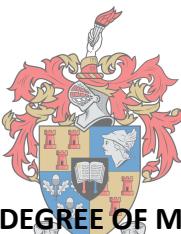


# **AN INVESTIGATION INTO PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND SERVICE PROVIDER IN AN EDUCATION DISTRICT.**

**BY**

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**DISSERTATION PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF CURRICULUM STUDIES IN  
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### **Declaration**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The role of partnerships between schools and service providers remains an important part of school improvement processes. In this study the role of the READ Education Trust in assisting teachers with the implementation of a Balanced Language Approach is explored and researched.

This study focuses on the experiences of the three partners, the READ facilitator, the curriculum advisor and the teachers from participating schools. The study looks at the factors promoting or hindering the success of the partnership and develops ideas based on the data produced for ways in which such partnerships might be improved and planned for more ‘successful’ interactions. The study is framed and interpreted within the Cultural Historical Activity Theory framework as it lends itself to the multiple dimensions of different activities within a system. Each partner is viewed as an activity system and the processes of interaction between the systems, what facilitates interactions and provides positive developments are recorded and discussed in terms of literature reviewed.

The three partners were investigated separately and data developed by way of interviews, questionnaires and document analysis (teacher lesson plans). Overall the partners show complimentary interactions that supported the intervention to improve language teaching. A well planned professional developed process which included new teaching ideas that were supported by materials were mentioned by teachers as an important factor in their own learning and professional development. The curriculum advisor and the READ facilitator cited interactions with teachers and between themselves as important sharing processes (boundary crossing) where new ideas, adaptations to materials and new approaches to teaching were developed (boundary objects) that promoted the objectives of the partnership mainly the implementation of the balanced language approach to language teaching.

Issues raised as barriers included lack of support at school level, the “exclusion” of school management teams in the partnership process, the lack of enthusiasm for the partnership demonstrated by school management teams. Another issue raised was the limited time the READ facilitator could spend in classrooms. Suggestions for further research include a form of cascade process to include more teachers at schools and a greater collaboration between neighbouring schools in order to extend the useful ideas and value of the partnership.

## OPSOMMING

Die rol van die vennootskap tussen skole en diensverskaffers bly n belangrike deel van skoolverbeteringdprosesse. Met hierdie studie word die rol van die READ – opvoedingstrust in die opleiding van onderwysers om die gebalanseerde taalmetode te implementeer, nagevors en bespreek.

Die studie focus op die ervarings van die drie vennote, die READ-fasilitaator, die kurrikulum adviseur en onderwysers by deelnemende skole. Die studie ondersoek die faktore wat die sukses van die vennootskap bevorder of verhinder en ontwikkel idees, gebassier op die data, oor how sulke vennootskappe verbeter kan word en beplan kan word ten ten einde meer suksesvolle interaksies te laat plaasvind. Die studie word volgens die teoretiese raamwerk van kultureel-historiese aktiwiteitsraamwerke gedoen, aangesien die verskillende dimensies van die vennootskap hierdeur gedek word en elke stelsel in die vennootskap hierdeur ingesluit word. Elke vennoot word as a aktiwiteitstelsel gesien en die interaksies tussen stelsels en wat dit bevorder en positiewe ontwikkelings wat mag geskied, word genotuleer en bespreek met die literatuurstudie as agtergrond.

Die drie vennote is onafhanklik ondersoek en data is ontwikkel deur onderhoude, vraelyste en document-analise ( onderwyser se lesplanne) te raadpleeg. Oor die algemeen het vennote komplimentere interaksies getoon wat die ingryping om taalonderwys te verbeter, ondersteun. Dit was 'n goedbeplande professionele ontwikkelingsprogram wat met leerondersteuningsmateriaal onderskraag is. Dit is as n belangrike factor in die leer-en onderrig van onderwysers geïdentifiseer. Die kurrikulumadviseur en die READ-fasilitaator het onderlinge interaksies met mekaar en met die onderwysers as belangrike grensoorskrydingsprosesse ( boundary crossing ) bestempel, wat nuwe idees, aanpassing van bronmateriaal en nuwe benaderings tot onderwys ontwikkel het ( boundary objects) wat die uitkomstes van die vennootskap , naamlik die implementering van die gebalanseerde taalonderrigbenadering bevorder het.

Kwessies wat as hindernisse geïdentifiseer is sluit in die tekort aan ondersteuning op skoolvlak en die uitsluiting van die skool se bestuurspan in die vennootskap. Ook die tekort aan entosiasme van die skool se bestuurspan in die vennootskap is genoem. 'n Verdere kwessie wat uitgesonder is, is gebrek aan tyd wat die READ faciliteerder in the klasse on deurbring. Voorstelle vir verder navorsing behels die insluiting van meer onderwysers by skole ( reeds ingesluit in die vennootskap), asook die feit dat daar beter verhoudinge met naburige skole ingestel word ,deur middle van 'n "cascade" proses om die goeie idees en waarde van die vennootskap uit te brei.

### **Acknowledgement**

I wish to thank my supervisor, Prof. C. Reddy, for sharing his wealth of knowledge and experience, and for the wisdom he showed in guiding me along this journey of discovery.

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Special thanks to my mentor, Fadli Wagiet, for his guidance and sincere interest in my studies.

Furthermore, I wish to thank my colleagues for advice and the support they provided during this research process.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this study to my late father, David Goliath, who emphasised the importance of achieving academic success, as well as my mother my 93-year-old mother for her love and care, always.

“May the pool of possibility in a child’s eyes, always be our motivation to teach them well.”

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ANA – Annual National Assessment

BLA – Balanced Language Approach

CA – Curriculum Advisor

CAPS – Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

CHAT – Cultural Historical Activity Theory

DBE – Department of Basic Education

FP – Foundation Phase

HOD – Head of Department

HL – Home Language

IP – Intermediate Phase

LITNUM – Literacy and Numeracy

LoLT – Language of Learning and Teaching

LTSM – Learning and Teaching Support Material

NCS – National Curriculum Statement

NGO – Non-governmental Organisation

NDP – National Development Plan

PIRLS – Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

PLC – Professional Learning Community

PSP – Primary Science Programme

SACMEQ – Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

SMT – School Management Team

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

WCED – Western Cape Education Department

## **Glossary**

## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

#### **1.1 Introduction to the Study**

The South African Constitution (1996) dictates the need for quality education for all. The principles of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS)<sup>1</sup> for schools is derived directly from the Constitution. (NCS, 2011) However, despite the education system undergoing radical changes since 1994, the political history of South Africa has impacted negatively on the quality of education in general (Naidoo, 2014). Two decades later we are still grappling with severe backlogs in various spheres of education.

The National Planning Commission was appointed to address these challenges to draft the National Development Plan (NDP), which set out South Africa's achievements and shortcomings since 1994. The paramount aim and responsibility of government outlined in the NDP is to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. The NDP outlines that South Africa can realise these goals by drawing on the energies of its people, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society. (NDP, 2011). The latter being significant to this study which is focused on a particular partnership.

The main focus in education since the change in government is to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to provide an equal opportunity for all regardless of race, religion or creed, and to develop the child holistically. This view is supported in the Chisholm (2011) review on challenges of South African schooling, where it is stated that classrooms in South Africa have become much more diverse than they were. Linguistic, race, class, culture and gender differences often compound the barriers to learning that learners face in classrooms daily.

The context of the school is seen as a key contributing factor to the quality of education. This is well articulated in the work of Van der Berg (2015). The data produced indicates that the results of the analysis of performance across grades show a clear learning gap between children from advantaged and non-advantaged backgrounds, that is already wide by grade 4.

The issue of language, literacy and reading is a contentious issue in South Africa. Experts in the field of language development and educational reform, such as Alexander (2004) state that a few futile attempts have been made to put forward ideological and politically “neutral” theories of language planning, but that these ends are seldom articulated and the impression is created that all that matters is the correct procedure of interventions. Naidoo

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<sup>1</sup> This was the curriculum mandated for schools at the time of the commencement of the project. It has subsequently changed to Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS).

et al (2014) elaborates that in terms of the National DoE language policy, learners should receive instruction in their home language from Grades 1 to 3, while, from Grades 4 to 12 the medium of instruction is English or Afrikaans. Naidoo (2014) argues that South Africa is a developing country and as such, learners who are not adequately competent in the language of instruction, different to their mother tongue, will experience barriers to learning.

Although the study of Alexander (2004) confirms that language of instruction is an important contributor to the academic performance of a learner, it is not the main contributor. The challenge in South Africa is compounded by many factors. Alexander (2004) states that factors such as community – and home – level poverty, weak school functionality, weak instructional practices, inadequate teacher subject knowledge, and a need for greater accountability throughout the school system all represent much more severe constraints to achieve better education. These factors have placed South Africa in an unfavourable position. South Africa is facing a crisis as several tests both internationally and nationally, such as the PIRLS, SACMEQ and ANA tests, are indicating that South Africa is operating far below the required level in language performance. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) data show that South Africa is scoring poorly in literacy tests. The International PIRLS 2006 assessment measures learners' reading achievement based on a variety of literary and informational reading passages. South African learners achieved the lowest score of the 45 participating countries. The South African Grade 5 learners did not reach the international average score of 500 (Howie, 2006)

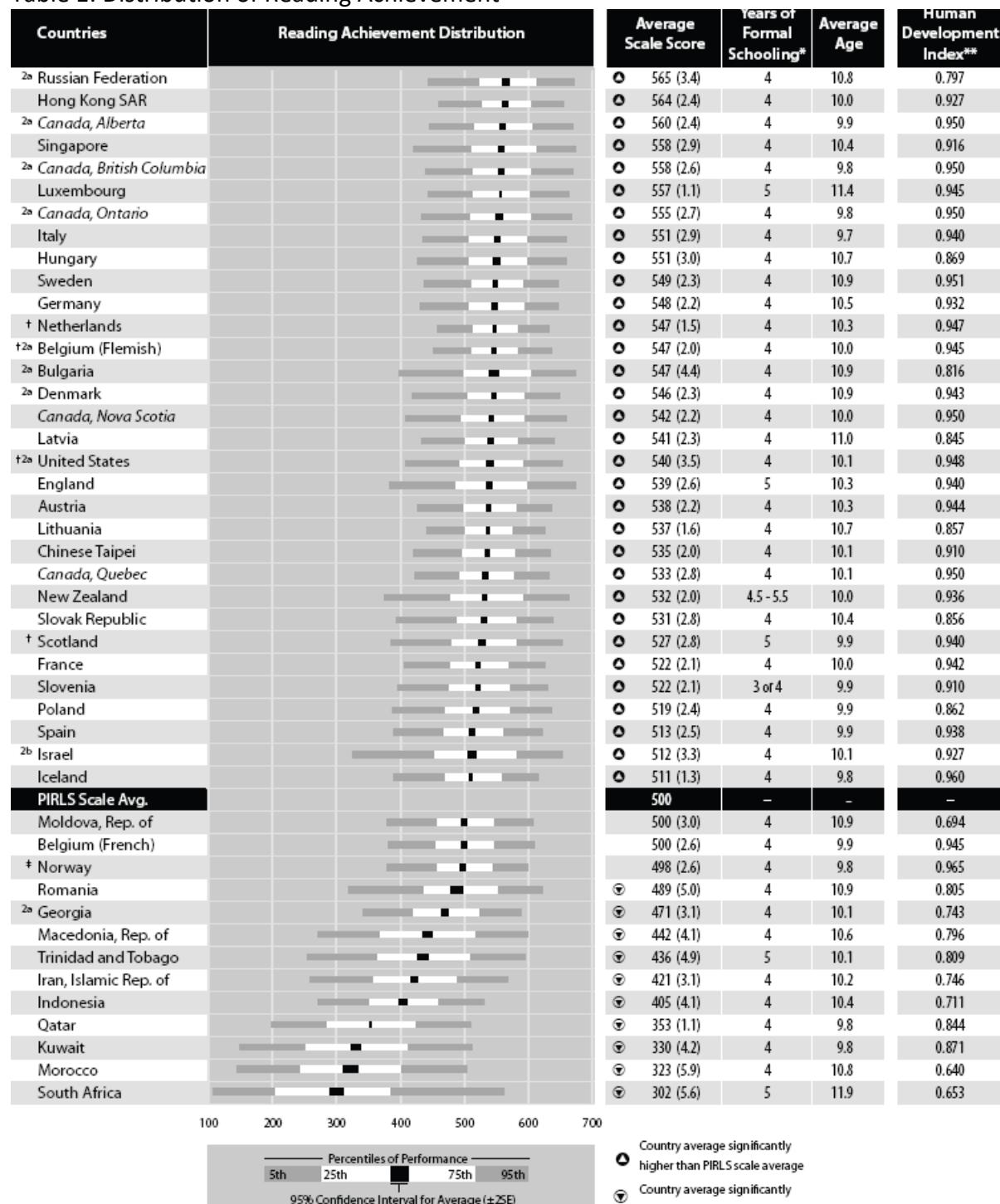
Similarly, the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality – SACMEQ 2000 and 2007 – Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (Grade 6 numeracy and literacy) SACMEQ II (2000) and SACMEQ III (2007) showed that there was no improvement in South African Grade 6 literacy or numeracy performance over the seven-year period. Given that 13 other African countries also participated, it is possible to compare the achievement levels of South African Grade Six children with other Grade Six children on the continent. (Spaull, 2013a)

Spaull (2013b) states in his report entitled "SA Education Crisis" that in the SACMEQ (2007) test South African pupils ranked 10th of the 14 education systems, 2<sup>nd</sup> for reading and 8<sup>th</sup> for mathematics, behind much poorer countries such as Tanzania, Kenya and Swaziland. The study found that 27 per cent of South African Grade 6 pupils were illiterate, since they could not read a short and simple text and extract its meaning, with the proportion varying significantly by province: half (49 per cent) of all Grade 6 pupils in Limpopo were illiterate, while only 5 per cent of pupils in the Western Cape were thus classified.

Table 1 below, which is taken from the PIRLS summary Report, presents the distributions of achievement results of all 45 education systems in the country column. The participants are listed in descending order of average reading achievement. An average of 500 points with a standard deviation of 100 points was obtained through the use of Item Response Theory

scaling and the participants' achievement is depicted relative to this international mean. The figure shows the ranges in performance for the middle half of the learners (25<sup>th</sup> to 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles) and the extremes (5<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentiles). By the fourth year of schooling, albeit to differing degrees, every participating country in PIRLS 2006 had a percentage of learners who were good readers and also a percentage of learners who exhibited difficulties in reading. Approximately a 250-point difference existed in a majority of countries between the lowest and highest achievers (5<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentiles). According to Mullis et al. (2007, p. 38), "the range in achievement in most countries is comparable to the difference in average achievement (263 points) between the highest performing country, the Russian Federation, and the lowest performing country, South Africa". (Howie, 2006)

Table 1: Distribution of Reading Achievement



\* Represents years of schooling counting from the first year of ISCED level 1.

\*\* Taken from United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report 2006*, p. 283-286, except for Chinese Taipei taken from Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan, R.O.C. *Statistical Yearbook 2005*. Data for Belgium (Flemish) and Belgium (French) are for the entire country of Belgium. Data for England and Scotland are for the United Kingdom.

+ Met guidelines for sample participation rates only after replacement schools were included (see Exhibit A.7).

‡ Nearly satisfying guidelines for sample participation rates after replacement schools were included (see Exhibit A.7).

2a National Defined Population covers less than 95% of National Desired Population (see Exhibit A.4).

2b National Defined Population covers less than 80% of National Desired Population (see Exhibit A.4).

( ) Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent.

NOTE: See Exhibit C.1 for percentiles of achievement in reading.

(Howie - PIRLS Summary report, 2006)

Based on these poor results, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) announced 12 development priorities in 2010. The first priority is improving the quality of basic education. It is widely recognised that the country's schooling system performs far below its potential and that improving basic education outcomes is a prerequisite for the country's long-range development goals (ANA summary report, 2011).

The Annual National Assessments (ANA) is a direct response to these concerns. The main purpose of the ANA programme is to make a decisive contribution towards better learning in schools (ANA summary report, 2011). It would furthermore be used to measure the impact of Interventions to improve literacy and numeracy results. To date the literacy results for Grade 6 was 27% in 2012 and 43% in 2014. Although there has been an improvement, we are still far from the 50% mark. (ANA summary report, 2011)

The ANA summary report (2011) highlights the fact that the majority of learners in the Intermediate Phase are not able to read with understanding, nor are they able to write coherent sentences.

Table 2: ANA Home Language pass rates in Grades 3, 6 and 9 (2012 – 2014)

Grades	2012		2013		2014	
	WCED HL	National HL	WCED HL	National HL	WCED HL	National HL
Grade 3	67.4%	56.6%	54.9%	57%	64.2%	56.5%
Grade 6	50.4%	38.7%	76.7%	67.6%	79.9%	74.6%
Grade 9	47.4%	38.9%	46.3%	37%	44.3%	47.8%

(Source: WCED – Language Strategy, 2015)

The WCED Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, also known as the LITNUM strategy, which was implemented in 2006 and strengthened in 2015 aims to improve learner performance in Language and Mathematics by 2019. This was intended to improve Literacy and Numeracy and the WCED instituted the external systemic test to provide valuable data on learner performance in the various categories. The Home Language (HL) and Mathematics systemic tests are set, administered and marked externally. Test results for Grade 3 indicate a steady increase in the pass rate over the period 2012 – 2014. In Grade 6 an irregular pass rate can be observed. From 2012 to 2013 there was a drop in the pass rate of nearly 7%, which was followed by an increase of nearly 8% in 2014. The pass rate from 2012 to 2014 in Grade 9 is characterised by a slow but definite decrease (WCED – Language Strategy, 2015).

Table 3: WCED Systemic Test results for Grade 3, 6 and 9 (2012 – 2014)

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
Grade 3	38.9%	37%	42.4%
Grade 6	36.9%	30%	37.9%
Grade 9	48.2%	48%	47.6%

(Source: WCED – Language Strategy, 2015)

According to the summary report of the WCED systemic test for districts, the majority of learners are struggling to read with comprehension, and are unable to write at the appropriate levels. (Cornelissen, 2011)

The information gained from appointing an external service provider (JET Education Services) to measure learner performance has led to even greater concerns about the dismal situation South Africa finds itself in. The poor performance of South African schools compared to those in both developed and developing countries has been established at primary level in Mathematics and reading (Taylor, 2008). Spaull (2013b) states that it will become increasingly clear that the weight of evidence supports the conclusion that there is an on-going crisis in South African education, and that the current system is failing the majority of South Africa's youth. The variety of independently conducted assessments of pupil achievement mentioned in the report shows that – with the exception of a wealthy minority – most South African pupils cannot read or write, with large proportions being functionally illiterate and innumerate.

The data outlined above, clearly indicates that an alternative way needs to be sought to address the weak language results. A language intervention structured to improve teaching and learning is desperately required. The urgency of the crisis warrants the adoption of a different approach, which will include additional partners to assist with classroom teaching and learning.

Based on the evidence provided, South African schools are in dire need to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and assistance needs to be directed towards supporting schools. The summary report of the Centre for Development and Enterprise formulated by Patrinos (2009), "Informing South African Education Policy", comments that the only way to improve the quality and the quantity of instruction in the classroom is through gainful partnerships, both through government and non-government entities.

To this end, curriculum services both nationally and provincially have a key role to play in delivering the effective implementation of the curriculum. To support interventions, Metropole South Education District (MSED) has been proactive in spearheading and forming collaborative partnerships with universities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private companies. Examples of such NGO's are the Zenex Foundation, Primary Science

Programme (PSP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and WordWorks and later READ. Various researchers are in agreement that partnerships have an important role to play in education. A deeper insight into the roles and responsibilities of the NGO's, the district office and teachers will be discussed in the literature review.

The need for schools and districts is thus to build stronger partnerships with NGO's. According to Richmond (1996), partnership building has become a vehicle for a massive restructuring of the curriculum at all precollege levels, as well as for the professional development of teachers. In education, partnerships are often described as relationships between interested groups in order to develop successful strategies and increase the chances of success in various processes. In brief, Richmond (1996) indicates that for partnerships to be successful, what is achieved in the collaboration must be greater than what any of the members of the partnership could have accomplished individually. She adds that partners have a significant commitment to using their expertise along with that of others to enhance teaching and learning.

Given the evidence the weak and unacceptably low literacy results outlined above, the route to addressing the problem was to forge partnerships between a service provider and the schools in collaboration with the Metropole South Education District.

## **1.2 Why the Language intervention?**

The dismal performance of learners in aforementioned tests as previously stated, the results of South African and Western Cape learners in South African and international Language tests suggest that the majority of learners in Western Cape schools are not reading and writing at appropriate levels (target of 60% as stated above). The result of the Annual National Assessments (ANA) language tests, the WCED systemic tests, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) all suggest under-performance in languages.

While there have been some recent improvements in learner outcomes, as well as some important policy innovations, the picture that emerges time and again is both dire and consistent: however, one chooses to measure learner performance, and at whichever grade one chooses to test, the vast majority of South African learners are significantly below where they should be in terms of the curriculum, and more generally, have not reached a host of normal numeracy and literacy milestones. There are without doubt several factors contributing to the crisis, which thus requires a focused intervention. (Spaull,2013b) factors related to teacher motivation and the ability of the teacher to convey their subject knowledge that may better capture what makes a 'good' teacher. Thus, it would seem that the ability to teach students well at the Grade 6 level is not very dependent on subject knowledge, but perhaps more on the teacher's ability to convey that subject knowledge meaningfully and constructively. (Spaull, 2013b)

The indicators of a nation in distress with regards to the poor literacy results warrant a plan of action by provincial education departments. The reading intervention was spearheaded by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) as a province-wide strategy to improve the literacy results in the province. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to implement a focused approach to effectively improve classroom practice and more specifically the teaching of literacy.

It is evident through the various initiatives instituted by WCED that language improvement along with Mathematics will receive due attention. Below, is an outline of the teacher training as set out in the WCED Annual Performance plan.

Table 4: Western Cape Education Department Goals

<b>Improved Literacy and Numeracy in Primary Schools1</b>	
Goal statement 1	<p>Literacy and Numeracy performance to improve so that: 40% of learners in Grade 3 perform in Language according to age norms by 2014 and 60% perform according to age norms for Mathematics. 40% of learners in Grade 6 perform in Language according to age norms by 2014 and 50% perform according to age norms for Mathematics. 55% of learners in Grade 9 perform in Language according to age norms by 2014 and 20% perform according to age norms for Mathematics. Scores to be tracked by means of annual testing and interventions to be adjusted accordingly.</p>

(WCED, Annual Performance Plan, 2012)

The plan for the period 2010-2014 lay the foundation for solid improvements in learner performance in the period that would follow in 2014-2019, during which period learners will have the opportunity to be educated within a system that has been designed and managed to deliver on the targets set. (WCED, Annual Performance Plan, 2012)

### 1.3 Reason for new innovation

It is becoming overwhelmingly clear that based on the variety of learning opportunities required in Language, there needs to be a strategy formulated to assist teachers to close the gaps in learners' abilities in the Intermediate Phase (IP). Naidoo (2014) stresses that there is an urgent need to improve reading in order to encourage and improve the confidence of learners, although he notes that it is also apparent that most educators have no previous training on how to teach reading.

Barajas (2000) raises awareness of the fact that education currently faces a period of transition in which old paradigms are being replaced by new ones. Whereas the old paradigm is based on the concept of knowledge transfer (knowledge from person A to be transmitted to person B), the new paradigm relies more on constructivist principles. Within

the context of new educational paradigms, the new functions can be characterised by the shift from traditional teaching as a content provider and "transmitter" towards a mentor guiding and supporting learners through the process of knowledge acquisition. In an open learning environment, learning can be largely directed by the learners themselves

Another reason why the Language intervention is needed is addressed in the National Reading Strategy (2008) where it is stated that learners' language competence affects their performance in all subjects, at all grades. Poor language competence limits conceptual development. If *reading* competence is poor, then learners' *writing* competence will be poor, and their *comprehension* (understanding) levels will equally be poor. Why don't teachers raise the standards? The problem is that most teachers who are teaching beyond the Foundation Phase (FP) are not trained to teach basic reading. Teachers don't know how to help struggling readers. Language "mismatches" make the problem worse: the language of home and school do not match in many cases; the language of the resources at school, e.g. books, posters, generally do not match the home language of the learner. To compound this problem, many teachers in South Africa have an under-developed understanding of how to teach literacy, reading and writing. Many teachers also simply don't know how to teach reading. Too often teachers know only one method of teaching reading, which may not suit the learning styles of all learners. Teachers don't know how to stimulate reading inside and outside the classroom (National Reading Strategy, DBE, 2008).

A methodology which incorporates all the language components is required, as teachers mostly employ one method with not much knowledge of others. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) takes as its starting point the same position as the International Reading Association which states that: "There is no single method or single combination of methods that can successfully teach all children to read. Therefore, teachers must have a strong knowledge of multiple methods for teaching reading and a strong knowledge of the children in their care so they can create the appropriate balance of methods needed for the children they teach." (National Reading Strategy, DBE, 2008, p.9)

An area which warrants a closer look is the importance of what happens in the classroom. Teachers need a different way to engage learners. According to Muller and Roberts (2000) it is the classroom rather than the school that is regarded increasingly as the primary institutional site. Furthermore, Hayes et al (2006) endorses this view that inherent in school improvement is the upgrading of teacher quality through a focus on classroom, school and system-level reform.

There is a need to improve the teachers' level of language teaching. A study by Uys et al (2007) found that teachers were often aware of their inability to meet language-related needs of their learners. They not only lacked knowledge and skills for teaching language, but could also not identify strategies to promote effective teaching.

Based on the above accounts of areas of need in language teaching, a new innovation is needed to develop the teachers' understanding of how to teach effectively as well as what

needs to be done to assist learners. At the moment these concepts are not grounded, especially in the Intermediate Phase (IP).

#### **1.4 Description of the READ Programme**

Read Educational Trust is a South African NGO that operates broadly in the education and literacy sectors, specifically in educator training and the provision of school resources (READ Capability Statement).

Established in 1979 and funded by both local and foreign donors as well as the private sector, READ works alongside the Department of Education to implement teacher training and literacy projects in schools. The READ Educational Trust provides this focused Balanced Language Approach Training opportunity (READ Capability Statement).

READ is committed to helping develop the skills of South African teachers in the field of literacy and language education. Research has provided READ with strategies to apply to solve the education crisis, working in cooperation with the public and private sector, unions and the community at large. As a learning organisation, READ works with external evaluators to assess the READ offering, and to improve capacity where possible (READ Capability Statement).

READ operates primarily as an educator development agency in the fields of language, literacy and communication, and is a leader in educational assessment, materials development and resource provision. The READ programme supports the implementation of the Western Cape Education Department's (WCED) Literacy Strategy and Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), offering teachers a five-day training course on The Balanced Language Approach (BLA) during the June-July school holidays. This is followed by a year of classroom support and afternoon tutorial sessions. The latter focus on reflective processes, sharing good practice and 'filling gaps'.

Language teachers from Grades 1 to 6 are the core group targeted, but any other teachers are welcome to attend tutorial sessions. Phase 3 (Cycle 1) schools joined the literacy segment of the project in July 2013 and teachers participated in the five-day training session held during the mid-year holidays. Sustainability is an essential component of the intervention and when schools have completed their one-year cycle with READ, support and input are taken over by WCED officials in the Districts.

Colourful and relevant resources for each classroom have been supplied by the WCED and teachers have also received manuals, methodology handbooks and DVDs to assist with implementation.

As noted in the READ – Language Course Teacher Training Manual (2009) there are no universal definitions of literacy, but most educationalists agree that literacy is about

comprehension, communication and making meaning. To do this, individuals use different components of their language system. These components are reading, writing, speaking and listening.

This approach, known as the whole language approach is advocated and shared at the teacher training sessions in this partnership. This approach is what teachers would develop as a “new” way of doing. This was the aim of the development programme enabled through the partnership. Essentially new approaches to language teaching would then involve new competences for teachers, which can be seen as a professional development process for the teachers in the partnership.

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The process which is followed by the Read Educational Trust by providing teachers with training in the Balanced Language Approach (BLA) involves taking teachers through the details of all 8 Balanced Language Approaches. The 5-day session entails in-depth training and teachers are immersed in a functional, well-resourced classroom. The training involves explaining how learners learn to read, the importance of sounds and phonics, and highlights the comprehension strategies. All this is done in an interactive way, where facilitators demonstrate how each methodology is implemented. Teachers are given an opportunity to discuss and practise each methodology. DVDs are used to showcase an actual classroom scenario (READ Integrating Language Methodology handbook).

## **1.5 Description of the Balanced Language Approach**

The services of READ Education Trust, who are forerunners in the field of the Balanced Language Approach (BLA), were thought to be suitable to help bring about a change in the effective implementation of literacy strategies.

In the READ programme there are two main approaches to teaching reading. The first is the phonics or “skills-based” approach, where reading is seen as a structured process of sequenced and separate skills. The phonics approach emphasises the teaching of skills from simple to more complex – often represented as the “bottom-up” approach.

The second is the whole language approach, which emphasises that reading skills cannot be taught in a specific sequence, because reading involves a number of skills used at the same time. The whole language approach emphasises that reading begins in the brain of the

reader and then moves down to the text, known as “top-down” approach (READ – Language Course Teacher Training Manual, 2009).

The Balanced Language Approach as stipulated in the READ handbook focuses on language intervention by helping learners access the three areas of knowledge they need to be taught specific reading and writing strategies, for example,

- Using prior knowledge (semantic knowledge);
- Reading with understanding (semantic, grapho-phonic and syntactic knowledge);
- Sounding out words/looking at word structure (grapho-phonic knowledge);
- Fluent reading of sentences (syntactic knowledge).

The Writing strategies to be used are as follows:

- Using correct spelling and language structures;
- Knowing about different types/genres of writing;
- Knowing about the writing process, e.g. editing and refining writing  
(READ Integrated Language Course Handbook, 2012)

The training process is rolled out to schools as described below.

The WCED has embarked on an 8-year training and support plan to support literacy and numeracy development, which is foundational to the CAPS. This programme for teachers in Grades 1 – 6, provided by expert service providers, started in 2009 (Table 5).

Table 5: The implementation plan - WCED

Year 1 (2009): first 250 schools	Group 1 (125 schools) Numeracy Training in June holiday Group 2 (125 schools) Literacy Training in June holiday School-based support (250 schools) Readers and LTSM (250 schools)
Year 2 (2010): first 250 schools in a second year of training	Group 1 (125 schools) Literacy Training in June holiday Group 2 (125 schools) Numeracy Training in June holiday School-based support (250 schools) Readers and LTSM (250 schools)
Year 3 (2011): second 250 schools	Group 3 (125 schools) Numeracy Training in June holiday Group 4 (125 schools) Literacy Training in June holiday School-based support (250 schools)

	Readers and LTSM (250 schools)
Year 4 (2012): second 250 schools, in a second year of training	Group 3 (125 schools) Literacy Training in June holiday Group 4 (125 schools) Numeracy Training in June holiday School-based support (250 schools) Readers and LTSM (250 schools)
This pattern will be repeated for years 5 to 8, i.e. between 2013 and 2016, so that all primary schools are trained and are supported with reading schemes and materials within a period of 8 years.	

