). In early centuries, stories were the pathways of philosophy in Art, Religion, Science, historical record and enlightenment (Boyd, 1981). There was even competition surrounding the style of openings, as well as for audience attention. For example, Boyd (1981) cites one of the great Greek storytellers, Homer, whose presentations had an opening style which was culturally unique in that he would attract a massive audience by singing the first two to three

lines of the epic, and follow this up with the call: “If you are a Greek! Here is a story worthy to be listened to.”

It is held that in the attempt to understand our place in the universe and how the world was made certain myths and fables invoked religious beliefs, such as those concerning creation (Anderson, 2002). Also, in the myth of the cave we gain a variety of insights from different disciplines to explore ways in which humans have ordered and interpreted the sensory evidence provided by our environment.

This suggests that fables or stories have an epistemic function in that they support knowledge construction. It implies that traditional folktales did not only serve as a means of socializing, but they also embodied wisdom and knowledge. Therefore, it can be deduced that knowledge is culture-bound and socially constructed.

Both African and European folklore scholars believe that folktales have contributed to the socialization of children, and to issues of nation-building (Satyo, 1981 and Luthi, 1987). African traditional folktales form part of the oral literature that aims to entertain, record history and teach values and cultural morals (Sougou, 2008; James, 2010; Kehinde, 2010). In fact, other scholars of folklore describe folktales as having a unique structure, with a unique opening, an introductory statement, a body that is interspersed with songs, and a moral or etiological conclusion (Moropa & Tyatyeka, 1990; Siwundla & Ngomane, 2000; Satyo et al., 1994; Makuliwe, 1995; Kehinde, 2010). The narrator-audience interaction and most importantly, the use of natural language that is characterized by bodily and facial expressions, repetition and the use of song to punctuate a section of the story, advance a particular plot in the story.

This assertion is complementary to one that emphasizes the importance of indigenous knowledge narratives, in particular, African folktales. It invokes the modeling of language and literacy in the development of young children. That language is central to the process of knowledge construction points to the early and important role of folktales in enhancing young children’s imagination and critical thinking skills.

Littel (2004) describes critical thinking as that which a writer applies to information. It involves thinking that goes beyond the facts, thinking that seeks to organize, analyze, evaluate or draw conclusions *about* the facts. For example, usually in the evening, in the hut where the grandmother is seated with her grandchildren around the fire telling a folktale, children listen with curiosity as she uses her body and changes her voice. They can anticipate the next step or action in the story (Makuliwe 1995; Siwundla & Ngomane 2000).

From a pedagogical point of view, the role of a narrative-like folktale has been an important strand in teaching and learning as it stimulates thought and meaning-making. However, while storytelling is mentioned as one of the strategies for literacy teaching, no precise guidelines or methods are offered about how to incorporate folktales in literacy teaching, so most teachers are not aware of the positive potential of their impact on learning.

As noted earlier, it is alleged that in South Africa, storytelling which is often used in literacy development, does not enhance learners' understanding and imagination of their socio-cultural environment because many stories used in reading are Eurocentric (Bloch, 1996; Prosper, 2012). Most neither reflect nor support learners' identity or their background, and this seems to have a negative impact on learners' literacy development. It is for this reason that I sought to understand the extent to which Grade 3 teachers utilized isiXhosa traditional folktales in storytelling.

## **2.5 LESSONS FROM EUROPEAN WRITTEN STORIES**

The purpose of this section is to highlight the evolution of written texts from stories that form part of oral literature. It is alleged that after ten-thousand years of storytelling, the Gutenberg (1440) printing press was invented. As a result, many of the oral folktales were written down and were translated into English. Jean de la Fontaine translated Aesop's fables, including The Fox, the Crow,

the Tortoise, and the Hare and wrote some of his own in the late 1600s. Maria Leprince de Beaumont (1711-1789) published the first version of 'Beauty and the Beast', and the latter has been screen-played and reproduced as a song by an American Musician, Bryson (1986). It has emerged as one of the favorite classics amongst many. In 1697, Charles Perrault recorded the tales his nursemaid had told him as a child and published them in England in 1729 as *Tales of Mother Goose*.

Jacob and Wilhem Grimm collected stories and published their first volume called *The Nursery and Household Tales* in 1812. Other popular stories included 'Hansel and Gretel', 'Rumpelstilskin' and 'Snow White'. I had the 'privilege' of having heard about the last two as a learner under the Apartheid primary education system in South Africa.

In 1846 Hans Christian Anderson's *Fairy Tales* were published in English. The compilation included his original stories of 'The Emperor's New Castle Clothes', 'The Little Mermaid' and 'The Ugly Duckling'. Another compiler of stories was Joseph Jacob whose *English Fairy Tales*, included 'The Three Little Pigs', 'Henny and Penny,' and 'Jack and the Beanstalk,' published in 1898. The latter, and other English folktales may be found in Big Books used for literacy development in English First Additional language in the Foundation Phase language curriculum for South African schools.

The stories listed here illustrate that storytelling of this kind has been part of oral literature since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. They also show the importance of storytelling as folktales in particular, nurture the learner's imagination and thinking skills. Some of the popular stories include the 'Sleeping Beauty', 'Little Red Riding Hood' and 'Cinderella'.

Thus European traditional folktales became an integral part of American education. It must also be acknowledged that some of them earned universal recognition and have been integrated into an African colonial education for English literacy studies for example, 'Beauty and the Beast', 'Jack and the Beanstalk', 'Rumpelstilskin', 'Snow White' and so on. Today some of these tales are in a compilation of Big Books and others are screen-played on television as part of improving young children's literacy and communication skills. Unfortunately, most of them are Anglo-European

and they do not accommodate African cultural traditions. Hence some African scholars allege that the stories used in many South African classrooms are Eurocentric (Bloch, 1999; Prosper, 2012; Nomlomo & Sosibo, 2016).

In this study I focus on isiXhosa folktales as elements of traditional folklore and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). In the section that follows I illustrate the connection between folklore and IKS.

## **2.6 FOLKLORE AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS)**

Folklore as part of IKS has existed as an educational tool before schools were introduced (Ntuli, 2013). The Concise Oxford English Dictionary cited by Qaun-Baffour (2011:31) defines the word 'folk' as 'a people', in general terms. Qaun-Baffour (2011) adds that folklore may be described as traditional beliefs and stories of people about people. In defining folklore, Abrahams (1981), cited by Kehinde (2010:30), refers to it as a short narrative in prose, of unknown authorship.

Folklore includes folktales, fairytales, myths, fables and legends with some overlap in structure (Qaun-Baffour, 2011). Nonetheless, they are all stories – originally passed on through word of mouth – and all have endured as both educational and entertainment tools. As indicated earlier, myths are stories that explain natural phenomena. These might involve creation stories that refer to origins and reasons for the existence of certain manifestations, for instance, why a rabbit has a short tail. Myths sometimes feature gods and goddesses and are often part of spiritual traditions. These stories frequently involve fantastical elements such as witches, fairies and giants. In such narratives, animals may talk and humans may be endowed with supernatural powers (Kehinde, 2010).

Satyo (1981) believes that isiXhosa folklore, myths and legends are an epistemic source of both drama and poetry because they carry knowledge and wisdom in themselves. This is actually suggestive of Solon in Daiches (1981) who was a Greek lawgiver who would draw inferences from fables in order to convey his ideas. It is beliefs and practices such as these that make it imperative

to philosophically or theoretically explore socio-cultural, anthropological and psychological conceptualizations or perspectives in folktales. Such exploration promises to provide insight into the role of folklore in sustaining societal knowledge, values and norms.

Legends are stories of fantasy that evolve from real people who have supernatural powers and traits, in other words, they often have exaggerated qualities. For example, a tortoise or a bird may have human characteristics. Some legends permeate the whole culture and have long-lasting effects on the lives of people. A legendary hero is a character immortalized in myths and folktales, who is famous for acts of courage and bravery (Satyo, 1981).

There is a generally shared perspective among both African and European researchers, that folktales have their roots in the study of folklore. For example, Duggan, Haase, & Callow, (1948) argue that the development of folklore studies is closely connected to the rise of Romantic nationalism. Satyo (1981) presents a similar argument as he claims that folktales were a core element of nation building in IsiXhosa tradition.

Folktales usually show ordinary people overcoming extraordinary obstacles. These tales both entertain and give hope to people living in difficult times. Folktales bearing moral and cultural substance, passed down from generation to generation, encourage children to adopt values that benefit themselves and society in general.

This study seeks to draw on the relevant literature so as to probe the value of isiXhosa folktales in nurturing cognitive and critical thinking as well as imaginative thought in young learners.

### **2.6.1 Folktales as part of folklore**

Folktales are part of folklore and have existed from time immemorial. According to Moropa and Tyatyeka (1990) folktales were meant to entertain and unwittingly register the wisdom of knowledge to young minds. Folktales are regarded as a mirror-image of human life because what is told in the tale often resembles life situations (Luthi 1982; Moropa & Tyatyeka, 1990). Kehinde (2010:29) adds that the different kinds of folktales of Ananse stories are part of the various kinds of narrative prose in the literature of oral traditions that encourage imagination.

In literature folktales are described as stories that have been passed from generation to generation in a verbatim form. As a result, no one can claim ownership or authorship of them (Kelin, 2007; Zin & Nasir, 2007; Soughou, 2008; Tobon & Snyman, 2008; Kehinde, 2010). They possess supernatural powers and abilities like fairies (ZinNasir, 2007; Parkinson, 2009).

The composition of folktales comprises an interactive orientation between the storyteller and learners or audience. This may account for why folktales have always been children's favourite type of folk literature. In conjunction with the pleasure of the interactive aspect of folktales, they were used as a means of rearing society, especially in relation to serious predicaments like drought, plagues and the inevitability of death. Thus, according to Huck, Hepler, Hickman and Kefer (1997), storytelling formed the basis of good teaching.

Apart from constituting an honoured practice in ancient times, as people sat around campfires, sharing stories represented an attempt to understand and explain the natural and spiritual world. Storytelling was also a proven means by which a village could assemble and invest in its knowledge to survive. For example, Honey (1910) claims that the Bushmen-Khoi/Xhosa folktales are those most shared by various African communities. They have also aroused the interest of European missionaries like Thiel and Bleek who recorded them in 1800s. Honey (1910) recorded almost forty-two, such as The Jackal and the Wolf, Lion and Baboon, The Hunt of a Lion and the Jackal, Elephant and Tortoise and The story of a Dam, to name just a few.

Folktales are the primary source of great literature. For example, a variety of novels, operas, poems, plays and modern short stories may be traced from classic fairytales (Satyo, 1981). It is opined that much of our political jargon and many commercial messages borrow their punch-lines from classic fables (Satyo 1981; Luthi 1982). Luthi (1987) claims folktales illuminate the nature of existence – even in the absence of any belief in the physical reality of the story. This means no true or false assertions need be appended to the story; its value requires contextual interpretation. According to Anderson (2002) and Russell (1997) some stories were told for pure entertainment while others were used to share the history of a group of people, to teach lessons, and transmit

cultural values and beliefs. Psychologically, the literary pragmatic elements found in traditional and oral storytelling are helpful in nourishing the young brain's imagination. They nurture young children's cognitive horizons as they explain natural phenomena (Bruner, 1996).

Thus fairytales are more than stories for enjoyment; they present a particular way of looking at the world and at human existence. Luthi (1982) contends that traditional fairytales may be examined from two related points of view: aesthetic and anthropological. Aesthetically, grandmother told fairytales to grandchildren both for entertainment and for the attainment or transmission of knowledge. From an anthropological point of view, they were told to children so that they could gain the wisdom associated with cultural identity. In these respects, a folktale is regarded as a world-encompassing literary form and it reflects all essential components of human life (Luthi, 1982).

It appears that formal schooling does not capitalize on the pedagogical richness of folktales. Hence the focus of this study is on understanding the impact of isiXhosa folktales on learners' meta-cognition and their meta-linguistic structures – intellectual acquisitions which ought to be developed in the child's mother-tongue or home language. For this reason, it is crucial to explore the socio-cultural and psychological significance of indigenous knowledge in children's learning. In this study, it is thus important to understand how Grade 3 learners acquire literacy skills through the use of folktales. To extrapolate on this point, the literacy skills that learners acquire in the Foundation Phase serve as a pathway to the Intermediate Phase where the learners' literacy skills become crucial in other subjects (Ngece, 2014). In the Intermediate Phase, a sound literacy foundation is of vital importance as it guarantees an academic repertoire that must sustain learners throughout their academic career.

Folktales are thus integral to knowledge construction. They form a gateway to learners' reading for enjoyment, and they constitute a personal resource for creative writing. They also help learners acknowledge or grapple with moral values. In this regard learners might be introduced to folktale-writing with the help of their educator after having engaged in storytelling.



According to Bruner (1996), folk pedagogy also reflects parents' hidden assumptions' about how children learn and how they are to be taught. Bruner (1996) argues that many such assumptions and practices are embedded in common folklore, which includes folktales as well as proverbs.

The use of traditional storytelling or the mainstreaming of indigenous knowledge at primary school may thus have a positive impact on sustaining culture, identity, and self-determination as well as academic improvement. In other words, it might equip learners with lifeskills such as an aptitude for decision-making and problem-solving (Morop & Tyatyeka, 1990; Siwundla & Ngomane, 2000).

In these respects, the impact of folktales on children's learning is discussed at length later, in Chapter 4.

### **2.6.2 Folktales as an integral part of IKS**

The term indigenous knowledge is used to describe the knowledge systems developed by a community, as opposed to scientific knowledge that is generally known as modern knowledge (Ajibade, 2003). Indigenous knowledge is, in fact, regarded as the foundation of community and local decision-making in many rural communities. Indigenous knowledge systems comprise folklore, folktales, indigenous poetry and the knowledge of traditional herbs and medicine. Oral traditional storytelling is said to be rooted in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), and folklore is a component knowledge structure of indigenous societies. Therefore, folktales are integral to IKS and they are associated with home and oral literacy (Makuliwe, 1995). Most African folktales find expression in songs and indigenous poetry.

The World Bank (2004) defines IKS as practical and common-sense knowledge based on teaching and experience passed on from generation to generation. It covers knowledge of the environment; it is holistic and cannot be compartmentalized or separated from the people who hold it. It is rooted in the spiritual health, culture and language of the people. It is dynamic, cumulative and stable, and it enables people to act with discernment when using knowledge in meaningful ways (Nakashima, Prott and Bridgewater, 2000).

Indigenous knowledge is referred to as the local knowledge that is unique to a culture or society. It is also known as ‘folk knowledge’, ‘traditional wisdom’ or ‘traditional science’ (Nakashima et al., 2000). In the past, folktales and myths served as scaffolding for the handing down of tradition and customs from one generation to the next (Teacher Vision, 2017). Such knowledge progresses by word of mouth and through cultural rituals, and it has been the basis of a wide range of other activities that sustain societies in many parts of the world, such as agriculture, food preparation, health care, education and conversation (Nakashima et al., 2000). Related to these social practices, indigenous knowledge includes a large body of information about plants for food and medical health purposes (Alexander, 2003:7).

Indigenous knowledge also comprises folklore which includes folktales, myth, legends, proverbs, reminiscence, anecdote and aphorism (Kehinde, 2010). Anthropologists such as Boaz (1891) and Bascom (1955) are of the view that folklore is a core binding cultural entity in different societal and individual cultures. The function of folklore in such societies includes mediation for political decisions, validation of conduct and the release of emotions within a cultural context (Achemfour, 2013). As stated earlier, folktales and fairytales have their roots in the study of folklore.

IKS became part of the South African curriculum after 1994 in order to acknowledge the history and cultural heritage of the country (Department of Education - DoE, 2002; 2005). It was introduced as a means to transform society: to accommodate diversity and to foster social cohesion and sustainable development (Batiste, 2005; Themane and Mamabolo, 2011 cited in Nomlomo & Sosibo, 2016). It is thus important to note that IKS is actually acknowledged in the curriculum, particularly in language learning, as a means of providing learners with aesthetic, cultural and imaginative abilities which enable them to understand the world (DoE, 2002, 2005, DBE, 2012:8). Thus IKS is viewed as a powerful tool of identity construction, one that reflects language and power relations (DoE, 2002).

### **2.6.3 Enhancing learners’ critical thinking skills and imagination through folktales**

Storytelling is a method that has been used to narrate folktales in many cultures (Koki, 1998; Parkinson, 2009). Archemfour (2013) claims that folk stories were mostly told by older people to explain various issues and the lessons children had to learn from their socio-cultural environment. The stories were told at home and children in school were required to tell some of these stories to their classmates. For example, earlier cultures which had no written language used oral storytelling to pass messages about their cultures, values, morals, social events, language experience and knowledge (Koki, 1998). Interestingly, Hodge and Kress (1988) suggest that teachers should maintain the language's naturalness through folktales. This approach enhances the learners' critical and imaginative thinking skills that enable them to analyze the tale in the context of its fictitious characterization.

Traditionally, folktales, as part of the narrative genre have a unique orientation that is enriched with dramatization. They are composed of an introduction, a context, theme/s, complication and resolution. This implies that the structure of a tale is similar to that of a written novel or the plot in a drama. However, the folktale has a unique opening that invites the attention of the audience immediately (Moropa & Tyatyeka, 1990; Satyo, et al., 1994; Makuliwe, 1995; Siwundla & Ngomane, 2000). They are usually opened with a particular orientation like "Once upon a time". In isiXhosa it is said like this: "*Kwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi*" and the audience would respond in this fashion "*Chosintsomi*" to illustrate the listeners' readiness for the folktale.

Folktales assist in accomplishing the intellectual and social responsibility that inculcates moral consciousness in young children. For example, they help instill empathy, tolerance and kindness.

Sivasubramaniam (2013) describes folktales as having many unique characteristics. His view is that as good stories they constitute powerful social, cultural and moral expressions. He reasons that folktales make use of simple language and context-facilitating illustrations, and that they are easily accessible to students. The argument he launches is that there are many demanding and challenging folktales which can engage learners in the creative and hypothetical use of language. Sivasubramaniam's contention is that folktales are excellent language teaching resources which help nurture imagination and critical consciousness (Sivasubramaniam, 2013).

In a similar vein, according to Buss and Karanowski (2000), there are generally two types of plot structures in a folktale: the linear and the cumulative. In the linear plot, a problem is introduced, followed by a series of events as the character attempts to solve the problem. In a cumulative folktale, the problem and actions build upon each other. A cumulative folktale often includes a repetition of phrases. Buss and Malinowski (2000) argue that this repetition eases the memory of young tellers. Folktales often end abruptly with a short sweet resolution and a formulaic ending such as “They lived happily ever after.” (Malinowski 2000).

The interactive nature of folktales can stimulate the child’s imagination with curiosity. Folktale telling also triggers fantasy and imagination. Coleridge (in Daiches, 1981) refers to imagination as a primary manifestation of thinking and perception which enables us to differentiate between what seems to be real and fictitious. He claims that without this imagination, we would have only a collection of meaningless data. Imagination is essentially creativity.

Coleridge (in Daiches, 1981) claims that imagination is a central element in the development of cognition and critical thinking skills. It is associated with perception, which is part of the five senses that include sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. This relates to the psychological belief that children are born with innate abilities of perception in the form of schemata (Piaget, 1936). It implies that after having listened attentively to the grandmother telling a tale in its dramatic setting, children are in turn able to play with the tale by retelling it to their peers.

Folktales are regarded as a mirror image of life. In relation to this study, this belief emphasizes the importance of folktales in the creation of a solid foundation for reasoning and cognitive development, and for the construction of knowledge based on an indigenous knowledge system.

Aesthetically folktales help sustain the interpretation of the transformation of society and its contemporary values and norms. In other words, folktales enhance children’s everyday thinking about the social world. The narrative or communicative nature of traditional storytelling brings the learner’s cultural identity closer to the content and the context of learning. Therefore, it becomes easier for the learner to understand the story as part of their socio-cultural environment.

Imagination is fundamental to the acquisition of one's critical thinking habits. In fact, Webster's Reference Library English Dictionary – Concise Edition (1999) defines “imagination as the image-forming power of the mind. It is the power of the mind that modifies the conceptions (thinking and understanding) exercised in art and poetry”. It involves creative ability and resourcefulness in overcoming practical difficulties.

