

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**INVESTIGATING READING DIFFICULTIES AMONG CLASS SIX PUPILS  
OF KOLBURE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN TEMPANE DISTRICT OF THE  
UPPER EAST REGION OF GHANA**



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OF KOLBURE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN TEMPANE DISTRICT OF THE  
UPPER EAST REGION OF GHANA**



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**(7170080046)**

**A dissertation in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Foreign  
Language Education and Communication, submitted to the School of Graduate  
Studies in partial fulfillment**

**of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Education  
(Teaching English as a Second Language)  
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**SEPTEMBER, 2019**

## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Jacob Salifu Azure, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

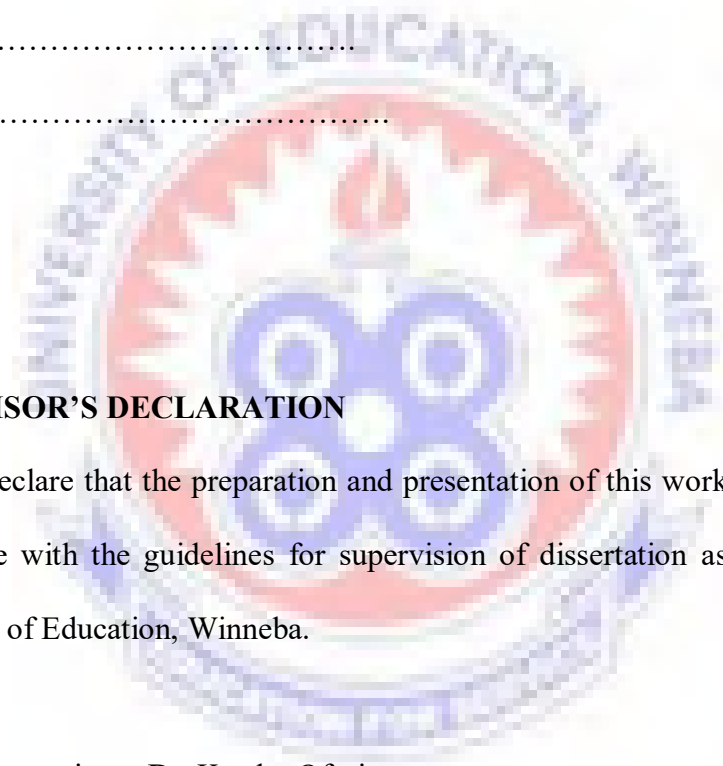
### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Kwaku Ofori

Signature :.....

Date:.....



## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my wife and children

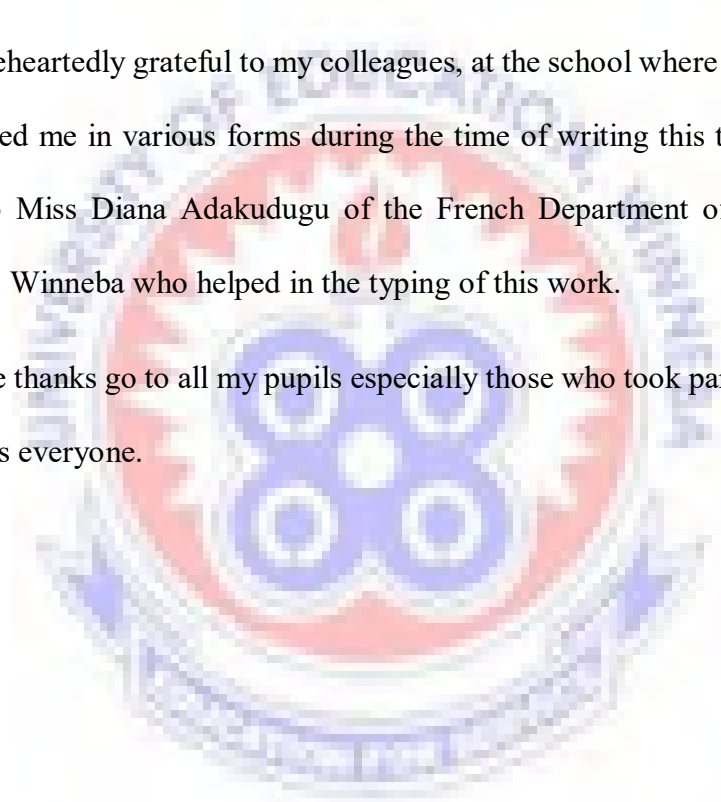


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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the reading difficulties among Class 6 pupils of Kolbure Primary School in the Tempene District of the Upper East Region of Ghana. It followed the qualitative research design approach. To obtain a sample of the population for the study, the researcher adopted the simple random sampling technique, selecting 15 participants for the study. He adopted this technique because of the similar characteristics exhibited by the pupils. Three research instruments used in the study included observation, interview and test. The observation and interview revealed that the unavailability of reading books, pupils lack of knowledge of the sound of the English alphabet, lack of support for reading at home, poverty and poor teaching methods were some of the causes of reading difficulties among pupils. The results showed that 100% of the participants did not have reading materials. The test results indicated that teaching reading using the phonic approach is beneficial to pupils because the results after the intervention was positive. The researcher recommends that schools should make reading materials available for use by pupils and also teachers should be trained to handle reading effectively especially the use of the phonic method in teaching reading. The government through the ministry of education as well as organisations and individuals should help to equip schools with adequate learning materials.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Overview**

This chapter deals with the general introduction of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation and limitation of the study and organization of the study. One's ability to read well is fundamental to ultimate educational success. In order to investigate reading difficulties among pupils, it is necessary to teach reading using appropriate method of instruction. Reading activity is characterized by translation of symbols or letters into words and sentences that have meaning to the learner. The main aim of reading is to be able to understand written materials.

#### **1.2 Background to the Study**

Kolbure Primary School is one of the fifty public primary schools found within the Tempene District of Upper East Region of Ghana. Kolbure community where the school is located has a population of about one thousand (1000) people. The school had a population of four hundred and two pupils as at the time the study was being carried out. There is high illiteracy rate among the people of the area as most of them cannot read and write. The community has a handful of educated people. There is also poverty in the area which is evident in the way parents care for their wards who are students of the school. Most pupils did not have proper school uniforms and sandals and this was as a result of parents inability to provide them. The school had five trained teachers and two volunteers as the teaching staff. The pupil population of class six was twenty-five boys and thirty-one girls totalling fifty-six pupils. The school lacked a lot in terms of teaching learning materials such as textbooks, wall charts, cardboards and others.

The school is not resourceful and for this reason teaching and learning did not go on smoothly as always expected. For example, the class six had only three English readers which were supposed to be used by 56 pupils. Teachers were always forced to write reading passages on the chalkboard in order for all the pupils to benefit. This act slowed down the teaching and learning process. The school did not have a library where pupils could go to read books of their interest. The pupils relied largely on what their teachers had given to them in the form of notes for studies in and out of school. Though the headteacher tried to provide certain teaching and learning materials, like cardboards, few textbooks and storybooks, it was still inadequate to support academic work in the school. ‘Learning materials are important because they can significantly increase student achievement by supporting student learning (Ministry of Education, Guyana. 2019)

Reading proficiency is the most fundamental skill critical to most, if not all, academic learning and success in school. In the United States, the ability to read proficiently is significantly related to how much a person can achieve in his or her personal and professional life (Block & Israel, 2005 p. 2). Unfortunately, same could not be said of the class six pupils of Kolbure Primary School as most of them always struggled to read passages in the Pupils English Reader and other written texts given to them to read.

During lesson delivery in class six of Kolbure Primary School, the researcher observed that most of the pupils could not read which he thought needed urgent attention because without reading a pupil cannot function or perform well in school. The National English Language policy requires teachers to help pupils develop the required English Language skills through storytelling, spelling, dictation, group discussions, rhymes, drama, role play, picture description or reading, singing, miming and retelling stories

among others. The researcher who happened to be the class six teacher of Kolbure Primary School took upon himself to investigate the reading difficulties among the class six pupils. This problem motivated the researcher to choose this topic for study. A number of efforts have been taken in the form of inservice training (INSET) for teachers. These trainings actually helped teachers in teaching and learning in the school. The INSET afforded teachers improved techniques in teaching the English Language but reading was still a problem because there are several factors causing pupils inability to read. This also formed the basis for the extensive study to be carried out on it.

According to Miriam et al (2004 p. 9), “learners retention of classroom materials may be limited if they cannot use educational texts and take class notes for later review”. This confirms the fact that any educational materials given to pupil, only becomes relevant if the learner can read, he/she cannot make use of those materials if he/she cannot read. It is for this reason that the researcher finds this problem worth working on.

The National Council on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in young children (2008) emphasized that many reading problems in school- aged children could be prevented by reducing the number of children who begin formal schooling with low levels of early literacy skills including reading of words. Having a strong background in literacy is an essential component for one’s overall success in life. The National Literacy Act defines literacy as an individual ability to read, write and speak a particular language and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary on a job and in society.

Tekyiwa (1998) says that English Language has been with us since the colonial era. It is the channel of communication used in areas of work and also used to train our future generation yet many learners have a lot of challenges in reading in our schools.

Tekyiwa says the falling standard and poor command of the English Language will definitely affect other subjects of study. She said that 'Reading is very crucial and important in understanding other subjects because the information therein is all written and studied in English'. This goes to confirm how important reading is in the teaching and learning of other subjects in our schools. Responsibility lies with teachers and other stakeholders in education to assist pupils and students who have reading difficulties. The bare truth is that many pupils at the primary level of education have reading difficulties in one way or the other. It is therefore very important for teachers to adopt effective skills approach in tackling reading. Reading is an integral part of language which needs maximum attention. It is the hope of the researcher that after the necessary approach is used to investigate the reading difficulties among pupils, they will become better readers.

The National Teaching Syllabus states that English language is studied as a subject from primary one to primary three and is used as the medium of instruction from primary four through to the highest level of education in Ghana. This clearly means that any challenge in English should be tackled head on. The importance of reading is nonnegotiable.

Grabbe and Stoller (2010) contended that reading difficulties appear as a result of inefficient operation of lower-level and higher level comprehension processes. These authors explained that this happens when text is too difficult, when the reader does not have adequate background knowledge or linguistic knowledge or when the reader has not had enough practice in reading for developing reading efficiency. This shows that that readers must make ample time to practice reading all the time. It will help them become good readers as far as language is concerned. Apparently, reading develops

gradually; the reader does not become fluent suddenly, or immediately following reading development course but rather a result of long-term and gradual improvement; (Grabbe, 1991 p. 379). Teachers therefore need to be consistent in resolving pupils reading difficulties.

According to Moats (1999), a child who does not learn reading early is unlikely to learn them at all. This makes it imperative to seek ways of solving the reading difficulties among pupils at the primary level before things get out of hand. The researcher believes that the academic performance of his pupils will improve across all other subjects if the pupils are able to read. The development of any country in the world now largely depends on education. It will therefore be wrong not to pay heed to solutions that can mitigate the reading difficulties among pupils.

Consequently, educators must address the issue of reading the early primary grade and not wait until it is simply too late. During teaching in primary six of Kolbure Primary School English reading lesson, it was realised that most of the pupils could not read even simple words. In an attempt to deal with the problem, the researcher decided to adopt the phonic method as the major interventional measure in dealing with the reading difficulties among the learners hence its has been proven the most effective method as compared to other methods such as the syllabic method, the look and say and the whole word method among others

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Reading is very important to success in any given society and the ability to read words correctly is highly valued for both social and economic advancement (Snow et al, 1998). During lessons delivery in the class six of Kolbure Primary, it was established that pupils had serious reading difficulties. Pupils find it extremely difficult to read



words, sentences, and paragraphs written on the chalkboard or from the pupils' reader. According to researchers at Yale University, students who have difficulties in reading in third grade, will continue to struggle in reading in high school (Casey, 2010). Students with relatively low literacy achievement tend to have more behavioural and social problems in subsequent grades and higher rates of retention in grade (Casey, 2010). From these assumptions, the researcher found it necessary to look into the reading difficulties experienced by the pupils and find the best strategies to assist the struggling readers to overcome their reading difficulties to create a better future for them.