(Source: WCED Annual Performance Plan 2012 – 2015)

The title of my study is an investigation into the Partnership between schools and READ the service-provider in an education district. The study population is 5 Intermediate Phase (IP) teachers from 5 schools in the Metropole South Education district. These schools were part of the phase two cohort of schools that received training from the READ Educational Trust. The teachers who have been supported by the service provider for the year now have the task of implementing the new Balanced Language Approach. The training model includes a week-long intensive training session, where the various methodologies are explained and demonstrated to them. After that the service provider supports teachers at their schools for a year. This training model is unique in the sense that it is, unlike so many other partnerships, not a once-off workshop, but a carefully orchestrated week-long session, followed by a year-long on-site training. Many teachers have gone through a similar process, but for the sake of this study a sample will be taken to assess how the partnership has been experienced by the role players.

## 1.6 Reason for this study

As with any effective intervention it is always interesting to hear the experiences of participants after the completion of the process. It would be beneficial to gain insight into what worked and what did not work well within this partnership between READ as the service provider, the teachers and curriculum advisors who were involved. The focus of the study is to investigate how the three partners experienced the partnership.

The teachers all experienced the same training model, but they came from different contexts and had different levels of understanding. A further reason why I am embarking on this study is to investigate the teacher engagement with the READ Literacy intervention. It would also be useful to see the level of participation by teacher, and how the READ facilitator and curriculum advisor experienced the interactions with teachers. The study wanted to see whether this partnership has brought about a change in the classroom practice of teachers, in particular the gains made in the field of Language teaching. This means it either promoted or hindered teachers' classroom practice of the language

methodologies. This field has always interested me professionally and it would be useful to see how the partners experienced the partnership.

It would be very useful to cast a light on the experiences of a sample group of the cohort of teachers who have undergone these teacher training sessions. It is about how partners (Read facilitator, curriculum advisor and teachers) experienced the partnership, what they felt were important and, most importantly, what they found to be valuable.

The research will be most useful for planned partnerships in the future. Education districts will be able to examine and evaluate the data which could assist future partnership planning and guide similar studies.

### **1.7 Aims and objectives – research question**

Which factors promote and which factors inhibit partnership operations between READ, and participating schools in Metropole South Education District?

#### **Sub-questions:**

- 1) What are teachers' experiences of the partnership?
- 2) What are the experiences of the service provider within the partnership?
- 3) What are the experiences of the curriculum advisors in the partnership?

The object of the enquiry is the partnership. Attention was focused on how the three partners experienced their involvement in the partnership. All questions are thus geared towards understanding the partnership.

### **1.8 Methodological perspective**

The paradigm most suitable for this study to generate information is the interpretivist approach. The reason for selecting this approach is that its central task is to empathise and understand. Babbie and Mouton (2001) suggest that the phenomenological / interpretivist tradition emphasises that all human beings are engaged in the process of making sense of their worlds. We continuously interpret, create and give meaning to define, justify and rationalise our actions.

This approach will be best suited to gaining insight into the actual accomplishments, challenges and frustrations of teachers regarding the impact of the partnership and more specifically the level of implementation in the classroom. A qualitative research methodology will be employed to accommodate the exploratory nature of the study. Patton (1990) adds that the key to understanding qualitative research lies in the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. Drawing from the work

of Hess-Bieber and Leavy (2004), qualitative questions tend to be open-ended, encouraging respondents to emphasise what they feel is important.

I frame the data production in terms of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) as a model of process and structure. This will be discussed in detail later (Chapters 2 and 5).

The data collection will be done through multiple methods to enhance the validity of the findings. The qualitative methods I will include are observations, interviews and document analysis. The research instruments will be in questionnaire format. The first questionnaire consists of structured questions to obtain biographical data from participants. This questionnaire will give teachers an opportunity to provide information such as teaching experience about classes and subjects taught, and the social context of the school. The second interaction is an unstructured interview to gauge the teachers' as well as the curriculum advisor and READ facilitator's experiences of the partnership process. Questions will be open-ended to give the respondents an opportunity to answer questions in a manner they feel would do justice to their lived experiences. According to Reja et al. (2003), open-ended and close-ended questions differ in several respects, especially as regards the role of respondents when answering such questions. Close-ended questions limit the respondent to the set of alternatives being offered, while open-ended questions allow the respondent to express an opinion without being influenced by the researcher.

The scope of the study covers the partnership between schools in an education district and READ, a service provider to the Western Cape Education Department. Only selected schools which have received their training in literacy from June 2011 to June 2012 will form part of study. Participants are Intermediate Phase teachers from 5 Primary Schools. All these schools received training in literacy strategies from READ from June 2011 to June 2012. The most important subject to be focused on is Language. A total number of 5 teachers will take part in study. Mainly Grade 6 teachers will be included in the study. The schools are from diverse contexts in an educational district. Sampling was purposefully done to include schools with diverse multilingual and economic settings. The participants included the facilitators working in the schools, the affected teachers who received training and the subject advisors working in these schools.

## 1.9 Chapter outline

Chapter 1 – Overview of the study

Chapter 2 – Literature review

Chapter 3 – Research methodology

Chapter 4 – Presentation of data

Chapter 5 – Analysis and discussion of findings

Chapter 6 – Concluding comments and recommendations

Partnering with schools is becoming more prominent. This study is a necessary one as it will shed light on aspects which come to the fore when teachers and other partners cross boundaries to improve language teaching. The research aims to show to what extent partnerships are adding value to teaching and learning. This research study attempts to gauge whether it has been a gainful experience. The study looks at the factors promoting and hindering the partnership process. The kernel of success should always be how the partners experienced the partnership.

This study is focused on a partnership between The READ Education Trust and schools in an Education District. The experiences of the partners form the core data and is used to determine the important aspects of this partnership.

It is important to state at the outset that even though I am based at the district office, my role in this study is as external researcher and not the participating curriculum advisor.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The challenges the South African education system is facing is partly evidenced in the poor literacy levels learners are achieving when measured against other countries. This is a challenge that speaks to, amongst other things, the teacher's capacity to implement the curriculum and ensure that learning is taking place. This requires a certain level of understanding of effective teaching methodologies. Partnerships between schools and an external service provider are globally viewed as a successful way to address and improve classroom practices in various subjects particularly in language teaching. In this study the partnership between a service provider and schools in an education metropole (district) is investigated.

This literature review examines research done in the field of partnerships in education in general, partnerships between education districts, schools and external service providers. These studies are valuable as they shed light on possible similarities or contradictions to what this research reveals and serves to inform interpretation of the data. This literature review will cover the various contributions made by researchers by looking at how they define partnerships and indicate their importance for teacher practices. Furthermore, this literature review will summarise the findings of studies on the successes and challenges of partnerships.

The review includes research done by other practitioners in the field of activity theory and in particular on boundary crossing, as this is the theory which underpins my research study. The review will also explore the concepts guiding my study, and the factors contributing to or hindering partnerships. The specific research question which this literature review will help to define is primarily what the experiences of the facilitator of the service provider, the teachers and the subject advisors were in the partnership process.

Peters (2002) points out there is a need for on-going research into how to improve collaboration in education settings. This view is supported by Sealy et al. (in Peters, 2002), who mention that much remains to be learned about the nature of partnerships in the school's context, about the respective roles of partners, and the conditions which lead to the most effective and productive partnerships. Silbert et al (2015) states that within the post-1994 South African context there have been numerous partnership-based interventions that have sought to redress the inequalities inherent in schools. Most of the partnerships were with agencies outside of school which are commonly referred to as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's). Pivotal to this study is the role of the three partners, the service provider/NGO, the district and the teachers.

## 2.2 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) – a review of local partnerships in Metropole South Education District

Non-governmental agencies essentially represent organisations that provide resources for development programmes and have played important roles in Education transformation and development in South Africa, both at national and local levels. Literature on the role of NGO's reveals the value of their work and according to Volmink and van der Elst (2017), NGOs play an important role in developing countries. Governments often lack capacity, while NGO services are well placed, given their freedom to innovate, to test new approaches to persistent social challenges. NGO's serve as a conduit for financial assistance from developing countries in many cases. This means that where the government has a positive social agenda, and where NGOs are effective, there is potential for collaborative and synergistic relationships between government and civil society organizations. However, Volmink and van der Elst (2017) warn that this is not always the case, as in some cases, the relationship can be one of mistrust.

In South Africa the role of NGO's is further highlighted by the National Education Department and is aligned to the National Development Programme (NDP). The NDP positions NGOs as legitimate and responsible partners, which alongside other role-players are collectively tasked with advancing the country's shared developmental goals of reducing inequality. In line with the South African landscape, the literature on partnerships between NGO's, the district office and schools, are well documented and some examples are discussed below.

A prominent NGO in educational reform in South Africa is the Zenex Foundation. This foundation is an independent trust established in 1995 to deliver programmes and projects in Mathematics, Science and Language education in South Africa. The foundation operates on the basis of strong partnerships with stakeholders, including education departments, districts, higher education institutions, researchers and schools that share the vision of skilled and empowered young people who can contribute towards the growth and development of South Africa.

In 2007, the Zenex Foundation launched an initiative to impact school improvement. The project was rolled out from 2010 to 2011 and the main goal of the initiative was defined as increasing learner success in particularly English and mathematics and Further Education and Training band (FET) Science. The partnership was spread across 5 provinces, 24 secondary and 50 primary schools. It included a variety of domains such as Gr. R, Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and FET.

The evaluation report showed a change in classroom practices, in particular related reading and writing. There was a change in teacher's practices, providing more reading and writing exercises required to be done by learners. There were also improvements noted in teachers managing the numeracy curriculum as the data indicated that they were teaching the relevant lesson content at the appropriate grade level. The resources supplied to the

partnership to the project were used by both teachers and learners which was another positive factor in the process. The evaluation demonstrated some significant and strong correlations between improved writing practices in the classroom and learner performance as measured in the number of workbook exercises. Furthermore, there were positive shifts in the behaviour of teachers and school management teams noted regarding teaching and learning practices in schools. Although these shifts did not translate into significant changes in learner performance, they were deemed useful to inform how medium to long term goals can be set. The evaluation indicated great variation in the ability of the service providers to implement the programme in different contexts.

Dye (2003) provides further research in the field of NGO contributions at a governmental level. His work focused on collaborations formed between South Africa and United States of America Development (USAID). In 1995, the newly elected government of South Africa and USAID signed a Primary Education Bilateral agreement. This agreement enables the two governments to work together to improve the quality of education for disadvantaged South Africans and formalize a partnership for the transformation and development of the education system.

This particular USAID partnership, to improve quality of educational delivery for Grades 1 – 9 was started in 2000 in 6 districts and with 26 schools. The focus was on improving quality of curriculum practices, improve quality of district and school management, enhance school governance, develop theory and best practice for whole school and district development. The success of this partnership was the improved district management teams. District officials began to develop a range of skills they had not previously had and could adopt a more collaborative and integral approach to school development. The School Management Teams (SMT) management style were reportedly changed positively and this included opening up and delegating more functions within the school to teachers. SMT became genuinely more interested in the staff. Educators improved their understanding of at least some of the elements informing the new way of teaching linked to learner centred approaches which was different to passive learning by children. More educators began using continuous assessment approaches which was another innovation not hitherto required of teachers to implement in their practices.

Another NGO, the Primary Science Programme (PSP) has established itself as a well-established non-profit organisation in the Western Cape Province. This organisation recognised for its effective approaches to improving the quality of primary education in South Africa through the training and development of teachers.

In the Schaffer PSP cluster project report (2009), it was evident that the partnership made a significantly positive impact on all sample schools and teacher performance in relation to the project objectives. The manner in which the project supported the teachers' application of knew knowledge in the classroom was an outstanding feature of cluster project provision. There was a significant improvement in teachers being more positive. There was a positive

shift towards planning and assessment. More than 50% of the teachers' basic knowledge of Science improved. There was an abundance of evidence to show that the Project teachers had access to quality PSP teacher materials.

The report also cited the following hindering factors. Few PSP resources have been translated into Xhosa. This greatly reduces the effectiveness at schools where the mother tongue is not English. The summary recommended that teachers not move across subjects and phases. It was further noted that it was wasteful to struggle to get demoralised teachers to the cluster. It would be best to rather focus on individual teachers and provide incentives, instead of unmotivated subject teams.

A further example of a partnership between the WCED, districts, Wordworks and teachers, is the Gr. R Emergent Literacy (ELIT) roll out. Wordworks is a South African NGO that focuses on early language and literacy development. As a WCED – NGO partnership the ELIT programme required effective and structured cooperation at three levels. (Provincial Office, District, and teachers)

In 2015 WCED, partnered with Wordworks, to take its emergent Literacy Project (ELIT) to grade R classrooms across the eight education districts of the Western Cape. The process took place from May 2015 to September 2016. ELIT incorporates the Stellar (Strengthening Teaching of Language and Literacy in Gr R) programme. This project required effective large scale training using cascaded training with a support model to 2973 teachers, the key implementers in this partnership between the WCED and WordWorks were the Curriculum advisors and lead teachers. (Schaffer and Hugow, 2017)

This partnership was hugely successful. Findings from report by Schaffer and Hugow (2017) states that lead teachers became mentors. There was a positive response to the materials. Learners enjoyed working with the stories. Learner language improved. The classrooms were transformed into attractive spaces. The hindering factors were that circuit managers were largely unaware of what was happening. The process was also a huge administrative burden.

Furthermore, the education district has a significant role and responsibility in delivering quality education to the schools in its jurisdiction. This is outlined in the Government Gazette (2012) which states that the education district offices have a pivotal role in ensuring that all learners have access to education of progressively high quality and are the link between provincial education departments, their institutions and the public. The gazette notes the main role of the district as being providing an enabling environment for education institutions. The district, in particular the curriculum advisors assists principals and educators to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their institutions and serves as an information node for education institutions. Along with this comes accountability to the provincial education department.

Metropole South serves a total of 145 Primary Schools and 54 High Schools. There are 5944 teachers in this district. The district stretches across a diverse area, and includes areas such

as Mitchells Plain, Nyanga, Philippi crossroads, Grassy Park, Wynberg, Muizenberg and Simons Town. Schools are situated in a diverse landscape and serves affluent to poor areas. Schools range from quintile 1 – 5.

Drawing on literature which outlines the importance of district support, the work of Chrispeels (2012) is significant as she could share insights from working simultaneously at the district, school and classroom level. She emphasizes the role of the district by stating that without support from the top and systems coherence, individual school change efforts can be quickly undermined.

Literature on educational reform views the role of the district office as valuable. According to Chhoun et al (2008) in the study on “The little district that could” the district can be an active agent for systemic reform and that in at least some districts, in powerfully positive ways. In the study conducted by Silbert et al, (2015) the close collaboration with officials of the Metropole East Education District, responsible for the delivery of schooling in the Western Cape township of Khayelitsha, is intentional and signals a recognition that the improvement of all those involved in education in this community.

Further research on successful partnerships between district and schools is the Professional Learning Process as researched by Olivier and Huffman (2016) states that the clear, and concerted efforts of the district to develop strong, positive and productive professional relationships were recognized and appreciated by school administrators.