With well-developed critical thinking skills, the learner is able to receive and possess information. The learner can also analyze, interpret, evaluate and apply information in relevant contexts (Siwundla & Ngomane, 2000). Sivasubramaniam (2013) claims that folktales articulate the centrality of the learners' environment as they contain semiotic resources such as expressions of appreciation, empathy and an understanding of other meaning-making activities that can represent students' creative and critical thought. This implies that literacy lessons grounded on folktales are characterized by performative elements (acting out) which are the traits of storytelling. Storytelling, therefore, is one of the key components of early literacy development which stimulate young learners' intellectual abilities.

Through storytelling children develop an understanding of human nature and feelings, as well as an awareness of characteristics that people assume. They provide multiple learning styles through active participation, co-operative and social learning. Children develop a longer attention span together with their ability to listen actively. They can follow instructions and recall sequences that emerge in the story (National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association, 1996). Listening and oral language processes are commonly recognized as the basis for beginning to read, that is, they are considered to be a critical part of early literacy instruction (Morrow, 2001).

Folktales empower learners with the correct syntax, vocabulary and pronunciation. From folktales, learners can identify parts of speech and connect words they might use in sentence construction. The teacher can develop a language grammar lesson by utilizing vocabulary found in a tale.

Comprehension and spelling tasks that form part of literacy development may be designed from folktales.

#### **2.6.4 Folktales as part of storytelling**

Storytelling is considered an art form that can be mastered by most people (Morrow, 2001). It is both a talent and a learned skill. Thus language development can be enhanced through an aesthetic exploration of stories by discussing literature, telling stories and participating in dramatic activities based on a story.

In fact, storytelling has existed in human culture from time immemorial, and it is culturally rooted in past experiences of human life to the present circumstances faced by humans and nature (Mayaba, 2012). It is an educational resource that will never diminish across all human cultures and is used to instill different values such as resilience, honesty, problem-solving and so on, which are useful in real life situations (Morgan and Roberts, 2010). Through storytelling, children's emotions and imagination are stimulated (Rozalski et al., 2010). Jaquinta and Hipsky (2006:209) claim that when a child is listening to a story, s/he identifies with the character or a situation in the story, and this may lead to positive behavioural change. Storytelling, followed by a discussion can help teachers identify what the learners are going through and what coping skills they can learn from characters in the story. Stories can help improve learners' attitude towards reading and writing and help improve their language and literacy academic abilities Weigh (2005).

Through storytelling learners are able to share experiences, explore their understanding of ideas and interact with peers. The dramatic oral interpretation of traditional stories also increases the depth of comprehension and the vocabulary of students when compared to reading aloud (Trostle & Hicks, 1998). Telling stories or listening to stories thus strengthens the learners' cognitive abilities (Jennings, 1991).

Storytelling is not only a social experience; it is also an effective learning channel from oral to written language or literacy (Dyson & Freedman, 1991). In many South African classrooms,

stories are read from the Big Books. But as indicated earlier, unlike the traditional folktales, some of these stories are not authentic in relation to the learners' culture and experiences, and therefore may not appeal to learners.

In African communities however, folktale performance is an essential part of storytelling. Finnegan (1991:41) defines performance as the delivery skill of the performer and the interaction with the audience. Folktales fulfilled an educational role and home teaching was achieved through the performance of folktales where, in the narration of a story, the performer would reveal the setting and demonstrate events through the action of the characters.

Today, in a classroom environment, learners can be given an opportunity through what Nomlomo (2010) refers to as turn-taking, which is a co-operative and learner-centred pedagogical strategy. In this way the values, morals and messages folktales contain may be passed from generation to generation through indigenous knowledge (Kehinde & Ndofirepi, 2010).

Also, as alluded to already, listening to stories helps children build their oral communication skills by developing attention span, auditory memory, listening and comprehension skills (Palmer & Bayley, 2005). According to Arko-Achemfour (2013), children might be required to retell some of the folktales from home, to their classmates in school. Furthermore, by listening to and participating in storytelling, children are able to make connections between what they have heard and what they see in print (Morrow, 2001). Therefore, storytelling attracts children to books. By listening to stories, children develop an interest in reading and writing as well.

Sivasubramaniam (2013) strongly believes in the efficacy and sufficiency of folktales for nurturing critical consciousness and expressive responsiveness. He asserts that folktales are a powerful expression of cultural, social and moral values. Folktales are characterized by various stages, namely abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation and resolution (Elliot, 2005).

Nomlomo and Sosibo (2016) argue that through folktales young children are exposed to attributes they can emulate or avoid, for example showing respect, problem-solving, behaving with good

character and having a sense of belonging. They are also stimulated to be critical and quick thinkers, with a sense of accountability and responsibility (Nomlomo & Sosibo, 2016). This suggests that folktales can be associated with the social, cognitive, psychological and economic worldviews (Hoppers 2004).

Sivasubramaniam (2013) reiterates these points by stating that not only do folktales awaken learners' curiosity and critical thinking, but they are important components of transformative teaching which entails collaboration and active participation by the learners. They are also powerful expressions of cultural, social and moral values. Folktales are interactive as they involve a performer and an audience who interact in a specific context (Ntuli 2013). They are multi-voice discourses which lay a good foundation for reading, writing, creative thinking, meaning-making and expression of voice which are important literacy elements (Sivasubramaniam (2013). Therefore, folktales play a significant role in literacy teaching and learning as learners can navigate their imagination in then-and-now scenarios depicted in the story.

Added to this, the manner in which folktales are structured corresponds with the modern or contemporary writing of a novel or short story. Satyo, Feez and Joyce, as well as Elliot echo the idea that folktales constitute orientation, context, complication and resolution (Satyo, 1981; Feez and Joyce, 1998; Elliot, 2005). There is an introduction or orientation phase, which gives characters, place and time (plot) in order to induct the learners to the main story. In this phase the listeners are introduced to a/ problem/s which might cause conflict amongst the characters. In the complication stage, the listeners discover the problem on their own, while the evaluation stage creates suspense and the audience is challenged to find out what happens next (Feez & Joyce, 1998). All these stages are said to enhance literacy instruction as they reinforce not only children's listening skills but also their comprehension, imagination and critical thinking, which are the key components of literacy development.

As already stated, Ntuli (2011) states that storytelling was, albeit entertainment actually used as an educative tool before writing and schooling was introduced. Thus, if storytelling were to be



more frequently used in schools, this would result in a transformation of the education syllabus from a primarily content-driven approach to one of problem-solving. At the same time this would create the impetus for the recognition of indigenous knowledge (Phaahla, 2011).

As it stands, the South African language curriculum referred to as the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) proposes communicative and text-based approaches to literacy teaching (DBE, 2012). Folklore which comprises folktales or narratives, rhymes and songs is prescribed in the Foundation Phase language curriculum (DoE 2005; DBE, 2011). It would therefore seem straightforward that there would be a greater acknowledgement of how crucial it is to expose learners in the early schooling years to different types of texts that form the foundation of learning in other learning areas such as history and science, for instance.

Admittedly, stories are used in schools for literacy development (Miller & Pennycuff, 2008; Kelin, 2007). And it is the case that the National Curriculum Statement encourages the use of stories for literacy purposes from the Foundation Phase to the Further Education and Training Phase (Department of Education, 1997).

Various researchers (including those already cited) lend support to this emphasis, based on the fact that learners can construct their knowledge from stories. According to Kelin (2007:64-76) the purpose of storytelling is to impart valuable lessons about life, culture and interpersonal relationships and to engage in imaginative ways. Kelin offers the practical suggestion that reading aloud and telling stories to students for a minimum of 15 minutes can improve students' reading and listening comprehension skills (Locket, 2011). S/he argues, as others have done, that listening to stories helps learners to acquire new vocabulary and new expressions. Kelin points out that the skill of listening may be linked to that of reading. As learners read, they make sense of what they read and gain meaning from the story (Miller & Pennycuff, 2008:38).

The natural richness of the language found in folktales may help learners develop communicative and debating skills. This is how they also gain epistemic skills that enable them to construct their own stories. In practical terms, learners can brainstorm their community life stories, especially

traditional tales. They can use visuals and identify similarities and differences between cultures. They can also discuss the role of the story in culture and retell stories from different traditional communities. At the level of group activity, learners can be allowed to tell or read a traditional tale and do some note-taking, have joint construction, develop a text in groups, do joint editing and reflection. The teacher may also prepare a language lesson using the grammar derived from the story told in the classroom (Siwundla & Ngomane, 2000).

### **2.6.5 Folktales as a form of folk-social pedagogy**

Bruner (1996) speaks of folk pedagogy which deals with the place and time in which people influence, teach or educate one another in various ways. Folk pedagogy comprises an interactive orientation between the storyteller and the learners or audience. It allows the storyteller to concentrate on the development of the plot, and the story content involves complication and resolution. Many aspects of culture are transmitted and consolidated by narratives or stories (Bruner, 1996). So, stories refer to the mode of narrating ideas to the world we experience, and they persuade our thinking.

Arch Achomfour (2013) asserts that in Nigeria the Ananse folk stories were told to children by their elders. They were then asked to retell these stories to their peers in turns at school. Because storytelling relies so much on words, they offer a tremendous resource of language experience for children (Koki, 1996). Traditional storytelling has profound cultural elements and, as such, is integral to people's lives. It contributes to people's sense of identity and self-worth (Luthi, 1987).

A study conducted by Taylor and Francis (2012) with Ethiopian parents shows that parents preferred oral to written discourse as an anchor for literacy-driven parent-child interaction. They resorted to the description of folk narratives in their native language. They argue that literacy competence can enhance both the child's and the parents' confidence and well-being (Taylor and Francis, 2012). The use of folktales allows for the holistic development of literacy by improving listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Folktales can aid teachers in the design of spelling check activities for their learners. These activities enable learners to discover and reflect on their

own mistakes, especially if they are provided with opportunities for peer assessment. Taylor and Francis (2012) commend this practice as a means of reinforcing ‘cultural linguistic affordances,’ among families.

According to Finnegan (1988) there is a continuum of communication from oral to written modes in different societies. This entails interaction through various media. The introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and computer application technology has added a technical flavour to storytelling. Innovative and creative storytelling has become more semiotic as stories can be played on television and on radio stations. For example, the isiXhosa traditional tales can be animated and screen-played on television and other screenplays. This attests to the existence of a variety of modes of orality and other forms of literacy practice. However, oral competencies integrated with reading and writing skills still have greater benefits for literacy development (Finnegan, 1998). Teachers are thus obliged to attend in-service training programmes so that they are able to adapt to innovative learning and teaching strategies and techniques.

In a case study conducted by Ngece (2014) the value of home literacy is emphasized as a solid foundation for school literacy. Ngece (2014) refers to Scribner & Cole (1978) who studied the Vai community to illustrate the significance of cultural literacy among unschooled adults as a means of understanding their own socio-cultural environment. Scribner and Cole (1978) postulate that social literacy practices have an influence on school literacy practices.

This implies that folktales can be used as a connection between home and school literacy in social pedagogy. In fact, the family is regarded as the basic agent of socialization (Bernstein, 1970). In the context of this study, this view might be related to the use of the oral traditional folktales to support learners’ early literacy development. It may also be linked to the importance of indigenous knowledge in contemporary education.

Traditional oral stories enable children to make meaning of texts since these stories can be remembered long after they have been told because of their engaging nature. When telling learners a story, Morrow (2001) suggests that one must use his/her voice to create characters, express

emotions and to experiment with pacing, tone, accents and sound effects. In other words, the teller must use their body language, facial expressions and gestures to convey and reinforce the meaning of words. Morrow (2001) goes on to say that one must use his/her imagination and include all five senses in the folktale as one tells it. The more really the teller can imagine it, the more real it becomes for the audience, even if it is a work of fiction.

The audience may be involved through simple rhetorical questions or complex sing-along songs. Within the body of the story, the listeners should be given a chance to discuss an idea with a partner or to add elements of plot or characters to the story as it is being told. The audience should be invited to sing along or to stand up and act out a part of the story. In fact, it is suggested that each story lesson should be accompanied with a creative song, which comprises the five “Ws” which are: who, what, why, when, and where? This song would assist learners to understand what each “w”, stands for and why each adds an important element to the story. These characteristics of storytelling may be used as learning and teaching strategies for both novice and experienced teachers within the teaching fraternity (Morrow, 2001).

Other critics suggest that even when one is analyzing a fable, this should be done within the ambit of its utopian orientation or setting by embracing the exaggerated truth told in the tale. In this way, learners may free their imagination to be able to make the contrast between the world of fantasy and the real world. According to the Piagetian view of cognitive development, endorsed by Bruner’s perspectives, children construct an understanding of their world around them. They also experience discrepancies between what they already know and what they discover in their environment (Macleod, 2009). In this way, they construct new knowledge. Therefore folktales may be associated with constructivism which in turn is reflected in social, cultural, and historical factors – which all play a part in Vygotsky’s theory of cognitive and socio-cultural development (Kathryn 1998). The theory that underpins this study is discussed at length in Section 2.7.

Ntuli (2011) claims that in presenting a folktale as a study of oral performance, it is imperative to employ a performance-based approach. This approach can enable learners to mimic and imitate action verbs in the construction of their own stories. Bauman (1974:29) highlights the importance

of performance as a rendition in another communicative mode. This means that attention is paid not just to words, but also to how the words are delivered.

Luthi (1982) states elements in the performance of folktales portray its artistic form. These characteristics include constraints and freedom, stability and movement, firm form and quick progression that produce a magical sense of structure in the minds of the listening audience (Luthi, 1982). Performance incorporates such elements as intonation, speed, rhythm, dramatization, and rhetorical devices (Ntuli, 2011). Through performance, the learners' imagination and thinking skills are stimulated and learners become pro-active listeners.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be deduced that there is a special pedagogy for folktales which requires active interaction between the storyteller and the listener. The pedagogy draws on the teacher's and the learners' socio-cultural contexts and it is referred to as 'folk-social pedagogy' (Bruner, 1996).

In the next section, I expand on the theory that supports folk social pedagogy.

## **2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

As this study deals with folktales and literacy development, it draws on socio-cultural theories and constructivist theories that support cognitive development and language learning. These theories are informed by the work of Vygotsky (1978), Piaget (1936), Bruner (1915-1996) and other renowned social science theorists.

Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist who began his work following the Russian Revolution of 1917, is closely identified with socio-cultural theory (Scott and Palincsar, 1997). Piaget, by contrast, is claimed to be a pioneer of constructivism (Scott and Palincsar, 1997). His theory of cognitive development is said to be a progressive reorganization of mental processes resulting from biological maturation and environmental experience. In fact, it is argued that both socio-cultural

and constructivist theories are concerned with activities that children engage in to learn. These tenets, despite some differences, are said to be consistent with the enquiry-based approaches in which teachers and students are co-enquirers, but with teachers mediating between students' personal interpretations. Such meaning emanates from thinking, students' discussion, and the culturally-established symbols of wider society (Ball, 1993; Cobb, Wood & Yackel, 1993; Engle & Conant, 2002; Magnusson & Palincsar, 2005).

Vygotsky (1962) advocates the most effective form of learning is enquiry-oriented, personalized and collaborative. It has to be conducted in accordance with the norms and values of the community under the guidance of a skilled practitioner like the teacher, parent and/or skillful other. This is crucial for the learners' progress to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Bruner (1996) explores the subject of folk pedagogy by academic vocabulary/diction. He considers aspects of cultural psychology like the social environment where language and community affairs are communicated through symbols and belief systems. He asserts that tradition, customs and moral values are often embedded in daily reality and their significance is found in 'meaning making'. This view aligns with the constructivist approach.

According to Vygotsky (1978) language develops from social interaction for communicative purposes. For example, a folktale has disparate dramatic features such as the use of direct and indirect speech, songs and repetition (Makuliwe, 1995). Hence, I argue that if folktales are part of the Grade 3 language curriculum, they could help create an opportunity for learners to make meaning of their learning even in other academic disciplines offered at school. One of the most important aspects of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory regarding the child's cognitive development is the notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The ZPD is the area of exploration for which the student is cognitively prepared, but requires help and social interaction if it is to be fully developed (Bruner, 1999). From a socio-cultural point of view, the family, the community and the school are the major agents responsible for the

socialization of children in the accepted values, norms and standards of the society in which they grow. So, these play a significant role in assisting the learner to reach the ZPD.

According to the CAPS (DBE, 2011) cultural stories contribute moral, pastoral and academic values which the teacher can easily integrate into existing classroom work instead of having to find extra time for interventions and resources to fulfill the mandated duty of care and support.

The CAPS document (DBE, 2011) encourages parents and knowledgeable others to share their knowledge and skills with learners at schools in order to support their literacy development. This initiative could be helpful in developing learners' vocabulary and their acquisition of terminology that could be used as a learning resource across disciplines. Stories can also be used to develop written and spoken literacy in children (Kelin, 2007).

Some research findings on the theory of social constructivism in literacy learning activities may be restructured to allow students to acquire academic knowledge by building on the experience of everyday knowledge (Kathryn, 1998).

In the context of this study, folktales can be used to enrich learners' language, thus stimulating a sense of identity by incorporating their cultural and aesthetic values. In this way, learners do not only acquire language skills, but their critical skills are evoked (Sivasubramaniam 2013). For example, in the curriculum learning and teaching cycle of a narrative-genre like a folktale, Ntuli (2013) advocates that the obligatory features be relied upon. These include complication and resolution, which challenge learners to think.

The scaffolding techniques suggested by White (2010) indicate that the development of learners' knowledge and their understanding of the social context are the most important elements of learning. Scaffolding is part of the socio-cultural and social constructivist theories. This implies that there is a close relationship between these two theories (Kathryn, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978).

In teaching a folktale, the educator could arrange an activity for the preparation of a joint construction in the same genre where learners can do observations, research, note-taking and role-play. Once such skills are well approved through continuous reflective assessment, the educator can move to an advanced stage where the learners would be prepared and instructed to engage in an individual construction of the same story. In this way, learners are able to exploit their independent thinking and imaginative thinking skills through a collaborative process.

This activity aligns with the socio-cultural and social constructivist theories which advocate co-construction of knowledge through co-operative learning and scaffolding. In this process, the more knowledgeable learners might assist others to reach the ZPD in their learning.

Piaget's (1936) cognitive development theory and constructivism argues that people produce knowledge and form meaning on the basis of their experience. According to this theory children are born with a very basic mental structure on which all subsequent learning and knowledge are based. This theory explains the mechanism and processes by which a child develops into an individual who can reason and think using a hypothesis.

According to Piaget's theory (1936), children learn through assimilation and accommodation as they acquire new knowledge. The processes of assimilation and accommodation are cognitive processes in which children add information to the existing schema and accommodate new incoming information. The schemata form the basic building blocks of intelligent behaviour and proffer a way of organizing knowledge (Wordsworth, 2004). Vygotsky's theory of socio-cultural learning emphasises the role social and cultural interactions play in children's cognitive development. For example, when the grandmother tells a folktale there are moments of acting out and bodily expression that could show the sorrow or pain of a particular character. These actions enable the children to accommodate and assimilate new knowledge as they connect the newly acquired knowledge to what they already know.

As this study focuses on literacy development through folktales, the theories I present here are used as a lens through which to understand how folktales enhance imagination and critical thinking



skills among Grade 3 learners. Folktales mimic real life situations, hence they could enrich or nurture a learners' imagination and stimulate their critical thinking. It is useful to understand how learners' socio-cultural and indigenous knowledge, derived from folktales, is used in the classroom. One could then make better sense of how teachers mediate this kind of knowledge in their literacy lessons.

In a study conducted by Mayaba & Woods (2012) on the use of folktales as a resilient intervention or learning strategy for vulnerable children orphaned by HIV AIDS, they reflect on the pedagogical strategies that were successfully executed by learners. The learners were able to reflect on oral stories using drama, drawing, collage- and group-work discussion. This exercise was found to be of pivotal academic value.

