An investigation of Grade four teachers' strategies in teaching isiXhosa home language creative writing in Amatole East Education District rural primary schools, in Eastern Cape Province in South Africa

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Abstract- This study was driven by the theoretical framework that is located within the Product Approach Model of Gabrielinos and Steel, Process Approach Model of Kroll, as well as Genre Approach Model by Badger, White, Cope and Kalantzis. The researchers selected an interpretive paradigm within a qualitative research approach as the most appropriate approach suitable for the study. The study sample was four primary schools in Amathole East Education District, with seven participants judgmentally selected. Methods of collecting data used were classroom observations and interviews. Instruments utilized for data collection were interview schedule and observation sheets.

A Thematic analysis was chosen as a satisfactory data analysis method for this study. The most common challenges experienced by grade four teachers in teaching creative writing that are highlighted by teachers are: time management, individual attention, marking of creative writing tasks and giving of clear feedback, illegible handwriting, cellphone language, short fall in vocabulary, lack of resources, language barriers, lack of language basics and that they forget easily. However, grade four learners experience problems of making lot of mistakes, being unable to minimize words for the page lines, incorrect spelling of words, sentence construction, developing of paragraphs and task arrangement, time management and that they struggle to hold a pen, as they are familiar to a lid pencil from foundation phase. The study concludes that the development of flash encourage difficult syllables, with two to three consonants, encourages the reading of books to improve spelling and that encouraging lot of writing can overcome the experienced challenges. Teachers suggest that diversity in teaching strategies, high amount of learning time, interesting story books, recurring creative writing homework, frequent learner assessment and feedback, teacher persistence, motivation, writing process together with mind mapping, are important when dealing with creative writing.

Key words: Teaching strategies, teachers, home language, grade four, creative writing, rural primary schools

I. INTRODUCTION

The researcher looked at the emphasis and recognition of African languages (by the South African Constitution 1996), together with the guarantee of learners' right to receive the basic education in languages of their choice (Chapter two of the constitution - Bill of Rights). Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), the latest policy on curriculum, aims at ensuring that learners do acquire knowledge, skills and apply them in a meaningful way to their own lives (Department of Basic Education, 2016). The DBE's Incremental Introduction of African Language Policy (IIAL, 2013) was discussed. The main aim of this policy is to enhance efficiency and the utilization of African languages at HL level to enable the use of their HL proficiently (IIAL, 2013). There is also evidence on the performance of learners in the language test from the grade 4 PIRLS Literacy achievement by language of test, as per the PIRLS assessment. There is a need for teaching strategies focusing on addressing the problems encountered

by South African learners in the Intermediate phase (DBE, 2016). The relationship between learner performance and the school location was also addressed. In terms of the Grade four PIRLS achievement by school location analysis, remote rural area schools are shown to be struggling in literacy achievement, as compared with schools in other areas, with achievement score of 290 grade 4 PIRLS achievement by school location. Hence, the researcher found it imperative to focus on the rural primary schools of the Eastern Cape Province. It is evident that, in recent studies, attention given to how creative writing in HL is taught in intermediate phase is inadequate, as more recent studies put emphasis mostly on foundation or secondary grades (Graham, 2019).

Several research studies have been conducted regarding creative writing in other countries, including United States, Great Britain, France, as well as Uganda. Graham's study reveals that a survey has been done from grade 4 to 6 teachers, specifically in United States, in as far as teaching creative writing practices is concerned (Graham, 2019). The teachers' report highlights that the courses obtained in training college equipped them with scanty information to teach creative writing. Only fifteen minutes a day is devoted to teaching writing, while learners use twenty-five minutes to write texts about a paragraph long (Graham, 2019). In Great Britain, according to Akkaya (2014), creative writing is a practice that teachers should put emphasis on for the children's benefit, because of its ability to develop their creativity and personalities. Tok & Kademir (2015) assert that the use of creativity in writing can enhance writing skills for intermediate phase learners. Furthermore, learners will be fluent in writing and their writing skills will improve. Studies reveal that writing skills of learners are confidently overwhelmed by creative writing activities (Tok, & Kandemir, 2015). Bae (2012) insists the creative writing activities are positively prepared in accordance with teaching strategies that facilitate creative writing. Hence, in this study, the researcher looks at grade four teacher's strategies in creative writing.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