The role of the teacher needs to be emphasised. This is explicitly outlined in the Professional Administrative Measures (PAM) document. It states that the key role of the teacher is to foster a purposeful progression in learning. Teachers have to prepare lessons and report on learners’ academic achievement. Teachers have to view learning as an active process where a variety of strategies are used in a classroom environment which stimulates positive learning activities. (Gazette, 2017)

The role of the teacher in crafting a successful partnership and effecting change in the classroom is crucial. Silbert et al (2015) agrees by stating that the participation of teachers in the professional development courses, coupled with school based support was a key element of this University- district – school partnership. This is further supported by Chrispeels (2002) who indicates that the partnership helped teachers learn how to assume active roles in their respective grade level meetings and present ideas to other staff members.

Based on research the role of the three partners as described above are instrumental to this study. The role of the partners and in particular the way they work together, is beneficial to this study.

This review is furthermore divided into the following sub-sections:

### **2.3 Section A – Literature on partnerships**

2.3.1 Descriptions and definitions of partnerships

2.3.2 Value and experiences of partnerships

2.3.3 Challenges and problems of partnerships

2.3.4 Summary of partnership research

### **2.4 Section B – Language teaching**

### **2.5 Section C – Theoretical literature**

2.5.1 Brief overview of cultural historical activity theory

2.5.2 Components of an activity system

2.5.3 What are researchers saying about the field of boundary crossing?

2.5.4 Studies conducted with links to boundary crossing as a process

#### **2.3.1 Description and definition of partnerships**

In a recent document on effective and sustainable university-school partnership, partnerships are defined as the stakeholders sharing in teacher education and ‘a willingness to work together with other partners’ (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

When defining partnership through the lenses of previous research, it is interesting to note that relationships are deemed important, and in particular the prevalence of trust is well documented. Kruger (2009) states that partnerships are a social practice achieved through and characterised by trust, mutuality and reciprocity among pre-service teachers, teachers and other school colleagues and teacher educators. Cardini (2006) agrees that partnerships may be described in the abstract as organisational models that are superior, because of the positive characteristics that they are supposed to entail such as cooperation, trust and interdependence. Cardini (2006) adds that within these discourses partnerships function as a magic concept: one that sounds modern, neutral, pragmatic and positive because of its links with notions such as “networks”, “cooperation” and “trust”. Collaboration, or other related notions such as “joint working”, “working together” or “cooperation”, is often at the heart of any definition of partnership. Partnerships often include various organisations with distinct and different relationships with one another, creating a complex web of links and interactions. Kruger (2009) concurs that the condition for partnerships to be based on trust

is good, as stakeholders can come together in ways which do not tightly define expectations and contributions within the partnership. Sims (2010) also indicates that to improve practice in partnerships it is important to establish trust and confidence.

The importance of collaboration and building relationships features in many of the research studies as a key descriptor of what a partnership entails. According to Richmond (1996), partnerships often include various organisations with distinct and different relationship with each other. Furthermore, she adds that partnership building has become a vehicle for a massive restructuring of the curriculum at all levels as well as for the professional development of teachers. Huxman and Vangen (2000) argue, in Cardini (2006), that the essence of partnerships can be summed up by the notion of collaborative advantage, that is to say, there are advantages to be gained when members from one organisation act collaboratively with members of another organisation. Frost, Akmal and Kingrey (2009) agree, adding that by working together partners with different connections and perspectives have the potential to accomplish goals that the individual people or institutions could not achieve on their own. The Frost (2009) study notes the success of an inter-organisational collaborative group that was brought together to plan and provide professional development. Sim (2010) states that in his study the community of practice approach provided a framework which prioritised the enabling of dialogue among the participants.

The research done in the field of partnerships makes it apparent that there is an emphasis on learning. Kruger (2009) states that an effective partnership focuses on learning for all stakeholders. In school the students' learning is the principal focus of the effective partnership, enabling links to be made between the school's needs and the priorities and pre-service teachers' skills and interests. Villegas-Reimers (2003) states that the partnerships between teachers, administrators and university faculty members was created to improve teaching and learning, and also to merge educational theory and practice. Villegas-Reimers (2003) further defines partnerships as professional development schools (PDSs) involving teachers, administrators and university faculty members, created in order to improve teaching and learning, and also in order to fuse educational theory and practice. Partnerships helped to bring about change in the teachers' learning. According to a study conducted by Ndlovu (2011), the SMILES project of the University of Stellenbosch, it was clear that teachers were in evident need of support with content and innovative pedagogy, and the experience of a hands-on practical approach so they could develop positive feelings of professional self-efficacy in their lessons. Thomas, Poetter and Eagle (2005) state that there was an increase in the botanical knowledge of both teachers and students when Science and Mathematics educators and the instructional leaders from the Talawanda School District worked together.

Richmond (1996) states that in order for partnerships to be successful, what is achieved in the collaboration must be greater than what any individual member of the partnership

could have accomplished on their own. She adds that all the players must have a significant commitment to using their expertise along with that of the others to enhance both teaching and learning. It is further assumed that each individual who enters into a collaboration brings one kind of expertise. To emphasise this point Frost, Akmal and Kingrey (2009) state that by working together, partners with different connections and perspectives are seen as having the potential to accomplish goals that the individual people or institutions could not achieve on their own.

### **2.3.2 Value and experiences of partnerships**

Within the context of the Western Cape, the study conducted by Silbert (2015) which focused on the partnership between a university (UCT) and schools in the Khayelitsha area, the establishment of professional practice sites were beneficial and had a significant positive impact.

Further afield Thomas, Poetter and Eagle (2005), who summarised the experiences of stakeholders state that the experiences of partnerships are embedded. He stated that when people work together across institutions to pool resources and talents, this can have a significant impact on students' learning and community well-being. It is further explained in this study that building relationships is the key to a strong partnership infrastructure and to exceptional projects and programmes. Building trust is central to maintaining healthy to minimum healthy, on-going relationships in a partnership. To be effective partners, we have to respect each other's individual and cultural/institutional differences in ways that actually propel our work.

A fundamental aspect which is highlighted by researchers in the promotion of partnerships is the notion of collaboration. Cardini (2006) that collaboration or "joint working", "working together" or "cooperation" is often at the heart of any definition of partnership. Peters (2002) agrees, indicating that, in reflecting on their joint project, all participants were able to articulate benefits that had accrued from working collaboratively. Frost et al. (2009) state that their study revealed that in the process of negotiating their way through their different expectations, they had to work through the tensions that emerged in order to achieve a common sense of direction. As most of the group acquired this shared sense of direction, they saw positive outcomes emerging from the process. To develop trust, the process requires that the collaborating members of a group are willing to risk vulnerability as they work through their complexities related to the different cultures and goals of the members, develop common goals for their work together and develop trust that in turn engenders the readiness to take on more risks and greater goals.

In the study by Thomas, Poetter, and Eagle (2005) participants stressed that their willingness to listen and respond to the needs of classroom teachers – and by proxy the needs of students – was one of the most powerful tools of the partnership. Because the teachers felt they were an integral part of the formation of the partnership, they invested in

the outcome of the project. According to Thomas, Poetter and Eagle (2005), in the partnership between the University of Wisconsin and teachers it was agreed that the partnership had gone beyond their original expectations: "We certainly listened to the teachers' ideas, and we felt we were giving them what they said they wanted. I was still concerned that we could miss what they really needed." (Jeffrey, Winslow and Schussler,p. 13 - Life cycle of a partnership) Furthermore, the teachers stated that participating in the project talked positively about it to their colleagues and encouraged other teachers to do more science in their classrooms.

The value of the partnership will be measured by the way in which the teacher adopts and implements the strategies. Richmond (1996) reported that the ultimate goal of the partnership was to have teachers become self-sufficient in their understanding of how students learn about plant life. The partnership managed to shift the teachers' observations away from what they do towards a greater focus on what the children learn, as teaching is mostly about providing opportunities to learn. Richmond (1996) points out that in order for significant and long-lasting change to take hold in the way science is taught in schools, there must be substantial interaction between those with knowledge of scientific content and those with knowledge of students and schools. Ndlovu (2011) comments that in the SMILES partnership, based at the Stellenbosch University, the outcome of the research study on this partnership clearly showed that teachers were in clear need of support with content and innovative pedagogy, and experience of hands-on practical approaches so they could develop positive feelings of professional self-efficacy in their lessons. Teachers in disadvantaged schools are not deliberately being ineffective, but are in genuine need of professional support and capacitating, not threats of punitive evaluation, which they detest for historical reasons. Ndlovu (2011) supports this notion of professional teacher development by stating that the outcome of his research study on this partnership clearly showed that teachers were in honest need of support with content and innovative pedagogy, experience of hands-on practical approaches so they could develop positive feelings of professional self-efficacy in handling their lessons. Villegas-Reimer (2003) states in their study on teacher professional development that the university/college faculty also benefits from this collaboration model (Larkin,2000) as they developed partnerships with practitioners in the field, which allows them to be more informed about the daily practices and situations encountered in classrooms, feel supported in their work with student-teachers, and also have the opportunity to link theory and practice more naturally and frequently.

The literature is clear that the success of a partnership lies in the extent to which the teacher feels enthusiastic and comfortable. Thomas, Poetter and Eagle (2005) found that their experiences with a partnership was that they wanted the partnership activity to be authentic to students by making sure teachers were comfortable with what was being implemented. Cardini (2006) states that the vital ingredient in successful partnerships is the commitment and enthusiasm of partners. Ndlovu (2011) notes that the high levels of

teacher confidence engendered by partnerships was testimony that school-based CPD initiatives that are responsive to teacher development needs can enhance the expectancy value in understanding the interplay of motivation and expectations relating to changes in teacher behaviour.

Richmond (1996) values her partnership with schools and adds that after this partnership she understands the culture of schools better and wants to foster a sense of belonging, regardless of cultures involved. Frost et al. (2009) emphasise that in order to overcome challenges, members of an inter-organisational group have to make an early and on-going effort to understand each other's perspectives and organisational cultures, while negotiating the goals and purposes of the group's work and establishing group norms.

An example of a good partnership between a university and teachers was evident in a study with a group of Science teachers in South Africa who worked in very poor conditions for many years. They came together for different forms of professional development: coaching, group discussions, group-work based on the curriculum. They described this partnership as "small steps" and "modest", but considered it as quite effective in improving the teachers' knowledge and skills (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Another interesting case is that of a partnership between a university in the USA, a university in CHILE and a school district in Chile. In this programme university faculties from both countries prepared and implemented a course on how to improve the knowledge and skills of science teachers in Chile. All those involved reported the experience as successful and felt that it had effectively promoted their professional development (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Kruger (2009) makes an important contribution by stating that the partnership leads all stakeholders to take on altered relationship practices. An effective partnership constructs new enabling structures which span the boundaries of school and university. The partnership provides the space for stakeholders to initiate new learning relationships by valuing the contributions made by each partner and supports pre-service teachers, school teachers and university teachers in forming committed relationships.

### **2.3.3 Challenges and problems with partnerships**

Although the research reports on partnerships are very positive, there are several studies which reveal some challenges observed during research engagements. Some of these studies are discussed below.

Based on research, the aspects of trust and the need for collaboration remain challenges. Cardini (2006) states that an important obstacle to establish links based on trust between partners – which is essential to achieve collaboration – derives from issues concerned with power relationships between the partners. Although the discourse of partnerships signifies equality of power, shared values and the establishment of common agendas and goals, the reality tends to be very different. Cardini (2006) adds that these indicators tend to be

structured around departmental and service boundaries and do not reflect the pursuit of joint objectives. Cardini (2006) states that the challenge for collaboration arises when very diverse organisations, with different resources and objectives, seek to define a shared aim. Cardini (2006) continues that although collaboration is presented as a main characteristic in theoretical definitions of partnerships, partnerships are sites where cooperation is very hard to achieve. Frost (2009) indicates that while some partnerships manifest cooperative practices between partners, others seem to be closer to classic contractual arrangements, where there is no evidence of the development of trust between those involved. Cardini (2006) comments that emphasising cooperation and trust hides the complex struggles for power that take place in working partnerships.

The task of holding a group of people with a common goal together creates a challenge. This is mentioned by Marlow and Nass (2000), who state that maintaining a true partnership between so diverse a group of stakeholders can be very complicated. To further substantiate this argument Richmond (1996) points out that if partners hold different views, the process of compromise may be draining and the results, while perhaps instructive for students, are more frustrating for the instructors. Frost (2009) indicates that many of the challenges have their roots in a number of difficulties: determining a joint purpose or path, particularly when individuals and organisations have different agendas in mind; establishing common understandings and language across different organisational cultures; establishing trust, which is an issue often related to perceived power imbalances; lack of willingness to share equally in the team's work; lack of commitment to the team's process; and overlapping role assignments.

A number of partnerships research studies mention that if provision is not made for sufficient time, then challenges may arise. Frost (2009) indicates that challenges regarding time and planning might have been avoided if time and knowledge of inter-organisational collaborations had allowed for careful 'planning for planning'. Ndlovu's (2011) study highlights that the limitations of duration of implementation led to tensions, as a result of high expectations from both funders who expect quick results and from education authorities who want quick evidence of what works as models of best practice. Frost (2009) stresses the importance of allowing sufficient time and states that time must be reserved for working through the difficulties that emerge along the way. Cobb (in Villegas-Reimers, 2003) agrees by stating that although the partnership model does have a significant effect on the teachers' perceptions, beliefs and practices, as well as on student-teachers' and students' learning, these changes take time, first and foremost to build trust and a good relationship between the faculty and the teachers. Frost (2009) indicates that problems were experienced in the planning group, as members assumed that their prior experiences of working together and a 'commonly understood' task would circumvent any difficulties. These challenges might have been avoided if time and knowledge of inter-organisational collaboration had allowed careful 'planning for the planning'. Sim (2010) adds that the constraints of partnerships come down to the different institutional 'cultural politics' time

demands: teachers focus on their own practice and there is insufficient preparation by faculty members with teacher participants in their theoretical underpinning of a project.

Researchers are in agreement that there are several conditions at schools which can create challenges within partnerships. Fullan and Hargreaves (in Peters, 2002) maintain that for real change to occur, there must be changes to the basic working conditions of teachers. They add that over time participants in this school-university partnership identified a range of conditions that appeared to impede school-wide change. These included lack of shared vision, high turnover, competing demands on teachers' time, restrictive school structures and a percentage of staff who were resistant to change. She also included further challenging and problematic issues in her study such as personal conditions, which included initial confusion about what was expected. Cardini (2006) states that external pressures, diversity of motives and purposes amongst partners as well as variations and curtailment of funds often lead to instability, conflict and premature dissolution. Peters (1997) agrees that certain partnerships face challenges and states that in her study most teachers did not want to open up their practice to critical scrutiny. She adds that in the cases where some teachers did commit to a process of reflection, they found it quite distressing in practice.

Further challenges around partnerships are addressed by researchers. Blankstein et al (2008) reiterates that the fast pace of school, changes in personnel, annual budget schedules, and ever- evolving trends in education present challenges to the success of partnerships. According to Ndlovu (2011), there is also the fear that partnerships can become counterproductive, as teachers become disenchanted because the more they are trained, the less they are able to teach in the classroom. Sim (2010) in her study on sustaining productive collaboration between faculties and schools suggests that the area of weakness in the project is that participants appeared to be less aware of how their participation had shaped their own identities as members of a professional community of school-based teacher educators. Peters (2002) adds that the pressure to perform well and the measures used for that performance have restricted the project's capacity. Peters (2002) also found that in most schools only small numbers of staff were actively involved, while many of the other staff members remained largely unaware of any kind of school/university collaboration.