Lawal (1995) opined that "if a learner possesses poor reading habits, he suffers serious handicaps not only in school but also later in the world of work. This is even true when one considers the fact that education is now learner centred with the more effective techniques placing a far greater emphasis on the learner's ability to read". A research study conducted by the International Reading Association (Moore et al, 1999) that has been cited in Clark and Rumbold (2006), says that Adolescents entering the adult world are with the flood of information everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future. In this complex world, their ability to read can be crucial especially when looking for a job.

In the school based assessment (SBA) of Kolbure Primary, pupils performance is always below average. The records showed that over the years the averages scores in English Language, Mathematics, Science have always been below 40%. This phenomenon is due to pupils inability to read and understand the assessment questions. In essence, the researcher saw it very necessary to work on the reading difficulties confronting his learners.

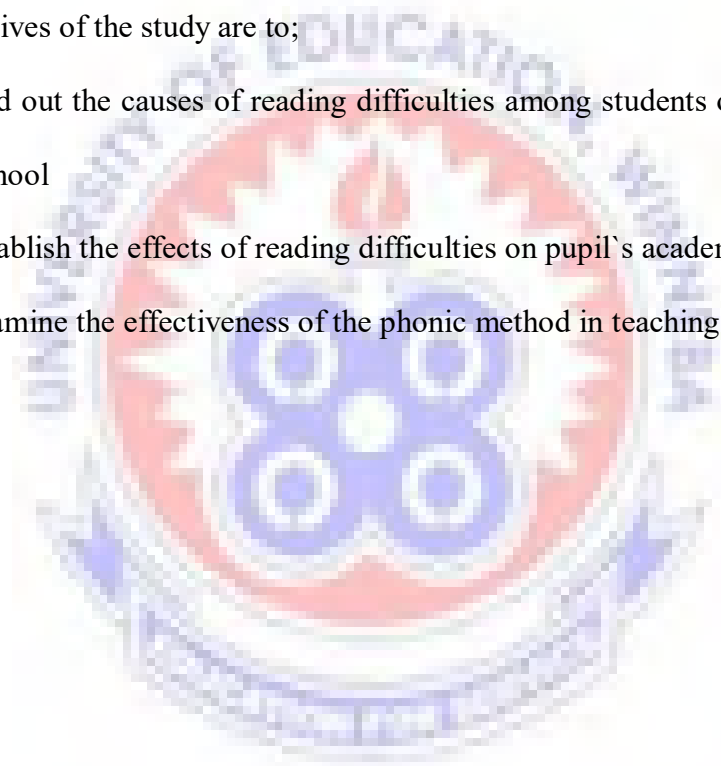
#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

This study seeks to investigate the reading difficulties among pupils of Kolbure Primary School. The phonic method of teaching reading and other relevant minor strategies would be employed in addressing the reading difficulties. The study is also intended to establish the extent to which the phonic method will help pupils overcome their reading difficulties.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to;

1. find out the causes of reading difficulties among students of Kolbure Primary School
2. establish the effects of reading difficulties on pupil's academic performance
3. examine the effectiveness of the phonic method in teaching reading



## **1.6 Research Questions**

These are the research questions that governed the entire study.

1. What are the causes of reading difficulties among pupils of Kolbure Primary School?
2. What are the effects of reading difficulties on academic performance of pupils?
3. How effective is the phonic approach in assisting pupils overcome their reading difficulties?

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The study will be helpful in the sense that success in life especially in school depends largely on one's ability to perform and pass his/her examination. This achievement would not be possible if one cannot read. It is the researcher's hope that the study will help make pupils of Kolbure Primary School better readers.

The study will also help improve pupils performance in School Based Assessment (SBA) and terminal examinations in all other subjects.

Since the study employs a systematic approach of the phonic method in establishing its effectiveness in teaching reading, it will be most helpful to educators involved in reading development.

The study will affect pupils learning positively in other disciplines of learning. Before a child attempts any study materials he/she must be able to read in order to comprehend the information contained in those study materials. The study will improve the study of other subjects in our schools especially performance in English Language.

Through this work, innovative ideas will be derived which will inform teachers how to approach the teaching of reading in our schools. The study is intended to find answers to pupils reading difficulties so the researcher is optimistic that better ideas will be discovered to make the teaching of reading effective.

The study seeks to motivate pupils to become confident when they are reading hence this will develop their self-esteem. As they become confident readers, they will grow to be purposeful citizens to their families, society and the country as a whole.

The study will also inform stakeholders what can be done to assist struggling readers in our schools. Resources become necessary when dealing with reading difficulties thus acquiring reading materials, getting well-equipped libraries in our schools among others. This study will reveal what needs to be done.

### **1.8 Limitation**

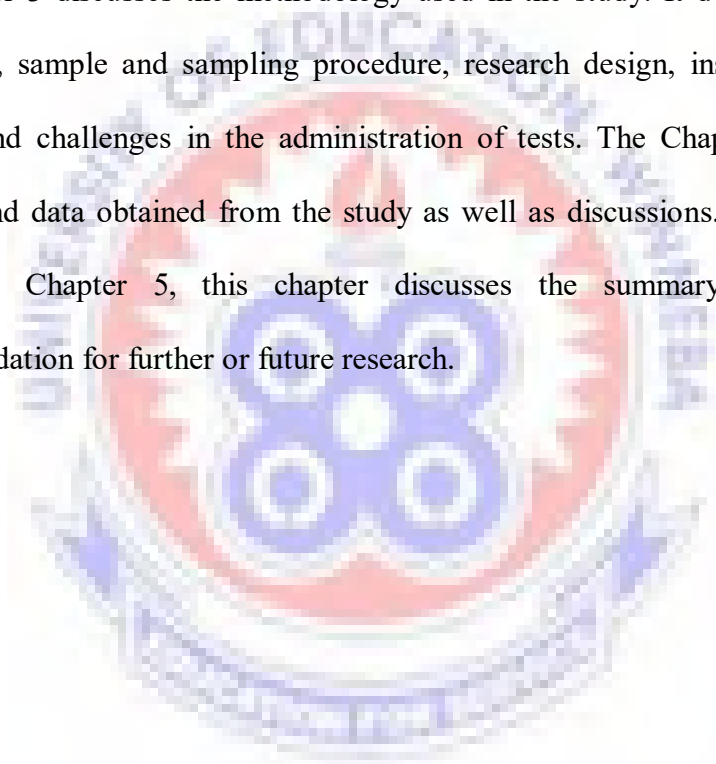
At the time the research was being carried out, the researcher was busy performing his responsibilities as a teacher, which was time consuming. Financial constraints also hindered the researcher from collecting a wider range of information from the target population. As a result, he limited himself to class six pupils of Kolbure Primary School where the researcher was the classroom teacher.

### **1.9 Delimitation**

The scope of the study is limited to only primary six pupils of Kolbure Primary School due to time constraints. The problem investigated was limited to reading difficulties and no other aspects of English. Again, the researcher identified only the poor reading abilities among pupils of class six of Kolbure Primary, hence the choice of the reading difficulties.

### **1.10 Organization of the Study**

The study is put into five (5) complete chapters. The Chapter 1 which is the first chapter deals with the following: introduction to the study, background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation, limitation and organization of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant related literature on reading difficulties. In this chapter, the researcher seeks to do an indepth study of what authorities have said or established on the problem under study. The chapter 3 discusses the methodology used in the study. It deals with the target population, sample and sampling procedure, research design, instrumentation, data analysis and challenges in the administration of tests. The Chapter 4 contains the analysis and data obtained from the study as well as discussions. The final and last chapter is Chapter 5, this chapter discusses the summary, conclusion and recommendation for further or future research.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed literature relating to the problem under study. The literature includes the works of scholars who have spoken about similar issues regarding the topic under study.

The researcher also relied on books, publications and websites relating the topic of study. The ministry of education works relating the topic were also consulted. The purpose of using these materials was to utilize the materials as reliable tools which effective discussion, analysis and conclusions could be drawn.

The researcher looked into the theoretical framework, definition/concept of reading, the nature of reading, the reading process, causes of pupils inability to read, importance of reading, the effects of pupils inability to read on academic performance as well as interventions that will facilitate pupils reading abilities.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

There are many notions and different types of methods as to how reading should be taught and these stem from the orientations that influence our beliefs. Three major theories have dominated the scene and have influenced the teaching of reading since the early 1900. They include the behaviourist theory, cognitive theory and cognitive-constructivist, or better still constructivism.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher adopted the behaviourist approach/bottom-up /sub-skill approach to teaching reading. The behaviourist theory which is basically a psychological theory in its essence, founded by John Watson, is

actually a theory of language learning. The supporters of this theory are Leonard Bloomfield, Burrhus Frederic Skinner and Arthur Staats. The motive for the choice of this approach is that it emphasizes the application of phonics and syllabic methods in teaching reading and this is the bases on which interventions are made. According to Reutzel and Cooter (2000), the behaviourist is of the conviction that efficient decoding leads to comprehension and that lack of phonics knowledge is the fundamental cause of reading disability. They further caution that allowing children to attempt to read books without knowing the letters and sounds they represent can lead to reading failure.

The behaviourist views reading as a matter of decoding single letters, words or focusing on areas such as eye-voice span speed of reading and lip movement during silent reading (Herbert & Raphael, 1996). The behaviourist accepts the saying that “teach children phonics and they will be able to read”. The proponents of behaviourism believe that the first stage of reading development is the decoding stage.

According to the proponents, the reader process text by first recognizing the lower level of units of language; the letters and their corresponding sounds and by putting these lower level units into more complex units. The explanation is that the reader first perceives and reads letters and then continue to combine the letters into words, then synthesizes several words to form phrases, clauses, sentences and then finally processing text, they are of the view that once the child masters decoding skills very well, using the knowledge of phonics, he/she will get meaning of the text automatically.

The behaviourist maintain that the correct way to help non-readers learn to read is by directly and chronologically teaching phonetics or the ability to decode letters and sounds and subsequently blend the sounds to form two, three, or polysyllabic words.

### **2.3 The Concept/Definition of Reading**

Reading simply means making meaning out of something written or printed. The general aim of reading is for meaning. Reading is a number of interactive processes between the reader and the text, in which readers use their knowledge to build, to create, and to construct meaning. A number of processes are at work when people read. Grabbe (2009, p. 21) identifies “lower-level processes, including word recognition, syntactic parsing and meaning encoding as propositions” and “higher-level processing including text-model formation (what the text is about), situation-model building (how we decide to interpret the text), inferencing, executive-control processing (how we direct our attention), and strategic processing”.

Shaywitz et al (2004) argue that, unless the reader-to-be can convert the printed characters on the page into the phonetic code, these letters remain just a bunch of lines and totalling devoid of meaning. Readers must discover that the words they hear come apart in smaller pieces of sound (Shaywitz, 2003). Sounds in words are linked to certain letters and letter pattern called the alphabetic principle. We are unable to read unless we decode single letters and words. The first stage of reading is the decoding stage. The reader deals with text by first recognizing the lower level units of language; the letters and their sounds and synthesize these lower level units into more complex units. If there is a problem in decoding and word recognition, they encounter reading difficulties. Once the child masters decoding skills or can decode a text very well, using the knowledge of phonics, the child will derive meaning of the text automatically. This conceptual framework is in line with behaviourism. The behaviourist believes the effective way to help struggling readers learn to read is by directly and chronologically teaching them phonics in other words how to decode letters and blend the sounds to form words. They are of the view that efficient decoding leads to comprehension.



Reading is the act of getting meaning from printed or written words which is the basis for learning and one of the most important skills in everyday lives (Guthrie, Benneth & McGough, 2007)

Richard Anderson and the commission on Reading in the USA (2000) defined reading as the process of constructing meaning from written text. They stated that skilled reading is:

1. Constructive: learning to reason about written material using knowledge from everyday life and from disciplined field of study;
2. Fluent: Mastery of basic processes to the point where they are automatic so that attention is freed from the analysis of meaning;
3. Strategic: Controlling ones reading in relation to one's purpose, the nature of the material and whether one is comprehending;
4. Motivated: Able to sustain attention and learning that written material can be interesting and informative; and
5. A lifelong pursuit: continuous practices, development and refinement.