In the context of this study, it becomes clear that African folktales can form part of the Foundation Phase curriculum and could be utilized for learning and teaching. Learners could acquire valuable academic skills for future learning. Therefore, teachers should be encouraged to use African traditional stories in their language classrooms and to adopt the learning and teaching cycle suggested by White (2010).

The learning and teaching cycle promotes modeling, deconstruction and reconstruction of the folktale. It entails giving individual and group work activities based on the story, as well as other strategies of tale analysis such as reflection through retelling peers, making inferences through dramatizing, drawing and collages, as well as group debating and discussion as suggested by various scholars (Luthi, 1987; Morrow, 2001; Mayaba & Woods, 2012; Sivasubramaniam, 2013).

With regard to a home-and-school literacy connection, parents and learners may interact through folktales in storytelling sessions. Learners can be asked to reflect on the folktales in relation to their own real-life experiences (Carson, Emmet, & Fairefax, 1999). However, Kehinde (2010) argues that one of the sustaining ideological signifiers of African literature whether oral or written, is socio-political commitment. In other words, folktales contain socio-cultural and political aspects that depict the values and beliefs of the community in which they are told.

## 2.8 SUMMARY

In summary, folktales may be viewed as the main instrument in the socialization of children in ancient societies. Both European and African perspectives share the view that folktales contributed both towards the construction of knowledge and to the socio-political project of nation-building (Kehinde 2010). Kehinde (2010) points out that European and African folktales have similar universal global themes including love, coming of age, identity, good versus evil, virtues of power, triumph over adversity, redemption, warfare, courage, death, sincerity and disillusionment. Also, their contribution is evident in the creation of drama and poetry as well as written prose.

Folktales are a mirror image of life situations as learners can deduce from them certain accepted behavioral values in the community like respect, truthfulness, honesty, the attainment of moral values, problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

The next chapter deals with the research methods and approaches relied on in this investigation into how teachers make use of traditional folktales to foster imagination and critical thinking skills in the learning and teaching of language and literacy in the Grade 3 classroom.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research approaches and paradigms that guided this study. The discussion in this chapter includes the epistemological orientation, the qualitative methodological nature of this research, the research design and the research methods used. It also presents the method of analysis as well as a reflection on the appropriateness of the research methodology.

Lastly, in order to evaluate and triangulate the collected data, I discuss data verification principles which include reliability, trustworthiness and validity.

### 3.2 Research Approach

There are two known scientific approaches that are universally used in conducting scientific research, namely qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), qualitative researchers examine the socially constructed nature of reality and the relationship between the researcher and what is being studied. They also consider the situational constraints that influence the enquiry. By contrast, quantitative studies focus less on the processes and more on measurement, causal relationships and the analysis of variables (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

While a quantitative approach analyses numerical information through statistical procedures, a qualitative approach analyses narrative information subjectively in an organized fashion (Brink et al., 2006). The quantitative approach usually reflects preconceived ideas about how the concepts are interrelated, while the qualitative approach stresses the importance of peoples' interpretations of events and circumstances rather than the researcher's interpretation (Brink, Van der Walt and Van Rensburg, 2006).

Qualitative research is defined as research that derives data from observations, interviews, or verbal interaction; it focuses on the meanings denoted and interpretations given by the participants (Holloway & Wheeler, 1995). The qualitative method allows the researcher to study a real life situation and the contextual conditions of people's lives thereby to obtain views and evidence from multiple sources (Yin, 2011; De Vos, Strydom, Delport & Fouche, 2011).

Qualitative researchers usually start with general research question/s rather than specific hypothesis. They collect an extensive amount of verbal data from a small number of participants, organize that data in some form that gives it coherence, and use verbal descriptions to portray the situation they have studied. According to Kumar (2005:12) the qualitative approach is classified as unstructured, because it allows flexibility in all aspects of the research process. Qualitative researchers focus on ascertaining the significance participants attach to the problem or issue, not so much to the 'meaning' that the researchers bring to the research. Qualitative methods are usually located in the interpretive tradition which is inherent in social constructivist theories (Spivey, 1997; Henning et al., 2004). Qualitative research is viewed as research that derives data from observations, interviews or verbal interactions and focuses on the 'meaning' and interpretations of the participants (Holloway & Wheeler, 1995).

According to Kumar (2005) a study is qualitative if its purpose is to describe a situation, a phenomenon, a problem or an event. Creswell (2007) gives practical expression to the same idea, stating that qualitative researchers ought to collect data at the site where participants experience the issue or the problem under study. He further states that qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behaviour, and interviewing participants (Creswell, 2007).

The qualitative approach is used in this study to investigate how teachers and learners interact in isiXhosa literacy lessons. The aim was to understand how isiXhosa folktales were used to facilitate literacy instruction.

### 3.3 Research Paradigm

A paradigm is often defined as a framework for thinking. In the context of research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) a paradigm encapsulates four terms, which are ethics, epistemology, ontology and methodology. Ethics refers to the morality of persons in the world while epistemology has to do with knowledge of the world, and explores the relationship between the researcher and the known. Ontology raises basic questions about the nature of reality and the nature of human beings in the world, and methodology focuses on the best means of acquiring knowledge about the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Denzin (2009) calls for new paradigm dialogues in social science research, in other words, alternative ways of doing things. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) the concept of a ‘paradigm’ is often used by political and social scientists to denote actual and intended responses to a phenomenon.

Among the paradigms most frequently applied in qualitative research is the interpretive one. An interpretive research paradigm which is closely associated with constructivist approaches to research has the purpose of understanding “the world of human experience” (Cohen & Manion 1994:36). This is to suggest that reality is socially constructed (Mertens, 2005:12). With regard to research implications the interpretivist-constructivist approach tends to rely upon the participants’ views of the situation being studied (Creswell, 2003:8). It also recognizes the impact of their own background and experiences on the research.

This study sought to understand the role of indigenous knowledge for literacy development in the Grade 3 classroom. Hence the investigation entailed an analysis and interpretation of the teachers’ and learners’ literacy practices that were based on the use of isiXhosa folktales and how they were used to enhance Grade 3 learners’ imagination, critical and analytical thinking skills. I followed the interpretive paradigm to understand the teacher’s and learners’ interaction in the isiXhosa literacy lessons. The interpretive approach usually seeks to understand a particular context as the

core tenet of the interpretive paradigm is that reality is socially constructed (Willis, 2007; Bryman, 2004).

### **3.4 Research Design**

Babbie and Mouton (2001) maintain that a case study design can be traced back to Bronislaw Malinowski in Anthropology and Frederic Le Play in French Sociology. Other researchers have nominated the members of the Chicago School in North American Sociology as the real pioneers in the use of case study as a method (Bryman, 2004). Small cases were studied by members of the Chicago School who were interested mainly in unemployment, poverty, delinquency and violence among immigrant groups shortly after their arrival in North America. However, in recent years in educational research, an environment matched with the kind of behavior a learner would display at school and the non-/availability of relevant learning resources has compelled many educational researchers to utilize case study when conducting educational research (Bryman, 2004).

In a case study the researcher carefully chooses a few cases which he/she deems relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Neuman, 2006). A qualitative researcher examines at some depth many features of a few cases over a period of time using detailed and varied data collection techniques (Neuman, 2006). Thus the strategic value of a case study lies in its facility to draw attention to what can be learned from a single case (Shcram 2006: 107).

Using a case study, the researcher locates a system – or a case – within its larger context, but the focus remains on either the case or an issue that is illustrated by the case (Creswell, 1998:61). A case may be viewed as simple or complex. It may be a child or a classroom of children, or an event such as the mobilization of professionals to study childhood conditions (Stake (2005). Because qualitative researchers are interested in the meaning the participants give to their life experiences, they often use a case study to engage with the activities of a single person or a small number of people. This is to gain familiarity with the research participants' social world and to look for patterns in their experiences, words and actions in the context of the case as a whole (de Vos, Delpont, Fouche and Strydom, 2011).

In this study, I looked into the patterns of storytelling with regard to isiXhosa traditional folktales in the Grade 3 classroom. Storytelling lessons formed part of language and literacy teaching in this grade, and the issue under investigation was isiXhosa traditional folktales, and how teachers make use of them in their literacy teaching.

Qualitative researchers often have a close relationship between what is studied and the situational conditions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This implies that the natural setting (where the research is conducted) is an important aspect of qualitative research. In the following section I focus on the research site which was the source of my data.

### **3.5 Research Site**

As indicated, qualitative researchers tend to collect data at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under investigation (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) stresses that the researchers themselves are key instruments in the collection of data as they examine documents, observe behaviour and interview participants.

To conduct this study, I chose a convenient site that was not far from where I reside. This was advantageous because it became easier for me to build a good rapport with the school community at the site. The school was also chosen because the language of learning and teaching in the Foundation Phase is isiXhosa as my study set out to examine the teaching and learning of isiXhosa literacy in Grade 3, which forms part of the Foundation Phase.

The school I selected is situated in Gugulethu Township. It is a primary school with a predominantly isiXhosa speaking population. The school has three phases, namely the Foundation Phase (Grades 1-3), the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4- 6), and one grade in the Senior Phase (Grade 7). In other words, it enrolls learners from Grade 1 to Grade 7. At the time of data collection, there were 17 staff members and 632 learners. There were two Grade 3 classrooms with 58 learners in

each classroom. All the learners and the teaching staff are isiXhosa speaking. At the time of data collection, the school had been in existence for 48 years.

The school is located in a low socio-economic environment. It is categorized as a Quintile 3 school, because the majority of community members are unemployed and some of them are pensioners receiving government social grants. A poverty alleviation programme which runs the nutrition programme for all the learners is provided by the school. The programme is supplemented by a school garden, which is maintained by some community members.

### **3.6 Research Participants and Sampling**

According to Babbie & Mouton (1998), the population for a study refers to a group (usually of people) who participate in the research study to inform an issue or a phenomenon to be investigated.

The general term used for selecting the population to be studied is sampling. Sampling entails taking a portion of a population to be representative of the issue to be studied (Kerlinger, 1986). A random sample is guaranteed to be unbiased as any member of the population has a chance of being selected (Kerlinger, 1986).

There are different types of sampling, namely probabilistic, non-probabilistic, theoretical, deviant, voluntarily sequential purposive, snowball and random sampling (Kerlinger, 1986; Strydom, Delport et al., 2011). Ritchie et al. (2003) define purposive sampling as a strategy whereby members of a sample are chosen with a purpose in relation to the criteria that match the focus of the study. Theoretical and purposive sampling procedures are often treated as synonymous (Silverman, 2000).

This study made use of purposive sampling in order to address the research objectives and to formulate a theoretical policy basis to enhance indigenous knowledge in the form of folktales in the Foundation Phase curriculum.



The sample comprised of one Grade 3 teacher, learners and the school Principal. The personal profiles of the two teachers (including the Principal) are provided in Table 1. I thought it necessary to interview the principal as I believe he is supposed to be familiar with knowledge and development of the Foundation Phase curriculum. I was fortunate to have interviewed the principal also because he gave me advice as to which class to approach as another class was managed by a novice teacher. I decided to take his advice as he claimed that the one he had advised me to interview has a wealth of experience in that grade and was then a head of department. She was due to have retired within the following year.

With regard to their qualifications, the principal holds a B.A. degree and a Postgraduate Higher Diploma in Education, with 13 years of teaching experience; and the Head of Department held a Junior Primary Teachers' Diploma (JPTD) with 32 years of teaching experience.

**Table 1: Teachers' Profiles**

Teacher	Age	Gender	Qualifications	Home language	Teaching experience	Designation
1	43+	M	B.A.; HDE	IsiXhosa	13 Years	Principal
2	58+	F	JPTD	IsiXhosa	32+	HOD

The Grade 3 learners were observed in their interaction with the teacher during literacy lessons. The number of learners was approximately 63, with an average age of 9-10 and 11. There were 30 boys and 33 girls whose mother tongue was isiXhosa.

### 3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This study focused on the teaching and learning process, paying particular attention to storytelling, featuring isiXhosa folktales. Teachers' and learners' interaction during storytelling lesson/s was observed every Friday morning for a period of three months.

Observations, interviews and personal narratives from the participants were conducted as a means of data collection. To verify and validate the information from the observation and interviews, available documents were collected and analyzed. These documents were to provide information as to how folktales were utilized in the use of storytelling as a learning method for Grade 3. An in-depth discussion of the data collection process follows.

### **3.7.1 Classroom Observations**

Observation plays a very significant role in understanding learners' abilities and development. In relation to classroom observation, the rapport between the researcher and the participants established prior to the start of the study allowed me to capture and record some language lessons and associated literacy activities. It took me almost three months to carry out the observations and I observed ten lessons.

The oral communicative interaction between the educator and learners, especially pertaining to literacy lessons and language tasks was integrated with storytelling. Each and every time the teacher presented a language lesson, she would start with storytelling. Folktales were told by learners too and they also engaged in writing activities. The 'talk interaction' in different scenarios was observed. For example, the teacher usually asked for attention when she was about to read a story from the 'Big Book' (of stories). Lessons took approximately 45 minutes.

Learners' seating arrangement was also observed and I was informed by the teacher that learners were seated according to their abilities so that when doing facilitation and mediation, more attention would be spent with the slow learners. Facilitative and mediating talk and movements by the educator was well observed. Pedagogical strategies and techniques used by the teacher were folktales narrated by individual learners. In this regard, I wanted to determine whether the teacher

made use of participatory, facilitative and mediatory learning through engaging techniques in her language and literacy lessons.

The reading corner contained various literary books, posters and word charts on the wall. The print-rich environment of the entire classroom was clearly observable. I also observed that there were cue cards with different Xhosa words on the wall. The instructive methods for literacy and language storytelling activities per lesson were also observed. The learner-teacher interaction on an individual and group basis was observed.

According to Henning et al. (2004) in qualitative research, the researcher may observe the language in use and symbols such as posters, word charts, pictures utensils/chalkboard, art, books and all artifacts that are used in the classroom. I followed this guide to observe how language is communicated in its symbolic or in its non-verbal expression through the techniques available in storytelling, by both teacher and learners.

The open-ended semi-structured observation schedule presented in Appendix 11 was designed to capture a glimpse of the aforementioned variants. The observation schedule focused on the following aspects of the lesson:

- 1) Lesson Content
- 2) Introduction to the Lesson
- 3) Learner Engagement
- 4) Resources used in the lesson
- 5) Forms of Assessment
- 6) Opportunities given to learners to tell their stories
- 7) Assessment of storytelling
- 8) My overall comments on the lesson/s

Even though I was not directly involved in the process of teaching and learning, I assumed an “insider” position and perspective (Babbie and Mouton 2001). This implies that I only observed the lessons; I did not participate in any lesson activity.

Interviews are meant to consolidate or validate observation and to provide direction for future observations (Henning et al., 2004). I now proceed to discuss how interviews were conducted to supplement my classroom observation data.

### **3.7.2 Interviews**

According to Kvale (2009) interviewing is understood to be a social practice – a development of everyday conversation – and as such it is a specific form of knowledge-seeking which brings with it moral issues. In other words, interviews are used in both quantitative and qualitative research (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997). Research interviews vary between standardized and non-standardized interviews which are referred to as structured and semi-structured interviews.

Henning (2004) comments that different authors refer to the process of “non-standardized” interviewing in terms of “talk as social action” (Baker, 1997:130). This implies that an interview is regarded as a speech and communication genre (Halliday, 2001:124) in itself. It yields information of a particular form. This means that the discourse of interviewing comprises a set of its own principles or conventions that aim at information-gathering and knowledge-making (Halliday, 2001:124; Mishler, 1984 in Gubrium & Holstein, 2002:17). When people are interviewed, they often voluntarily bring their own opinions (Bryman, 2004). It is therefore important that the researcher uses open-ended questions to collect rich data.

Qualitative studies often use unstructured or semi-structured interviews which are also known as in-depth interviews (Collins, 1998). The unstructured and semi-structured or open-ended interviews actually extend the conversation for a particular purpose (Greeff, 2011). Unstructured interviewing often seeks to comprehend the experience of people and the meaning they make of that experience. For example, in this study I have utilized semi-structured and in-depth interviewing with open-ended questions. I wanted to investigate and understand how the Grade 3 teacher made use of isiXhosa folktales to support learners’ imagination and critical thinking skills.

I also focused on the answers to the question posed and searched particularly ‘quote-worthy’ statements. I created a category of information that was not solicited, but volunteered by the respondents and looked at the relevance of this data.

In-depth interviews are typical in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1988, Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Their use is predicated on the assumption that social reality is subjective and therefore needs the researcher to engage with the subjects that are familiar with the situation or phenomenon being studied. In-depth interviews are very important for data collection on personal experiences and perspectives.

In the following section I focus on the interview with the Grade 3 teacher and the school Principal.

### **3.7.2.1 Teacher’s Interview**

The Grade 3 teacher’s interview commenced with a demographic profile. This included her age, gender category, relevant teaching qualifications and teaching experience in the Foundation Phase, particularly at Grade 3 level.

The interview process progressed with an open-ended question about the teacher’s strategies when teaching language and literacy. There was a follow-up question to establish when she used storytelling as a method, and what the teaching strategy/ies was/were with which she felt comfortable. I also wanted to find out how teachers valued the role of isiXhosa folktales in their literacy teaching and how Grade 3 learners made meaning of isiXhosa folktales as part of storytelling. The Grade 3 teacher who is also the head of the Foundation Phase Department expressed her pedagogical experience on storytelling in general by alluding to it as a means of holistic intervention. She saw storytelling as one of the tools by which to inculcate or nurture the culture of learning even for other learning activities. She commented on the overcrowding and the cheating by some while learning is in progress, adding that with storytelling cheating is minimized.

The Grade 3 teacher felt comfortable in the interview as it was conducted in her mother tongue (isiXhosa), in her classroom after school hours once the learners had left. The interview took approximately 30 minutes. I took my audio-visual recording device, a notebook and pen with me to record the interview. Charmaz (2002) cited in (Henning et al., 2004) comments about note taking in interviews. She says that making notes as the interview progresses reminds one to revisit some questions and possibly to omit others. I was recording while taking notes that would help with my data analysis.

### **3.7.2.2 Principal's interview**

The Principal's interview took place in his office after school and it took approximately 25 minutes. He described the school as categorized in Quintile 3. He explained that most learners' parents were unemployed. The majority of learners were children from a working class background. According to the principal the most worrying factor was learners' parents who though of youthful age, were unemployed. The parents' level of education was also a cause for concern. Ultimately, the most caring people in the families were grandmothers. He claimed the school would see the learners' real parents only when they required help with SASSA forms which had to be completed and signed.

With regard to the language and literacy curriculum, he was aware of the importance of storytelling in improving the literacy and language development of learners. He mentioned Big Books, which is a package provided by the Department of Education consisting of a variety of English stories translated into isiXhosa. These stories do not resemble indigenous traditional stories. He suggested that we need to write and compile our Folktale Big Book that will restore and preserve the traditional authenticity of these stories. He even expressed his concern about the dwindling number of experienced teaching staff in the Foundation Phase claiming that the one at his school was about to retire the following year.

### **3.7.2.3 Document Analysis**

Documents are also regarded as primary sources of data. In other words, the study of documents and artifacts can be introduced as a method on its own (Henning et al., 2004). Any document, whether old or new, whether in printed format, handwritten, or in electronic format may be used as a valuable means of data collection. Gubrium and Holstein (2008) state that most qualitatively oriented researchers depend on documents to make their case. However, limited availability of documented literature often makes it difficult to rely on this as an only source, due to bias and credibility issues. Information derived from the document must benefit both the interpretation and the analytical research methods (Garfinkel, 1967).

My objectives with documents were to check if the curriculum policies involve traditional stories or folktales under language and literacy education in the Grade 3 Foundation Phase curriculum. I also sought to check the contact time allocated during the week for language and literacy, as well as activities in the learners' books pertaining to the use of traditional stories. Therefore, for this study the following documents were scrutinized: The (Revised National Curriculum Statement – RNCS (2002) and the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), the classroom timetable and the learners' written tasks. With regard to lessons on storytelling both the RNCS (2002) and the CAPS (2011) documents stipulate that in the learning and assessment of learners they should become familiar with the structure of the story, the sequence of events and the themes of the story.