### **2.3.4 Summary of partnership research**

The research studies highlight certain key aspects as being crucial to the success of partnerships. These aspects include trust and the importance of collaboration. The partnership studies also make significant reference to the need for a common focus, and a need for building shared knowledge and understanding. According to researchers, partnerships are not without their challenges, such as partners not having a common goal, time constraints and the conditions at schools.

I also note that there is a strong correlation between what other researchers cited as challenges experienced in partnerships and what this study revealed. Of particular significance is the fact that teachers in my study also mentioned that they were not aware of the need for a common objective from the beginning of the partnership. Previous researchers are in agreement that the lack of a common goal hinders the success of a partnership. A further similarity between previous studies and this study is the aspect of time. Both the service provider and teachers stated that the time frame of the partnership was too short. Teachers felt that service providers did not visit them frequently enough. The conditions at schools are equally documented in this study as a key factor which impacts negatively on partnerships. Teachers stated that aspects such as Language, learner behaviour and lack of School Management Team structures all hindered that success of the partnership. Previous studies made reference to the fact that in some cases not all teachers are part of the partnership. The same aspect was raised in this study. Teachers stated that a challenge arises when not all teachers are on board. This fact was reiterated by the facilitator, who noted that it becomes a challenge when certain teachers have been trained and others not.

In conclusion, it seems that when interpreting the data produced by this study, it is important to note that the work of previous researchers in the field of partnerships can be used to enhance the interpretations and create a deeper understanding of partnerships.

## **2.4 SECTION B – Language Teaching**

What is language teaching?

The National Curriculum gives expression to the knowledge, skills and values worth learning in South African schools as determined by the state. This curriculum aims to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives (NCS, 2011).

In the CAPS curriculum framework document, language teaching is described as happening in an integrated way, with the teacher modelling good practices and the appropriate skills in groups before learners apply these skills on their own. The structure of each lesson should be one that engages the whole class before practising in groups and then applying the new skills individually. The relevant terms used here are listening and speaking, shared reading and writing, group guided reading and writing, and independent reading and writing (CAPS, 2011).

The holistic approach to teaching and learning language as described by Cushing- Leubner (2014) refers to maximising learning opportunities by:

- Co-constructing learning such that learner input and background knowledge inform unit content and task design (e.g. language foci, vocabulary, authentic texts and tasks, corrective feedback);
- Differentiating lessons using extensions and scaffolds that challenge students with varying proficiencies;
- Revising your syllabus if necessary based on diagnostic and formative assessments of students' strengths, needs and goals;
- Using texts for integrated language instruction e.g. fluency tasks to access background knowledge, accuracy tasks to draw and build relevant vocabulary, focused reading tasks for comprehension and making inferences, writing or presentation extension that allows learners to use language to synthesise or problem-solve the text's central themes.

Further theories regarding language teaching are outlined in the “Elements of Effective Reading Instruction”. In terms of the content of effective reading instruction, it is clear that the following elements should all form part of an effective programme. (National Reading Panel, 2000)

- Phonemic awareness and the teaching of phonics;
- Decoding and word studies, including the learning of a sight vocabulary;
- Language development, to include vocabulary development;
- The explicit teaching of comprehension strategies;
- Meaningful writing experiences
- The development of fluent reading by reading and rereading familiar texts;
- A wide range of reading materials;
- Opportunities for both guided and independent reading. (Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers, 2012)

An equally important factor in language teaching is sight vocabulary. Many struggling readers have phonological processing difficulties and there is evidence that skilled readers access a store of words or visual patterns when reading. High-frequency words are words that occur frequently in a text, for example, the, what, this. Automatic recognition of these words (also called having a sight vocabulary) helps students to improve fluency, make use of context clues and focus more on comprehension than on decoding. Many high-frequency words have irregular spelling patterns and sounding out these words can be pointless and frustrating. (Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers, 2012)

All constructivists agree that logical thought is expressed by language, and therefore, language practices are an important part of classroom activity. According to Vygotsky (1978)

the language that a learner encounters is the source of more complex social structures and ways of knowing, and turns into new forms for the organisation of psychological processes in the developing individual. So social constructivists tend to regard active language practices – critical dialogue, discussion and literacy - as the crucial formative activities of a school learning context. (WCED Language Strategy, 2015)

The importance of language development is well documented in the WCED Language Strategy, which states that language is vital for communication with others and is fundamental to learning in all subjects. In studying languages, learners develop the skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing that they will need to participate successfully in society and employment. (WCED Language Strategy, 2015)

The WCED LITNUM Strat plan stipulates that the WCED's strategy with regard to literacy rests on the assumption that explicit teaching of phonics will take place nested in a "whole language" approach in which the making of meaning is stressed. (WCED Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2006 – 2016)

In terms of language development the Foundation of Learning (2008) an initiative of the National Department of Education to enhance literacy and numeracy in South Africa, "reading aloud", "shared reading" and "guided reading" by educator and learner, form the components of a reading programme.

According to Naidoo et al (2014) the intermediate phase learners extend their knowledge over a wider range of texts than the foundation phase. Learners in the intermediate phase must be able to read a variety of texts for different purposes, use a variety of reading and comprehension strategies, and view and comment on variety of visual texts.

The Balanced Language Approach (BLA) has its roots based on the principles of the whole language approach. According to Rosa (2007), whole language consists of a set of beliefs based on the following suppositions:

- Language is for making meaning, for accomplishing purposes;
- what is true for language in general is true for written language;
- phonology, orthography, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics are always simultaneously present and interacting in every instance of language;
- language use always occurs in a situation;
- situations are critical to meaning-making;
- language acquisition occurs through actual use.

Further research the field of language learning, such as the work of Mehrpour and Motlag (in Sifakis, 2015) state that individuals learn in various ways and instructors should teach

through miscellaneous methods. Suitable methods should be developed for various groups of individuals at various levels based on their preferred learning styles. Another study conducted by Mahdavirad (in Sifakis, 2015) on the impact of form-focused guided strategic planning on oral text performance found that form-focused strategic planning has a beneficial effect on the participants' performance in terms of complexities, accuracy and fluency. The study done by Rahimi and Sobhani (in Sifakis, 2015) showed that teachers should take the learning context into account to best identify the likely causes of any failure, and hence provide the means to resolve problems appropriately. Further studies on teacher training done by Kourkouli (in Sifakis, 2015) state that there seems to be a need for teacher development courses to bring about significant conceptual and generative changes.

Drawing on the research from Condry et al (2010) it is noted that literacy approaches that use phonics may seem efficient in the short term, but unless they are entrenched within focused texts and reading activities, they may well be analysed as drills for schools and not as reading "for real" authentic purposes.

Navsaria (2010) contributes to this discussion by stating that when reading the child may sound out the letters in the word and then blend them together to decode the target word. Finally, in the orthographic phase the child is able to recognise the large chunks of words and to read more proficiently by analogy with known words. Failure to progress through these phases leads to literacy problems.

Furthermore, Navsaria (2010) indicates that written language production/expression can be divided into two stages, viz. the process and the product. Writing processes include the cognitive-linguistic and motor acts that are involved in producing written language texts. These include planning (prewriting), organising, drafting, reflecting, revising and editing as well as forming letters and sequences of letters into words. The overall purpose of writing is to communicate ideas in the most effective manner. Written products are the result of the writing processes. A writing product can be examined at several levels, viz. the word level (e.g. word choice, spelling), sentence level (e.g. grammar, complexity, style) and the text level (e.g. discourse, structure, cohesive devices and coherence).

Navsaria (2010) concludes that it is important for children to be able to read and write. She explains that with writing comes the development of logic, rationality, linearity, abstract thinking and the ability to classify. Reading also enables a person to access the meaning contained in a text. Writing enables the writer to express his/her thoughts and reading enables the reader to access these thoughts (Kingston et al., 2005), while literacy enhances communication in social, cultural, religious and general everyday life. Written language expression, together with reading, is central to the acquisition of literacy. Furthermore, spoken and written languages complement and support each other, resulting in general language and literacy competence that begins early and continues throughout childhood into adulthood. (Navsaria, 2010)

## 2.5 SECTION C – Theoretical Literature

### 2.5.1 Brief overview of Cultural Historical Activity Theory

A theoretical approach that has possible application as a heuristic to partnerships is the cultural historical activity theory (CHAT). In this section I discuss some aspects of overlap and points of resonance between educational partnerships and CHAT.

#### Vygotsky's Activity Theory (1978)

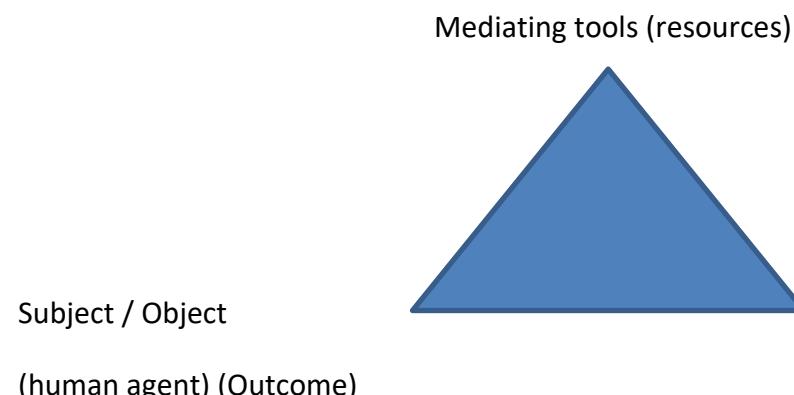


Figure 1: First-generation Activity Theory (Adapted from Vygotsky, 1978)

Figure 1 graphically represents Vygotsky's developmental theory of how a human interacts with the world by means of cultural artefacts. The subject, an individual or group, uses mediational means in order to act on the object of an activity (Hardman, 2008). An important aspect raised by Vygotsky is that a child can accomplish more through guided mediation than he or she can on his or her own.

#### Leontiev's Activity Theory (1981)



Figure 2: Second-generation Activity Theory (Adapted from Leontiev, 1981)

Although the first generation of activity theory centres on Vygotsky's (1978) notion of mediation, it is still located at the level of an individual's actions and does not go far enough to illustrate how cognitive change happens within a collective context. Neither does it provide a framework capable of situating learning within a wider context, accounting for the collective and dynamic nature of activities. Leontiev (1981) adds to Vygotsky's (1978) initial model of human action by illustrating how individual actions are goal orientated, while collective activities are object orientated. The lowest level of the model, operations, is called into play by the tools and conditions of the actions being carried out. (Hardman, 2008)

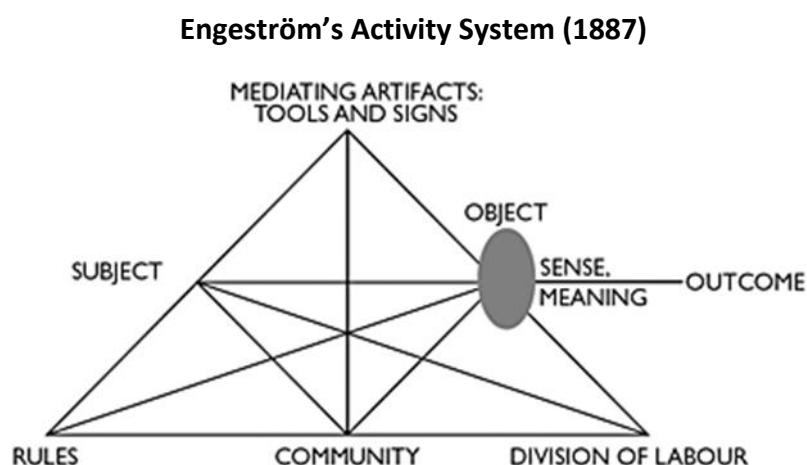


Figure 3: Third-generation Activity Theory ( Illustration of Activity System – Engeström, 1987)

In this study the third-generation activity theory, noted above, is used as the lens through which the findings on this partnership will be viewed. The system is used as a basic unit to research human interaction and behaviour.

The people in the activity system are continuously shaping each other while they interact socially with each other. The two-way arrows indicate the dynamic nature of the nodes of the triangle.

### **2.5.2 Components of an Activity System**

**Outlined by Hardman (2008) in the following manner.**

Subject: The human agent e.g. the teacher

Object: The problem space that the teacher is working on

Mediating tools: the resources mobilised by the teacher

Rules: The norms, conventions and social interactions of the classroom

Community: The teacher is a member of a community at school

Division of labour: Refers to the negotiation of responsibilities and tasks.

From this CHAT prism, illustrated in Fig. 3, the learning trajectory of teachers and their development as inclusive teachers needs to be the purpose in order to facilitate learning at both the individual and the administrative level. One way to better understand how partnerships evolve and to experience the inherent tensions is to examine the boundary practices that occur when various professionals from different activity systems come together to serve all students.

According to Engeström (2001), activity theory is the overarching body under which activity systems operate, which leads to boundary crossing by boundary brokers. These boundary practices are influenced by the sometimes varied, yet also overlapping, boundaries, which transform this process into a complex, multifaceted, intertwined system. As we engage in learning, we develop capabilities to cross boundaries and negotiate the object, directed by a motive of an activity system. It is crucial to negotiate and integrate other systems to bring about greater understanding, which leads to finding further solutions and acquiring new learning. Activity theory also assists in helping to explore the organisation and transactions that occur in everyday human life.

Oswald and Perold (2011), argues that in the original Engeström (2007) triangle the subject-object relationship is represented by the top part of his diagram. The subject-object relationship is related to the larger cultural and historical context by the relationships represented by the other triangles. The subject-object relationship is modified by the cultural rules, norms or conventions that apply to this relationship and by the division of

labour in which it is embedded. Oswald and Perold (2011) continues by saying that these rules might well include the tools considered appropriate to use and the way in which control of their use is distributed among the different categories of community members who are regularly involved in these actions. The relationships between components are not static, but are continuously being constructed and reformulated in the course of their deployment in particular situations. This model enables and encourages an innovative approach, as it allows for the possibility that rules may be changed or the division of labour may be modified, or other semiotic tools may be valued in creating different activity systems – ones that can, for instance, encourage rather than constrain learning for change. Third generation activity theory is intended to develop conceptual tools to understand dialogues, multiple perspectives, voices and networks of interacting activity systems (Daniels, 2004). All activity systems are part of a network of activity systems that together make up human society.