Diane (2001) defines reading as a multi-faceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency and motivation. Reading is making meaning of print, it requires that we:

Reading from left to right

Scan silently

Recognize different types of the print and hand writing

Distinguish between letters or words which are very similar

Skim

Go over the sentences with the eye without using the fingers to trace the words

Recognize the punctuation

According to Gates (1949), reading is not a simple mechanical skill, nor is a narrow scholastic tool properly cultivated. It is essentially a thoughtful process; however, to say that reading is a thoughtful-getting process is to give it too restricted description. It should be developed as complex organization of patterns of higher mental processes. Gates further stated that it should embrace all types of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning and problem-solving.

It is pointed out that reading is one of the best media for cultivating many techniques of thinking and imagining.

Reading is making meaning from print – It requires that we;

1. Identify the words in print- a process called word recognition
2. Construct an understanding from them – a process called comprehension
3. Coordinate identifying words and making meaning so that reading is automatic and accurate – an achievement called fluency.

Reading is supposed to be the weaving together of word recognition and comprehension in fluent manner (Leipzig, 2001).

## **2.4 The Nature of Reading**

Reading is the decoding of text and symbols in order to get meaning or information.

Efforts are being made to acquire the skill of reading. This means reading by nature is acquired not an inbuilt skill in humans. Learners would need to make conscious effort in order to acquire this all important skill.

According to Wolf (2007, p. 3) "we were never born to read". He held the view that human beings invented reading only a few 100 years ago. And with this invention, we rearranged the very organization of our brain, which in turn expanded the ways we are able to think, which altered the intellectual evolution of our species

Shaywitz (2003) indicated that reading is the most complex of human functions. Optimum efforts would have to be employed when teaching or learning how to read. According to Wolfe & Nevills (2004) reading in every language poses a difficulty, but reading in English is particularly difficult. For instance some language systems such as Japanese Katakana, are based on a system where each syllable is represented by a written symbol. When symbols are learnt, the child can read with relative ease (Snow, Burns & Griffins, 1998). According to these authorities, spoken English on the other hand, has approximately 5000 different possible syllables. Written English makes use of a system of letters and alphabets to make up the spoken language. A letter alone will not mean anything in English. It has to be combined with other letter to represent a word. The learner has to learn this complex alphabetic system in order to understand written words.

According to Wolfe & Nevills (2004) reading in English is very much complicated by its orthography thus the spelling of words. In some languages, one letter has one sound but in English, one letter can represent several different sounds depending on its placement in the word.

## **2.5 The Reading Process**

Reading is complicated. There are four major stages that a child will go through in their lifetime to become competent and proficient reader. This process involves word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and most importantly motivation. From the ages of 6-7, beginning readers learn to decode by sounding out words. They get the understanding that letters and letter combinations represent sounds and use this knowledge to blend to form simple words like man or dog. At this stage a child with dyslexia, auditory processing or a reading disability will have great difficulties (PRIDE Reading Program, Nov. 13, 2016). This establishes the fact that the pupils of Kolbure Primary six are actually having serious difficulties with reading because all the pupils have passed this age bracket of 6-7. Most of the pupils in class six are within 11-13 years old.

At the stage two of the reading process called fluency, children within the ages of 7-8 fall there. Here they begin to recognize whole words by their visual image and orthographic knowledge. They identify familiar patterns and achieve automaticity in word recognition and increase fluency as they practice reading recognizable texts (PRIDE Reading Program, Nov. 13, 2016)

The last two stages are comprehension (8-14) and the multiple viewpoints (14-18). At the comprehension stage, the learner is ready to use reading as a tool to acquire new knowledge and understanding. Children need to understand sentences, paragraphs and chapters as they read through text. For the purposes of this study, all pupils in class six of Kolbure Primary School fell within this stage and this means they should have exhibited those characteristics as well. This clearly shows the study worth it. The stage four which is multiple viewpoints involves more complex thinking and analysing,

children are ready to share and manipulate ideas. Here too, they handle facts and concepts.

According to Ruddell and Singer (1994), a reading model tries to depict how an individual perceives a word, processes a clause and comprehends a text. The top-down approach suggests that our understanding of text begins with the knowledge and experience we bring to reading. We use prior knowledge to interpret the text in a meaningful way to us.

The bottom-up reading model, of which this study adopted, suggests that the understanding of written language develops from learning to decode its rules when reading, the learner focuses on the sounds of the alphabet and the smallest units, or phonemes, such as ‘ou’ ‘ee’ then words to sentences. The features of text include spelling, punctuation, and grammar play an important role in helping us to interpret text by providing clues to its meaning (Nancy & Keith, 2009; p. 84-85).

## **2.6 Causes of Pupils' Inability to Read**

Literature has revealed a lot of causes why pupils or learners cannot read well. Pupils of Kolbure Primary School struggle to read their textbooks and other reading materials. The researcher visited works by scholars to ascertain why this phenomenon continues to be a problem for pupils especially pupils of Kolbure Primary.

Research has shown that there are several causes of reading difficulties among pupils. These include socio-economic factors, systemic factors, language factors, neurological factors, personality factors and learning styles (Davin & Van Staden, 2005, Geske & Ozola, 2008)

They emphasized that there are many different and usually very complex factors affecting learners reading levels. Some of these factors are beyond the influence of the school as a learning environment

Research works have identified socio-economic background of pupils as the greatest factor accounting for reading ability or otherwise of pupils. Again studies have indicated there is positive relationship between socio-economic backgrounds and academic performance of pupils. This assertion has a direct link with the researcher's school that is Kolbure Primary School. Most parents in the Kolbure community are mainly peasant farmers hence lack the capacity to buy reading books for their children who are pupils of Kolbure Primary. Children sometimes do not get food to eat before coming to school. All these affect their ability to read.

According to Taylor and Shindler (2008), children who come from poor families tend to perform poorly in tests of reading than those from rich homes and families. Dickson and Neuman (2006) pointed out that the socio-economic and the domestic environment of a child have an impact on learning to read. They further stressed that children raised in poverty, those with limited proficiency in English, those from homes in which the parents' reading levels and practices are low, and those with speech, language and hearing difficulties, are at increased risk of reading failure because often they are not exposed to literacy practice. To establish whether or not this is the case of Kolbure Primary School formed part of the research.

Reading difficulties occur on a continuum, meaning that there is a wide range of students who experience reading difficulties. There are those who are diagnosed with a reading related disability but there is even a larger group of students (without diagnoses) who still require targeted reading assistance. Rockets (2005, p.3). The researcher at a

point realised that most of those who had severe difficulty in reading experienced the difficulty from the onset of their education.

According to Lerner (2000), children who have a good start in reading read more and become better readers, in contrast to those who have a poor start in reading and so do not engage in wide reading but fall further behind. Similarly, Lyon (2000) notes that learning to read begins long before children enter formal schooling, and that those who have stimulating literacy experience from birth have an edge in vocabulary development, understanding the goal of reading, and developing an awareness of print and literacy concept. Lyon (2000, p 14) concludes that “the children who are most at risk for reading failure enter kindergarten and the elementary grades without these early experiences”.

Given the important role that language abilities play in reading acquisition, some groups of children may be at a greater risk of developing learning difficulties in reading and spelling than others. Children with specific language impairment or communication disorders, for instance often experience literacy problems (Bishop & Snowling 2004; Catts et al, 2002; Ricketts, 2011; cited in Susanne et al, 2014, p. 210)

Palani (2012) in Owusu-Acheaw (2014) indicated that reading has lost its importance as both young and old are glued to the TV. He further explained that due to the influence of mass media, people do not show interest in reading books, newspapers, journals, articles, letters and magazines. Many students prefer to watch movies and others shows on TV, listen to audio-CDs, watching video games, playing games. It is true that both adults and children spend a lot of hours trapped watching TV or other related activities with the technological gadgets at home. Children therefore do not see the need to spend enough time to do effective reading. With reference to pupils of Kolbure Primary

School, some children travel for long distances to watch TV instead of learning their books.

In 1999, Young People New Media found that in a national survey of 6-17 year olds, more households had TVs than books. Most schools including Kolbure Primary School lack textbooks and other reading materials as well as inadequate time allocated for reading in basic schools and our homes will probably lead to a generation that cannot read effectively.

According to Nye et al (2004), teacher competence can explain over 20% of the variance in pupils reading achievement. The teachers style and pedagogical content knowledge can influence pupils reading ability. This is true to a large extent because teachers have a challenge in handling the reading aspect of the English Language. This may be due to the inadequate inservice training being organised for teachers by the Ghana Education Service. The headteacher of Kolbure Primary School organised few inservice trainings for the teachers but more has to be done on teacher professional development.

Teacher incompetence has been identified as the most significant factor that impedes students` learning (Harrington, 2001). Teachers who are fully prepared and have greater training are said to be more successful and effective with students than teachers with less preparation and training (Agyeman, 2000; Ferguson, 2001; Hama, 1998)

Most teachers do not know the appropriate methods of teaching reading hence resulting in poor reading outcomes by students. They resort to only the English Textbook to prepare their lesson plans. Other just copy the text from the course book on the chalkboard and ask pupils to read in turns. This strategy does not help achieve effective



reading. It is necessary teachers refer to all the necessary curriculum materials in designing reading lessons. The curriculum materials include the syllabus, the pupils text, the teacher's guide and other relevant learning materials. When this is done, it will facilitate the skill of reading.

Difficulty with decoding what is read is caused by having not acquired the phoneme-grapheme concept (how sounds correspond to letter pattern). One specific disability characterize by poor decoding is dyslexia, defined as brain-based type of learning disability that specifically impairs a person's ability to read. These learners read at levels significantly lower than expected despite having normal intelligence. It can be common in certain families as a result of hereditary inheritance and recent studies have identified a number of genes that may predispose an individual to develop dyslexia. Common characteristics among people with dyslexia are difficulty with spelling and phonological processing (the manipulation of sounds), David (2017).

A study conducted by Vukovic, Lesaux and Siegel (2010), which looked at mathematics performance of students with reading disability found that students with dyslexia showed weakness in the mathematics performance due to their inability to read and comprehend mathematical problems

## **2.7 Importance of Reading**

Knowing how to read has many benefits. A proficient reader is most likely to do well in the overall academic work. Mastering reading is a primary tool for success for children. According to Gredler et al. (1998, p.15), being a good reader in English means that a child has gained a functional knowledge of the principles of the alphabetic writing system.

There are myriad reasons reading is very important in our lives. For an individual to function well in today's world, one must be able to read. Understanding directions and instructions on a medicine bottle, writing application letters for jobs, reading road signs, writing and responding to emails and several others are day-to-day activities that involve reading. Reading is also required for reading memos and reports and responding to employees. Writing of exams, tests in schools all depend on one's ability to read. It is based on this that poor readers do not perform well in academic work.

According to Davis (2014), "failure to master reading skills will lead to slower job performance". People who read get ideas daily. This helps them to position themselves efficiently at the job place hence better performance is the end results. Understanding the written word is one way the mind grows in its ability. Teaching young children to read helps to develop their language skills, Davis (2014 p. 1). Language skills are better utilized especially the skill of writing when one is reading always. A lot of vocabulary is acquired by those who read constantly and this turns to help them become users of a language.

Reading is a contributor to listening and communication. A person who knows how to read can educate him or herself in any area of life he or she is interested in. We live in an age where we overflow with information, but reading is the main way to take advantage of it Davis (2014, p2)

Reading is key in the acquisition of knowledge. Everything you read fills your head with bits of information, and you never know when it might come in handy. The more knowledge you have, the better equipped you are to tackle any challenge you will ever face. Additionally, should you ever find yourself in dire circumstances, remember that

although you might lose everything else; your job, your certificates, your money and possessions, knowledge can never be taken away from you.

Skilful, critical, and voluminous reading is one of the most important personal habits that lead to successful academic career and a happy productive life (Atwell 2007; Bayless 2010; Robinson 2010; Stanovich & Cunningham 2000). Consistent readers are far apart from their peers in terms of performance and work output.

"For the majority of young people, enthusiastic and habitual reading is the single most predictive personal habit for the ability to achieve desirable life outcomes." (Bayless, 2010). The U.S. Department of Education (2005) maintains that avid reading promotes

Better skills acquisition,

Superior grades,

And a desirable life, as measured by income, profession, employment, and other attributes. The ability to read, learners would not get important information about health, social, cultural and political issues, as well as sources for pleasure and enrichment.