### **3.7.3.1 The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)**

The CAPS document is a national policy that guides teaching and learning in South African schools currently. It gives direction to school administration and teaching staff as to how to execute teaching and learning programmes at both school and classroom levels. CAPS replaced the Revised National Curriculum Statement of 2002.

The CAPS is vested with institutional authority as to how teaching and learning programmes have to be arranged even at classroom level. It is like a yardstick for quality assurance in the education system. It spells out the contact/notional time including periods per week for each learning programme or subject to be learnt, and is sometimes accompanied by teacher guides per subject to spell out the necessary themes. The guides also explain how teaching and learning resources should be developed, and how to creatively execute collaborative and participatory teaching and learning methods with the use of storytelling (RNCS 2002).

This CAPS document thus helped me in choosing the day of the week most conducive to research activity. Friday mornings were most suitable for storytelling lessons.

### **3.7.3.2 The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)**

I referred to this policy document to check the extent to which policy regulations specify the use of traditional stories as a means to enhance imagination and critical thinking skills. I was particularly interested in whether anything was said about reading for meaning using traditional storytelling.

For Foundation Phase literacy and the language development the RNCS (2002) dictates that in the use of storytelling – including folktales – learners must be guided in the construction of their own stories. It spells out expected learning outcomes together with assessment standards and assessment tool/s. It is a policy that makes teachers accountable for what they are supposed to accomplish regarding specific outcomes.

### **3.7.3.3 Classroom Timetable**

The classroom timetable is a document that allocates teaching and learning periods and contact time for each learning programme to be executed in the classroom. It reflected the language learning themes which were specified per period; these include phonics, shared reading and language oral activities, training sessions for spelling and writing skills.



In my scrutiny of the classroom timetable, I checked whether storytelling lessons were integrated with the aforementioned skills and whether isiXhosa folktales were also integrated in storytelling lessons.

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical considerations pertain to the desired professional research etiquette. They concern confidentiality therefore participants need to be ensured of the protection of their privacy. The researcher must guarantee this after participants have attached their signatures to the consent forms. It is his/her responsibility to treat them with the utmost dignity and care as he/she is accountable for the ethical quality of the inquiry (Henning et al., 2004). This implies that a good rapport must be established between the researcher and participants (Kvale, 1996; Silverman, 2001).

In order to observe research ethics, I applied for ethical clearance from the University of the Western Cape's Research Committee. When permission was granted, a letter of consent was drafted and sent to the school in order to gain access to the research site. The letter detailed the purpose of the research and guaranteed protection, confidentiality and anonymity of the school and participants. Participation was declared voluntary, and participants were promised that no harm would be inflicted on them. Confidentiality was established in the first instance by assuring participants that their names would not be disclosed in the research process. I have referred to each anonymously by simply using their occupational titles, such as teacher, Head of Department or Principal.

### **3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Validity and Reliability are scientific categories that guarantee the degree of rationality with which the phenomena under scientific inquiry are treated (Schwandt, 1997). Validity is defined by the accuracy in the representation of the participant's account of social phenomenon. It also assesses whether the tools are credible or understandable to them (Schwandt, 1997). In other words, these

scientific instruments are to measure trustworthiness and rationality in the process of investigation including its findings.

### **3.9.1 Validity**

In general, validity is an indication of how sound your research is. In other words, it refers to the effective use of the research strategies and techniques in bringing about desired outcomes (Kvale 2009). For example, validity may refer to how well a questionnaire can measure what it is intended to measure. The validity of an investigation depends on the soundness of the theoretical presuppositions and upon the logic of the derivations from theory to the research question of the study (Kvale 2009).

Validity depends on good craftsmanship that is, the entire structuring of an investigation which involves continually checking, questioning and theoretically interpreting the findings (Kvale 2002:309). This implies precision throughout the research process – from the design to the presentation of the findings (Henning et al., 2004). Validity in data collection means that one's findings truly represent the phenomenon/-a one is claiming to measure (Hammersley, 1990:57).

In this study I attempted to ensure validity by using different data collection strategies that supplement each other, namely observations, interviews and relevant document analysis. This entailed careful probing of what was said during interviews and the continuous checking of the information obtained from all the data sources. In other words, I had to ensure that the participants' interview reports were trustworthy, and I had to check the quality of my interview questions with my supervisor.

### **3.9.2 Reliability**

Reliability like validity is a way of assessing the quality of the measurement procedure used to collect data in research study (Hammersley, 1992a:67). Kerlinger (1986) notes the concern for reliability comes from the necessity for dependability in measurement. Kerlinger (1986) offers synonyms for reliability which are: dependability, stability, consistency, predictability and

accuracy. With reliability as a measurement, we can ascertain the degree of error which might be present in an investigated phenomenon (Kerlinger, 1986).

I was able to evaluate validity and reliability through the successful use of open-ended interviews and outsider-insider observation techniques, as well as curriculum documents which detail the importance of storytelling across the curriculum. As Kirk and Miller (1986:52) argue, the modern search for reliability in qualitative observation rests on detailing the relevant context of observation.

### **3.10 SUMMARY**

This chapter focused on the research design and methodology. It touched upon some important theoretical and conceptual perspectives on epistemology and research paradigms. The contrast was drawn between quantitative and qualitative paradigms and associated research instruments and design types.

Since this study is a qualitative inquiry, more detailed emphasis is placed on the utility of qualitative research instruments like semi-structured observation schedules, open-ended semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Complementary to the research instruments are the scientific verification principles, validity and reliability, whose relevance has been outlined.

The next chapter deals with data presentation and analysis.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter dealt with research methodology. This chapter focuses on data presentation, interpretation and analysis. According to Babbie (1998), the collected data is to be interpreted and analyzed for the purpose of drawing conclusions that reflect the interest, ideas and theories that initiated the inquiry. This implies that the observations and interviews, including the document analysis discussed in Chapter 3, will permeate the processes of interpretation and analysis. In other words, I will apply the technique of triangulation to the analysis in order to arrive at the research results or findings that are discussed in the chapter that follows this one.

### **4.2 DATA PRESENTATION**

Data presentation plays an important critical role in consolidating research as the objectives are examined against relevant evidence. As indicated earlier, the research instruments used to collect data were classroom observations, interviews and document analysis. Data presentation includes classroom observation data that portrays the interaction between the Grade 3 learners and the teacher in isiXhosa literacy lessons. Initially, I looked at what was common in participants' responses. I was particularly interested in instances where extended commonalities in their responses occurred. Thereafter I looked at differences and similarities in their responses.

#### **4.2.1 Classroom Observation Data**

The purpose of classroom observation was to check whether teachers include traditional isiXhosa folktales in their storytelling lessons. It also looked at how teachers made use of traditional folktales in their literacy lessons to support learners' imagination and critical thinking skills. Some studies illustrate how a particular literacy exercise influences the targeted literacy skill and how the practice of developing literacy affects the totality of people's lives, especially their sense of self and of social identity (UNESCO, 2006).

In the classroom I was given a timetable so that I could be familiar with the language lesson themes. The physical appearance of the classroom was quite impressive with numeracy and language, and activity charts on the walls. The classroom was indeed print-rich and I suppose this enhanced the culture of learning in many ways. I observed ten language and literacy lessons, as stated earlier. Of these, six focused on storytelling using traditional isiXhosa folktales. I present these six lessons in the section that follows.

#### 4.2.1.1 Lesson 1: Ibhayisekile yokuqala (*The first bicycle*)

The lesson topic was the title of the story about the origin of the bicycle. This is a contemporary story from the Big Book which was read aloud by the teacher with the learners' active participation. The teacher read the story and then asked some questions based on the content of the story.

I noticed that it took more time for learners to pay attention to a story read from the Big Book than when they themselves were given the opportunity to tell folktales for the class. This could be due to how the modern story was approached. For example, the bicycle story was retold by a young learner after it had been read from the Big Book. The opening of a modern story differs from that of a folktale in which the audience is invited at the beginning of the story.

The skills that were imparted in this lesson were listening and comprehension. In the process of reading the story, the teacher often paused and asked some questions. Table 2 captures excerpts and pictures that were used in the story.

**Table 2: Interaction between the teacher and learners**

1. Teacher	Kanene, apha ebalini kuthiwa ivelaphi ibhayisekile? <i>In this story where did the bicycle come from?</i>
2. Learner A	Kuthiwa yenziwa eJamani, Mem. <i>It is said it is made in Germany, Ma'am.</i>
3. Teacher	Kuthiwa ngubani umfo oweza nebhayisekile? <i>What is the name of a man who made a bicycle?</i>

4. Learner B	Igama lotata oweza nebhayisekile nguBaron Drais. <i>The name of a man who made a bicycle is Baron Drais.</i>
5. Teacher	Chaza unyaka eyenziwa ngayo ibhayisekile yokuqala. <i>Mention the year in which the first bicycle was made.</i>
6. Learner C	Ibhayisekile yokuqala yenziwa ngowe-1817. <i>The first bicycle was made in 1817.</i>

The aim of observing this lesson is to demonstrate that the ‘telling’ of modern stories, read from the Big Books series is actually given preference over traditional folktales because the educational content in the narrative about the invention of modern transport (like a bicycle) is written down and traditional folktales are an available resource which may be orally executed.



**Figure 1: The first bicycle**



#### **4.2.1.2 Lesson 2: Ukubhala ileta yobuhlobo nebali ngeleta yobuhlobo (*Writing a friendly letter and a story about a friendly letter*)**

The bicycle story was followed by a lesson on the writing of a friendly letter. The lesson topic, *Ukubhala ileta yobuhlobo*, was about writing a friendly letter. The teacher asked the learners if they had ever thought of writing a letter to their mothers or to their friends. The teacher engaged learners in active communication before explaining to them how a friendly letter was written. She went on to say that one must start with her/his home address and she demonstrated where the address must be written and what follows it, that is, the address, salutation, etcetera.

At first glance, during the letter writing activity the learners were looking tired and bored with the task of writing a friendly letter. The learners looked more interested after the teacher decided to read them another story – this time, about a friendly letter.

The second letter-writing lesson was a consolidation of the previous letter-writing activity that had been initiated, in which learners had appeared tired and bored. The teacher was responsive to this lethargy shown by the class. She went on to read a story about a friendly letter from the Big Book.

The story was about a boy called Den who wrote a letter to his friend Mandla, telling him about his amazing participation in a national athletics competition, and his dreams of going to the Olympic Games in the near future.

The learners were then asked to write a letter to a friend telling him/her about their birthday party. The teacher used storytelling as a facilitating and mediating tool to inspire learners for their letter-writing activity. I noticed that the learners were unable to develop the text without the teacher's assistance.

Through this letter-writing activity learners were introduced to imaginary and technical writing skills. (As it happens there may have been those learners present who had never had a birthday



party.) The teacher used the chalkboard to guide the learners in how to write a letter. She showed them how to write the address and salutation of a friendly letter.

#### **4.2.1.3 Lesson 3: Ukufundwa kwesicatshulwa (*Reading Comprehension*)**

This lesson was based on shared reading. Interestingly, the piece that was read was pasted in the learners' books. It was a fable about a giant [*isigebenga*]. According to CAPS (DBE 2011:18), reading aloud is one of the most important components of a balanced reading programme. It assumes a collaborative empowering element that helps struggling learners to actively participate in the activity without fear of being singled out to read, on an individual basis. Hence, guided by their teacher, learners read in groups of averaged abilities. Those cited as having the lowest average were the ones who received the most guidance. In this instance, there was self-enjoyment and their imaginations were freed.



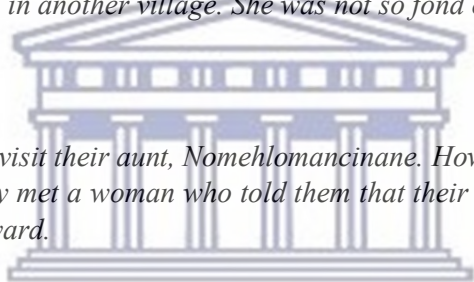
What follows is the folktale that was read aloud by both the teacher and the learners in a shared reading activity:

Kudala kwakukho ixhegokazi elalikhohlakele kakhulu. Yayilizim elalizenza umntu onobubele. Izim ngumntu otya abantu. Lalinentombi elaliyithanda kakhulu. Lalinodadewabo owayehlala kwenye ilali. Lalingamthandi kakhulu udadewalo. Udadewalo wayeneentombi ezintathu.

Ngenye imini ezi Ntombi zandwendwela uNomehlomancinane. Zazingamazi ukuba ulizim. Zathi xa zisendleleni zadibana nomama owazixelela ukuba umakazi wazo lizim. Zagqiba kwelokuba maziye phambili zingajiki.

*A long time ago there was a very cruel old woman. She was a giant who appeared calm and kind. A giant is someone who lives on human flesh. Anyway, she had a daughter whom she loved very much. She also had a sister who lived in another village. She was not so fond of her sister, who as it happens, had three daughters.*

*One day these girls decided to visit their aunt, Nomehlomancinane. However, they didn't know that she was a giant. On their way they met a woman who told them that their aunt was a giant. They decided not to turn back, but to go forward.*



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**Table 3: Interaction between the teacher and learners through storytelling**

<p>7. Teacher: Lalingumntu onjani elixhegokazi? <i>What kind of character was this old woman?</i></p>	<p>Umfundi: Lalizenza umntu olungileyo, labe lingumntu okhohlakeleyo. Ikwali lo nezim. <i>Learner: She pretended as calm person meanwhile she was a cruel person. She was also a giant.</i></p>
<p>8. Teacher: <i>Babunjani ubuhlobo phakathi kwalo nodade walo?</i> <i>Teacher: How was the relationship between the giant and her sister?</i></p>	<p>Umfundi: Babengavani Mem <i>Learner: They were not on good terms, Ma'am.</i></p>

<p>9. Teacher: Ucinga ukuba inoba yintoni ibenza bangavani? <i>Why were they not in a friendly relationship?</i></p>	<p>Umfundi: Inokuba babemonelana ngabantwana Mem, kuba usista kaNomehlomancinci wayenabantwana abathathu yena enomntwana omnye. <i>Learner: Maybe jealousy about children because Nomehlomancinci's sister had three children and she had one child.</i></p>
<p>10. Teacher: Ucinga inkuba kuza kuqhubeka ntoni endleni? <i>Teacher: What do you think will happen on the road?</i></p>	<p>Umfundi: UNomehlomancinci lizim uzabaginya, Mem. <i>Learner: Nomehlomancinci is a giant she will swallow them, Ma'am.</i></p>

The teacher had designed some reflective questions on the foregoing text. It would have been a good idea if the teacher were to have maintained the isiXhosa language's naturalness offered by the categories of time, place, space/environment in the folktale lesson. For example, by discussing aspects of the story and by asking them to imagine the conclusion as to what might have happened to those girls had they shown bravery of some kind – like not being scared of giant. Such an approach would have stimulated the learners' (desired) critical thinking and imagination skills, as advocated by Hodge and Kress (1988).

#### 4.2.1.4 Lesson 4: Ubizelo (Dictation)

The fourth lesson was about the spelling [Ubizelo] of words like [*intsente, intsomi, iintsuku etcetera.*] The purpose of this lesson was to reinforce the grapheme ['nts']. Most of this vocabulary exercise was derived from the folktale told by the learners, for example, the proverb: [*Bacela kwabanentsente – they ran away*]. I noticed that the majority of these ['nts'] graphemes appeared on flashcards on the wall. It seemed some learners were aware of this because they looked there before they started writing.

I noticed how other learning resources on the wall were used by the teacher and learners in the creation of sentence structure, for example:

- a) Baxhela inkomo [*They are slaughtering a cow*]. A poster illustrating the slaughtering of a cow was shown.
- b) Uvela kukha amanzi emlanjeni [*She is from the river to fetch water*]. A poster of a girl carrying a bucket on top of her head was evident.

These printed resources seemed to enhance visual learning, vocabulary and the development of grammar, which also help learners when they have to create their own stories.

#### 4.2.1.5 Lesson 5: Ukubalisa ibali (Storytelling)

This lesson was based on a story. Learners told their own folktales and they took turns in doing so. The introduction of the story was fascinating. For example, the interaction between the storyteller and the audience went as follows:

**Table 4: Storytelling**

11. Storyteller	Kwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi <i>Here I come with my story!</i>
12. Audience (Chorus)	Chosi ntsomi ndaba zolwimi. <i>We welcome the fake/gossiped news.</i>
13.	Ezikabani <i>Whose?</i>
14. Audience (Chorus)	Ezika-X ... (X's... - mentioning the name of the storyteller). Ungazifaki emgqomeni <i>Do not throw them into the dustbin.</i>

The introduction was different from what I knew, namely [Chosi ntsomi, ungaphum' iimpondo – *We welcome your story, but be careful that you do not grow horns*]. This response was based on a belief or myth that if you tell a traditional story during the day, you would grow horns like an animal.

What follows is one of the folktales told by a learner:



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Kwathi kekaloku ngantsomi. Kwaye kukho mzi othile wakuloNomahamle noNomehlo mancinci, nomama wabo. Utata wabo watyiwa lizim. Ngenye imini umama wabo wabathuma kumalume wabo ohlala phesheya komlambo. Kwakufuneka benqumle kwihlathi elishinyeneyo.

Bathi besahamba phakathi kwelohlathibeve izingqi zezim, emva kwabobabaleka. Ngqe! iZim emva kwabo, bacela kwabanentsente, labamba uNomehlo mancinci. Wakhala uNomehlo mancinci wathi: Nomahamle, mntakamama, ndisindise!!

Lamginya iZim, emva koko laleqa uNomahamle owayephethe intonga etsolo. Laye lambamba lamginya kunye nale ntonga ayiphethe ngesandla. Uthe akufika esiswini seZim wafika wahaga usista wakhe, emva koko wagqobhoza isisu seZim ngale ntonga itsolo. Baphuma. Lafa iZim.

Phela-phela ngantsomi.

*Once upon a time –there was a family home – Nomahamle and Nomehlo mancinci and their mother. Their father was eaten by a giant. One day their mother sent them to their uncle who was staying over the riverside. They were compelled to cross a densely forested bush.*

*When they were walking in the bush, they heard the giant’s footsteps behind them. The giant hurried after them and caught Nomehlo mancinci. She cried and asked her sister to rescue her: Nomahamle, please my mother’s child help me!!*

*The giant swallowed her. Thereafter the giant was after Nomahamle who was carrying a sharp knobkierrie. The giant caught Nomahamle and swallowed her together with the knobkierrie in her hand.*

*When she got into the giant’s stomach she hugged her sister and thereafter stabbed the giant in the stomach and created a big hole with the sharp knobkierrie. They got out of the giant’s stomach*

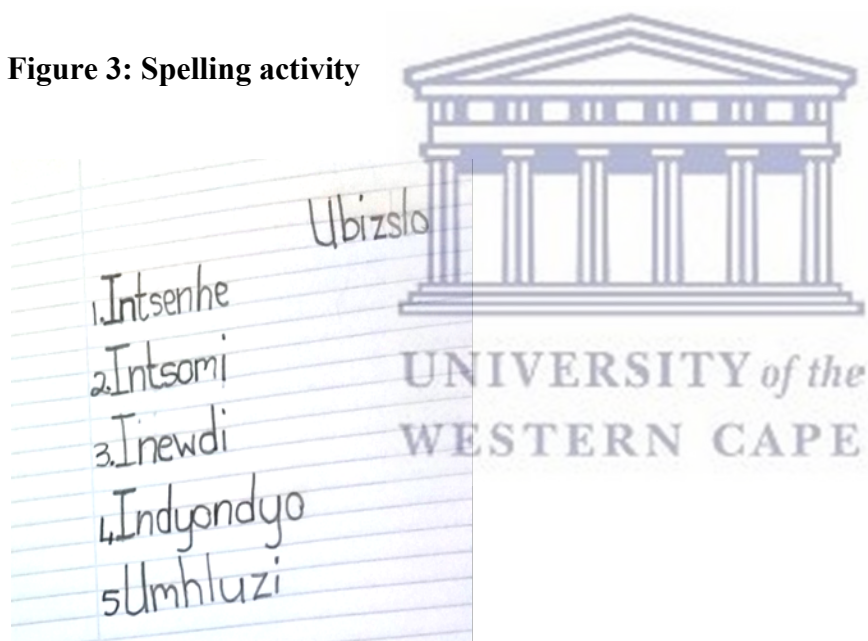
*There end(s) the tale.*

When the learner had finished narrating the story, the teacher instructed the learners to write a story which involved themselves in a dangerous incident.