 In terms of the literature review. the researcher considered South African language policies. The South African constitution, Language BICS and CALP, Language in Education Policy (LIEP), The Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL), Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) of isiXhosa HL in South African schools, Languages in the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy statement, Recommendations for investing in African Languages and Multilingual Education, are among the language policies that were explored in the study. Writing Models were presented in the study. Focus was on Tribble's writing process model and the simple view of writing model, which states that the transcription processes are foundational in the early stages of writing development and the ideas of the writer are translated into written texts from the basis of handwriting and spelling. The researcher also outlined and discussed the following subtopics. These are the five creative dispositions model which are: inquisitive, persistent, imaginative, collaborative and discipline. Primary education as a field of study, home language as an object of the study and time allocation for the home language in intermediate phase were also considered.

The importance of writing in language learning and essential skills necessary for writing were also clearly explained. The researcher continued by indicating the relationship between creativity and writing, conceptualizing creative writing, showing the importance and benefits of creative writing, as well as the effectiveness of creative writing for learners. The role of creative writing in learning highlighted engagement, peer tutoring and motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic. Strategies to teach creative writing included the encouragement of creative thinking for your learners, inquiry-based strategy and free writing, individual difference, and the assessment of creative writing. Components of creative writing with story writing and essay writing were analyzed. Teaching techniques used in creative writing class that were included in the literature review were seen as catering for the development of learners' potential and learner motivation. Challenges experienced in teaching creative writing - time allocation and the teaching of creative writing, text messages, frequency of writing, poor infrastructure, lack of resources and learning equipment, understaffed schools, and big classroom sizes together with teacher training were also some of the aspects that came to the fore. These were considered together with strategies used by teachers to overcome the challenges experienced by learners in creative writing, were deeply examined. Paragraph–pattern approach, scaffolding, inquiry-based strategy, and scaffolding process are also outlined.

III.   METHODOLOGY

By employing the interpretive paradigm, the researcher was able to discover the natural flow of events and processes, as they happen, and interact closely with the participants to gain an understanding of the strategies used by grade four teachers to teach learners creative writing skills (Joubish, 2012). A case study design was considered appropriate for this study. The researcher adopted qualitative research, which helped her to better understand the challenges experienced by teachers in teaching creative writing and gaining a new perspective on what is already known. The researcher interacted with the Grade Four isiXhosa teachers by interviewing them in their offices or selected venues and watching their teaching in the classroom, thereby setting out to attain a thorough understanding on the strategies teachers use for Grade Four isiXhosa HL creative writing learners. The population of this study consists of isiXhosa HL teachers. Seven IsiXhosa HL teachers were selected as a sample among the population of this study. The study adopted purposeful sampling. The sample size consisted of seven isiXhosa HL teachers, among the entire population of isiXhosa HL teachers of Willow vale Sub District.

In terms of data collection and analysis methods that informed the research design, the researcher used the following methods of data collection: observations, and interviews. An observation schedule was used as an instrument for data collection. The aspects covered on an observation schedule included creative writing activity, teaching strategies/approaches used in the teaching and learning process, challenges encountered during the teaching and learning process, as well as assessment criteria and feedback. The researcher chose to use semi-structured interviews simply because it   comprises features of both structured and unstructured interviews and uses both closed and open questions; therefore, it puts the researcher in a better position to? (DO WHAT? PLEASE INSERT). A qualitative analysis of data collected was used to analyze the transcripts of the interviews with the teachers. Everything that stemmed from the interviews was written down. Thematic analysis was preferred as a satisfactory data analysis method for this study. Scagnoli's (2013) point of view is that thematic analysis is a qualitative method for recognizing, examining, and reporting themes within data.