## **2.8 Effects of Reading Difficulties on Academic Performance**

Reading is the backbone of academic work. All examination questions are usually written and learners are expected to read and understand them to be able to provide feedbacks which are the answers. It is clear that one's ability to read will most likely help them to perform well in examinations.

A student who lacks reading ability does not do well in class activities and this deficiency is extended throughout his/her academic life. (Fosudo, 2010). We are

practicing an educational system where English Language is used to write the syllabus and textbooks for use in the schools. Pupils who can excel need to be able to read in order to function well in their educational life and also in life as a whole. The relationship between reading ability and academic performance seems like a logical connection since textual information is common in our society. Espin and Deno (1993) established that a relationship exists between basic reading literacy and student academic success. Their study involved 121 tenth grade students in a rural school in a small mid-western community. Their work was based on the connection between a student's reading measure and that of student score from a classroom study task, grade point average, and achievement test results. The same can be said about the pupils of Kolbure Primary because the very few who are able to read somehow, performs a little better than their counterparts who cannot read anything. The researcher who doubled as the classroom teacher of class six of Kolbure Primary School can say the work of the above researchers (Espin and Deno) confirmed the happening in Kolbure Primary.

One other study which focused on secondary students was carried out by Cromley (2009). This study focused specifically on reading and proficiency in science with an international perspective and included several countries, including the USA. Cromley gathered that there was a very high correlation between reading comprehension and science proficiency. The United States was among the nations with the correlation between reading and science. The study confirmed the poor performance that would occur if learners have reading difficulties. Pupils of Kolbure Primary School may be performing poorly because of their inability to read.

A study conducted by Grimm (2008) looked at the relationship between early reading skills and growth in Maths skills. His study studied third grade students and found that

students who had a higher level of reading comprehension tended to learn problem solving and data interpretation skills faster than those with weaker reading comprehension. A study conducted in Turkey in 2011 with the focus on reading comprehension explicitly related to Mathematics performance Duru and Koklu (2011). The researchers looked at middle school students' ability to read mathematical text and convert it into algebraic equation and vice-versa. The data gathered from this study indicated that students had low reading comprehension which prevented them from comprehending the mathematical texts and algebraic equations representing those texts. The researchers concluded that there were several factors involved, such as students' inability to organize prior knowledge and their lack of knowledge of meaning of symbols, signs, and words used in mathematics (Duru & Koklu, 2011). The study indicated that vocabulary is an important component of reading which supports comprehension.

## **2.9 The Phonic Method of Teaching Reading**

Phonics is a method for teaching reading and writing of the English Language by developing learners' phonemic awareness thus the ability to hear, identify, and manipulates phonemes. This means learners should possess phonemic awareness in order to benefit the phonic method. Phonemic awareness refers to specific ability to focus on and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. Phonemes combine to form syllables and words (Rockets, 2019) For example, the word 'fat' has three phonemes; /f/ /a/ /t/. There are 44 phonemes in the English Language including sounds represented by letter combination such as /th/. Acquiring phonemic awareness is important because it is the foundation for spelling and word recognition skills. Phonemic awareness is one of the best predictors of how well children will learn to read during the first two years of school instruction.

The goal of phonics is to enable beginning readers to decode new written words by sounding them out, or, in phonics terms, blending the sound-spelling patterns. The focus of phonics is on spoken and written units within words, hence phonics is a sublexical approach and, as a result, is often contrasted with whole language, a word-level-up philosophy for teaching reading.

The basic principles of phonics were first presented by John Hart in 1570. Phonics has been widely used throughout primary education and in teaching literacy throughout the English speaking world. It gained prominence in the teaching of reading.

Important supporters of phonics led by Rudolph in his book ‘‘Why Johnny Can’t Read and What You Can Do About’’ cautioned that American schools would produce a generation of illiterates, if they continue to rely on faddish techniques (namely the look and say, or whole-language approach) to teach reading.

Phonic method is considered the most appropriate for teaching reading in the basic schools. A reading method is a set of teaching and learning materials and/or activities often given a label, such as phonic method, or language experience method.

Phonics are put into different types and each of them is very important in the teaching of reading. Synthetic phonics uses a part to whole approach that teaches pupils or students letter sound (grapheme-phoneme) relationships in a clearly defined incremental sequence. Teachers teach students small groups of letter sounds during short, brisk daily sessions so they can begin blending (synthesising) when reading and segmenting letter sounds in words when spelling.

For instance, after being taught the letters and sounds /s/ /t/ /o/ /p/, students can be supported to blend these letter sounds to read words such as stop, top, pot. When

blending, it is important to emphasize the initial, medial, and final sounds (Department of Education, 2009).

“Knowledge of letter sound relationship gives students a degree of independence in learning to recognize words and in reviewing them. It develops students’ visual images of words because it allows them to attend to the letter components of the words and their sequencing” (Department of Education, 2009, p. 20)

Analytic phonics on the other teaches students to analyse letter-sound relationships in words. This is quite different from the synthetic phonics as it does not focus on individual letter sounds and relationships. The analytic phonics focuses on learning the onset, or sounds made before the first vowel and the rime, or sound that follows. For instance, in the word “mat” the “m” sound is the onset and “at” is the rime, forming the word mat. The analytic phonics expects children to be able to say the onset, the rime, and then finally blend the two to form the word (Jennifer Tolbert, 2019)

Other forms of the phonic method is Analogy-Based Phonics, Embedded Phonic. The method of analogy-based phonics allows children to learn to use parts of words families to decode words they do not know by identifying the parts of the words that are similar to familiar words. For example, a learner can use his or her background of knowing the word pen to read the word hen, scream to cream, green to screen. Embedded phonics is the type of phonics instruction used in whole language programmes. Embedded phonics differ from other methods in that the instruction is always in the context of literature rather than in separate lessons, and the skills to be taught are identified opportunistically rather than systematically.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher relied heavily on the synthetic phonics of teaching reading in carrying the interventional works of the study though the others were sparsely used. Knowledge in vowels and consonant sounds of the English Language is paramount in using the phonic method in teaching reading.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

The chapter reviewed literature that is relevant to the study. Many authorities and other scholarly works were considered in giving a clearer picture of the review. The chapter focused on the following, theoretical framework, definitions/concept of reading, the nature of reading, the reading process, causes of pupil's inability to read, importance of reading, the effects of pupil's inability to read on academic performance as well as the phonic approach of teaching reading. These were discussed into details.



# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to discuss the methodology of the study under the following subdivisions research design, population, sampling technique, sample size and research site. Others include data collection techniques, data analysis and data presentation.

### **3.2 Research Design**

According to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009), a research design is a detailed description of a study proposed to investigate a given problem.

A research design is a plan and structure for investigations to obtain answers to research questions and may be compared to a blueprint for collection, measurement and analysis of data. (Schinder, 2003, p. 354). The research design includes all procedures selected to answer a particular question.



This study adopted a qualitative research approach.

According to Christensen & Johnson (2014, p. 88), 'qualitative researchers do not usually collect data in the form of numbers. Rather they conduct observations and in-depth interviews, and the data are usually in the form of word while for Gay et al (2009) it is the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehension narrative and visual data to gain insight into a particular phenomenon of interest.

The qualitative research approach was seen as the most suitable to realise the research questions thus the causes of reading difficulties among pupils of Kolbure Primary, the effects of reading difficulties on academic performance of pupils and the effectiveness of the phonic approach to the teaching of reading. The qualitative methods of observation and interview were used in gathering data while reading test was also conducted to determine the effectiveness of the phonic method of teaching reading and also explain the effects of reading difficulties on academic performance.

The combination of research instruments for collecting and analysing data allowed the researcher to gain a more comprehensive insight into the problem being studied.

### **3.3 Population**

A large group to which a researcher wants to generalize his or her sample result is called population; (Johnson & Christensen, 2014 p. 346).

The total population of Kolbure Primary is four hundred and two (402) pupils. The primary six enrolment is fifty-six pupils which is made up of twenty-five boys and thirty-one girls.

### **3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique**

Sampling is the process of selecting units from a population of interest so that by studying them one may fairly generalise the results back to the population from which

they were chosen (Williams, 2006, p. 11). The population is large so there is always need to get a feasible size to be able to carry out a meaningful research work.

The population will be too large for the researcher to attempt to study all its members, so a small but carefully chosen members, so a small but carefully chosen sample can be chosen to represent it and reflect the characteristics of those from which it is drawn (Statpac, 2009, p. 11).

The researcher used the simple random sampling technique. A simple random sample is formally defined as a sample drawn by a procedure in which every possible sample of a given size (eg. size 100) has an equal change of being selected for the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 348). In short, simple random sampling gives every prospective participant in a research study an equal chance of being selected. The researcher used this sampling technique because almost every pupil in class six of Kolbure Primary experienced some kind of difficulty during reading lessons. Through the simple random technique, the researcher drew fifteen pupils as the sample for the study out of fifty-six students in class six of Kolbure Primary School. The researcher wrote all the names of all 56 pupils on pieces of papers and folded the papers so that no name would be seen. He put all the pieces of papers in a container. He closed the container and shook the container to make sure all the papers were well mixed up. He then called the pupils to come and remove a piece of paper. After each piece of paper was removed from the container, he called out the name on that piece of paper and that pupil was considered the first participant. He shook the container one more time to make sure the papers were mixed, he called the second student to come and remove a piece of paper from the container. The name on the piece of paper became the second participant. The researcher continued the process until all the 15 participants were drawn. He settled on this sample size because of limitations such as time, and the lack

of resources. The researcher however believed this sample size would give a clear picture of the entire population.

### **3.5 The Research Site**

The study was conducted in Kolbure Primary School. It is one of the fifty public primary schools within Tempene District of the Upper East Region of Ghana. Kolbure is a remote village where most of the inhabitants are peasant farmers. Kolbure Primary School was established in 1987. The school has six classrooms which are occupied by pupils of class one through to class six. The kindergarten one and two sit under a tree for lessons. The school also has teachers' quarters but no headteacher's office. The school is using one of the rooms in the teachers' quarters to keep the school's properties and other relevant documents. The school has not got enough furniture and as a result most of the pupils sit on the floor to learn. The whole school has just fourteen dual desks which is used by class six pupils. The school has not enough teaching and learning materials to facilitate learning.

All the participants in this study were natives of Kolbure community. They were all in class six. The teacher-learner ration at the school stood at 1:57. The medium of instruction at the lower primary (KG1, KG2, P1-P3) is Kusaal. Kusaal is the dominant language spoken by the people in Kolbure community hence most of the natives are Kusasis. Primary four (P4) to primary six (P6) had English as the medium of instruction. In this case, the medium of instruction for all learners in this study was done mostly in English.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

This part presents the way in which data were collected. For the purpose of finding out the causes of reading difficulties among class six pupils of Kolbure primary school in

the Tempane District of Upper East Region and that of the effects of reading difficulties on academic performance, the researcher used observation, test and interview as data collection instrument. On establishing the effectiveness of phonic instruction to reading, the researcher used test as one of the data collection instruments. According to Williams (2004, p. 270) data collection a ‘process of capturing facts, information and figures based on the characteristic and the nature of the nature of the research problem. In this study, data was collected using observation, interview and achievement test method.

### **3.6.1 Observation**

According to Johnson and Christensen (2014, p. 328), observation is a method of data collection in which researchers watch the behavioural patterns of people in certain situations to obtain information about the phenomena of interest. It is called an unobtrusive method sometimes. Observation is seen as the most appropriate way of collecting data, for example, to learn about interaction or for verification purposes in order to obtain accurate information.

Creswell & Plan-Clark (2007, p. 45) refer to non-participant observation as ‘observation from the distance’, while for Best and Khan (2006) it is the researcher’s long distance observation of activities related to the topic of interest and spectator-based. For the purposes of this study, the researcher adopted the non-participant observation as he himself was not directly involved in the activities of the research participants, but as a passive observer who watched and listened to group activities in order to collect data from the observations.

During observations, the researcher observed the attendance of pupils to school, attention levels in class, their interactions in and outside the classroom and what they do often in school. The researcher focused more on pupils' ability to interact using the English language. The researcher also observed how learners showed interest or disinterest during reading lessons. Moreover, the researcher observed the kinds of learning materials pupils brought from their homes to school. Lastly, the researcher observed assistance learners give to one another in the classroom. Observations were important for the researcher to answer the questions of this study. Observations were also done on how pupils read during reading lessons.