#### 4.2.1.6 Lesson 6: Ukusetyenziswa kolwimi (Language Use)

The lesson was based on language use [*Ukusetyenziswa kolwimi*]. The teacher read five words in a spelling activity as shown in Figure 3. Learners had to spell these words: [*intsomi, intsente, incwadi, indyondyo, umhluzi*]. As indicated earlier, some of these words were derived from stories already told, and learners were assessed on spelling and vocabulary.

**Figure 3: Spelling activity**



The second activity involved converting sentences from the present to the past tense. The teacher first demonstrated this by changing the tense in a sentence from the present to the past as shown in the examples that follow.

- **Ixsha langoku [Present tense]:** Umama uhlamba izitya  
[Mother washes the dishes]

- **Ixsha eladlulayo [Past tense]:** Umama wahlamba izitya  
*[Mother washed the dishes].*

As an assessment activity, learners were asked to write the following sentences in the past tense.

1. Umalume ulima egadini. Umalume walima egadini.  
*The uncle ploughs the garden. The uncle ploughed the garden.*
2. UNosipho upheka umngqusho. UNosipho wapheka umngqusho.  
*Nosipho cooks stampmealies. Nosipho cooked stampmealies.*
3. Udyakalashé utya inyama. Udyakalashé watya inyama.  
*The jackal eats the meat. The jackal ate the meat.*
4. Utata uxhela igusha. Utata waxhela igusha.  
*The father slaughters a sheep. The father slaughtered a sheep.*
5. UZola uginywa sisigebenga. UZola waginywa sisigebenga.  
*Zola is swallowed by the giant. Zola was swallowed by the giant.*

The grammar activities were actually integrated into the storytelling as some sentences were derived from the story. Both tenses were used in storytelling. In some instances the present tense would be indicated for direct speech or quotations from the story. Otherwise the story was told in the past tense.



#### 4.2.2 Data from print-material and visual images

As noted earlier, the Grade 3 classroom was print-rich, with various learning resources on the walls. The print material ranged from numeracy charts (Space and shapes) written in isiXhosa, to language and literacy charts that included vocabulary and phonics. There were charts on body parts, posters in isiXhosa, and full texts of certain activities such as slaughtering an ox.

There was a resource corner with books, while other literacy books were stored in the cupboard. The print material was used for various purposes such as viewing, reading and writing. The picture that follows reflects the classroom environment with learning resources and textual-visual images.

Figure 4: Examples of print material



The print material constitutes an intervention which fulfils a facilitating and mediating role in teaching and learning activities. For example, the posters in Figure 4 illustrate some body parts with constructed sentences about their function. Parts of speech such as nouns, pronouns and verbs are highlighted, for example:

- Isandla **sona** siyabamba: *The hand [it] holds.*
- Iqatha **lona** liyaxhathisa. *The ankle [it] balances.*

The foregoing examples would help the learners to understand the structure of the sentence, enabling them to differentiate between the noun and the pronoun, and to understand that the verb is an action word.

In the next section I discuss the interview data.

### 4.2.3 Interview Data

In this section I deal with interview data that was collected from the Grade 3 teacher (referred to as T) and the Principal (referred to as P), as explained in Chapter 3. I asked open-ended questions in order to allow the participants to share their experience as it relates to the aims of my study.

#### 4.2.3.1 The Grade 3 teacher

The Grade 3 teacher had 42 years of experience teaching Grade 3 in the Foundation Phase. She had been an HOD in this phase for more than nine years. In conversation with her, she acknowledged that learners were exposed to literacy before they attended school.

I have used numbers (e.g. T1, T2, T3) to indicate the teacher's response to the various interview questions. I have done the same with the Principal's interview which is discussed in section 4.2.3.2.

With regard to the role of storytelling in relation to language and literacy development, especially isiXhosa traditional folktales, she said:

T1: Kangangendlela ezaziluncedo iintsomi, kodwa imfundo yanamhla ijolisa ubukhulu becala kumabali akutshanje, alemihla. Kangangokuba nakubeni nawo eluncedo. Kodwa awasivali esasikhewu sobuntsomi nokwakuzalan a kolwimi nobaliso lwentsomi yesiXhosa. Ngamanye amazwi, awatyebanga ncakasana sisigama sesiXhosa semveli njengeentsomi zesiXhosa. Isigama esisetyenziswa ekubaliseni iintsomi sikunika umfanekiso ngqondweni otyebileyo, atsho ubani acinge phucukileyo ngakubaliselwayo nangapha koko.

*T1: As much as folktales were useful, today's education focuses on contemporary reading of stories. While contemporary stories are also useful, they do not bridge the gap of (between) traditional folktales and the relationship between language and traditional folktales. In other words, they are not rich in isiXhosa vocabulary like isiXhosa traditional folktales. Folktale vocabulary provides rich imagery and the listener is stimulated to think deeper.*

She mentioned that folktales can entertain a young mind and thereby produce a smart thinker. She had this to say:

T2: You know Mfundisi, ... ukusoloko ucinga, ...uqiqa phucukileyo.

*You know Sir, ... always thinking, ...reasoning well.*

She also commented on the classroom environment and learners' transition to Grade 4. Her comment suggested that an early exit from mother-tongue instruction to second language teaching and learning had a negative impact both on learners' literacy development and on their academic progress. She mixed isiXhosa with English in her response, as shown below:

T3: You know: Uyazi mfundisi thina nabantwa asilinkwa ithuba kuba sinamagumbi anabantwana abangapha komthamo wegumbi lokufundela nomsebenzi onenkukacha-maphepha omninzi ekufuneka siqondane nawo rhoqo nditsho nakwimisebenzi yokufundisa. Lo nto itya ixesha lokufundisa. Isebe lemfundo lithi layicutha umsebenzi wenkukacha-maphepha kodwa ayibonakali loo nto. Kwaye xa befika kwinqanaba lesine iikhodi zabo ziyehla kwaye abazali banentoyongayiqondi into yokuba kulama nqanaba imicela-mingeniiba mbaxa.

*T3: You know Sir, we, together (with) our learners... we are not given space because sine – [we have] overcrowded classes and there is too much administrative paperwork even for designated activities. They say they have reduced paperwork but I don't see that, my*

*brother]. Actually, when they get to Grade 4, their grades drop and parents tend not to understand that in those grades challenges are becoming complex.*

There is a policy concerning the norms and standards. It is intended guide the processes whereby indigenous knowledge may be embraced and harnessed in the Foundation Phase language curriculum for Grade 3 learners. The teacher remarked that the policy was too general. She explained that while it does stipulate that stories and storytelling are components of language and literacy studies and should be executed weekly in this phase, no precise or specific reference is made to the importance of isiXhosa traditional folktales.

She pointed out that the emphasis was on storytelling for language and literacy development only. The curriculum policy indicates the necessity for oral activities pertaining to literacy, and includes folktales and storytelling, but does not specify other forms of traditional literature. The policy seemed to be geared towards modern literacy. This is evidenced from the literature displayed and packed in the resource cupboard, such as *'The story of a bicycle'*.

On the question of whether she provided time for oral storytelling sessions for her learners, she responded that she did that quite often due to the large number of learners in her class. She complained of too much paperwork that made it difficult to cater more fully for her learners, hence she used oral activities as an intervention technique. She commented that she engaged those learners who were passionate about storytelling to tell a story for listening and speaking, communication and discussion purposes in the classroom. She indicated that she used storytelling sessions for regular assessment purposes:

T4: ... Maxa wambi ngenxa yenani elikhulu labantwana kule klasi, kwaye nangenxa yomsebenzi omninziwenkcukacha-maphepha owenza kubenzima ukuqubisana nokufundisa. Yiyo loo nto ndisebenzisa ukubaliselana iintsomi njengesakhono/icebo lokungenelela, kwaye ndiye ndisebenzise aba abantwana bakuthandayo ukubalisa iintsomi ukuphucula ezo zakhono zifana nokumamela, ukuthetha nokuxoxa eklasini. Ndilusebenzisa rhoqo olu hlobo lokuvavanya.

*T4: ... Quite often, because of the big number of learners in this class and the heavy administrative paper work which makes it difficult to teach. It is for that reason that I use folktales as an intervention strategy, and I use the learners who like to tell stories to enhance skills such as listening, speaking and discussion. I use this type of assessment regularly.*

Concerning the benefits of isiXhosa folktales, she responded that the benefits were both academic and cultural. Through folktales learners could acquire a solid academic foundation; they could fortify their self-regard and be morally boosted. Their imagination and thinking habits could be improved through storytelling. She mentioned that children also found joy and happiness and fun in learning.

Moreover, when teaching a story, the teacher would not be expected to write down everything.

When asked if she had ever thought of inviting an elderly person to share the experience of storytelling with her learners, she said:

T5: Mmh...eh... Khange ndiyicinge indlela okubalulekileyo okungaluncedo ngako oko, kodwa yeyona nto ebendingayithakazelela ukuyenza lo nto.

*T5: Mmh... eh... I never thought of how important and helpful that could be, but this is something I would wish to take head on.*

With regard to the challenges she encountered when teaching isiXhosa Home Language grammar and literacy, and how she addressed such challenges, she responded thus:

T6: Njengoko benditshilo ngaphambili..... kweli ibakala abantwana basokolisana nopelo lwamagama, nokwahlula izibizo kwizenzi, ukulanandelisa amagama ngendlela efanelekileyo, kwanokubhala isivakalisi ngendlela eyiyo. Abanye basokola nokusa itekisi kwintsingiselo efanelekileyo. Ubaliso lwamabali ludlala eyona ndima ibalulekileyo negqibeleleyo ukulwisana nale miqobo isemfundweni nesakhono sokuthetha.

*T6: As I said before, ....at this grade learners grapple with spelling, and to differentiate between nouns and verbs, word order, and sentence structure, punctuation and some even struggle to convey meaningful messages. Storytelling plays a very important role in addressing these learning and communication barriers.*

Furthermore, she mentioned that the curriculum policy requires that storytelling be part of language and literacy but it does not mention the need to familiarize learners with the structure of the story, including sequence of events in the story. In other words, there are no specific guidelines pertaining to the use of isiXhosa folktales.

When asked about what she did in her capacity as HOD to include isiXhosa folktales as part of storytelling, she had this to say:

T7: Mandithi kumaxesha amaninzingentloko yesigaba selicandelo ndisebenza ngokwemigaqo ebekiweyo kwikharityhulam. Ikharityhulam iyayichaphazela into yokubaluleka kwamabali kubandakanya iintsomi. Ngamanye amaxesha akufuni kugqitha ngapha komphathi wakho kodwa ukuba ndingalinikwa elothuba ndingawenza ngobunono lo msebenzi. Andiqondi ukuba apha kwisigaba kwabasaqalayo emfundweni ootitshala mabafunjwe ngomsebenzi wenkcukacha-maphepha. Loo nto inokuchaphazela ixesha lokufundisa ngokuphazamisayo ide ibambezele uphuhliso lwengqondo zabafundi.

*T7: Well, in most instances, as an HOD of this phase I operate within the laid down rules and regulations prescribed in the curriculum. The curriculum states the importance of storytelling. Sometimes you do not want to step over your superior's authority, but given a platform, I can do this efficiently. I am not convinced that Foundation Phase teachers have to be burdened with too much administrative paper-work. That could affect the learning and teaching contact time and impede the learners' imagination and cognitive development.*

One of the questions was whether the school had its own language policy, and whether it contained anything with regard to the utilization of isiXhosa folktales as part of storytelling for language and literacy development. She responded as follows:

*T8: Well, we were not aware of such an autonomy or right as a school but it is worth telling and I think it would be worthwhile to consider that as a school community, ... and in fact, I must say even if this autonomy exist[ed] it is rubberstamped or rather a 'nay say', ... But perhaps the onus is on us as a school community to ensure that we include isiXhosa folktales as part of language and literacy curriculum even across the grades, ... maybe it will be of benefit both academically, culturally and morally, as we are currently faced with moral degeneration as a society.*

When asked about the advantages of using traditional stories in isiXhosa, she responded as follows:

T9: Ndinga ukuba umvuzo,... yona ikhona macala onke ngokwemfundo nangokwamasiko nezithethe zokuhlala nobulumko bolwazi oluqulathwe koluncwadi lwemveli ngoba nathi sikhule sibaliselwa iintsomi. Besingayothuki into ye-orali esikolweni, besiyilangazelela into yokwenza iintsomi norayi-rayi esikolweni. Apha koluncwadi ubuzuza ukuqiqu ngokuphucukileyo nobulumko bokuqiqu ngomgqalasele. So ndingathi abantwanabangazuza lukhulu xa iintsomi ezi bezingasetyenziswa ngokufanelekileyo njengesixhobo esimbaxa esivala amazibuko; nditsho olona ngenelelo olumbaxa olunonceda umntwana aphucuke ekucingeni mhlawumbi nasekubhaleni, i- 'creative writing' nolunye uhlobo lokubhala olusesikweni lwesikolo nemfundo.

*T9: I think there are benefits on all sides in terms of education as well in terms of societal culture and customs and the wisdom of knowledge embedded in traditional literature because even us we grew up being told folktales. We were not surprised of oral activity at school, we were interested in telling stories and riddles at school. So I can say children can gain a lot if traditional folktales could be used in an effective way as complex tools that prevent barriers; I say as real complex and effective intervention tools that can help children improve their thinking perhaps in creative writing and in other forms of accepted norms at school and in education.*

The teacher acknowledged the importance of using the traditional stories in literacy and language development with regard to facilitating and mediating learning. She was of the view that they play a good role in injecting a culture of learning, and a sense of identity and moral obligation in young minds. She seemed to be complaining about too much administrative work and overcrowding that impede literacy learning and teaching opportunities, especially in relation to the time available for traditional storytelling.

#### **4.2.3.2 The Principal**

In this section I focus on my interview with the school principal. As an introduction to our interview, the principal mentioned that the school fell under Quintile 3. In response to a question about the Foundation Phase curriculum and traditional folktales as part of literacy, he said:

P1: Ngokokuqonda kwam ikharityhulam iyayibeka kwaye ikugxininsa into yokubaluleka kwamabali ikwanombono wotitshala abasebenzisa amabali rhoqo egumbini lokufundela. Ikwakhuthaza ootitshala ukuba babafundise abantwana ekwakheni awabo amabali. Ukuba amabali ahlulwe ngokwalawo emveli njenge entsomi nawakutshanje bendingenawo loo mgqaliselo kodwa ikharityhulam iyazibandakanya iintsomi ukabaluleka kwazo kumabali afundiswayo. Kwaye ndinenkolo yokuba iSebe lezeMfundo lenza amalungiselelo eencwadi ezinkulu eziqulathe iintlobo ezahlukeneyo zamabali.

*P1: Well, to my understanding the curriculum puts an emphasis on the use of storytelling. It envisages teachers using stories on a daily basis in the classroom environment. It encourages teachers to teach the learners to be able to construct and tell their own stories, ... and as to define whether they be traditional or modern ... well, I was not aware of that but the curriculum speaks on folktales and the importance of storytelling. I believe that the departments have made provision of Big Books, which contain different stories.*

With regard to the use of traditional isiXhosa folktales as part of a knowledge system, he indicated that they needed to develop their own 'Big Book' for the restoration of isiXhosa traditional

folktales. He went on to say that the English Big Book is a series of mostly translated stories from other languages. He mentioned a key challenge is that the school was running out of older staff members who were experienced in storytelling, especially in isiXhosa traditional folktales for the Foundation Phase. He commented:

P2: Ngokokubona kwam kuyafuneka ukuba siyile owethu umqulu wencwadi lweentsomi zemveli, khon'ukuze ootitshala abatsha bakwazi ukusebenzisa lo vimba uyiliweyo weentsomi zemveli. Owona mcela-mngeni ngoku kukulahlekelwa ngootitshala abanamava okubalisa iintsomi zemveli ... lo utitshala mnye ubudlan'indlebe naye, uneminyaka angamashumi amane anesithathu efundisa sele zakudla umhlala-phantsi, mhlawumbi kulonyaka uzayo.

*P2: I think we have to develop our own book on traditional folktales so that the young teachers can use this resource. The challenge at present is losing teachers who have experience in telling folktales ... The one (teacher) you have just interviewed with her 43 years' experience in this phase, is about to retire sometime next year.*

The principal acknowledged that storytelling is a component of the Foundation Phase curriculum. But he expressed concern about the dwindling numbers of experienced teachers in the Foundation Phase as he believed these were the teachers with a wealth of experience in traditional storytelling. Hence he made a suggestion that we should be writing our own traditional storybook. This, he believed, would preserve the authenticity of our indigenous stories and enable the new generation of teachers to use them to improve language and literacy.

### **4.3 Data from Documents**

Chapter 1 states that this study sought to investigate the importance of using isiXhosa folktales both as part of fostering imagination and critical thinking skills, and as holistic social-pedagogical tools in the learning and teaching of language and literacy among the Grade 3 learners. As explained in Chapter 3, the documents I examined are policy documents such as the RNCS (2002), the CAPS (2011) of the National Department of Basic Education, and the teacher's lesson plans. Data collected from these documents is discussed in the next section.

#### **4.3.1 Curriculum Policy**



In this section, I report on data I collected from different documents, as discussed in the previous chapter. In assimilating data, I scrutinized the curriculum policy document to assess the extent to which it elaborated on the use of isiXhosa traditional folktales in the Foundation Phase, especially in Grade 3. Also, I examined and analysed learners' class-work books to determine whether there were any activities in which isiXhosa traditional folktales were utilized.

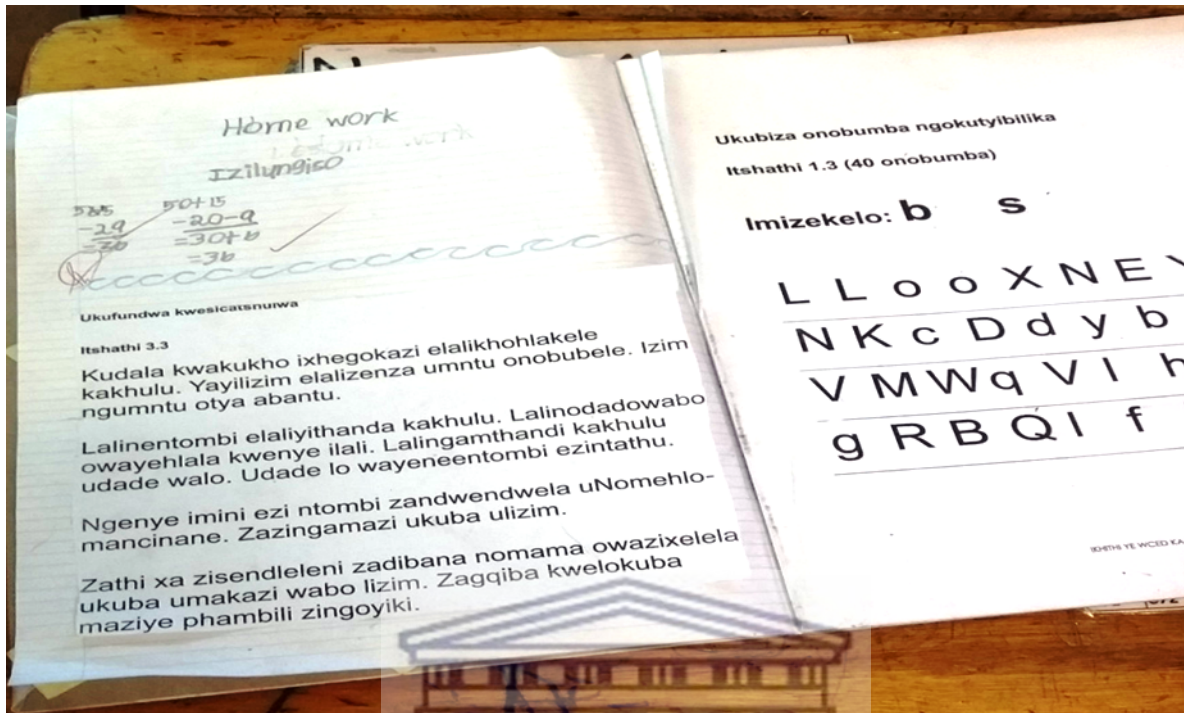
The Revised National Curriculum Statement RNCS (2002) spells out the significance of language and literacy education as a critical component of the curriculum. Language and literacy education develops reading and writing skills, and it is the foundation of other literacies, extending into further education.