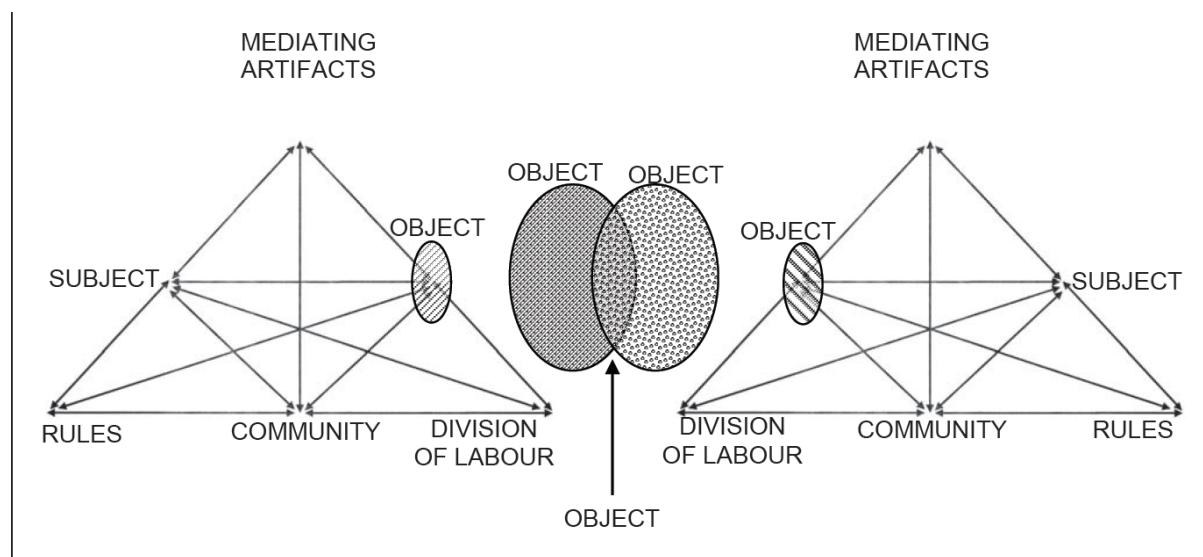


Fig: 4 – Improved Engeström Third-generation Activity Theory

According to Oswald and Perold (2011), CHAT offers a valuable framework for intervention and analysis when a more complex theory on learning is needed, as in the case of the widespread and intense social and educational challenges that need to be addressed in South Africa. Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), (Engeström, 2001) provides a theoretical framework for understanding the work of teacher learning and education in partnership contexts. Activity systems are a way of describing the ways in which participation is organised and mediated by rules, divisions of labour and mediating tools that can serve to orient human activity toward objects or outcomes. In schools many kinds of activity systems operate simultaneously. Activity theory provides an opportunity for transformation to take place as new learning and acquisition of knowledge take place.

Akkerman and Bakker (2011) indicate that CHAT represents a theoretical tradition that can be traced back to the works of Vygotsky (1978) and his contemporaries, conceptualising individual goal-directed actions within the frame of the larger collective system of activity from which these actions derive their meaning.

Further research conducted by Foot (2014) indicates that CHAT is based on three core ideas: 1) humans act collectively, learn by doing and communicate in and via their actions; 2) humans make, employ and adapt tools of all kinds to learn and communicate; and 3) community is central to the process of making and interpreting meaning—and thus to all forms of learning, communicating and acting. The CHAT model of an activity system that is constantly evolving through collective learning actions, in response to systemic contradictions, enables multifaceted analyses of the complex practices of professional work. The essential task of CHAT analysis as stated by Foot (2014) is to grasp the systemic whole of an activity, not just its separate components. This makes possible the analysis of a multitude of relations within an activity system, both at a particular point in time and as it evolves over time.

Tsui and Law (2007) explain activity systems by stating that activities are seen as embedded in activity systems. For example, the activity of learning vocabulary is embedded in the activity system of classroom learning, and the activity of an inter-class speech contest is embedded in the activity of a school. They add that the activity theory is seen as being directed by a motive. According to Leontiev in Tsui and Law (2007), the motive of an activity is attaining its object. The relation between subjects and community is mediated by rules, that is the norms, conventions and social relations within the community.

The focus on activity systems directs attention to who is carrying out activities (division of labour), what tools are at their disposal, which cultural norms and rules govern their performance, and what are the desired outcomes. In a formal teaching–learning context, this may involve introducing students to knowledge as a cultural tool for solving problems encountered in practice and requiring them to reconstruct knowledge through their own activity. (Taylor, 2014)

Elements mentioned by Frost, Akmal and Kingrey (2004) are that by working together, partners with different connections and perspectives are seen as having the potential to accomplish goals – that the individual people or institutions could not achieve alone. These are central to partnerships and can be set in an activity theory framework. I will elaborate on this perspective on partnerships in the sections below.

The elements in this study which are linked to the above activity system prism are firstly the subjects, who in my study are represented by the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor. The community where the activity takes place is the school. The motive or the object of these subjects is the effective implementation of the Balanced Language Approach as a language methodology with the aim of improving language teaching and learning.

The relationship between the subjects and the communities is mediated by the rules as determined by the language intervention programmes. In this study the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor had to adhere to a particular set of rules and norms. The READ facilitator had a mentoring and supportive role, while the curriculum advisor had a monitoring role.

The division of labour defines how the work is divided in the community. The READ facilitator is expected to provide the visitation roster and explain what will be expected during the visits. The READ facilitator also does lesson observations and conducts afternoon tutorial sessions. The curriculum advisor, on the other hand, has to inform schools of planned visits and outlines exactly what the focus for the day will be. The curriculum advisor has to monitor the planning of the teachers to see whether it is aligned with the CAPS requirements. The curriculum advisor conducts demonstration lessons and gives teachers guidance on how to improve classroom practice.

The mediating tools used in this partnership are the new resources which enhances the Balanced Language Approach. These tools are used to mediate the activities within the activity system of my study. They include, for example, the introduction of word walls and writing frames.

### **2.5.3 What are researchers saying about the field of boundary crossing?**

Research by Tsui and Law (2007) in the field of learning and boundary crossing in the school-university partnership noted that globalisation has raised fundamental questions about knowing and learning, and indicates that it is essential for educators to engage in collective knowledge generation by crossing community boundaries. Tsui and Law (2007) continue that experts such as Engeström (2001) not only engage in multi-tasking, but also operate in multiple communities of practice. Crossing boundaries forces participants to take a fresh look at their long-standing practices and assumptions, and can be a source of deep learning. As such, it is characterised by alternative or competing discourses and positionings which afford opportunities for transformation of conflicts and tensions into rich zones of learning.

When defining boundary crossing certain aspects come to the fore. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) indicate that all learning involves boundaries. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) state that boundary crossing is “a broad and little studied category of cognitive process”. Boundary crossing also involves going into unfamiliar territory and requires cognitive retooling. According to Tsui and Law (2007), the concept of boundary crossing has been developed to help understand the interaction between these activity systems, the multiple perspectives and the multi-voicedness. Furthermore, the boundary zone is created as they cross boundaries and engage in a new activity system in which the object contains learning as the foci.

Furthermore, Akkerman and Bakker (2011) add that boundaries simultaneously suggest a sameness and continuity in the sense that two or more contiguous sites are relevant to one another in a particular way. Boundary objects are mediating tools that are shared across communities of practice and that shape the work done in partnerships. Thus, the boundary object has a similar structure for each organisation in the partnership such as objectives and activities, but the individual institutions regulate and shape behaviour in very different ways because of the functions and role of the boundary object itself.

Boundary crossing is not without its challenges. Hedegaard (in Childs and McNicholl, 2013) notes that boundaries around schools are being disrupted to encourage school leaders to think systematically about professional learning and capacity building. Our concern is not simply to observe and report, but to consider how learning might be enabled, as people engage in activities in workplace practices. Childs, Edwards and McNicholl (2013) add that even the most robust partnerships can resemble marriages of convenience that are politely held together without any fundamental questioning of their bases. To that end partners are currently, with local schools, developing what they are describing ambitiously as the multi-layered system of distributed expertise and a new version of partnership. Oswick and Robertson (2009) in Akkerman and Bakker (2011) warn other scholars not to give merely positive accounts of processes of boundary crossing and the role of boundary objects in particular. Boundary crossing and boundary objects urge us to look at learning across and between multiple social worlds and thus expand education research beyond the study of learning within single domains and practices.

In this study, as indicated by Tsui and Law (2007), there are alternative discourses which afford opportunities for the transformation of conflicts and tensions into rich zones of learning. My study highlights these discourses due to the fact that two stakeholders (facilitator and curriculum advisor) enhance the understanding of the experiences of teachers. In my study teachers at first felt reluctant to share. They saw the outside service provider as a threat to their territory – the classroom. Tensions also emerged when teachers felt that they were not fully aware of the object of the activity system. Boundary-crossing assisted by providing an alternative view of what is happening in the teacher's classroom. Mutual engagement with regards to the guidance provided to student teachers in classroom teaching in my study takes the form of the guidance provided by both the curriculum advisor and the READ facilitator regarding the effective implementation of the classroom methodology. This study indicates that the partnership made it possible, because of boundary crossing for partners (teachers, facilitator, and curriculum advisor), to transform the boundary zone into a learning experience as a result of the collaborative response to a problem.

#### 2.5.4 Studies conducted with links to boundary crossing as a process

Various researchers have reported on studies with links to activity theory and more specifically to boundary crossing. The study areas vary, but the overarching theme is of collaboration and partners moving beyond their comfort zones by giving them shared ownership when going into unfamiliar territory to gain knowledge and transform their practice into new ways of teaching.

There seems to be a strong emphasis on enhancing understanding. In the study conducted by Johanneshottir (2008) the distance students being studied were in the special situation of moving between activity systems and crossing boundaries. Teachers moved between the theoretical setting of the university studies and the practical settings the procedural knowledge they acquire in teaching. In a similar study done by Elster (2012) on reforms in Biology teaching, it is stated that activity theory has proved of value as a heuristic for the interactions and processes of mutual learning. The main outcome of the study is a better understanding of the elements and the dynamics of the activity systems, including the mutual learning of all participants. In a similar study by Wake, Foster and Swan (2013) pertaining to lesson study, the teachers developed a common understanding of goals and outcomes of the group.

The next theme which was highlighted by researchers on boundary crossing is linked to collaboration. Edwards and Daniels (2004) in their study describe the educational trajectory of pupils who are at risk of becoming excluded and marginalised in society. They argue that individual learning cannot be separated from organisational learning. Victor and Boynton (1998), like Engeström (2001), call this setting up a team system in which members focus on process improvement, which promoted the sharing of ideas within the team, and which fostered collaboration across teams and functions. The working group report on lesson study in research conducted by Archer, Pope, Onion and Wake (2013) focused on the student teachers and more experienced teachers working collaboratively and supporting each other's learning and challenging beliefs about teaching and learning in a safe environment. This topic of shared learning was evident in the study by Wake, Foster and Swan (2013). In this study the Mathematics teachers and students worked as a community. Wake's (2013) research, based on lesson study, brings into the shared experience of teachers and other educators a new activity system with the object of advancing professional learning.

According to researchers in the field of activity theory, boundary crossing has the potential to create transformed learning. In the study conducted by Edwards and Daniels (2004) it is described as the capacity to engage with others and be shaped by the opportunities available to us as actors in our social world. Archer et al. (2013) state that teachers live their professional lives as members of multiple activity systems determined by structural organisation of their school and the educational system more widely. Lesson study brings

into the shared experience of teachers and other educators a new activity system, whose object is professional learning and outcome is improved knowledge of teaching.

This improvement of learning is investigated in the study by Hardman (2008) on the way that the University of Cape Town focused on researching pedagogy. This study investigated how teachers use computers to mediate mathematics teaching and whether the introduction of this novel technology impacts on their pedagogical practices. The study revealed that the strength of activity theory as a heuristic device for understanding empirical data lies in its ability to account for human activity as a dynamic activity system.

Boundary crossing is definitely seen as a means to convey information to various partners. This is the case in a study done by Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) on working in boundary practices. Teachers belong to many activity systems beyond the classrooms in which they practice. They cross over into multiple activity systems, which means that information and cultural practices are being transported across activity systems. As they travel, they inform and influence new practices in other activity systems.

Boundary crossing, although beneficial in developing teaching and learning, also has its challenges. Johanneshottir (2008) states that the crossing of boundaries was hindered by facilitators not being aware of the limitations experienced by teachers. He states that teachers felt that their context was hindering the process at times. Aspects such as Home Language and lack of parental support were noted by teachers. The distance students in the Johanneshottir (2008) study are in a special situation of moving between activity systems and crossing boundaries. It was here that the crossings of boundaries were hindered by facilitators not being aware of the limitations experienced by teachers. These aspects were also experienced by teachers in my study and will I raise this issue in the data discussion.

CHAT and boundary crossing provide frameworks that fit my study. Different activity systems and potentials for boundary crossing are discussed.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed the nature of partnerships, language teaching and ideas for framing the study. The research methods and design are discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The objective of this study is to find answers to the research questions which guide the study. These questions are focused on revealing the experiences of the participants in the world in which they operate. This chapter aims to outline the plans and designs to be followed in order to gain an insight into the realities experienced and will also produce knowledge of teachers' understanding of the partnership. This chapter will outline the plan to be followed to collect this information. The main aim was to provide a broad framework for developing the operational steps, which included the plans and designs required for the research.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the partnership between schools, service provider and curriculum advisors in an education district. More specifically the study focused on the partnership between READ Education Trust as the service provider and the schools who formed part of the training model. The focus of the partnership was to improve language performance at schools by making use of the Balanced Language Approach (BLA). The factors contributing towards the success and factors inhibiting the partnership were the focus of the enquiry as indicated by the questions below.

*Research Question:*

What factors promote and what factors inhibit partnership operations in the READ intervention process, the partnership between READ and the participating schools in Metropole South Education District.

**Sub-questions:**

- 1) What are teachers' experiences of the partnership?
- 2) What are the experiences of the service provider within the partnership?
- 3) What are the experiences of the curriculum advisors within the partnership?

This study is interested in exploring the experiences of the partners who form part of the partnership between schools in the district and READ as service provider. The next section describes the procedure to be followed to find the answers to the research questions. The coherence of the study will be clearly explained, as it is important to follow a set structure, which includes the selection of an appropriate paradigm, purpose, design and techniques to be used in the study. All this will have to be completed within a framework which promotes the validity of the results. In this study special care has been taken to ensure that the best

possible data-collection strategies have been adopted. Certain ethical considerations ensured that the results would be valid, trustworthy and reliable. Permission from the principals and teachers of the respective schools were required and teachers were informed about the purpose and the intention of the study, and their role in it.

### **3.2 Research design**

Babbie and Mouton (2001) describe research design as being composed of the research process, theoretical orientation and research methods. The research design of this study is the plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to the above-mentioned research questions. The plan thus includes all the sources, data-collection methods and information which I used to complete programme of the research. According to Kumar (2014), a research design is the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to enhance relevance to the research purpose.

This research design follows a step by step procedure to obtain the answers required. The theoretical position underpinning this study, the research methodology as well as the methods and procedures followed to address the research questions, will be discussed.

### **3.3 Interpretive Paradigm**

It would be interesting to establish how teachers experience new partnerships at schools and what their experiences are in dealing with the “outside” expectations – particularly how they would implement the new methodologies within their social contexts. It is true that different teachers and different environments would generate different outcomes. This research study was focused on how teachers, the facilitator and curriculum advisors experienced the partnership. The teachers’ understanding and level of implementation of the Balanced Language approach is important to this study. The study takes into account all aspects which will influence the stakeholders’ experience of the partnership.

The paradigm most suited to this study was the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm best lends itself to the unique features and operational engagements experienced by the participants. In this study the interpretive paradigm will help in interpreting teachers’, service providers’ and curriculum advisors’ responses, which were collected through interviews, implementation reports and observations. The interpretivist approach was also most suitable to develop an understanding of the experiences of the teachers and the way that they experienced the training week and subsequent on-site support from service providers.

According to Johari (2009) the qualitative data is the main concern of the interpretative studies. This is because the intention of interpretivism is to understand phenomena through

making meaning, where the interest of the participants was examined in its natural settings and perspectives.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) suggest that the interpretivist tradition emphasises that all human beings are engaged in the process of making sense of their worlds. Through this process insights into why the partnership was successful or why not. Conclusions were derived from the data collected through the interviews and supporting documentation. It was interesting to see what types of reasons are given by teachers regarding the success of the partnership. The research question speaks directly to the experiences of the partners in the partnership.