IV.   DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

Creative writing is viewed by teachers as a form of writing that lets learners convey their ideas, feelings, and their thoughts from mindset to a piece of paper. It involves the use of learner imagination like essays, stories, poems, letters, invitations, meeting agendas and minutes, the designing of posters and diary entries. If a learner uses his/her own ideas and feelings on a piece of writing, then that type of writing is called creative writing.
Creative writing is grouped into shorter and longer texts. This type of writing is characterized by its original thoughts and self-imagination, rather than truthfulness. Learners are free to be creative and come up with different ideas on the topic. Learners are flexible to handle the topic, as they feel and work freely. They can attack problems encountered with confidence in their efforts without fearing failure. Major essentials of creative writing are huge thinking, well organized and arranged work, as well as the uncovering and the designing of beliefs. Its foundational principle is to create psychological events openly in their minds. Learners need an excessive sequence of thinking, monitoring, and inspection skills to become actively involved in creative writing activities. Learners become regular habit readers and gain sufficient information to use effectively for the enrichment of their knowledge and experiences in creative writing.

The observed data in the four schools was mainly pursued to address creative writing activities, teaching strategies/approaches used in the teaching and learning process, challenges encountered during the teaching and learning process, as well as assessment criteria and feedback. Story writing: Teaching strategies/approaches used are group work, role play and co-operative learning. Learners actively participated. They engaged themselves in their lesson to the fullest. Findings uncovered that the lesson target was accomplished. Diary entry: Teaching strategies/approaches used are free writing and pair work. The lesson was well presented. Learners were very attentive. They were really promising. Although there were some challenges of spelling mistakes and illegible writing, the findings revealed that learners were very keen, and the lesson goals were achieved. Story re-writing: Teaching strategies/approaches used are group work, tabulation/ arranging of work, as well as clarity and focus. The observation disclosed that most learners were not interested at all and absent-minded. Some were not even listening to the teacher. There was a group that was not taking any instructions. The teacher could not control the class.

Findings showed that the lesson objectives were not achieved at all. Essay writing: Teaching strategies/approaches used are Spelling drilling, Sentence formation and writing process. The researcher's observation unveiled that Grade four learners in school D were too slow in their writing. It was a struggle for the class to finish even one paragraph.

V.   CONCLUSION

The observed data in the four schools was mainly pursued to address creative writing activities, teaching strategies/approaches used in the teaching and learning process, challenges encountered during the teaching and learning process, as well as assessment criteria and feedback. Teaching strategies/approaches used were group work, role play and co-operative learning. Learners actively participated. They engaged themselves in their lesson to the fullest. Findings uncovered that the lesson target was accomplished. Teaching strategies/approaches used are free writing and pair work. The lesson was well presented. Learners were very attentive. They were really promising. Although there were some challenges of spelling mistakes and illegible writing, the findings revealed that learners were very interested, and the lesson goals were achieved. Story re-writing: Teaching strategies/approaches used are group work, tabulation/ arranging of work as well as clarity and focus. The observation disclosed that most learners were not interested at all and seemed to be rather absent-minded. Some were not even listening to the teacher. There was a group that was not taking any instructions. The teacher could not control the class. Findings showed that the lesson objectives were not achieved at all. Teaching strategies/approaches used are Spelling drilling, Sentence formation and the writing process. The researcher's observation unveiled that Grade four learners in school D were too slow in their writing. The class seemed to struggle to finish even one paragraph.

The most common challenges experienced by grade four teachers when teaching creative writing that were highlighted by teachers are: Time management, individual attention, marking of their creative writing tasks and the giving of clear feedback, illegible handwriting, cellphone language, short fall in vocabulary, lack of resources, language barriers, lack of language basics and that they forget easily. On the part of grade four learners, their challenges in creative writing are making lot of mistakes, being unable to minimize words for the page lines, incorrect spelling of words, sentence construction, developing of paragraphs and task arrangement, time management and that they find it difficult to hold a pen, as they are familiar to a lead pencil from foundation phase. The teachers came up with the following strategies used to overcome experienced challenges in teaching creative writing: the development of flash cards with difficult syllables with two to three consonants, encouraging the reading of books amongst learners to improve spelling, encouraging constant and consistent writing, having patience to provide individual attention, the training of learners to write faster, developing their vocabulary, mixing fast learners with slow learners sometimes, giving fast learners more work, while dealing with slow ones sometimes.

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