### **3.6.2 Interview**

“An interview is a conversation for gathering information. A research interview involves an interviewer, who coordinates the process of the conversation and asks questions, and an interviewee who responds to those questions.” (Easwaramoorthy & Fataneh, 2006, p. 1).

An interview is either face-to-face or over the telephone. The internet is also another way by which interview can be conducted.

The researcher adopted this instrument because it would help him get in-depth information on the participants. It allowed him to get their thoughts, experiences, feelings and so on. The researcher chose interview over questionnaire because most of the participants could not read well to be able to fill questionnaire. The participants could communicate well in Kusaal, which is the L1. The researcher allowed participants to express themselves in the L1 since the researcher could speak the L1 of the pupils.

The type of interview used was semi-structured interview. This means the researcher/interviewer asked a set of predetermined questions and the respondents

answered in their own words. The semi-structured nature allowed the interviewer to probe the respondents answers for further clarification. The mode of interview was face-to-face. The interviewer interviewed all fifteen (15) participants face-to-face. He used three days to interview them. He interviewed five participants per day. Each interview session lasted for about twenty minutes. The main purpose of the interview was to find out pupils views on their inability to read. They were asked among others the following; whether they really have interest in reading, the number of times they read in a week, number of hours assist them to read at home.

As indicated in the background to the study, the pupils had severe difficulties in reading texts which led the researcher into investigating those difficulties. At class six, the pupils were preparing for the Junior High education and this even made it more pressing for something to be done about pupils inability to read.

### ***3.6.3 Achievement Test***

Reading is one's ability to make meaning out of a printed material. For the researcher to determine this, he made use of achievement tests to establish the extent at which pupils understood what was being read.

An achievement test is a test of developed skill or knowledge. The commonest type of achievement test is a standardized test developed to measure skills and knowledge learned in a given grade level, usually through planned instruction, such as training or classroom instruction. To achieve the purpose of the study and find out answers to research questions the researcher conducted a pre-test to establish how pupils understood the passages they read in their class readers.

The English textbook used in teaching the pupils was Aki-Ola series, Creative English for Primary Schools, Pupils Book 6. Passages were drawn from this book for the purposes of the study. Relevant information from other sources were also used.

The researcher conducted a pre-test. A sample of the pre-test is in the appendices.

The researcher also used reading test mostly oral test to determine or monitor the progress of the intervention. The researcher finally conducted a post-test after administering the intervention.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Procedure**

The researcher used observation, interview and test to gather data. The researcher did the observation during school hours for the period of the study. He recorded what was observed in a notebook. He summarised what was observed and analysed them in themes.

He also interviewed participants within the school's premises. He prepared the questions to ask the participants ahead of time. He interviewed 5 participants a day. He summarised the responses to two that is agree and disagree in order to present the results in a tabular form to analyse.

The test was conducted for participants within the school. The researcher presented the results in a simple table comprising marks, frequencies and percentages. He analysed the results using the tables provided.

### **3.7 Pre-intervention Stage**

At this stage, the researcher tried to find out the severity of pupils inability to read. At this stage he tried to understand their problems before coming out with the main intervention to achieve this, the researcher did a model reading of the passage titled 'Save the Elephants' for pupils. The researchers then allowed pupils to read the passage

for him to observe their word recognition, pronunciation as they read. The researcher asked pupils to answer the questions that followed the passage. This formed the pre-test. Each pupil was also made to recite letters of the alphabet to ascertain whether they could produce the correct names of the letters of the alphabet.

### **3.8 Intervention**

Having established that pupils had severe reading difficulties even to the extent of not being able to read simple words made the researcher choose the strategy that he felt would help learners become better readers.

The researcher adopted the phonic method of teaching reading to teach the pupils during the interventional stage of this study. Before the intervention started, the researcher established a conducive and cordial teacher-pupil relationship which made pupils felt free, and took part confidently during lessons.

This was achieved by including games such as 'Give a sound and I choose', matching letters to sound' and simple songs in the teaching of sounds of letters and how to blend them to form words.

The phonic method involves the correct pronunciation of the names and sounds of the letters of the alphabet. The intervention period lasted for ten weeks. It started on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Jan., 2019 and ended on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March, 2019. He met the pupils thrice a week for the stated period.

Tutoring took place in 60-minute sessions three times a week for the entire intervention period.

#### ***3.8.1 Teaching the English Alphabet***

The researcher started the first session by asking pupils to tell the number of letters making up the English alphabet. They were made to name the letters and also identify



the sounds of the letters they have identified. The researcher used a game to assist pupils identify capital letters from small letters. He used letter cards of both capital and small letters. He put the letters in a box and made pupils to look for the capital letters and that of their small letter counterparts. Example

<b>Capital letter</b>	<b>Small letter</b>
-----------------------	---------------------

B	b
---	---

G	g
---	---

O	o
---	---

It was all fun because most of the pupils saw that it was very easy for all of them. The researcher's intention was to make the process friendly for pupils since it was the first official meeting on the intervention process.

With this activity, every participant was able to discriminate between the upper case letters and lower case letters.

The next four weeks were used to introduce the sounds of the English language to pupils. Most of them admitted they were never taught the sounds of the language. For this matter, the researcher spend ample time with pupils in order for them to grasp the sounds before proceeding to blend the sounds to form words.

### ***3.8.2 Teaching the sounds of letters***

In teaching the sounds, the researcher started with the vowels. As he taught each sound, he included a word each in which the given sound appears at the initial of the word.

#### ***3.8.2.1 Teaching of vowels (short vowels)***

The researcher used flashcards to teach the sort-vowels first. He drilled with pupils to be familiar with sounds. He used a voice app to assist in delivering his lessons.

/a/ in apple

/e/ in elephant

/i/ in itch

/o/ in octopus

/u/ in umbrella

### ***3.8.2.2 Teaching the consonants sounds of the English Language***

/b/ in bad

/k/ in cat or kite

/d/ in dog

/f/ in five

/g/ in goat

/h/ in hat

/j/ in jam

/l/ in love

/m/ in mad

/n/ in nest

/p/ in pupil

/r/ in rat

/s/ in sun

/t/ in tap



/v/ in van

/w/ in wig

/ks/ in fox

/y/ in yell

/z/ in zebra

A lot drilling was done to help learners.

### ***3.8.2.3 Diagraphs***

After the consonants, the researcher took participants through the diagraphs. A diagraph is a pair of letters that make one sound.

/ch/ in chin

/sh/ in ship

/th/ in thin

/ng/ in sing

/wh/ in ship

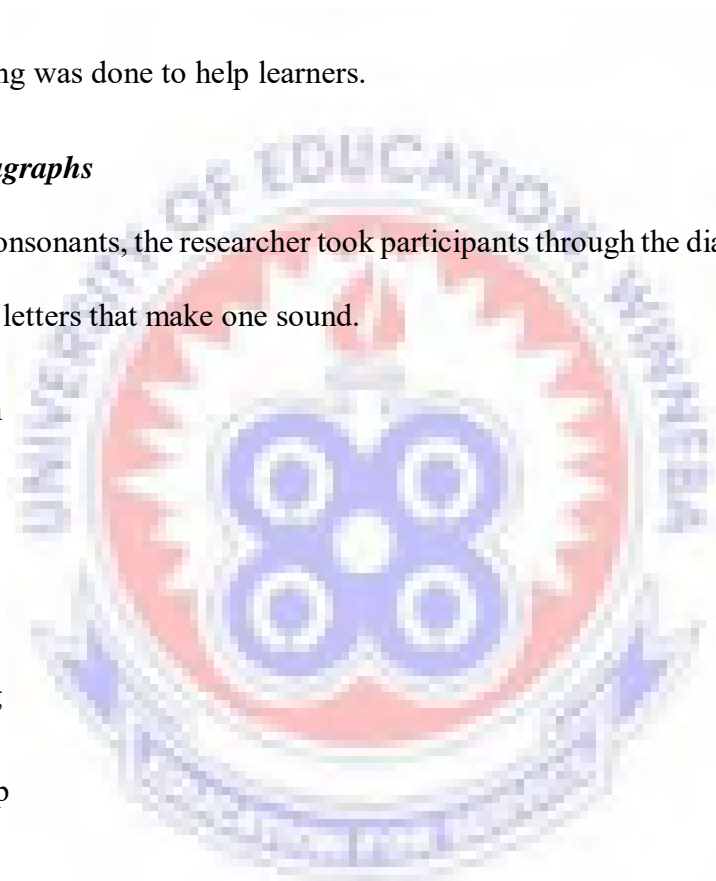
/nk/ in sink

The researcher drilled with pupils until they could memorize the sounds. This was done with the help of flash cards.

### ***3.8.2.4 Teaching of Long Vowels***

With the aid of TLMs, the researcher taught the long vowels. This became necessary because a vowel has at least two ways in which it sounds in words

/i:/ in piece



/u:/ in root, routine

/ɔ:/ in author

/a:/ in start

/ɜ:/ in turn

### ***3.8.2.5 Teaching Sounds of Diphthongs***

The researcher also took participants through another set of special sounds of the English language. A diphthong is a vowel with different targets: that is, the tongue and / or other parts of the speech apparatus moves during the pronunciation of the vowel. In other words, a diphthong is a combination of two adjacent vowel sounds within the same syllable.

/I ə/ in fear

/və/ in ensure

/ai/ in flight

/ɔi/ in oil

/əv/ in over

/eə/ in dare

/av/ in powder

/ei/ in face

Drills were used to assist learners become used to these special sounds.

### ***3.8.2.6 Blending of Sounds to Form Words***

#### **Step 1.**

The blending of letters to form words was done step by step, starting from the smallest through to the complex ones. After the researcher had taken the pupils through the various sounds, he taught them how to blend two letters for examples, (b-a, ba), (b-e, be). He also taught them to read the two letter blends. More examples of the two letter combinations are as follows.

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#### TWO-LETTER BLENDS

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b+a =ba	s+a = sa	g+a = ga
b+e =be	s+e = se	g+e = ge
b+i =bi	s+i = si	g+i = gi
b+o =bo	s+o = so	g+o = go
b+u =bu	s+u = su	g+u = gu

---

Here, the focus was not on the meaning of what was read but to encourage pupils to learn how to read and also make reading fun. As pupils became familiar with the two letter words, the researcher introduced pupils to three letter blends.

### Step 2

Teaching of three letter blends

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#### THREE-LETTER BLENDS

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fa + t = fat	ki + t = kit	ra + t = rat
ma + t = mat	pa + d = pad	ba + t = bat
de + n = den	ye + s = yes	se + t = set
bo+ x = box	no + t = not	wi + n = win
hi + d= hid	pu+ n = pun	la + p = lap

---

At this stage, the researcher introduced few sentences of both two letter words and three letter words.

1. The dog is fat
2. I met him
3. Yes, she saw her
4. The cat run

The researcher made a list of several two blends and allowed pupils to add other letters to form three blends. A lot of drillings was done to achieve automacity.

### Step 3

Teaching of the blending of four letters. The researcher used the phonic primer developed by The National Right to Read to assist in the teaching of the sounds to the pupils. He also made use of some sound lessons from jolly phonics lesson application to assist his pupils in the blending of sounds.

At this stage, the researcher always revised the previous lesson before proceeding to new lessons.

Under the four letter blends, he taught the following; twin-consonant endings, plurals, and two-consonant blends. He drilled until pupils could sound them.

<b>Twin-Consonant Endings</b>	<b>Two-Consonant Blends</b>	<b>Two-Consonant Blends</b>
puff	blab	swam
sell	brag	trot
kiss	club	twin
fuzz	drag	fast
lock	fled	raft
kill	frog,plug,skip, mask	held, help,hand,mint

plurals

cats (sounds like /s/ )

beds (sounds like /z/ )

mats (sounds like /s/ )

After pupils were able to identify the consonant blends, the researcher asked them to come out with other examples.

### Step 4

The researcher taught pupils the digraphs and gave examples of words of each of them. A digraph consists of two consonants that form a new sound when combined. The researcher also taught three consonants blends.