This approach also attempts to understand the feelings, challenges and successes experienced by the teachers and other partners in the study. This is crucial as it attempts to determine, mostly through questioning, how the teachers felt about the implementation of the Balanced Language Approach. Teachers will be provided with an opportunity to express the reasons for their understanding, but most importantly also include what made them act in a specific way, and what made them feel comfortable or not in using the methodology in class. My aim was to discover and understand what the fears of teachers were and what gave rise to challenges or successes.

The interpretivist approach allows not only for the theory or the facts to be studied, but more importantly for the actual thoughts, experiences, challenges and reasons to be uncovered. This paradigm provides the participants in my study with the freedom to explore all areas of context and to be true to the questions posed to them. As the researcher, I set out to answer the research question by looking at the experiences encountered by the partners and the true effects and reasons why teachers reacted in certain ways during this partnership. This will broaden understanding of the phenomenon and reveal many aspects of this partnership, both positive and negative.

### **3.4 Qualitative approach to research and questioning**

In the case of the interpretative paradigm it is best to employ the qualitative approach. According to Patton (1990), the key to understanding qualitative research lies in the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context. This makes it the most suited to be incorporated into the interpretive approach.

Drawing from the work of Hesse-Bieber and Leavy (2004), qualitative questions tend to be open-ended, encouraging respondents to emphasise what they feel is important. This suited my research method, as teachers had the freedom to add comments which best expressed their opinion regarding the matter. They also had the freedom to refer to comments perhaps not indicated in the questions, but were crucial to making meaning of their

experiences. Patton (1990) states that with qualitative methods the data collection is not constrained by predetermined categories of analysis, allowing for a level of depth and detail that a quantitative strategy can't provide.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) suggest that qualitative researchers attempt always to study human action from the insiders' perspective. The goal of research is defined as describing and understanding rather than the explanation and prediction of human behaviour. Babbie and Mouton (2001) state that qualitative research is especially effective for studying the subtle nuances of attitudes and behaviours, and for examining social processes over time. As such the chief strength of this method lies in the depth of understanding it permits. This is vital as the study is interested in teachers providing their real feelings that would help to understand their experiences.

The interpretive paradigm and qualitative nature of the study were selected for this research as they allowed cases to be studied in depth.

Important characteristics of qualitative research as outlined by Patton (1990) are:

- It is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness;
- The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis;
- The process is inductive, in that the researcher gathers data to build concepts and theories;
- Finally, the product of a qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive.

The design of a qualitative study includes shaping a problem, selecting a sample, collecting and analysing a problem and writing up the findings.

The methods used in this research project are discussed in the next section.

### **3.5 Research method**

Choosing the correct methods for developing and producing data are important as this will not only determine your outcome, but will ensure whether the required information has been extrapolated correctly in order to provide the answers to the research questions. From the outset I had to decide, as the researcher, whether this research intends to find meaning or is based on figures. The method for this study was therefore determined by what was being studied and the required outcome had to be taken into account. As this study focuses predominantly on the experiences of the participants in my study, the interview formed the most important method of data collection in this study. This is because the questions could be specifically geared towards gaining insight into the experiences of teachers during their engagement with the Balanced Language Approach.

I also used questionnaires as a method initially to gain insights into the background of the teachers in the partnership. The questionnaires were completed by all teachers who agreed to be participants in the research. This questionnaire was biographical and provided information about the teachers' experience, age, previous interaction with partnerships and grades taught. The questionnaires were dropped off at the school and then collected after the teachers had completed them. The data from the questionnaires are presented in appendix 1.

The next form of data collection was the interview with the 5 teachers who were participants in the partnership. The interview questions were developed in such a way as to address the research question and sub-questions. Interviews were conducted at a central venue following an interview roster, which was negotiated and indicated the dates and times for the respective respondents. Special care was taken to secure the validity of the data by ensuring that all interviews were completed within a set period of time. The reports of the service provider were also used to gain insight into how teachers dealt with and experienced the implementation of the Balanced Language Approach in their classrooms.

Five Intermediate Phase Teachers in the Metropole South Education District with expertise in language were identified and included as participants (see section on sampling in 3.8). The selected teachers were all part of the WCED Literacy Intervention, which is a year-long intervention. The programme starts off with an intensive 5-day course followed by on-site training for the year. This sample ensures that different perspectives are provided by different teachers from different schools with different social contexts. Teachers were able to speak about their experiences of the programme, and the service provider and curriculum advisor could also share their interactions with schools in their capacity of providing support and monitoring.

### **3.5.1 Interviews**

The decision on which instrument to use for data collection remains the most important aspect of a research study. Kumar (2014) states that the construction of a research instrument is the first practical step in operationalising your study. It is the most important aspect of your research as it constitutes the input; the output (the findings and conclusions) is entirely dependent upon it.

In order to gain insight into the actual accomplishments, challenges and frustrations of the teachers, it was important to listen attentively to the teachers as they shared information, thoughts and their feelings around the implementation of the language methodology. The interview is by far the best instrument to use as teachers were able to give an in depth-explanation of their world and understanding of the situations they encountered in the partnership. Seidman (2006) states that at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of the experience. The interview was the most fitting instrument to use in this study as it shed light

on exactly what the teachers' thoughts were regarding their experiences of the partnership. Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behaviour and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behaviour. (Seidman,2006)

The interviews were largely semi-structured to unstructured. I wanted to give the teachers the opportunity to express their individual views on their experiences. This type of question is different from structured questions, where no change is allowed. The reason for choosing this method is that with this type of interview there is no way of knowing in what direction the teacher will steer the interview. This type of questions provides the teacher will that flexibility. According to Maykut and Morehouse (2005) the researcher tactfully asks and actively listens in order to understand what is important to know about the setting and the experiences of people in that setting. This purposeful conversation is not scripted ahead of time. Rather, the researcher asks questions pertinent to the study as opportunities arise, then listens closely to people's responses for clues as to what question to ask next, or whether it is important to probe for additional information.

Another reason why the interviews were unstructured is because it was vital to get to know the actual feelings of teachers and to get an idea of why they are feeling that particular way. Answers may become apparent in the undercurrents of an interview and not necessarily from the particular questions. (The way the question is approached is therefore significant.) But there is no way of knowing what direction the interview will take. Babbie and Mouton (2001) quite rightfully states that often the researcher is interested in determining the extent to which participants hold a particular attitude or perspective. Hence the responses of teachers should not be limited. Teachers are encouraged through this type of interview to speak openly and freely about their experiences in order to allow a greater level of understanding. It puts them at ease and makes it easier for them to move back and forth between questions and responses, coming back to a point they might have missed earlier

A further benefit of the unstructured interview is that the interviewees discuss incidents that were not mentioned in documents and provided another way to determine processes and practices related to decisions made and implemented. (Kavoura and Bitsani, 2014)

The interview schedule and examples of transcripts can be found in Appendix 2.

### **3.5.2 Document / artefact analysis**

Kumar (2014) states that the way you analyse the data depends upon the way it was collected and the purpose for which you are going to use the findings. Document analysis plays an important part in this research. Documents in the form of READ school reports which were made available by service providers as well as their overall term report was perused as evidence. These documents provided insight into whether the intervention is hampering or promoting Language teaching in the classroom. It was also useful to use the classroom observation reports from curriculum advisor, as this gave a first-hand glimpse at

how well the teacher is implementing the BLA. The classroom environment and use of resources were further evidence of how the teacher was experiencing the partnership.

The information which the service provider generates is vital as it reveals the findings relevant to the school. It indicates the level of the teachers' understanding of a particular concept of the BLA. The READ facilitator provides a report every term. Aspects covered in this report range from the teachers' implementation status to actual lesson delivery, including whether the classroom is conducive to learning. All these observations are recorded and noted in the report. There is also a report completed at the end of the year, which was used to gain data regarding the partnership.

Equally, the curriculum advisor's report is viewed as important. The curriculum advisor has a monitoring role. This allows for observation of various aspects pertaining to curriculum, for example, whether the teachers are planning correctly for language instruction. Secondly, the advisor will monitor and report on the work in the learners' books. Advisors will also look at the utilisation of resources such as textbooks and DBE workbooks. Again the classroom environment will be examined to see whether the strategies of the Balanced Language Approach are evident. Examples of these are the wall charts, writing frames, vocabulary walls and reading corners. Based on all the aspects listed above, the curriculum advisor writes a report to indicate the level of the teacher's implementation. These reports will be a good source of information when compiling data on the partnership.

Teachers' curriculum planning and lesson plans for Language teaching were also used as documents for review in this research.

The school's provincial systemic results and the national annual assessments were perused, but they did not form part of the data set for analysis and discussion in this study.

### **3.6 Sampling**

Every second year a new cohort of teachers is introduced to the methodologies of the Balanced Language Approach during the week-long training session. At this point in time a considerable number of teachers have already completed their training. It will be impossible to interview every single teacher who has gone through the process. Only a small number of subjects was selected to represent the whole group of that particular year. Fogelman (2002) explains that we must study a sample of that population, preferably one that can be shown to be representative of the relevant population and which therefore allows us to be reasonably confident about the validity of whatever generalisations we make.

Care has been taken in ensuring that the sample is representative of the group of teachers. The characteristics with the rest of the population and can be used to draw conclusions about the whole population of language teachers.

Only a sample of the schools will be selected and not the entire group of schools who have received training during a particular phase. The 5 schools have been selected on the basis that they represent the diverse contexts of all schools. These 5 schools formed part of a larger group of 30 schools in this Metropole who received training in the Balanced Language Approach during a particular phase. Consent was sought by arranging a meeting with the principals of the identified schools. The aim and intention of the research was explained to them. Once the principal had given consent, a meeting was arranged with every teacher from each of the 5 schools to explain the process.

Five Schools were identified and one teacher at each school was selected to form part of the sample. These teachers were all from Intermediate Phase. The teachers also represented a diverse group of schools with different contexts. The context of the five schools ranged from semi-affluent to poor. Factors such as single parenthood and parental neglect are prevalent in all five schools. Gangsterism is rife in the community of one of the schools, while poverty is a factor at two of the five schools. Learners have access to computers at only one of the schools and books at home at only two of the schools.

All the schools have access to the basic workbooks and textbooks provided by READ and the education department. Three of the schools have libraries. All schools have a computer lab to which learners have access. The mother – tongue at two of the schools is English, while at the other three schools, learners speak predominantly Afrikaans at home. The LoLT at all five schools is English.

There are approximately 40 learners in a class at the schools in the sample for this research. Two of the five schools have only one class per grade. Class teaching takes place at only one school, while at the other four schools, the teachers share the teaching of Language and Mathematics. At the two schools where class teaching takes place, only one teacher per grade attended the READ programme, while at the other three schools the number varied.

The schools were selected by the district in collaboration with the circuits within the district. Each of the circuits could select a group of schools to be part of the Language and mathematics training and circuits based their decision on performance of the schools with a view to improving the performance in both subjects by way of the programmes.

The facilitator who was responsible for the training and on-site support also formed part of the sampling decision making process. The curriculum advisor, who supported and monitored the schools to evaluate the implementation of the methodology was also part of this process and this allowed a better opportunity to get the different perspectives of persons in the process to state their experiences in the partnership.

### **3.7 Data-analysis process**

Data analysis is an on-going process which takes place throughout the research study. It is important to select a sound and reliable data-analysis technique which will enable the data

to be presented in a reliable manner. These data will bring to light the meaning that participants attach to their experiences. The analysis is important as it will shed light on the commonalities or differences and provide information regarding the manner in which the teachers, the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor experienced the partnership.

The importance of analysis is also highlighted by other researchers such as Maykut and Morehouse (2005), who state that the approach to data analysis is to understand more about the phenomenon we are investigating and to describe what we learn. Linked directly to my study, the analysis of how teachers, the facilitator and the curriculum advisor viewed the partnerships is important. The data will be able to reveal the experiences of the partners and whether it helped to promote or hinder the process.

In this study the data analysis process was undertaken in the following manner. The first questionnaire was used to gain insight into the teacher's experiences and general thoughts on previous partnerships by categorising the teachers in terms of context, experience and views on partnerships. This provided the basis for the rest of the information which followed.

The second important stage of the analysis was to use the interview data. This entailed transcribing the voice recordings. After reading through the transcript, a deeper analysis is made in order to understand what the participants' meaning. For each teacher a summary of the responses was completed on a similar template. There were definite distinctions made between those responses which hindered and those that promoted the partnership. These were indicated by a Yes or No tick in the relevant column. From these completed templates, similarities and differences could be identified and collated.

The next step of the analysis was looking at the emerging themes. Corresponding themes were colour coded to indicate similarities. All information pertaining to the same theme was written up and placed on cards. All cards were pasted below the specific theme. This also entailed cutting out certain parts of transcripts. This provided a great source of reference as the various responses could be listed in order of frequency as well. It also provided an indication of which themes were more prominent in the interview data than others. These data emerged after the process of analysis. According to Maykut and Morehouse (2005), the data are not grouped according to predetermined categories. Rather, what becomes important to analyse emerges from the data itself, out of a process of inductive reasoning.

It is important to note that you start with provisional categories which are taken from the broad outline, but as information is refined, certain categories will be eliminated in the final scheme. The data cards were grouped according to the pre-determined categories. This is done by pinning cards below the respective categories by using certain criteria. This process is continued until all cards have been placed.

Concepts are copied onto cards and these are filed under the appropriate categories. The cards were further refined and categorised at a later stage. According to Maykut and Morehouse (2005), further details will indicate various aspects such as the recurring words, phrases and topics in the data. At the end of the analysis the researcher will be able to make comparisons or contrasts, note patterns or themes, clustering, use of metaphors, use of triangulation, look for negative cases, follow up surprises and check results with respondents.

### **3.8 Validity**

The most generally accepted definition of validity refers to something that is justifiable based on the evidence and can therefore be trusted. For validity the question often asked is whether the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. Bush (2002) states that a reliable instrument should give more or less the same results each time it is used with the same person or group.

According to Bush (2002), the concept of validity is used to judge whether the research accurately describes the phenomena which it is intended to describe.

Bush (2002) states that authenticity may be an elusive target, but it is an important objective for educational management researchers. While there is no perfect truth, a focus on reliability, validity and triangulation should contribute to an acceptable level of authenticity sufficient to satisfy both researcher and reader that the study is meaningful and worthwhile.

The study should ensure that the sample group is small so that validity remains intact. Fogelman (2002) explains that we must therefore study a sample of the population, preferably one that can be shown to be representative of the relevant population and which therefore allows us to be reasonably confident about the validity of whatever generalisations we make.

### **3.9 Reliability**

According to Kumar (2014) reliability means that the result is dependable, consistent predictable, stable and honest. The greater the degree of consistency and stability in an instrument, the greater its reliability.

If the research is repeated under the same conditions and produces the same results, it is reliable (Bush, 2002); furthermore, when it comes to reliability, the most important factor is consistency. According to Bush (2002), a reliable instrument should give more or less the same results each time it is used with the same person or group. Reliability is about using the same measure and obtaining the same outcomes on different occasions. The researcher needs to ensure that a certain level of quality assurance is in place. In the case of this research study, the interviews were conducted with all respondents within a set timeframe

so as not to compromise the outcome of the responses. If the interviews with the teachers are done over a long period of time, then the responses cannot be compared. It was also important to take teachers from the same phase and cycle of training with the same period of engagement with the methodologies. If this is not the case, then the findings cannot be a true reflection of the implementation. When it comes to reliability the most important factor is consistency.