The policy document contains, among other items, rules, regulations, norms and standards intended to guide teaching and learning as well as assessment activities. It recognizes the child's right to learn as well as their cultural rights as it stipulates that all children should be taught in their mother-tongue or in their primary language from Grade R to 3 (DBE, 2011).

The document also acknowledges the contribution which could be made by a school/library and by elderly people to advance children's literacy. It spells out the importance of both non-fiction and fictional stories, but there is no emphasis on isiXhosa folktales. It appears that the policy leaves the decision to teachers as to what literature to use.

The School Improvement Plan refers to the language of teaching and learning and additional literature and resources to be used.

#### **Figure 4: Example of a story for reading**



The use of stories and storytelling demands that teachers have a story lesson every day in a week in Grade 3. Seven to eight hours are allocated for language and literacy, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 5: Time Allocation**

Outcomes	Time Allocated
Listening and Speaking	45 minutes/per week: 15 minutes per/day for 3 days
Reading and Phonics	4 hrs 30 minutes per week: 15 minutes per/day; 45 minutes for 3 days
Handwriting	45 minutes per week: 15 minutes a day; 45 minutes for 3 days
Writing	1 hr per week: 20 minutes per day; 60 minutes for 3 days
Reading and Phonics	<u>Phonics sounds</u> 2hrs30 minutes per week

Group Reading	30 minutes per day for 5 days; <u>Group reading</u> 5hrs per week 2hrs 30 minutes per group 30 minutes per day for each of two groups for 5 days .
Listening and Speaking	1 hour per week: 15 minutes per day for 4 days:
Handwriting	1 hour per week: 15 minutes per day for 4 days

While the (CAPS) policy appears to have an open-ended approach, it does regulate Home Language learning and teaching in relation to the story structure or the characteristics to be addressed by teachers in their classrooms. It states clearly that teachers are to familiarize learners with the structure of the story in respect of characters, sequence of events, main theme/s, protagonist and antagonist and experience or complication in the story (DBE, 2011). Teachers are also encouraged to have lessons on storytelling daily.

The policy also requires teachers to orientate learners on how to create a story at both an individual and a group level. Teachers are also expected to create space for debates and discussions on storytelling, and make use of isiXhosa folktales. The debates promise great fun and would instill self-esteem and a sense of joy among learners.

#### 4.3.2 Teacher's lesson plans

The teacher's lesson plans based on storytelling were examined with regard to the different pedagogical techniques and modes, that is, whether the stories were read or told, contemporary or traditional. I assessed gradation – whether the lessons catered for different learning abilities – and question-types, that is, low, average and high order questions. I also investigated whether the lessons catered for language and literacy activities derived from the story.

My analysis of the teacher's relevant lesson plans indicated that they were indeed based on storytelling. They gave the assurance that the lesson would provide the necessary background detail, and that those outcomes relating to the requisite knowledge and skills (to be acquired by learners) would be kept in focus. They also revealed the different strategies the teacher planned to use in storytelling, for example, reading or narration. The teacher intended that the questions to be asked during the lessons would serve as a means of formative assessment.

These documents thus enabled me to identify the types of questions, and the tasks that were planned for the learners such as written work, the creation of a story, individual and group work, and so on.

In the next section I focus on the analysis of data from the various sources, namely classroom observations, interviews and document analysis.

#### **4.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

One of the aims of data analysis (Henning et al., 2004) is to describe both the data and the objects or events to which the data refers. The purpose of data analysis is to draw inferences from findings and to make recommendations. The transcribed raw data is to be filtered and analyzed through the lens of both the research design and the research instruments. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999: 156) data analysis is the process of bringing order structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. This process entails the integration of theories used in the study.

Various researchers have identified principles they consider appropriate for qualitative research analysis (Smit, 2001; Dey, 1993; Tesch, 1990; Huberman and Miles; 1994; Silverman, 1997, 2000). They claim that qualitative analysis takes place throughout the data collection process as the researcher has to reflect on impressions, relationships and connections while collecting the data. This implies that the researcher must probe for similarities and differences to identify categories and themes pertaining to the research study. Henning et al. (2004) propose that a detailed description of participants' perspectives on the phenomenon that was studied forms the basis of qualitative analysis.

As articulated in the previous chapter, this study followed a qualitative approach to investigate the use of isiXhosa folktales in fostering imagination and critical thinking in Grade 3 learners. This section analyzes and interprets data with the aim of checking for similarities and contradictions between what was observed and what was gathered in interviews and documents. It is guided by the research questions stated in Chapter 1.

In conducting my study, I was guided by Kvale's (2009) seven stages of data collection which include explicit formulation and conceptualization of the subject-matter, designing questions, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting on the knowledge gathered in the interview conversations. With regard to data analysis, I used the Thematic Analysis which is described in the section following.

#### **4.4.1 Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis is usually used in qualitative research to identify themes that appear relevant to the study or to the research topic. Researchers look for recurring instances between the observation and document data and responses from interviews. These observed occurrences are usually categorized into sub-themes that emerge from the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the investigator must make an argument in relation to the research question when using thematic analysis.

The thematic approach aims at the interpretation of data for meaning-making. As stated earlier, it focuses on an in-depth description of the experiences of the participants regarding what is being studied (Henning et al., 2004; Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

The following are key themes that emerge from data collected for this study:

- 1) Curriculum and Storytelling
- 2) Folktales and Knowledge Construction
- 3) Pedagogical Strategies in Storytelling.

These themes are discussed under sub-themes and categories that align with the research questions stated in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

#### **4.4.2 THE CURRICULUM AND STORYTELLING**

This section focuses on data that illustrates how the Foundation Phase curriculum addresses storytelling as a means of facilitating literacy teaching and learning. It also explains the content of the CAPS curriculum with regard to the literacy skills that Foundation Phase learners are expected to acquire.

##### **4.4.2.1 The Foundation Phase Language and Literacy Curriculum**

This theme is supported by interviews, observation data and document analysis. For example, the lessons presented earlier show that the teacher adhered to the CAPS requirements with regard to time allocated for the literacy activities. The interview data shows that the teacher was aware of the gaps in the FP curriculum (T7), as she suggested that the school should include folktales as part of the curriculum (T8). The interview data with the principal confirms that the CAPS document specifies learning opportunities as it emphasises the use of storytelling as the foundation of all language and literacy activities (DBE, 2012). In other words, storytelling is regarded as one of the key elements in literacy development.

The RNCS stipulates the use of fables, legends, myths, poems, songs, riddles and jokes (DoE, 2002: 26). The CAPS document also encourages folktales, riddles, songs and poems (DBE, 2011). Both the RNCS (2002) and CAPS (2011) encourage lessons on storytelling and advocate that learners be familiarized with the structure of the story: the sequence of events, and themes; also that those learners be taught how to write a story. Essentially, learners should be equipped with listening and comprehension skills. They must be able to evaluate and analyse the events in the story. For example, they must be able to envisage, assess or imagine stages like the located situation, complication, resolution and climax as the story unfolds.

These departmental requirements are in line with the cognitive operations in Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy of educational objectives. According to Bloom (1956), the cognitive domain consists of six levels, namely (i) possession of information, (ii) comprehension, (iii) application, (iv) analysis, (v) synthesis and (vi) evaluation. Bloom's taxonomy represents increasingly complex forms of thinking which are crucial for understanding the implied meaning of stories or folktales. Tonges' (2014) view that storytelling fortifies brain development in children draws on certain of these elements when she proposes that even without a text or pictures storytelling teaches children how to listen deeply with conscious focus and enables them to visualize characters and to remember a sequence of events. This assertion also complements Freire and Machado's critical literacy approaches which combine with the democratic and socio-cultural features of learners' environments. Freire & Macedo, 1978) viewed literacy as a process of conscientisation which involves reading the world rather than just reading the word.

Freire (1974) stresses the importance of bringing the learners' socio-cultural realities into the learning process to challenge the socio-economic processes that might inhibit their thinking capacity. The process Freire advocates is to help them identify conflict they will encounter with expected societal norms and values. With such critical literacy approaches embedded in folktales, if exposed to them, learners will be in a position to develop critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills and thus to become critical independent thinkers. Indeed, the curriculum prescribes

storytelling as one of the literacy teaching strategies in early childhood education (Department of Education, 2012).

So folktales as a component of the genre of storytelling are important tools for mediating learners' literacy development. This assertion could be explained in terms of Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory that promotes the use of learners' prior knowledge for meaning-making. The CAPS curriculum recognizes this kind of teaching approach by incorporating IKS as an aspect of traditional literature.

#### **4.4.2.2 The Foundation Phase curriculum and Indigenous Knowledge System**

Both the teacher and the Principal seemed to understand the importance of IKS in the Foundation Phase curriculum. For example, the teacher's response (T8) acknowledged the academic, cultural and moral role of folktales in children's development. She saw the benefit of IKS as offering complex and effective intervention tools for literacy teaching and learning. The Principal's answer to the interview question (P1) also supported the inclusion of folktales in the curriculum as part of traditional literature.

IKS is acknowledged in our education policy especially with regard to its scientific use. However, in relation to language and culture it appears to be merely rubber-stamped. This implies that it be might have been written into the policy with more care in terms of its practicability. For example, there are alarming reports from the United Nations Education and Cultural Organization on low levels of literacy, prompting a focus on policy changes regarding literacy – with specific foci on women, children and adults (UNESCO, 2006).

In the South African education system, the Indigenous Knowledge System in which folktales are embedded is seen by the Western Worldview as pagan or barbaric, which is why it was never included in the colonial education system. This has resulted in the marginalization of IKS even within the current formal curriculum (Nomlomo & Sosibo, 2016) under the new dispensation.



The integration of IKS with the Foundation Phase Curriculum must not be taken for granted because it is imperative. Epistemological support for this statement may be found in studies by Kehinde (2010 and Ntuli (2011) who proclaim that traditional folktales were used as means of passing wisdom and knowledge from one generation to the next even before formal schooling had emerged. For instance, folktales in Nigeria serve communities in various socio-cultural settings and they are highly regarded as educational and pedagogical instruments. Therefore, the integration of modern literature and oral traditional literature in the education curriculum can ignite a brighter future for the continent and the world (Pemberton, 2010).

#### **4.4.2.3 Storytelling in the Foundation Phase**

The observation and interview data shows that the teacher made use of storytelling to support learners' reading and writing literacy. Both the teacher (T7) and the principal (P1) acknowledged the importance of storytelling as a means of enhancing learners' listening and speaking skills. The teacher (T1 and T2) stressed the importance of storytelling as a means of enriching the learners' vocabulary and stimulating their thinking and reasoning.

Data shows that storytelling lesson observation schedules were designed in accordance with prescribed lesson themes. For example, in an event where the story is integrated with grammar or with the structure of the language, a theme of the story would be integrated with such instructions as the selection of verbs that reflect bad or good motives or emotions in the story, depending to the type of narrative-genre told, read and viewed by the learners.

Other activities included listening, reading and viewing the narrated story, as well as being given some comprehension questions based on the story. Some activities include ones associated with verbs, nouns and phonics.

Learners were actively engaged in a collaborative and dialogical fashion when engaged in storytelling lessons. This was most interesting if one were to compare storytelling lessons with other lesson types where learners' responses were not as vibrant.

Storytelling enhances writing and reading skills: for example, the lesson on a friendly letter. The teacher read a story of a friend who wrote a letter explaining his wish of becoming a good athlete who could compete in the Olympic Games. Then the learners were guided to develop a text on writing a friendly letter.

When storytelling is used in learning and teaching as a facilitating and mediating approach, learners become animated with enthusiasm and the collective willingness to complete the learning activity following a storytelling session. According to Fischer and Terry, (1990) storytelling is one of the few kinds of talk in the classroom that offers rich complex language with clarity and which develops complexity in students' language usage, thereby enhancing their vocabulary and writing.

Facilitation and mediation roles were best suited to storytelling lessons rather than other lesson types, for example, if one compares storytelling lessons with the lesson on how to write a friendly letter then in terms of facilitating and mediating a friendly letter the teacher grappled a great deal in explaining the address and the introduction. Storytelling lessons, as a result of their natural language setting, prosody and engaging character are easy to facilitate and mediate because they invite the learners' imagination and challenge their thinking simultaneously.

Holstein and Gubrium (2008:245) contend that fairytales and neighbourhood experience have discernible contours. In other words, narrativity may be examined on its own terms in the manner by which it shapes what is known about the subject-matter. Their argument seems to suggest that as stories, folktales have unique features, and that it would be worthwhile if the policy were to present such specificities. This would promote the process of integrating Indigenous Knowledge into the Foundation Phase language and literacy curriculum.

#### **4.4.3 FOLKTALES AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT**

The analysed data indicates that folktales were used to facilitate and mediate learning. In other words, the teacher used them to stimulate learners' thinking skills so that they could make meaning or construct knowledge of what they learnt.

In the section that follows I refer to how learners made sense of the literacy lessons when folktales were incorporated, and I highlight the value and significance of folktales in literacy instruction.

#### **4.4.3.1 The role and value of folktales in literacy teaching and learning**

In the interview with the Grade 3 teacher she explained that folktales constitute a holistic academic intervention, notably in a situation where the classroom is overcrowded. They inject curiosity that enriches the learning culture in the classroom even for other learning activities like "writing a friendly letter". They learners' imagination, which is fundamental to all forms of cognitive development.

Folktales have facilitation, scaffolding and mediating roles in literacy and language teaching and learning. This is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) belief that learning is a social process and that everything is first learned through social interaction with others as it becomes assimilated into the individual's mental structuring. According to Vygotsky (1978), the discourse of collaborative learning, modeling, scaffolding and mediating presents strategies for supporting the development of learners' intellectual skills and facilitating intentional learning. The observation data supports this view as the teacher provided opportunities for the learners to work together through group work, and they were able to scaffold each other.

CAPS (2011) encourages teachers to use folklore in comprehension and reading activities so that learners are able to distinguish between what could be real and what could be viewed as a fiction. Folktales are multi-purpose oral literacy tools which readily provide educational scaffolding. Their collaborative dialogic characteristics help nurture the imagination and critical thinking skills of learners. In this respect, Sivasubramaniam (2013) describes folktales as having unique

characteristics. He states that good stories are powerful social cultural and moral expressions. He contends that folktales can be excellent language teaching resources which help nurture imagination and critical consciousness.

Through folktale performance, the learners' imagination and thinking skills are stimulated and learners become pro-active listeners. Ntuli (2013) claims folktales are interactive literacy tools as they involve a performer and an audience who interact in a specific context. The observation data is consistent with this view as the teacher narrated stories to her learners, and individual learners themselves narrated their own folktales to others, as their audience.

Luthi (1982) states there are elements and characteristics that portray the artistic form in the performance of folktales. He claims that these characteristics include constraints, freedom, stability and movement, firm and quick progression that produces a magical sense of form in the mind of the listening audience. Hence Ntuli (2011) complements Luthi's assertion that performance deals with such elements as intonation, speed, rhythm, dramatization and rhetorical devices.

Kehinde (2010), however, argues that caution should be taken in selecting stories for children as some stories have the potential to breed indiscipline and immorality in society. Plato (cited in Kehinde, 2010), argued Socrates' view that the stories used for teaching children should be selected with great care, otherwise we run the risk of inculcating ideas into their minds that are the exact opposite of the ones they should have when they grow up. If not carefully chosen, some folktales may shape children's character in such a way that they become bullies and selfish individuals.

The data presented shows that the stories taught by the Grade 3 teacher dealt with historical and social issues, (*Ibhayisekile yokuqala*/ 'The first bicycle'). They also dealt with lifeskills (friendship, birthday) as illustrated in Table 2. This implies that while these folktales are entertaining, they also instill educational, social and moral values in young learners.

#### 4.4.3.2 Folktales and mediation of learners' reading and writing literacy

According to Bakhtin (1981) the prevalence and practice of folktales in the language classroom can encourage learners to view the signs of a text as both spoken or written in their narrative styles. This can facilitate a dynamic meaning-making style which may be changed or replaced by their signs, the semiotic context of the original text. Through folktales learners can read their personal life experiences, understand their roles as readers, reviewers, critics and promoters of their reading and writing.

Folktales represent language within a natural setting and the teacher can deconstruct or decode the setting into an academic environment in different pedagogical ways. They can also be viewed as a valuable resource for the development of spoken and written language (Kelin, 2007). In the analysed data, for example, the lesson on spelling and phonics demonstrates that oral source promoted an eagerness in learners to write.

In this study the learners were able to make meaning of the lessons by referring to the print material on the classroom walls. However, the print material was not rich enough to enhance learners' reading literacy and knowledge construction. This could be attributed to the limited availability of isiXhosa resources in our schools. This is suggestive of Steensel's (2006) argument that the lack of literacy resources like books in our social setting may hinder the academic potential of children at school. This implies that a lack of resources may have a negative impact on children's knowledge construction.

UNESCO (2008-2011) proclaims the need for sustainable literate environments that are well resourced to facilitate learning among children. The naive Eurocentric perception that views isiXhosa and other African languages as not economical or scientifically viable is indeed absurd and impacts negatively on educational literacy materials production especially for the young ones. The reproduction of indigenous knowledge for language and literacy development – in both oral and written form – is something that is overlooked, or rather not taken sufficiently seriously.

The data presented in the foregoing section (P2) recommends the design of isiXhosa story books on *iintsomi* (folktales), instead of a reliance on translated stories that are Eurocentric. This might be possible if parents are involved as partners in the teaching-learning process. Parents and teachers should perform oral storytelling on a regular basis for storytelling strengthens brain development (Tonges, 2014). A lack of parental involvement in the schooling of their children, especially in relation to scaffolding learners' language and literacy development, may impact negatively on the learners' cognitive intellectual development. Parental engagement in the child's learning is thus seen as a crucial determinant of his/her academic success.

Recent studies allude to the need for a strong relationship between parental involvement and the literacy skills development of young learners (Prosper, 2012; Ngece, 2014; Kathomi, 2015; Makaluza, 2018). This view is supported by Piaget and Vygotsky's theories (1978) on the importance of the home environment in children's learning. Therefore parental involvement in learners' early literacy development becomes important in the school environment as it may help to mediate the effects of factors such as socio-economic background and individual differences, creating quality education for each child including those who are susceptible to poor literacy levels (Kathomi, 2015).

#### **4.4.4 PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES**

This theme is supported mainly by data from classroom observations and document analysis that illustrates the pedagogical strategies the Grade 3 teacher used to enhance learners' literacy through storytelling and folktales. I also refer to the interview data that supports what I observed in the Grade 3 isiXhosa literacy lessons.

The analysed data shows that the teacher used different strategies to foster learners' imagination and critical thinking. These strategies include a balanced language approach and learner-centred approaches. These are discussed in the section that follows.

##### **4.4.4.1 Learner-centred and Balanced Language Approach**

Data from classroom observations shows that the Grade 3 teacher made use of storytelling in an integrated or inclusive manner, which involved the integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. This was corroborated by the interview data which indicates that the teacher made use of stories to enhance listening, and speaking in her class (T4). The folktales were also used for reading and writing for example, the writing of a friendly letter.

The CAPS (2011) requires teachers to orientate learners in storytelling. This can take various forms. The teacher regarded folktales as effective intervention tools that support the learners' academic, cultural and moral development (T8). In other words, they were used for the socialization of learners into their culture, and to instill societal values and norms.

However, the teacher revealed certain challenges learners experienced in their language learning, namely spelling, and recognition and use of aspects of language such nouns, verbs, word order, etcetera. (T6). Figure 3 illustrates some of the words learners struggled to spell.