Revision of the digraphs was done and examples of words containing digraphs provided.

digraphs

chin, such, patch

ship, wish

thin, with

sang, song, ring, king

sank, honk, sunk

Then, the three consonant blends also followed. Drills were key in achieving this

scruff, split, thrill

### **Step 5**

The researcher adopted an aspect of jolly phonics to assist pupils understand more on blending especially on the letter combination as one sound since it was designed in line with synthetic phonics teaching. It was done using the activities like, gestures, and songs. The following were taught

/ai/ as in aid, aim, bait, fail, laid, main

/oa/ as in oak, oats, boats, coal, foam, moan

/ie/ as in tie, die, lie, pie, tried, spied

/or/ as in or, for, lord, fork, sport, corn, sort

/oo/ as in too, zoo, hoop, moon, boom, cool, food

### **Step 6**

With the same jolly phonics ideas, the researcher taught pupils some tricky words. These are words that do not conform to regular phonemic pattern hence difficult to blend the sounds. The following are examples of words which were introduced to pupils as words which could not be easily blended to form them.

I, the, he, she, me, have, give, little, down, what, when, why, who, which, many, more, before, saw, put, could, would, should, would, right, always, also, once, father, mother. These and others were introduced as whole words.

### **Step 7**

After pupils became familiar with the sounds and how to blend them to form words, the researcher introduced short but interesting passages for pupils to read. For example;

I saw a cat yesterday. It was a black cat. I gave it food to eat. I like cats. I will ask my parents to buy one for me.

With this and other examples, pupils were able to read. The researcher explained the meaning of the passages to pupils.

### **3.9 Post Intervention**

On the tenth week, the researcher carried the post-test to assess progress of the intervention. Observation run through the entire study period and details of it is



presented in the next chapter. Interview was carried out along the interventional period and details are presented in chapter four.

### **3.10 Ethical Issues**

Educational researchers respect the right, privacy, dignity and sensitivity of their populations, and also the integrity of the institutions within which the research occurs. In this study the researcher informed the headteacher of Kolbure Primary School about the study and he granted him the opportunity to carry out the research. The researcher explained to pupils the reasons for which the study was being carried out. He assured them that no information was going to be given to the colleagues who were not participating. He did that to ensure that those who were not able to do certain things were not mocked at. The researcher also informed parents of the participants about the study. He explained to them the significance and why they should allow their wards to participate in the study. This was very necessary because the intervention activities were done after school hours but in the same classroom.

The researcher did not use the names of participants in explaining anything. He assigned them letters of the alphabet eg Paul is assigned the letter A and the letter is used instead of his name. To Gay et al (2009), ethical considerations include the coding of the data to protect the participants' identity, their privacy and confidentiality.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

The chapter spelt out the strategies the researcher used to gather data. The researcher made use of three instruments in gathering the. The phonic method of teaching reading was used comprehensively to assist pupils' reading ability.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results, analysis and their interpretation in accordance with the research questions stated in chapter one. The research questions include the following;

1. What are the causes of reading difficulties among the pupils of Kolbure Primary School?
2. What are the effects of reading difficulties on the academic performance of pupils?
3. How effective is the phonic method in helping pupils overcome their reading difficulties?

The data gathered from the interview is presented first followed by the information gathered from the observation and then lastly, information gathered on the reading achievement test. Observation and the test were used in both the pre-intervention and post-intervention stages.

#### **4.2 Reasons for Pupils' Inability to Read**

**Research Question 1: What are the causes of reading difficulties among class six pupils of Kolbure Primary School?**

The table below shows the results obtained from the interview the researcher conducted with participants.

**Table 1: Reasons that account for Pupils Inability to Read (interview)**

Reasons	Number of Pupils		Total Frequency (%)
	Agree f(%)	Disagree f(%)	
Inadequate reading materials	15(100%)	0	15(100%)
Lack of support for reading at home	10(66.67%)	5(33.33%)	15(100%)
Poor knowledge of letter sounds	14(93.33%)	1(6.67%)	15(100%)
Poor reading habits	12(80%)	3(20%)	15(100%)
poverty	13(86.67%)	2(13.33%)	15(100%)
poor teaching methods	8(53.33%)	7(46.67%)	15(100%)

Table 1 seeks to establish the reasons why pupils of Kolbure Primary could not read. The above is the results obtained when the researcher conducted an interview with the participants. According to Easwaramoorthy and Fataneh (2006) “Interviews are appropriate when there is a need to collect in-depth information on people’s opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings.” The researcher needed such information from the participants so the interview was deemed an appropriate instrument. With the first item on the table, the researcher sought to find out if pupils had reading materials that they use at school and out of school. The results obtained from the interview with the pupils as shown in table revealed that all 15 participants representing 100 percent agreed they did not have enough reading materials. The researcher who happened to be a teacher in the school could confirm this as he was aware the teaching and learning materials in the school were not adequate as there were only 3 English textbooks for the primary six class of Kolbure. Those three books could not be given to the pupils since their number was 56. The researcher found that pupils depended largely on the notes that teachers give to them in class.

On the second item on the table, the researcher tried to find out if pupils had any support on reading at home. The results show that 10 of the participants representing 66.67% agreed with the statement that they lacked reading support at home. According to Yan Yip (2008, p. 1), “parents accompanying their children to read is crucial to nurture reading interest.” This clearly indicates it is very important for parents to support their children to read at home. 5 of the participants representing 33.33 percent indicated that they had some form of reading support at home.

The third item on the interview with the pupils sought to find out from pupils their knowledge on the letter sounds. 14 of the participants representing 93.33 percent indicated that they had no knowledge of the sounds of the English Language whilst 1 of them representing 6.67 percent indicated she had knowledge on the sounds. This was confirmed when the researcher introduced sounds at the intervention period. Majority of them had no idea at all about the sounds of the English Language though most of them were familiar with the letter names. This explains the fact that the child needs phonemic awareness in order to be able to read easily. This skill is the most important for later reading success, accounting for about 65% of the variance in reading of first-graders and 49% of the variance of reading skills of eighth-graders. (Vaughn Gross Centre for Reading and Language Arts at the University of Texas at Austin, 2011). This observation is in line with the findings of Houtveen and Van de Grift (2012), they indicated that, learning to read is a complex task for beginners. They further stated that, an essential part of the process for beginners involves learning the alphabetic system that is, letter-sound correspondence and how to apply these skills in their reading. This was not the case at Kolbure Primary as the responses make it clear that most of the pupils had no phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the knowledge of individual sounds in words (Hougen, 2016).

With the fourth item on the table, the researcher tried to find out from pupils through the interview if they had interest in reading. Through the question on whether they always had time to read their notes at home, it was revealed as indicated in table 3 that 12 of the participants representing 80 percent agreed that they did not like reading at home and even in school. They admitted that when they close from school, they hardly have time for their books unless there is homework for them to do. There will not be any impact on a reading programme if the child is not ready to actively take part in the reading process. However, 3 of the participants representing 20 percent said they read their note books at home. They however lamented that they did not have people to help them during reading at home.

The fifth item sought to find out if poverty was truly among reasons why they could not read. 13 of the participants representing 86.67 percent agreed with the statement explaining that their parents and guardians had wished to buy them reading materials but had no resources to do that. It is an indication that most parents did not have the capacity to provide reading materials and other relevant educational support. From table 3, 2 of the participants representing 13.33 percent said their parents were able of providing them with reading materials but they had refused to do so. Probing further, it was revealed that those parents said they would not waste their resources buying reading materials for their children when most of them are always not able to get to the tertiary level of education.

The last item in table 3 talked about the teaching methods used by teachers in teaching reading. With this, 8 of the participants representing 53.33 percent agreed that the way teachers taught them reading made the unable to read. 7 of the participants however disagreed that teachers used poor teaching methods. They explained that teachers taught

them but they forget what they are taught easily. For those who agreed to the statement that teachers used poor methods said teachers did not give them enough time to practise how to read.

#### ***4.2.1 Analysis on observation***

Observation was used in this study to gather data by observing the participants and understanding their natural environment without altering or manipulating it (Gay et al, 2009). In order to gather further information about the causes of reading difficulties, the researcher focused on the following school factors, classroom physical environment, availability of reading materials in school, how students approach the reading passages, time of coming to school, use of English language both in and out of the classroom, sex and age of participants.

#### ***4.2.2 Classroom physical environment***

The researcher observed the physical environment of classrooms of Kolbure Primary School especially the class six. Due to the unavailability of furniture, three pupils sat on one dual desk. This experience did not make pupils feel comfortable. There was no reading corner where learners could have reading materials to use anytime they wanted to read. There were no wall charts or drawings on the walls of the classroom. According to Cameron (2002), the classroom media play a crucial role in promoting learning, and colourful posters that contain text can be of continual interest to beginners and help them recognise words. The floor of the primary six class was not conducive for academic work. The wall painting was faded.

#### ***4.2.3 Availability of reading materials***

Since the researcher was a teacher of Kolbure Primary, he knew so much about the challenges the school had in the area of teaching and learning materials. The researcher

observed that the primary six had only 3 English textbooks. The researcher wrote on the chalkboard anytime he taught the pupils. Time was always not effectively used because much time was used in writing on the chalkboard. There is no library in the school to support pupils learning. Neuman (2006), maintains that children who are exposed to books in their early grade years learn to read more easily.

#### ***4.2.4 How students read the reading passages***

Through the observation conducted at the pre-intervention stage, the following observations were made regarding how pupils read the passage one. 7 participants out of the 15 representing 46.67 percent could not read the passage except to read the few two letter words found in the text. They were only able to read words like of, be, are, to, in, and, it, is, not, has and at. It is believed they were able to read these words because they are considered common words to the learners. It was also observed that 5 participants representing 33.33 percent were able to read the with serious difficulties in pronouncing most of the words in the passage resulting in mispronunciation of the words which brought about impeded reading. For instance, words like hide /hāid/ was pronounced /h`Id/, straight /str`eIt/ as /stre`i/, mammals /m`æməlz/ as /mamals/ etc. This clearly showed they had no knowledge of the sounds of the English Language but had used rote learning to read the words hence the difficulty. 3 of the participants representing 20 percent could read the passage with appreciable level of accuracy that is reading most of the words correctly. The overall observation was that fluency was very much impeded in the reading of the passage.

#### ***4.2.5 Use of English Language***

The researcher observed that participants hardly interact among themselves while in the classroom or outside the classroom. Most of them used Kusaal which happened to be

the L1 most pupils spoke. Students would most likely be able to read if they make an effort to interact in the English Language. Speaking is a productive aural or oral skill and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning (Nunan, 2003, p. 48). Their inability to use the English Language could have been as a result of their reading difficulties. “Where there is little reading there will be little language learning.... the student who wants to learn English will have to read himself into a knowledge of it unless he can move into an English environment” (Bright & McGregor, 1970). It was not surprising that most students could not use the language as they were doing limited reading or could not read at all.

#### **4.2.6 Sex of participants**

The researcher observed that there was slight difference in the reading abilities of boys and girls. The researcher observed that most of the girls were getting the concept of the sounds than their male counterparts. Below is a table showing the demographic characteristics that is the sex of the participants.

The table below shows the sex of participants.

**Table 2: Sex of Participants**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Male</b>	8	53.33
<b>Female</b>	7	46.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

From table 2, the results revealed that the male population was 8 representing 53.33 percent of the population and their female counterparts were 7 representing 46.67 percent of the entire study population. This indicates that the males dominated the study population though the male population of Kolbure Primary six stood at 44.64 percent. It was natural that the females should get high representation because they formed 55.36



percent of the primary six class population but the sampling technique used did not allow that. It did not have any influence on the results because most of the pupils exhibited similar characteristics of the reading difficulty. The school generally had a high female population that is 221 girls as against 181 boys. However, the girls performed better than their male counterparts. In the post-test results, two girls had all marks indicating the best score of the test.

#### ***4.2.7 Age distribution of participants***

It was observed that those who could read fluently and scored very high marks in the post-test results were the young ones among the participants. The researcher observed that age could be a factor that causes reading difficulties too. Below a table showing the age distribution of the participants.

The table below shows the age distribution of participants.

**Table 3: Age Distribution of Participants**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
10-11	2	13.33
12-13	4	26.67
14-15	9	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

The analysis of table 3 shows 2 of the participants fell between the ages of 10 and 11 representing 13.33 percent. Also, 4 of the participants representing 26.67 percent fell between the ages of 12 and 13. Lastly, 60 percent of the participants fell between the ages of 14 and 15 that is 9 participants. Looking at the analysis, majority of the participants are 14 and 15 year olds which is far above the stipulated age of a class six pupil in Ghana which is supposed to be 11-12 year olds. This clearly indicates that most of the class six pupils of Kolbure Primary were beyond the ages of primary six pupils. This phenomenon may be as a result of late enrolment of pupils at Kolbure Primary

School. Most parents do not care to enrol their wards at the right age which is 4 years old.

