

**Optimising the Learning Environment for the Reception Year:  
The Experiences of Rural Grade R Teachers**M. J. Taole<sup>1</sup> and S. J. Mohapi<sup>2</sup>

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**ABSTRACT** The place of play in the education of young children has been the focus of much interest in the past years. Play is regarded as the leading form of development for the young children in Grade R. This article aims to explore the experiences of rural Grade R teachers when providing for play in their classrooms. The study employs qualitative design by using interviews. The participants were Grade R teachers in the Brits district in the North West Province and were identified through purposive sampling. The results showed that teachers are faced with numerous challenges when having to provide for play in their respective environments. Teachers are faced with multi-grade classrooms which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to teach learners through play. This article advocates in-service training which is based on play-oriented activities to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching Grade R despite limited space that they have.