The teacher also made use of questions to stimulate learners' thinking. Learners were given opportunities to tell their own stories in order to show their own understanding of the stories. For example, Table 3 illustrates how the teacher engaged with the learners to reach the ZPD that is one of the key components of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory.

Folktales also served the educational role of imparting knowledge and helping with the cognitive intellectual development of their young minds. This was evidenced when learners told folktales of their own. The use of isiXhosa traditional folktales by the teacher in collaboration with the learners was a means of making meaning of the story or plot. According to Riessman (2008) this critical approach to oral traditional literature is rich in imagination and it equips learners with cognitive skills.

The learners seemed to have developed a sense of self-discipline and showed enthusiasm as they paid attention and listened with curiosity to their peers. This is in line with Ntuli's (2011) view

that narratives are a performance-based orientation by the performer or the storyteller and the audience.

This observation might be associated with Garton and Pratt's (1989) definition of literacy which must include both spoken and written language. Garton and Pratt's (1989) definition suggests a critical and balanced language approach to language teaching. In this regard, the folk pedagogy was of utmost importance as it acknowledges and builds on one's culture.

Folktales as part of storytelling are important pedagogical tools that require serious scholastic attention on the part of researchers and policy-makers. The data of this study indicates that learners showed interest in folktales which were used to enhance their literacy learning, and that this sparked their imagination and fostered thinking skills.

The use of folktales as part of storytelling supports the folk or social pedagogy which takes into consideration the learners' socio-cultural backgrounds. Therefore, there is a reason to believe that a close inter-relationship exists between language or literacy and culture. This implies that a classroom environment which does not take cognizance of the learner's socio-cultural background when executing language and literacy lessons will be far from achieving expected objectives.

#### **4.5 Summary**

This chapter concerned data presentation, analysis and interpretation. It was imperative that thematic-narrative approaches be utilized along with interpretive theoretical approaches by which to analyze the data. The use of folktales in fostering imagination and critical thinking skills is of great importance for social, cognitive and intellectual development. The teacher made use of a variety of strategies to incorporate folktales into her lessons. The learners seemed to enjoy the stories and were able to construct their own, as part of assessment.

In the next chapter I focus on the findings of the study and draw conclusions. I also provide recommendations that emerge from the findings.





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# **CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter presented and analysed data which was collected by means of classroom observations, interviews and document analysis. This chapter reports on research findings, draws conclusions and makes recommendations on the practical realization of the implied inclusion in the curriculum of isiXhosa folktales (as folklore). At stake is the enhancement of critical thinking and imagination skills among the Grade 3 learners.

As stated in the first chapter, this study set out to understand how the Foundation Phase addresses folktales in language and literacy teaching and learning, with a special focus on Grade 3. It also investigated how the Grade 3 teacher made use of isiXhosa folktales to enhance imagination and critical thinking skills in Grade 3 learners. As a starting point, I present and discuss the findings that emanated from the analysed data. The key findings are as follows:

1. storytelling is an important component of the Foundation Phase Curriculum
2. IKS is important in isiXhosa language and literacy development
3. folktales stimulate learners' imagination and creativity
4. isiXhosa literacy learning is mediated through folktales
5. inclusive and learner-centred pedagogical approaches enhance isiXhosa literacy teaching and learning.

## **5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

As has been already been reiterated, this study focused on the role and use of isiXhosa folktales in enhancing Grade 3 learners' critical and imagination skills. Critical thinking and imagination skills incorporate analytical and interpretive as well as writing, problem-solving and decision-making skills which are crucial to the teaching and learning process. They are fundamental in the development of cognition and the learners' intellectual abilities even as this development might extend into further education and later the potential for academic empowerment. The early

nurturing of these aspects through storytelling is said to be an advantage. In fact, storytelling continues to break new ground in clearing learning barriers among children.

### **5.2.1 Storytelling is an important component of the Foundation Phase curriculum**

An analysis of the Foundation Phase curriculum shows that storytelling is regarded as a key component of literacy teaching and learning (DBE, 2012). However, there is no explicit reference to folktales, although they are mentioned as part of folklore. Nonetheless, it can be deduced that storytelling entails the epistemic-educative wisdom of imparting knowledge. Storytelling can be integrated into other subjects like history or science. The analysed data shows that storytelling can help provide historical or cultural context and artwork, for example, ‘*The story of a Bicycle*’ that is presented in Chapter 4.

Through storytelling learners are oriented towards reading for meaning and they also gain in imagination and critical thinking skills. In the context of this study, folktales as part of storytelling are regarded as valuable resources for meaning-making in spoken and written language (Kelin, 2007). Data has shown that learners enjoyed isiXhosa folktales, and were able to create and perform their own folktales. This suggests that if learners could be given more exposure to isiXhosa folktales, their listening, oral and reading comprehension skills could be strengthened. Therefore, teachers should be made aware of the need to include folktales as part of storytelling in their teaching.

### **5.2.2 IKS is important in isiXhosa language and literacy development**

The analysed data shows that IKS – which is embedded in folktales – is important for enriching children’s literacy in various forms such as speaking, reading and vocabulary development. According to Boyd (1981) stories are meant as the pathways of philosophy in art, religion, science and the history of the people; they were a source of enlightenment in early centuries. This suggests that stories are interdisciplinary and are regarded as helpful in the epistemic construction of knowledge in various fields of life.

IKS is actually acknowledged in the curriculum, particularly in language learning, as a means of providing learners with aesthetic, cultural and imaginative abilities which enable them to understand the world (DoE, 2002, 2005; DBE, 2012:18). In this way IKS is viewed as a powerful tool of identity construction that reflects language and power relations (DoE, 2002). This implies that if traditional folktales receive less attention or mediocre treatment in the classroom, African language-speaking learners are denied the right to meaningful learning.

The transformation of the education syllabus from a primarily content-driven approach to a problem-solving one creates the impetus for the recognition of indigenous knowledge (Phaahla, 2011). The recognition of IKS in the language and literacy curriculum is of paramount importance as it strengthens knowledge construction, as well as social and cultural identity among the young ones.

Ntuli (2011) asserts that in presenting folktales as a study of oral performance, it is imperative to employ a performance-based approach. This approach would help learners to mimic and imitate action verbs in the construction of their own stories and knowledge (Ntuli, 2011). The data presented in the previous chapter shows that Grade 3 learners created and performed their own folktales. In this way, they constructed their own knowledge.

### **5.2.3 Folktales stimulate learners' imagination and creativity**

One of the interesting findings of this thesis is that through isiXhosa folktales, the learners were stimulated to create and perform their own folktales. They had to tell the folktales to the whole class, as indicated in the data presentation section in Chapter 4. In this way, the other learners had to act as an audience and respond to the narrator according to the structure and delivery of a traditional folktale.

According to Coleridge (1981) imagination is a primary manifestation of thinking and perception which enables us to differentiate between what seems to be real or fictitious. He claims that without imagination, we would have only a collection of meaningless data. Imagination is essentially

creativity (Coleridge 1981) and is a central aspect for the development of cognition and critical thinking.

Oral traditional stories enable children to make meaning of texts since those stories can be remembered long after they have been told because of their engaging nature (Morrow, 2001). When telling a story, Morrow (2001) suggests that one must use his/her own voice to create characters, express emotions and experiment with pacing, tone, accents and sound effects. In other words, you must use your body language, facial expressions and gestures to convey the words and reinforce the meaning. He further observes that one's imagination includes all five senses as one tells it (Morrow, 2011). The more closely you can imagine it, the more real it becomes for your audience even if it is a work of fiction. Morrow (2011) also suggests that the potential in the story will be more fully realized if the learners perform or sing along to act out part of the story.

Performance deals with such elements as intonation, speed, rhythm, dramatization, rhetorical devices and performance (Ntuli 2011). Through performance, the learners' imagination, creativity and critical thinking skills are stimulated and learners become pro-active listeners who are able to interpret and analyze the story. For example, Plato's (347) construction of the science of reasoning is derived from his imagination of darkness in the cave and light experienced by individuals outside the cave. This myth is perceived as the cradle of human reasoning.

The Grade 3 learners who participated in this study showed creativity as they narrated and performed their own stories. The other learners were listeners (audience) who had to imagine what the story was about. In this way, the learners used their everyday knowledge to tell the stories they had heard from older people. This is in line with Arko Archemfour's (2013) view that as children tell some of these stories to their classmates at school, they acquire narration (oral) skills that exhibit their thinking and imagination.

#### **5.2.4 IsiXhosa literacy is mediated through folktales**

The data analysed in the previous chapter shows that the teacher used isiXhosa stories and traditional folktales to mediate learners' oral, reading and language skills. In this way, the folktales, as a sub-set of storytelling became useful resources to mediate literacy learning. Therefore, it can be argued that folktales have facilitation, scaffolding and mediating roles in literacy and language learning. This function is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) belief that learning is a social process and that everything is first learned through social interaction with others, as it becomes assimilated into the individual's mental structure.

Through folktales the Grade 3 learners were able to collaborate with each other, and the analysed data shows that they enjoyed lessons which were mediated through folktales and other stories. This suggests that folktales, as part of storytelling makes learning fun, thus motivating learners to play an active role in their own learning. In other words, folktales promote collaborative learning through scaffolding and mediating techniques that help nourish the cognitive and intellectual development of learners (Vygotsky, 1978).

### **5.2.5 Inclusive and learner-centred pedagogical approaches enhance isiXhosa literacy teaching and learning**

According to the analysed data, the Grade 3 teacher made use of interactive teaching approaches such as the question and answer method and collaborative learning through group work. These methods are learner-centred and they allow the learners to make meaning of their isiXhosa literacy lessons. The questions guided them to think creatively and apply the knowledge in various forms such as speaking, reading and writing. Therefore, it can be argued that the nature and performance of folktales by both teacher and learners fostered a learner-centred approach of teaching. Hence it is believed that the interdisciplinary and audience-engaging collaborative character of folktales guarantees a holistic-inclusive learning culture that is learner-centred (Ntuli, 2011). Inclusivity and learner-centredness through folktales were also proven in Mayaba's (2012) case study on the use of folktales as intervention tools for orphaned-vulnerable children with HIV and AIDS.

A folktale is regarded as a world-encompassing literary form as it reflects all essential elements of human life (Luthi, 1982). From an anthropological point of view, folktales were originally told to children so that they could gain the wisdom or knowledge and a sense of cultural identity. Folktales are integral in knowledge construction and they are a gateway to learners' reading abilities, creative writing and enjoyment (Ntuli, 2011). For example, when learners experience boredom for a particular learning activity, the teacher may intervene with storytelling to get them on track.

Satyo (1981) believes that isiXhosa folklore, myths and legends are an epistemic source of both drama and poetry. They carry deep knowledge and wisdom and they are a source of enjoyment and fun. The use of traditional storytelling or mainstreaming indigenous knowledge at primary school level may have a positive impact on sustaining culture, identity, self-determination as well as academic improvement.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of the foregoing research findings, I make certain recommendations as a means of strengthening the incorporation and use of folktales to enhance literacy teaching and learning. These follow in Section 5.3.1.

#### **5.3.1 Holistic incorporation of folktales into the Foundation Phase literacy curriculum**

The foregoing assertions represent attempts to convey the message that folktales help to sustain identity, culture, self-determination and academic improvement. Therefore, I recommend that they should be holistically incorporated into the Foundation Phase curriculum. Folktales should be used at school every day of the week as a component of social pedagogy. They may prove helpful for dealing with complex learning barriers that teachers are unable to detect among learners, for example, speech or hearing challenges.

#### **5.3.2 Introduction of isiXhosa traditional literature in pre- and in-service teacher training**

The Department of Education should liaise with other stakeholders like universities to provide workshops with information on how to use traditional folklore such as folktales in language and literacy development. Storytelling lesson-plan templates with themes could be provided and teachers could be supported in how to use them in their classrooms to establish quality teaching and learning in primary schools. Such resources could also assist curriculum advisors to monitor and evaluate literacy teaching and learning in the classroom.

In-service teacher training workshops could be hosted on a quarterly basis for accountability and transparency, and to address teaching and learning challenges encountered by both teachers and learners.

### **5.3.3 Role-play and journal writing for isiXhosa literacy development**

During the storytelling lessons learners could be given an opportunity to role-play the folktale. Teachers should know how to integrate role-play activities, especially with techniques as suggested by Morrow (2001) and Ntuli (2011) such as acting out a character's voice, facial expression, intonation and other body-gestures. Teachers should be made aware that a folktale is a performance-based narrative activity that enhances creativity and knowledge construction.

Learners may be tasked to ask their parents or older people at home or in the community to tell them folktales which they could write down in their journals or retell to their classmates at school. Through the journal-writing exercise, the learners may be oriented towards the construction of their own stories. They might also get to know the syntax or the structure of the sentences they use orally. They may become exposed to different forms of speech such as direct and indirect speech, as well as past and present tenses.

### **5.3.4 Provision of isiXhosa storybooks with folktales**

The non-availability of isiXhosa folktales in storybooks impacts negatively on the learners' access to reading in their home language. In other words, it affects the culture of reading and learning in the learners' mother-tongue. With the availability of isiXhosa storybooks learners may get engaged



in individual reading and group or shared reading. The learners may read folktales from storybooks to prepare themselves for storytelling or role-play sessions in their classrooms. The availability of isiXhosa folktales and storybooks could help to sustain the learners' cultural identity, moral values, academic improvement, independent thinking and self-determination. Therefore, it is important that isiXhosa folktale storybooks be supplied to schools where the medium of instruction is isiXhosa in the Foundation Phase.

### **5.3.5 Revisiting the curriculum policy and further research on IKS integration across the curriculum**

With regard to the Foundation Phase curriculum on language and literacy teaching, the policy (CAPS, 2012) stipulates the everyday use of storytelling in the classroom, yet it is not explicit about the regular use of isiXhosa traditional folktales. There is thus limited use of isiXhosa traditional folktales in the classroom accompanied by a lack of such resources.

Measures should be taken to establish accountability concerning the use of folktales for language and literacy teaching and learning. The policy directives should transparently stipulate these accountability measures so that teachers know what is expected of them by educational law pertaining to the integration of IKS in language and literacy education in the Foundation Phase.

Further research on the integration and use of IKS in other learning areas across the curriculum like history, mathematics and the sciences has to be explored as African learners encounter multiple learning barriers in other subjects. The use of English intervention resources does not bring solutions to these academic challenges. Therefore, IKS that includes folktales should be part of the curriculum from the lower grades to the Further Education and Training (FET) band.

## **5.4 CONCLUSION**

As young children grow and progress through the early years, listening skills become increasingly important and it is clear that there is no better way to increase or improve attention span and listening skills than by telling stories (Liu, 2016). Storytelling has a socio-psycho intellectual

developmental dimension. As stated earlier, stories should be relevant to the curriculum material and to the intellectual or cognitive development of the learners.

Based on this discussion, we can deduce that storytelling has holistic and all-round heuristic characteristics. It is worthy of a pedagogic strategy because of its multifaceted character. It is inherently audience and learner-centered as the audience or listeners must first be conjured up or engaged with the storyteller starts to open their mouth. Storytelling is an important tool for enhancing and nurturing imagination which is viewed as the bedrock for all forms of mental functioning.

Storytelling and traditional folktales in particular, contain the wisdom of knowledge, hence one could find a story integrating scientific, cultural or historic aspects about an event. From their inception traditional stories are enriched with creativity, abstraction, imagination and critical reasoning. They are a powerful source of creativity and imagination and have the potential to mediate all kinds of learning barriers. For example, in Mayaba's study (2012) folktales have been utilized as a fruitful intervention tool for children vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

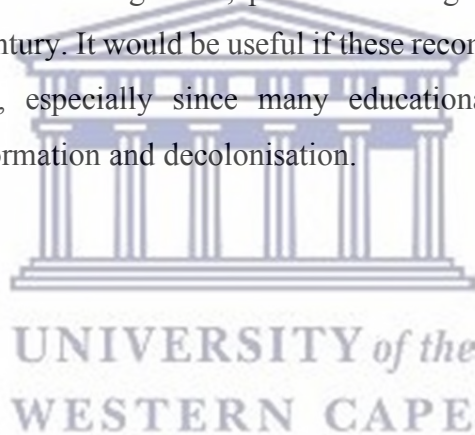
Responsible citizenry is nurtured through folktales in many parts of the African continent as folktales are an embodiment of human culture, wisdom and knowledge. In many African countries like Senegal, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and Mali folktales are still used as educational and cultural assets or tools for community- and nation-building. They are used for conscientizing the youth towards a progressive life orientation in- and outside of school. As Ntuli (2011) puts it, in the olden days before modern schooling, storytelling played both educative and entertainment roles.

The Foundation Phase curriculum should integrate indigenous knowledge and oral literature as the main component of language and literacy studies. In fact, this knowledge must be applied across the curriculum as reading for meaning remains a problem even for the students at secondary and high school level where they struggle to answer a source-based text.

The research findings are useful because they highlight not only the significance of storytelling in teaching and learning, but also the role of folktales in mediating and scaffolding isiXhosa literacy teaching and learning. They introduce us to new ways of incorporating IKS into the school and teacher training curricula.

The findings have implications for further research and curriculum renewal. Further research could be conducted in other African languages on how to integrate folktales into the curriculum. The continued discourse on the importance of IKS and oral literature as a major component in addressing learning barriers experienced by an African child must be acknowledged.

Imaginative enterprise, critical thinking skills, problem-solving and creative skills are much-needed lifeskills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It would be useful if these recommendations were to be shared with educational authorities, especially since many educational institutions now strive to implement curriculum transformation and decolonisation.



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## APPENDIX 1

### PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za

tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x91 14, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

**REFERENCE:** 20170502 –364

**ENQUIRIES:** Dr A T Wyngaard

Mr Mlamli Bara  
NY 41-No 22  
Gugulethu  
7750

**Dear Mr Mlamli Bara**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN ISIXHOSA: FOSTERING GRADE THREE LEARNERS' IMAGINATION AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS THROUGH FOLKTALES**

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

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **08 May 2017 till 30 August 2017**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

**Directorate: Research**

**DATE: 02 May 2017**

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Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001  
tel: +27 21 467 9272 fax: 0865902282  
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47

Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000  
Employment and salary enquiries: 0861 92 33 22  
[www.westerncape.gov.za](http://www.westerncape.gov.za)



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WESTERN CAPE



**APPENDIX 2**     **University of the Western Cape**  
Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South  
Africa

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16 January 2017

**INFORMATION SHEET FOR DISTRICT STANDARDS OFFICIALS**

**Research Title or Topic:** Early Literacy Development in isiXhosa: Fostering Grade 3 learners' imagination and critical thinking through folktales

**Researcher:** Bara Mlamli

Masters candidate, Faculty of Education; Language and Literacy Department, University of the Western Cape

**Purpose of the Research:** I am a (M.Ed) student in the Department of Language and Literacy Studies, at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. In this study, I investigate early literacy development, in particular the use and role of isiXhosa Folktales in enhancing imagination and critical thinking skills among Grade Three learners in one of the Western Cape Schools, South Africa.

**Aim of the Research:** The primary aim of this study is to investigate how teachers make use of folktales to enhance Grade three learners' literacy skills. It will focus on whether the teaching strategies used by teachers facilitate the development of Grade three learners' imagination and critical thinking skills. To identify strategies used by teachers to integrate traditional folktales in the school curriculum in order to improve learners' ability to learn the objectives include examining and analyzing the content and context of the Foundation. Phase language curriculum with regard to folktales as part of literacy teaching and learning strategies. The research will highlight the educational implications of the inclusion of African tales and propose a pedagogical framework in which tales can be lesson-formatted for the academic improvement of these young learners. In other words, it will determine pedagogical innovative ways of using isiXhosa folktales for literacy teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase.

Therefore, I would like to request of you to be part of my research study. As **District Education Standards Officer**, you will be required to:

1. Answer questions related to the use and role of storytelling with a particular focus on traditional folktales in the Foundation Phase Primary school learners, as well as the kind of support provided to schools to integrate Traditional storytelling techniques for literacy development.
2. Participate in an interview session which will last for a maximum time of 30 minutes.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from participating at any time. Should you decide to withdraw from the study all data generated as a consequence of your participation will be destroyed.