### 4.3 Effects of Reading Difficulties on Academic Performance

**Research Question 2: What are the effects of reading difficulties on academic performance pupils?**

Through observation, the researcher found out that effects of reading difficulties on academic performance is negative. He achieved this by comparing the results of the reading pre-test and post-test results.

The two tables below are the results of pre-test and post-test for the purposes of comparison.

#### Pre-test Results

Marks	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
1-2	7	46.67
3-4	6	40.00
5-6	2	13.33
7-8	0	0
9-10	0	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

#### Post-test Results

Marks obtained by students	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
1-2	0	0
3-4	0	0
5-6	4	26.67
7-8	9	60
9-10	2	13.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

From the two tables above, that is the reading pre-test and post-test, it is established that before the intervention process to assist pupils read, the researcher conducted a pre-

test to ascertain the veracity of the reading difficulties that the pupils encountered. It is revealed from the table that as many as 7 of the participants representing 46.67 percent scored 1-2 marks but in the post-test results, that is after the intervention had been carried out, no participant scored 1-2. This is a clear indication that performance by the participants had improved. Also, with the pre-test results 6 out of the 15 participants representing 40.00 percent scored 3-4 marks but no participant scored 3-4 marks in the post-test. This is yet another indication that performance had improved after the intervention. From the tables above, 2 of the participants representing 13.33 percent scored 5-6 marks which was a pass mark and the highest score obtained by participants in the pre-test but 4 participants representing 26.67 percent scored 5-6 marks in the post-test which happened to be the least mark in the post-test however it was a pass mark. The performance had improved as 13.33 percent as against 26.67 percent in the post test. No participant scored 7-8 marks in the pre-test but 9 of the participants representing 60 percent scored 7-8 marks in the post-test. This is another clear indication that there was improvement in performance after students learn to read through the intervention process. Lastly, from the tables above, 2 participants representing 13.33 percent scored 9-10 marks which happened to be the best marks in the test but none had 9-10 marks in the pre-test. It was also observed that pupils reading skills had improved.

#### **4.4 The Effectiveness of the Phonic Method in Teaching Reading**

**Research Question 3. How effective is the phonic approach in helping students overcome their reading difficulties?**

The researcher conducted pre-test and post-test to test pupils reading levels. Two different passages were used for this purpose.

#### 4.4.1 Analysis of pre-test results

Before the intervention stage, the researcher conducted a reading test to establish if pupils understood what was being read. A passage titled ‘‘Save the elephants’’ was used in conducting the pre-test. The students were directed to read the passage and answer 5 questions that followed the passage.

The table below is the results of the pre-test conducted before intervention.

**Table 4: Pre-Test Results**

Marks	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
1-2	7	46.67
3-4	6	40.00
5-6	2	13.33
7-8	0	0
9-10	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 reveals the results obtained during the pre-test. Students were presented with a passage from their class reader to read and answer 5 questions that follow. The following were the questions from the passage

1. How many species of elephants are there today?
2. What is the difference between African elephants that live in the forest and those that live on the savannah?
3. What is the height and weight of the African elephant bull?
4. Why are elephants herbivores?
5. Why are elephants endangered?

Each question carried 2 marks making a total of 10 marks. Out of the 15 participants who took part in the pre-test, 7 of them representing 46.67 scored 1-2 marks. This is a clear indication that pupils were unable to read the passage well since that very poor

performance. From table 4, 6 out of the 15 participants representing 40 percent scored 3-4 marks. These participants performed slightly better than the first group but still poor meaning they were also not able to read the passage well to obtain good marks. 2 of the participants scored 5-6 marks. Though this group performed slightly better, their performance was not impressive clearly indicating that they too had problems in reading the given text. The focus of reading is to be able to make meaning out of a printed or written materials. The researcher having done his observation during reading session thought it wise to include the reading achievement test to establish the veracity of the reading problems or difficulties among the pupils of Kolbure Primary School. The analysis clearly shows pupils had reading difficulties hence the researcher adopted an intervention strategy to assist pupils in this regard. The researcher relied heavily on the phonic method of teaching reading at the intervention stage which lasted from January to March, 2019 at Kolbure Primary School.

#### ***4.4.2 Analysis of post-test results***

After the researcher took participants through the interventional stage, he conducted another reading test to find out if there has been improvement in pupils reading abilities or not. The table below shows the results of the post-test

The table below is the results of the post-test conducted for participants after the intervention was done.

**Table 5: Analysis of the Post-test Results**

<b>Marks obtained by Students</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
1-2	0	0
3-4	0	0
5-6	4	26.67
7-8	9	60
9-10	2	13.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

From table 5, The researcher used a passage titled “Ananse and the King’s Wealth” for the post-test because he had used the passage for the pre-test with students during the intervention stage hence it would not be proper to use same passage that pupils had read many times. The following were the questions from the passage for post-test

1. What caused the famine in Anansekrom?
2. Why did the people think Ananse had a secret source of food?
3. Why was Ananse the worst affected by the famine in the beginning?
4. How did Ananse get to the strange cottage the first time?
5. Why did he go there the second time?

It is revealed that no participant scored marks from 1 – 4 which is a clear indication that participants actually improved in their reading ability. 4 of the participants representing 26.67 percent scored 5-6 marks. This is an improvement but not too good a result even after the intervention stage, the researcher believes that the phonic method may be the best approach in teaching reading but there are other equally disturbing causes of reading difficulties like unavailability of reading materials, lack of parental support among others that need to be taken care of alongside the phonic method. 9 participants representing 60 percent scored 7-8 marks. This is an indication that these pupils have improved on their reading tremendously which is an indication that the intervention

brought about immense improvement in reading. Only 2 of the participants representing 13.33 percent scored 9-10 marks which was considered the best result. There was improvement over the pre-test results. The best score in the pre-test was 5-6 marks but that of 5-6 is the least in the post-test results which is a clear indication that the intervention positively affected pupils reading.

#### ***4.4.3 Analysis on observation made after the intervention stage***

The researcher observed the participants reading abilities after the intervention stage. It was observed that 8 of the participants representing 53.33 percent could read the passage “Ananse and the King’s Wealth” with accuracy, fluency and the right pronunciation of words. They read with confidence and enthusiasm. The fact is that during the intervention stage, the researcher used drills and games in teaching the sounds of the letters so pupils were motivated to discover things for themselves. It was also observed that 7 of the participants representing 46.67 percent were also able to read the passage at appreciable level but were very slow in reading. There few instances of mispronunciation which did not impede reading. The researcher took care of words that were difficult to be taught using the phonics method and added them through the whole word approach. Words like could, should, two, once etc. were added as whole words as they do not follow a definite grapheme-phonemic pattern for easy blending.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The chapter presented and analysed data gathered. The results showed that the leading cause of reading inability of pupils in Kolbure Primary is the unavailability of reading materials followed by pupils lack of knowledge of the sounds of the English alphabet. It is also evident from the results that the phonic approach of teaching reading had had positive impact on the reading abilities of pupils.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the summary, conclusion and recommendations.

#### 5.2 Summary

This study was carried out to investigate reading difficulties among class six pupils of Kolbure primary school in Tempene District of the Upper East Region of Ghana.

The study sought to find answers to the following questions

1. What are the causes of reading difficulties among pupils of Kolbure primary school?
2. What are the effects of reading difficulties on academic performance of pupils?
3. How effective is the phonic approach in assisting pupils overcome their reading difficulties?

This study employed a qualitative research approach. A sample of 15 pupils out of 56 pupils of Kolbure primary school class six took part in the study. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants for the study.

The researcher used three different data collection instruments to gather data. They included observation, interview and test.

The observations made on classroom physical environment, availability of reading materials, how students approach the reading passages, use of English Language, age and sex of participants were all analysed under themes/paragraphs.

Findings on the interview were categorised in a tabular form and analysed. The test results were presented in a tabular form and analysed.



Through the interview conducted, the researcher discovered that the causes of reading difficulties included the following based on the order of the most common cause of reading difficulties to the least based on pupils, responses. Inadequate reading materials was seen as the most common cause of reading difficulties in Kolbure primary six as all 15 participants agreed they did not have reading materials. Poor knowledge of letter sounds was next. Poverty and poor reading habits were seen as the second and third causes of reading difficulties. Lack of support for reading at home and poor teaching methods were the least identified.

Findings on the observation indicated that the physical classroom environment was not attractive for learning. It was also observed that reading materials were unavailable in the school and pupils did not also have reading materials.

The researcher also observed that pupils reading abilities improved tremendously after the intervention was carried out. It was also found out from the observations that the girls performed slightly better than their male counterparts. Also, the younger ones picked concepts faster than the grownups.

The test carried out also indicated that pupils performance had improved in the post-test clearly showing that the phonic approach was effective in helping pupils to read.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Arising from the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations.

- Government through the Ministry of Education should provide all basic schools with reading materials

- Government and NGOs should engage in activities that will help alleviate poverty in remote communities like Kolbure.
- Teachers should incorporate phonics in the teaching of reading so learners would have knowledge of the sounds of the letters to aid them in reading.
- School environment should be made conducive for learning that is providing reading corners and well-painted classrooms.
- Teacher training institutions in Ghana should equip teachers to the method of teaching reading effectively.
- Teachers in primary schools should be given the necessary support to identify and teach learners with reading problems. This means school should provide teachers that support by organising productive workshops.
- The school authorities should liase with the PTA members to support their wards to read at home.
- Teaching reading using the phonic approach should start at the foundation level.

Eg kindergarten and primary one upwards.

- More workshops solely focusing on reading difficulties among primary school pupils should be conducted by the ministry of education to train teachers to cope with teaching reading effectively.
- Parents should be encouraged to enrol their wards at school at the right age that is 4 years olds.

- Teachers of Kolbure primary should use the phonic approach in teaching reading.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for Further Research**

The outcome of the study revealed that the phonic approach of teaching reading has positive results. The study was just done in one school so further research can be done in other schools outside Tempene District to test the effectiveness of the phonic method.

Also, further research can be done to establish the effects of the unavailability of reading materials on the reading abilities of pupils.

#### **5.5 Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it was noticed that the two biggest challenges to reading in Kolbure primary school were the unavailability of reading materials and pupils lack of knowledge of the sounds of the English alphabet. This indicates that pupils should be exposed to reading materials to help them learn to read. The other major setback was their lack of knowledge of the sounds of the English alphabet. The researcher used the phonic approach and it proved to be effective in teaching reading. The researcher proposes that the phonic approach should be incorporated in the teaching of reading.

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## APPENDIX A

### PRE-TEST PASSAGE

#### Save the Elephants

Elephants are very interesting- looking animals. There are only two species (kinds) of elephants today, the African Elephant and the Asian Elephant.

The African Elephant lives south of the Sahara Desert in Africa.

Some live in the forest while others live on the flat grasslands, called Savannas. The African elephants that live in the forest have a smaller body and tusks than those that live on the Savannas.

The African elephant, the largest land mammal in the world has a very intriguing body. African elephants males(bulls) can be of 13 feet tall and weigh 15,000 pounds. The females (cows) are smaller than the males.

The huge mammals have wrinkled grey skin which is almost hairless. They have large ears, long tusks made of ivory, a powerful trunk and four heavy legs. Each ear can be up to 5 feet long and is shaped like the continent of Africa. The ears hear well and could also be flapped to keep the mammal cool.

The trunk is an incredible organ with multiple uses. The elephant breath through two nostrils at the end of the trunk which is an extension of the nose. The trunk is also used to get water and food. To get water, the elephant sucks water into the trunk, then curls it towards the mouth and squirts the water into it. The trunk has two grasping extensions at the tip, which it uses like a hand. It breaks off branches from trees and shrubs with its trunk and brings food to its mouth.

The legs of the elephants are great straight pillars to support their bulky bodies. The feet are nearly round and pad-like to enable them stand for a long time without tiring. Elephants are herbivores. They eat mostly leaves and grasses. They also love sugarcane, bamboo shoots and ripe fruits, especially bananas and mangoes. Elephants may eat about 250kg of food and drink about 200 litres (90 gallons) of water a day.

Social life.

Elephants live together in families. The females live together tightly with the younger ones (calves), sisters, aunts and grandmothers the oldest female heads the family. The males and females only come together for mating. A female elephant(cow) gets pregnant for 20 to 22 months. It is the longest pregnancy for any animal. An elephant only has one calf at a time. The other cows in the family help to raise the calf. Male calves mature around the age of 14 and leave the family to live on their own. Elephants can live to be more than 60 years old. Elephants communicate with each other. They can hear sounds that are more than a mile away. They make low rumbling sounds that can be heard far away, and also make loud trumpeting sounds to warn or to greet elephants nearby. They sleep for 3 to 5 hours a night.

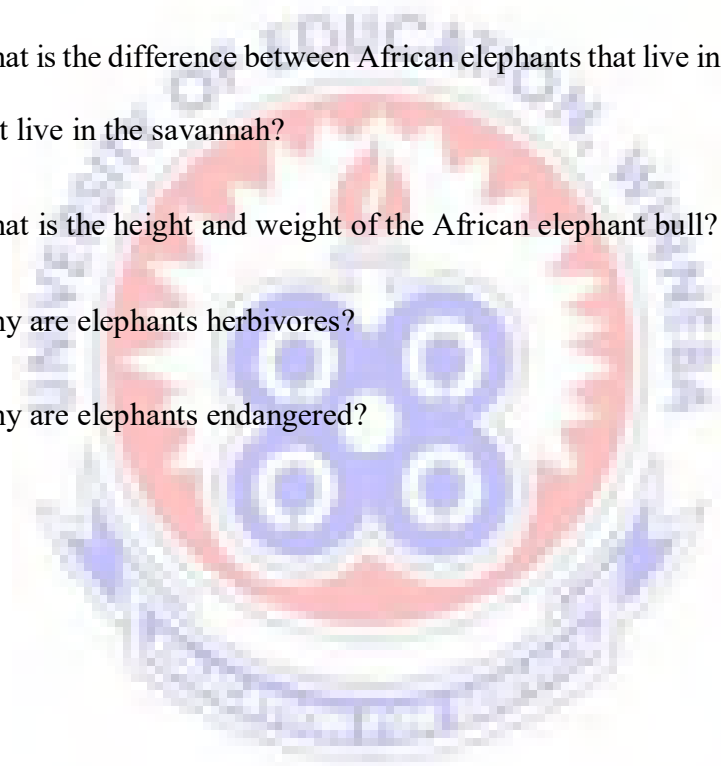
### **Are elephants endangered?**

Elephants have no natural predators besides man and occasionally lions (which attack weak adults weak adults and young ones individually). The population of elephants in the early 1900s was estimated at between 5 million and 10 million in the wild. The number has been decreasing so tremendously that they are now considered endangered. People have poached the animals for their ivory and meat. Due to their large body size, it is not easy for them to hide leaving them at more risk from poachers than other

animals. Destruction of forest and grasslands where they lived has also caused their number to dwindle.

In 1989, many countries took steps to protect elephants including banning ivory sales. In spite of all this, only about 5000 elephants live in the wild today. If tougher steps are not taken, it is feared elephants live in the wild today. If tougher steps are not taken, it is feared elephants would soon be extinct.

1. How many species of elephants are there today?
2. What is the difference between African elephants that live in the forest and those that live in the savannah?
3. What is the height and weight of the African elephant bull?
4. Why are elephants herbivores?
5. Why are elephants endangered?



PRE-TEST

① How many species of elephants are there today?

Ans 2 species ✓

② What is the difference between African elephants that live in the forest and those that live on the savannah?

Ans one is bald

③ What is the height and weight of the African elephants bull?

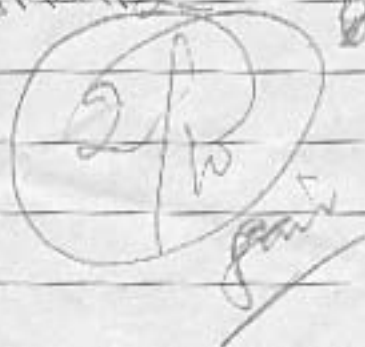
Ans 20 and 2 1/2

④ Why are elephants herbivores?

Ans eat plants and figs

⑤ Why are elephants endangered?

Ans they are small



1/4 H

1) How many species of elephants are there today?

ans: 2 species.

2) What is the difference between African elephants that live in the forest and those that live in the savannah?

ans: one is white.

3) What is height and weight of the African elephants?

ans: 20 and 25.

4) Why are elephants herbivores?

ans: they chop grass.

5) Why are elephants endangered?

They are big.

4/10

Jan

## APPENDIX B

### POST-TEST PASSAGE

#### **Ananse and the King's wealth**

A very long time ago, a severe famine hit Anansekrom. There had been no rain for years and as a result, all the rivers and streams were drying up. The crops farmers planted, were not doing well. No one had any more grain nor cereal in store.

The people were growing leaner and leaner. Everyone was disturbed and they feared they would soon be dying. But Ananse was not as disturbed as the others were rather growing fatter and fatter.

This made people suspicious. They thought Ananse had a secret source of food, but he always denied that. But he really had a secret.

A few months earlier, Ananse had been the worst affected by famine because he had only a little food in store. But it got so finished. He was so lazy that he always made small farms. When the little food he stored got finished, he had to go and look for food elsewhere for the survival of his family.

One day as he was looking for food in the forest, he found three palm kernels. He soon found a stone to crack them. He attempted to crack the first one and it went through a hole. He tried the next one and it did the same. "if this last one enters the hole, I will enter it to," he said. He tried cracking the last kernel and it also went through the hole.

Ananse hastily and angrily followed through the hole too. He came to a strange cottage all of a sudden. He was scared but he heard a voice behind him. He turned to see an old woman. "my child, no one comes here. Why are you here?", she asked. Ananse

narrated what he had gone through. The old woman directed him behind her cottage to pluck some leaves.

“don’t pluck those leaves that ask you to pluck them. Pluck only those that plead not to be plucked”, she directed. Ananse did just what the old woman directed him to do. The old woman asked him to go back with the leaves, and boil some anytime he wanted food. He thanked her and went away.

Ananse and his family fed on the leaves all that while so secretly that nobody knew about it.

The suspicion that Ananse had a secret source of food kept growing. While the other people grew leaner and leaner his family grew fatter and fatter. But Ananse never told anyone his secret. One day, the wise king knowing how greedy Ananse was, summoned everybody in the village. “you are all witness to what has bedevilled our land. There hasn’t been rain for years and all our water bodies are dry now. We’re growing leaner each day and there seems to be no hope at all. If we sit down and do nothing we would soon be dead. I have summoned you all here today to hear from you. Anyone who can think of a way to feed our people would get a very handsome reward. I, the great king of this land would divide all my wealth into two and give half to that person”, he said.

Ananse raised his hand and suggested that the king should give the people some time to think about it. Ananse did not sleep all night. He was thinking of how he could go to the old woman for more leaves. He desired the wealth of the great king.

The next day, Ananse set off for the forest. He took three palm kernels where he got some, the other time. He went to crack them near the hole. He tried the first one and it cracked. He pushed it away and tried the next one. It also cracked. He didn’t know what



to do because he feared the last one would also crack. He didn't try to crack that one but rather he pushed it through the hole. He then entered and went through the cottage.

The old woman asked him why he was there again and he said the same story he told the other day.

She directed him to go behind her cottage and pick some leaves. She cautioned him not to come there again.

Ananse, so obsessed with gaining the king's wealth, hurried behind the cottage and did not even listen to what the leaves shouted. He picked both those that said he should pick them and those that said he shouldn't pick them. He filled his sack and hurried home.

When Ananse got to Anansekrom, he went straight to the king and told him he could feed the whole village with the leaves. The king thought it was too good to be true so he made Ananse swear on his life. 'if it turns out to be a joke, you would be executed', he said to Ananse.

The king then summoned the whole village again and told them that Ananse was going to feed the village with his magical leaves. They waited with mixed feelings while Ananse boiled the leaves. After sometime, he confidently removed the lid of the saucepan thinking it had turned into food! But he was dismayed to realise the leaves had turned into gravels instead.

Everyone was disappointed and furious at Ananse. The king who was more furious ordered his executioners to put him to death. Ananse pleaded and pleaded for his life but the king had no mercy on him.

1. What caused the famine in Anansekrom?
2. Why did the people think Ananse had a secret source of food?

3. Why was Ananse the worst affected by the famine in the beginning?
4. How did Ananse get to the strange cottage the first time?
5. Why did he go there the second time?



POST TEST

Q What caused the famine in Anansehram?

ans. There was no rain.

Q. Why did the people think Ananse had a secret source of food?

ans. Ananse and his family were growing Fufu and Fufu.

Q. Why was Ananse the worst to be affected by the famine in the beginning?

ans. Ananse was lazy.

Q. How did Ananse get to the strange cottage the first time?

ans. Ananse followed the Palm Kernel's stream.

Q. Why did he go second time?

ans. He wanted the King's Share.

9/10  
Good  
J

1. What caused the famine in Anansekrom?

Ans: There was no rain. ✓

1

2. Why did the people think Ananse had a secret source of food?

Ans: Ananse and his family were growing fatter. ✓

3. Why was Ananse the worst to be affected by the famine in the beginning?

Ans: Ananse was lazy. ✓

4. How did Ananse get to the strange cottage the first time? ✓

Ans: Ananse followed the palm kernels into the hole. ✓

5. Why did he go there the ~~see~~ second time? ✓

Ans: Ananse wanted the king's wealth. ✓

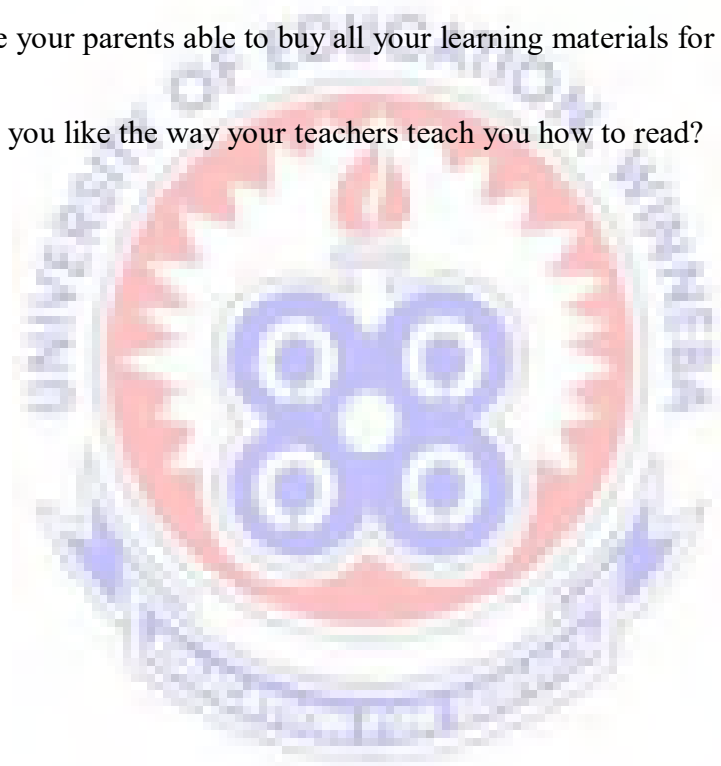
10/10

Excellent  
S

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you have reading books?
2. Who supports you to read at home?
3. Do you know the sounds of the letters of the alphabet?
4. Do you read at home?
5. Are your parents able to buy all your learning materials for you?
6. Do you like the way your teachers teach you how to read?



## APPENDIX D

### OBSERVATION GUIDE

1. Classroom physical environment

Furniture in the class

Reading corner

Classroom arrangement

Quality of classroom of paint, walls etc

2. Availability of reading materials

Books brought to school by pupils

Reading books available for use in class six

Other story books

3. How pupils read text

Are they fluent

How well do they pronounce

Fast or slow readers

4. Use of English

How often do pupils use English when they are in school

5. Sex of the participants

Whether there is difference in the performance between boys and girls

6. Age of participants

Observe the performance of both younger and older participant to see if there is any difference