**Confidentiality:** All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. The data will be safely stored and only the researcher will have access to this information.

Should you wish to find out more about the research, you are welcome to contact me and my supervisor, Professor Nomlomo whose contact details are provided below.

Researcher: Mr. Bara Mlamli  
Email: [mlamli.bara@gmail.com](mailto:mlamli.bara@gmail.com)

Supervisor: Prof. VuyokaziNomlomo  
Contact number: 0728967756  
Email: [ynomlomo@uwc.ac.za](mailto:ynomlomo@uwc.ac.za)

Tel. 021-9592650/2442

Signature of the researcher:..... Date:.....



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Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa

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## APPENDIX 3: Background information sheet

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is **Mlamli Bara**. I am a Masters student in the Language Education Department of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. I am conducting research on the role of folktales as part of Early Literacy Development strategic learning in isiXhosa in the Grade 3 classroom.

**Research Title:** Early Literacy Development in isiXhosa: Fostering Grade 3 learners' imagination and critical thinking through folktales

The research study is guided by the following research questions:

- How can storytelling be used to enhance literacy development among isiXhosa speaking Grade 3 learners?
- What does the Foundation Phase language curriculum suggest with regard to storytelling and literacy development?
- How do teachers make use of folktales as part of storytelling to teach literacy in Grade 3 where the medium of instruction is isiXhosa?
- To what extent do teachers instil cultural, moral and educational values to Grade 3 isiXhosa speaking learners?
- How can isiXhosa traditional folktales be used effectively as part of story-telling to enhance early literacy development in Grade 3?

The research participants will comprise Grade 3 isiXhosa Home Language teacher and learners, the Head of the Foundation Phase and the School Principal. Data collection will be in the form of observations in the Grade 3 classroom and interviews with the Grade 3 teacher and the Head of the Foundation Phase.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage of the research process without having to give any explanations. Participants are guaranteed utmost confidentiality regarding all information collected from them. Pseudonyms or a system of coding will be used to protect their identity.

Should you wish to find out more about the research, you are welcome to contact my supervisor, **Professor Nomlomo**, whose contact details are provided below.

Yours sincerely

Researcher: Mr. Bara Mlamli

Email: [mlamli.bara@gmail.com](mailto:mlamli.bara@gmail.com)



Supervisor: Prof. Vuyokazi Nomlomo

Contact number: 0728967756

Tel. 021-9592650/2442

Email: [vnomlomo@uwc.ac.za](mailto:vnomlomo@uwc.ac.za)

Signature of the researcher:.....

Date:.....





# University of the Western Cape

Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa

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## APPENDIX 4: PERMISSION LETTER

### THE WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (WCED)

The Research Director  
Western Cape Education Department  
P/B X9114  
Cape Town



Dear Dr Wyngaard

#### **Re: Permission to conduct research at Y School**

My name is **Bara Mlamli**. As a Masters student in the Language Education Department of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape I am conducting research on the role of folktales as a component part of story-telling in early literacy development in isiXhosa in Grade 3. The target group will be Grade 3 isiXhosa Home Language class teacher/s and learners, the Foundation Phase Head of Department and the Principal.

I would like to request your permission to observe the Grade 3 isiXhosa Home Language literacy lessons in school Y from the May-August 2017. The research will not interfere in any way with

the functioning of the school or with learning in the classroom. In addition, participation will be voluntary so participants will be free to withdraw at any time without giving reasons, should they feel uncomfortable with my research. Their participation in the study will remain anonymous. Information received as part of the study will be used for research purposes only. It will not be used in any public platform for any purposes other than to understand how the use of folktales as a component part of story-telling might enhance literacy development skills in a Grade 3 classroom.

Should you wish to find out more about the research, you are welcome to contact my supervisor, **Professor Nomlomo**, whose contact details are provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher: Mr. Mlamli Bara



Supervisor: Prof. Vuyokazi Nomlomo

Contact number: 0724717445

Tel. 021-9592650/2442

Email: [mlamli.bara@gmail.com](mailto:mlamli.bara@gmail.com)

Email: [vnomlomo@uwc.ac.za](mailto:vnomlomo@uwc.ac.za)

Signature of the researcher:.....

Date:.....



# University of the Western Cape

Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa

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## APPENDIX 5: PERMISSION LETTER

### THE PRINCIPAL

Y Primary School  
Guguletu

7750

Dear Sir



### Re: Permission to conduct research in your School

My name is **Mlamli Bara and I am** a Masters student in the Language Education Department of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. I am conducting research on the role of folktales as part of storytelling in early literacy development in isiXhosa Grade 3.

I would like to request your permission to observe Grade 3 teachers' and learners' interaction in the isiXhosa Home Language literacy lessons. I kindly request of you as the Principal of the school and the Foundation Phase Head of Department to participate in the interviews. I also kindly request your permission to interview the Grade 3 teacher/s.

The research will not interfere in any way with the functioning of the school or with learning in the classroom. In addition, participation will be voluntary and so participants will be free to withdraw at any time without giving reasons should they feel uncomfortable with my research. Your participation in the study and that of the learners will remain anonymous. Information received as part of the study will be used for research purposes only. It will not be used in any public platform for any purposes other than to understand how the use of folktales enhances early literacy development skills in Grade 3 classroom.

Should you wish to find out more about the research, you are welcome to contact my supervisor, **Professor Nomlomo**, whose contact details are provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher: Mr. Bara Mlamli

Supervisor: Prof. Vuyokazi Nomlomo

Contact number: 0728967756

Email: Mlamli.bara@gmail.com



Tel. 021-9592650/2442

Email: [ynomlomo@uwc.ac.za](mailto:ynomlomo@uwc.ac.za)

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

Signature of the researcher:.....

Date:.....



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Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa

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## APPENDIX 6: PERMISSION LETTER

### THE FOUNDATION PHASE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Y Primary School

Gugulethu

7750

Dear Madam



**Re: Permission to conduct research**

My name is **Mlamli Bara**. I am a Masters student in the Language Education Department of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. I am conducting research on the of role of folktales as part of storytelling in Grade 3 isiXhosa Home Language Literacy in order to explore how teachers make use of folktales as part of storytelling to enhance Grade 3 classroom literacy skills in isiXhosa Home Language. The target group will be Grade 3 isiXhosa Home Language class teacher/s and learners.

I would like to request your permission to observe Grade 3 teachers' and learners' interaction in the isiXhosa Home Language literacy as they use storytelling for literacy development. I also kindly request of you as the Foundation Phase Head of Department that you participate in the interviews.

The research will not interfere in any way with the functioning of the school or with learning in the classroom. In addition, participation will be voluntary and so participants will be free to withdraw at any time without giving reasons, should they feel uncomfortable with my research. Your participation and that

of the learners in the study will remain anonymous. Information received as part of the study will be used for research purposes only. It will not be used in any public platform for any purposes other than to understand how folktales enhance literacy development skills in Grade 3 classroom.

Should you wish to find out more about the research, you are welcome to contact my supervisor, **Professor Nomlomo**, whose contact details are provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher: Mr. Mlamli Bara

Supervisor: Prof. Vuyokazi Nomlomo

Contact number: 0728967756

Tel. 021-9592650/2442

Email: mlamli.bara@gmail.com

Email: [ynomlomo@uwc.ac.za](mailto:ynomlomo@uwc.ac.za)



Signature of the researcher:..... Date:.....

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# University of the Western Cape

Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa

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## APPENDIX 7: PERMISSION LETTER

### GRADE 3 TEACHER(S)

Y Primary School

Gugulethu

7750

Dear Madam



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

### **Re: Permission to conduct research in your Grade 3 isiXhosa Home Language classroom**

My name is **Mlamli Bara**. As a Masters student in the Language Education Department of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape I am conducting research into the role of folktales as part of storytelling in Grade 3 isiXhosa Home Language Literacy. My purpose is in order to explore how teachers make use of folktales as part of storytelling to enhance Grade 3 classroom literacy skills in isiXhosa Home Language. The target group will be the Grade 3 isiXhosa Home Language class teacher/s and learners.

I would like to request your permission to observe you and your learners during the isiXhosa Home Language literacy lessons in order to understand how you and your learners make use of storytelling for literacy development. I also request of you to participate in the interviews.

The research will not interfere in any way with the functioning of the school or with teaching and learning in your classroom. In addition, participation will be voluntary and so participants will be free to withdraw

at any time without giving reasons, should they feel uncomfortable with my research. Your participation and that of the learners in the study will remain anonymous. Information received as part of the study will be used for research purposes only. It will not be used in any public platform for any purposes other than to understand how the use of storytelling enhances literacy skills in the Grade 3 classroom.

Should you wish to find out more about the research, you are welcome to contact my supervisor, **Professor Nomlomo**, whose contact details are provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher: Mr. Bara Mlamli

Supervisor: Prof. Vuyokazi Nomlomo

Contact number: 0728967756

Email: [mlamli.bara@gmail.com](mailto:mlamli.bara@gmail.com)

Tel. 021-9592650/2442

Email: [ynomlomo@uwc.ac.za](mailto:ynomlomo@uwc.ac.za)



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Signature of the researcher:..... Date:.....





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Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa

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## APPENDIX 8: PERMISSION LETTER

### THE PARENTS

Dear Parent/Guardian

#### **Re: Permission for your child's participation in a research study**

My name is **Mlamli Bara and I** am a Masters student in the Language Education Department of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. I am conducting research into the role of folktales as part of storytelling in Grade 3 isiXhosa Home Language Literacy in order to explore how teachers make use of storytelling to enhance Grade 3 learners' literacy skills in isiXhosa Home Language. The target group will be the Grade 3 isiXhosa Home Language class.

I would like to request your permission to sit in your child's isiXhosa Home Language class and observe how he/she interacts with his/her teacher and peers. I would also like to observe her/his written activities as part of storytelling for early literacy development.

The research will not disrupt the class schedules or the teaching and learning in the classroom. In addition, participation will be voluntary, so participants will be free to withdraw at any time without giving reasons should they feel uncomfortable with my research. The identity of the learners in the study will remain anonymous. Information received as part of the study will be used for research purposes only. It will not be used in any public platform for any purposes other than to understand how folktales enhance literacy development skills in Grade 3 classroom.

Should you wish to find out more about the research study, you are welcome to contact my supervisor, **Professor Nomlomo**, whose contact details are provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher: Bara Mlamli

Supervisor: Prof. Vuyokazi Nomlomo

Contact number: 0728967756

Tel. 021-9592650/2442

Email: [mlamli.bara@gmail.com](mailto:mlamli.bara@gmail.com)

Email: [ynomlomo@uwc.ac.za](mailto:ynomlomo@uwc.ac.za)

Signature of the researcher:..... Date:.....



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## Parents' Letter (IsiXhosa version)

### Ifomu yesivumelwano nabazali

#### Isihloko sophando

*Uphuhliso lwelitherasi: Inxaxheba yeentsomi ekuphuhliseni ulwimi ingqiqo nomfanekiso ngqondweni wabafundi beBanga lesithathu*

Mzali obekekileyo

NdinguMlamli Bara, ndifundela isidanga seMasters kwiYunivesithi yaseNtshona-Koloni. Ndinqwenela ukwenza uphando kwisikolo somntwana wakho apho ndiza kubukela eklasini yakhe ithutyana elithile. Ndiza kujonga umsebenzi owenziwe ngabantwana, ndishicilele nezifundo zokufundisa ukufunda nokubhala kwibanga lokuqala. Njengoko umntwana wakho ekule klasi, ndicela ngokuzithoba imvume yakho ebhaliweyo ukubandakanya umntwana wakho kolu phando. Ndikwafuna ukucacisa ukuba ukuthabatha inxaxheba kolu phando ayisosinyanzelo, kwaye lonke ulwazi oluqokelelwe kolu phando luza kusetyenziselwa injongo zolu phando kuphela. Le nkcazelo ingezantsi ingakunceda ekuthabatheni isigqibo malunga nesicelo sam.

#### INJONGO YOPHANDO

Injongo yolu phando kukuqwalasela impumelelo yokusetyenziswa kweentsomi njengamabali okuphuhlisa izakhono zolwimi lwenkobe kwibanga lesithathu, ukufunda nokulolonga umsebenzi abawubhalileyo. Le yindlela yokubona ukuba siphuhlisa njani isakhono sokufunda nokubhala kubantwana abakwibanga lesithathu abathetha isiXhosa njengolwimi lweenkobe.

Ukubandakanyeka kwam kwiklasi yomntwana wakho ukuze ndikwazi ukuqhuba olu phando kubalulekile, nokuba ndibekhona kwezinye izifundo zokufundisa ukufunda nokubhala kwiklasi yomntwana wakho kangangethubal eenyanga ezimbini. Ndifuna ukugxininisa ukuba ubukho bam eklasini yomntwana wakho ayizuba sisiphazamiso ezifundweni nangayiphi na indlela. Ngamanye amaxesha kuza kufuneka ndishicilele ezinye izifundo. Olu shicilelo aluzukujolisa emntwaneni wakho, koko luza kugxila kwizinto eziqhubeka eklasini kwaneendlela zokufundiswa kwezakhono zokukhulisa ulwimi lweenkobe. Kusenokufuneka ndenze iikopi zomsebenzi obhaliweyo wabantwana abakweli banga, ngemvume yetitshala yabo.

### **INXAXHEBA YOMNTWANA**

Akukho nanye into ezakunxulunyaniswa nomntwana wakho ngqo, kwaye nelungelo lakhe lokungabhengezwa kwegama lizakuthathelwa ingqalelo. Akuzukusetyenziswa amagama okwenyani xa kubhalwa ingxelo yolu phando. Ngoko ke, igama lomntwana alisayi kuvela konke. Umntwana wakho uzakuphathwa ngesidima nangentlonipho ngalo lonke ixesha.

Ndinethemba lokuba le nkcazelo ingentla iza kukunceda ukwenza isigqibo malunga nesicelo sam. Ukuba unombuzo malunga nolu phando, nceda uqhagamshelane nam kule nombolo: 07289677556, kungenjalo unganxibelelana nomhlohli olikhankatha lam kolu phando, uProfesa Vuyokazi Nomlomo kule nombolo: 021-9592442/2650.

Ndibamba ngazibini.

Mlamli Bara

## IFOMU YESIVUMELWANO

Nceda ugcwalise le fomu ingezantsi uze uyithumele kutitshala womntwana wakho.

Ndiyabulela kakhulu ngentsebenziswano kwakunye noncedo lwakho.

Mna ..... (igama lomzali/umgcini-  
womntwana osemthethweni), ..... ongumzali  
ka..... (igama lomntwana)

Ndiyifundile lenkcazelo ingentla kwaye **NDIYAVUMA/ANDIVUMI** (rhangqela impendulo yakho) ukuba umntwana wam athabathe inxaxheba kolu phando.

Intsayino yomzali: .....

Umhla: .....

Umphandi: Mnu. Mlamli Bara

Cell: 0728967756

Email: mlamli.bara@gmail.com



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE



# University of the Western Cape

Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa

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## APPENDIX 9

### Participants' Informed Consent form

I understand the intent and purpose of this study.

I.....agree/disagree to be part of the study and I am aware that my participation in this study is voluntary. If, for any reason, I wish to stop being part of the study, I may do so without having to give an explanation.

I am aware the data will be used for a Master's thesis and a research paper. I have the right to review, comment on, and/or withdraw information prior to the paper's submission. The data gathered in this study is confidential and anonymous with respect to my personal identity, unless I specify or indicate otherwise. In the case of classroom observations and interviews, I have been promised that my personal identity and that of the school will be protected, and that my duties will not be disrupted by the researcher.

I have read and understood the above information. I give my consent to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's signature:

Date.....

## **APPENDIX 10: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **10.1 Interview with the School Principal**

##### **Personal Profile**

1. For how many years have you been the principal?
2. What qualifications do you hold?
3. What are your major subjects?
4. What is your Home Language?

##### **Interview Questions**

- What is your personal experience and belief about the role of folktales as part of storytelling in early literacy development in isiXhosa?
- What is your understanding of the role of folktales as part of storytelling and early literacy development in education concerning the National and Provincial Act and regulations?
- What guidelines are there from the national curriculum (CAPS) regarding the role of folktales as part of storytelling in early literacy development?
- In your opinion, does the WCED adhere to the guidelines regarding the role of storytelling in early literacy development in Grade 3?
- In your opinion, is it necessary for the WCED to give your school guidelines on the role of folktales as part of storytelling in early literacy development or have you developed your own guidelines?
- Does the school have the role of folktales as part of storytelling in early literacy development in isiXhosa in its literacy policy or regulations?
- How do you monitor literacy teaching in the Grade 3 classroom?
- What measures have you taken to support teachers in the use of folktales as part of storytelling?
- How do you address the lack of resources as pivotal to storytelling to enhance literacy skills for Grade 3?
- Are there any specific books for isiXhosa folktales to enhance the development of literacy skills for Grade 3 learners?
- If yes, what have you put in place to make them conform to isiXhosa Home Language curriculum standards for grade three learners?

## 10.2 Interview with the Head of Department (IsiXhosa)

### Personal Profile

1. For how many years have you taught IsiXhosa Home Language?
2. What qualifications do you hold?
3. What are your major subjects?
4. Up to what level have you done IsiXhosa?
5. What is your Home Language?

### Interview Questions

- What is your experience and belief concerning the role of folktales as part of storytelling to enhance early literacy development in IsiXhosa Home Language learning?
- What guidelines are there from WCED regarding the role of folktales as part of storytelling for literacy teaching and learning?
- In your opinion, does the WCED adhere to the guidelines regarding storytelling in the Foundation phase?
- In your opinion, is it necessary for WCED to give your school guidelines for folktales as part of storytelling for literacy development skills or have you developed your own guidelines?
- Does the school have a storytelling policy or regulation?
- How do you monitor literacy teaching and learning in the Grade 1 classroom?
- What measures have you taken to support teachers in the use of story-telling resources in isiXhosa teaching (that is, folktales)?
- What challenges (if any) do isiXhosa Home Language teachers bring to you with regard to the use of folktales in enhancing learners' language and literacy development?
- How do you address these challenges as the Head of Department?
- Are there any specific folktales that are used in teaching isiXhosa Home Language literacy?
- If yes, what have you put in place to make it conform to isiXhosa Home Language curriculum standards?



## **10.3 Interview with the Grade 3 isiXhosa Home Language Teacher**

### **1.1 Personal Profile**

1. For how many years have you taught isiXhosa Home Language?
2. What qualifications do you hold?
3. What are your major subjects?
4. Up to what level have you done isiXhosa?
5. What is your Home Language?

### **1.2 Interview Questions**

- What is your experience and belief concerning the role of folktales as part of storytelling in IsiXhosa Home Language teaching?
- For how long have you been using folktales in IsiXhosa Home Language teaching and learning?
- How often do you use folktales as part of teaching IsiXhosa Home Language Literacy?
- How comfortable are you in using folktales to teach language and literacy to Grade 3 IsiXhosa Home Language learners?
- What activities do you engage your learners in to make use of folktales for language literacy developmental skills?
- What approaches and methods do you use in literacy lessons in which you use folktales?
- What does the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) say about storytelling and literacy development?
- In the event that CAPS does not say anything about the role of folktales for literacy development, what guidelines do you make use of to explore the use folktales as part of storytelling in your lessons?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using storytelling in early literacy development?
- What are some of the challenges you come across while teaching isiXhosa Home Language literacy?
- How do you address these challenges?
- From your experience, do you think stories have improved your learners' literacy skills? If yes, in what ways?
- What would you regard as a barrier to using folktales as tools for teaching?
- Do you consider yourself successful in using storytelling?
- How do you know you have been successful in the integration of storytelling in literacy lessons?
- Can you specify the role of folktales within teaching and learning in general?

## OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

<b>School: Y School</b>	<b>Subject: IsiXhosa</b>	<b>Class: Grade 3</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Introduction to the lesson			
Learner engagement			
Resources used in the lesson			
Forms of Assessment			
Opportunities given to the learners to tell their stories			
Assessment of storytelling			
My overall comments on the lesson			