It is important to ensure that the questions are relevant to all teachers. Babbie and Mouton (2001) agrees that the questions asked should be relevant to most respondents. It would be unfair to expect teachers to give feedback on matters that do not pertain to certain teachers. For example, it would be unfair to question teachers on the Balanced Language Approach who have not attended the training.

### 3.10 Research Ethics

With any research study it is important to respect the research participants. Even though the respondents have given their consent, respect is required. The research should also be based on trust. Fogelman (2002) emphasises that the golden rule is to tell the truth and to explain the reasons for procedures adopted. It is a transparent process from the beginning. Furthermore, according to Kumar (2014), ethical issues in research relates to participants, researchers and sponsoring organisations. With regards to participants, ethical considerations take into account the following: collecting information; seeking consent; providing incentives; seeking sensitive information; the possibility of causing harm to participants; and maintaining confidentiality.

Consent is important. According to Burgess (1989), informed consent has a central place in the ethics literature and refers to the voluntary consent of the individual to participate in research.

Individuals also need the assurance that the confidentiality of the information will in no way harm the integrity of the individual or be used to impact negatively on the teacher's career. Burgess (1989) agrees that individuals involved in research shall not be harmed in any way.

The research tool – in this case the interview – must in no way implicate or harm the integrity of the participant. Any information shared must be dealt with in the most professional manner. Fogelman (2002) stresses that with any research strategy or method it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that their instruments or methods of data collection are of as high a quality as possible, and as unobtrusive and inoffensive as possible.

The research ethics protocols as prescribed by Stellenbosch University research development office were followed in this study. Subsequent to this the principals completed the consent letter. The teachers were informed regarding the purpose of the study, their roles in the study, as well as the process which will be followed during the gathering of data.

### 3.11 Conclusion

Care was taken to keep the research design coherent. The interview, which was the key research tool, and the responses of participants were carefully analysed. The interviews revealed how the teachers experienced certain questions in different ways, and provided some deeper insights into the actual success or hindering factors which took place at the school. The depth of the teachers' understanding regarding the implementation of the language methodology was taken into account.

The research requires of the paradigm to seek the understanding of how the teachers, the facilitator and the curriculum advisor experienced the partnership. This led the researcher to a qualitative line of research which included the understanding how the partners experienced the implementation of the Balanced Language Approach and the reasons why the approach was promoted or inhibited.

The focus of this study was on the partnership. The sustainability of the Balanced Language Approach has not been reviewed in this research, but rather how the various partners viewed the experiences.

## CHAPTER 4

### Presentation of data

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data as collected and constructed during the various stages of the research. The study has three research participants.

These are:

- READ facilitator
- Curriculum advisor
- Five teachers based at different schools

The teachers represent a good variety in terms of experience and prior engagements with partnerships.

Table 6: Summary diagram of questionnaire data

<b>BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE MASTERS RESEARCH STUDY</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>ANSWER</b>
1.	<b>What is your age?</b>	27, 40, 46, 56, 64
2.	<b>At which institution did you complete your teaching qualification?</b>	Hewat College of Education x 3 UWC UCT
3.	<b>How many years of teaching experience do you have?</b>	5, 17, 20, 41
4.	<b>What is your current qualification?</b>	HDE 1V x3 BA Degree BA Degree – PGCE
4.	<b>Which grade/s are you currently teaching?</b>	4 5 x2 6 x2
5.	<b>How many classes are there per grade? (your grade is in order)</b>	1, 2, 3, 4
	<b>Have you taught any other grades previously? Please state.</b>	1 – 7
5.	<b>Which subject are you most passionate about?</b>	Natural Science, English, English, English
6.	<b>Which subject/s are you currently teaching?</b>	Most subjects
7.	<b>How would you rate the community your school is situated in?</b>	Poor ✓ Middle ✓✓✓ Affluent ✓ (indicate with a tick)

8.	<b>Does the school have the necessary resources such as library, books, any additional ....? Please list.</b>	Yes, all schools have libraries (1 not functional), computer centres and a few whiteboards, with textbooks and workbooks
9.	<b>Have you recently been involved in any training course/s besides the READ training? Please specify.</b>	All participants have been involved in training.
10.	<b>Provide details regarding the success rate of this training, if any. State reasons.</b>	All participants found the training to be valuable

The following representation is a summary of the responses from participants during an interview on the process of a partnership in an education setting.

The data of all three sets of participants make reference to the positive aspects, challenges and ways to improve. This will form the basis of what types of data will be included in the summary. Only comments with direct links to the listed criteria will be used to inform the data analysis.

## 4.2 READ FACILITATOR

### 4.2.1 Roles and responsibilities

The READ facilitator who took part in the interview process is an experienced and highly skilful member of the READ Intervention team. She is a qualified teacher with more than 15 years' experience. For 2 years she served as Curriculum Advisor for the Foundation Phase in an education district office. During this time she excelled in the field of language support to teachers at schools. As Curriculum Advisor her job description included doing classroom visits and she conducted numerous workshops to ensure the effective implementation of the curriculum. She has been part of READ since 2009. She is a self-motivated and purpose-driven individual. Her personality is vibrant and teachers love her energy and the positivity she brings to engagements. She has worked with schools from all Metropole districts in the Western Cape and language support is her passion. This facilitator furthermore forms part of other intervention programmes within the district, Metropole South.

Her role in the READ Intervention is largely related to teacher development. She conducts the 5-day training as facilitator to approximately 40 teachers in a venue. Her role includes management of the training venue as the READ coordinator. This entails distribution of manuals and other resources to all facilitators at the site. She oversees all queries and provides support to other facilitators, where needed. The development of the visitation programme to schools after the training forms part of her responsibilities.

As facilitator she is entrusted with a certain number of schools which she has to visit during the course of the year. During the onsite visits she observes lessons and has to conduct demonstration lessons. This is done to support teachers with the implementation of the various Balanced Language methodologies. The facilitator acts as the mentor. Teachers are able to ask questions to clarify issues, which can be sorted out on site. Being at the school, in the class and providing added support forms part of her assistance to teachers. She assists with the development of language resources and guides teachers in the use materials in the classroom. In the afternoons she facilitates the tutorial sessions. During these sessions she unpacks each of the methodologies in detail. Teachers are given the opportunity to share best practices. She gives feedback on lessons observed during the day. These sessions are valuable as teachers then hear what has transpired in another class and these are good learning experiences.

The facilitator has to write a report after each school visit. Schools and the District Office receive termly updates of processes implemented at the schools.

#### 4.2.2 Summary of Facilitator Interview data

##### 4.2.2.1 Positive aspects

In response to the question on the factors impacting positively on the partnership, the facilitator stated that she was overwhelmed by the excitement this partnership managed to generate. According to her, the partnership had a positive impact on teachers and the broader classroom which stemmed from the implementation of the Balanced Language methodologies. To best describe her contributions, I refer to the table listed as Appendix 1

According to the data, it was evident that READ was able to capacitate the system by the support they provided. This indicates that if the intervention was not in place, then the movement towards more effective teaching strategies in the schools would not have taken place. It was also seen as a great opportunity for READ and the Western Cape Education Department to align the type of support to schools. Due to the fact that the partnership was between the WCED, districts and therefore the focus of curriculum advisor was largely similar. The support from curriculum advisors to schools in terms of Language improvement has to be similar to the support provided by the READ facilitator. This alignment will create less confusion and reinforce the Balanced Language Approach methodology. The Facilitator states: "*People are getting the same kind of support, and not conflicted.*" That's definitely a positive thing and also entails a closer working relationship with officials. By aligning structures, the support to schools became more focused, the joint efforts by all education officials more streamlined, and one uniform message was spread. The facilitator does, however, make reference to the fact that stronger alignment is required at times.

The facilitator noted the positive change in the mind-set of the teachers: "*At the schools I think definitely a change in mind set. As I said I think, the one thing was the change in*

*attitude.*" It seemed as if the teachers felt more competent about implementing the methodologies. This aspect of positivity was one of the biggest gains from the interventions. There has been a remarkable change in the attitude of the teachers, who stated this unanimously in their responses to the interview questions. It is not easy to change the thinking of teachers and it does take a really pragmatic intervention to encourage teachers to want to explore an alternative approach. This fact is well documented in their responses. The Facilitator attributed this renewed passivity to the fact that teachers not only had one methodology, but several from which to choose and to tailor according to their needs. This was one aspect which the teachers appreciated. According to the facilitator, this renewed enthusiasm could be the result of the various tools the methodologies are exposing teachers to. Teachers are also feeling comfortable about using them. The aspect of support and the importance of the READ facilitators interaction with teachers is noted: "*I think that the other thing that I have learnt is that just how important it is to mentor and to coach people*". This can be viewed as a positive consequence of the partnership with READ.

It can be inferred from this partnership that learner involvement has also increased. In the interview the facilitator mentioned that "*lots of teachers have started to say things like they can see the children being more engaged, more involved in the lessons because there is more variety of ways kids can get*". The methodology clearly provides the learners with more opportunities to interact and participate, instead of being passive recipients of knowledge. She further states in the interview: "*So I think If teachers kept their minds not on themselves, who is this for? Then you know then ultimately the kids are going to become better readers, writers, communicators etc. It is a bit pie in the sky I suppose, but it's not very tangible, but I think that if they just keep seeing the results of what is happening, they might be encouraged to continue*".

The facilitator found that the best way to get the teachers really talking and sharing during the afternoon tutorial sessions was a good idea. She stated: "*The whole notion of reflecting regularly on what you are doing and setting achievable goals. We do that a lot in the tutorials*". She added: "*We meant to get teachers to reflect on what they are doing. What working, what's not working. Why it isn't working, why they should be working differently*". During these sessions the screening of videos also works well. She states that "*looking at gaps is actually showing video clips of what happens in a day in a particular classroom. The teachers really enjoyed this*." The Facilitator noted: "*Sharing of good practice seems to have bubbled over*." I found it interesting that the facilitator stressed the importance of allowing teachers just to talk. She mentioned: "*It creates a talking space for teachers where they can discuss details of a lesson and provide inputs*." The Facilitator made special reference to the fact that it doesn't just happen, but that it takes planning. She summed up the notion of reflection by stating: "*This obviously needs to be planned for, but it is something with real worth as teachers also found this to be helpful*."

#### 4.2.2.2 Challenges

The question pertaining to the factors impacting negatively on the partnership sparked the following comments. The data revealed that the facilitator felt that teachers were not prioritising the intervention. "*I noted it's a problem sometimes when the school doesn't see it as much of a priority.*" At certain schools there is no indication that they are making a concerted effort to embrace the methodology. She made the comment: "*Principals are welcoming, but don't request much input after the class visits. Some principals said they didn't really know about the intervention.*"

The methodology was not always part of the daily teaching. The Facilitator noted: "*I think the other challenges is that teacher not always making the methodology part of their daily teaching, and maybe just keeping it for the trainer.*" There was no really seamless alignment between the Balanced Language Approach and the curriculum. The Facilitator mentioned: "*Teachers were according to them just following the content as outlined in the curriculum and then sometimes using a methodology to complete an activity.*"

Another important point made was that the principals are not adequately involved. The training does not explicitly involve the principal. Some HODs are perhaps there as class teachers, but are not trained in how to be an effective manager of the process. When the teachers go back to schools then the principal, or HOD for that matter, is not able to effectively monitor the implementation of the project. She indicates that: "*I think that the intervention needs to be managed by the School Management team - SMTs – more*". A further challenge is the role of the district: "*So I also think that the district could have monitored the sustainability by ensuring that the tutorials are continued and the same pattern we use with best practices are followed. I know it's part of the district expectation, they would have to follow up and ensure that implementation still happens.*" The implementation of the methodology should be included in the moderation process. Internal moderation at schools is lacking. The Facilitator states: "*I think internal moderation, I think that needs to include the implementation of the methodologies.*" The School Management Team needs to take the needs of teachers into account and plan for required materials. Through observation the Facilitator has noticed that if a teacher has the required resources, such as an easel or chart paper, then the teacher will continue to implement.

The aspect of duration at the schools (number of visits per term) and the timeframe of a intervention was seen by teachers as being inadequate. The Facilitator noted: "*Another challenge is the timeframe is too short. It's a year, but not really a year. It's one visit in the month, which translates into 12 visits for the year.*" The facilitator felt that the percentage of on-site training was not enough. At bigger schools with more staff members some teachers never receive individual class visits. The fact that not all teachers at schools were trained is seen as a challenge. In response to a question during the interview the Facilitator said: "*Everybody at the school was not trained.*"

#### 4.2.2.3 Ways to improve

In response to the question about what the Facilitator would change about the partnership, the Facilitator mentioned that the teachers should set achievable goals. More attention should be given to situations where teachers could reflect on the quality of past lessons. Designated time should be set aside to do this: "*This whole notion of reflecting regularly on what you are doing and setting achievable goals.*"

The READ facilitator expressed a need for the process to be more directly managed by the School Management Team (SMT). The implementation of the methodology should be included in the moderation process. Internal moderation would have to be enforced. "*I think internal moderation needs to include the implementation of the methodologies.*" The methodologies should form part of the school policy. The Facilitator stated: "*To make sure that everyone understands what it is and when to use it, it should be written into the school's policy, so that when new people come to the school, it should be part*". The SMT needs to take the needs of teachers into account and plan for the materials required. Through observation the Facilitator noticed that if a teacher has the required resources such as an easel or chart paper, the teacher will continue to implement. The school also needs to free up time for teachers to continue with the tutorial sessions, especially after the intervention comes to an end at the school. More effective planning sessions need to be held between phases and staff at school. The entire process of the partnership should be written up in the school policy. Accountability is important: "*I think for me, the biggest thing is, are people actually going to be held accountable.*" The Facilitator notes that the district office and the School Management Team have a greater role to play in securing implementation: "*But the big thing is the district support, but also the school and the SMT and making sure teachers are accountable.*" She refers to the fact that more structures need to be put in place: "*So in terms of sustainability being common practice in the school, where you set a goal and someone is going to check on how far you've...*".

The SMT furthermore needs to take the needs of teachers into account and plan for required materials. Through observation the facilitator noted that: "a school/teacher will continue if resources are provided. *I mean whether it's an easel for a big book or a flip chart paper for shared writing. Would be helpful if schools could prioritise things like this.*"

It will be good if teachers could continue to share their good practices with others. The Facilitator suggests that: "*I think that if schools continued with that practice as if the facilitator was there, then that might help. I think teachers also just in terms of their knowledge, you know the more you use these approaches the better you get*". This translates into a more concerted effort to be made to get teachers to practise the approaches.

More deliberate links with the curriculum should be made. The Facilitator stated: "*Another thing that they need to do is really make a more deliberate effort. Like linking these methods*

*with what am I supposed to cover in the curriculum and start". "More accountability from all stakeholders is required". "Teachers must be kept motivated". "It is important for teachers to be able to see how the methodology is assisting the implementation of the curriculum". According to the data, it is clear that a good person or persons who could drive the process at school would also make a difference. Teachers would be able to see what the new methodology entails and when to use it.*

There should be a programme developed to address the intake of new teachers. The intervention should be focused on how to upskill the new teachers joining the system. They should know how to be part of the unified Balanced Language Approach at the school. This is also where the importance of mentoring and coaching should be realised. The Facilitator's task is to walk alongside the teacher and not to alienate. In conclusion, the Facilitator stated: "*I think that the other thing that I have learnt is that just how important it is to mentor and to coach people.*"

All the language support from district should be aligned with the Balanced Language Approach. There should also be a definite link with the curriculum. District officials running workshops should use the same terminology and format to train teachers. "*Support that comes from the district around languages is should always be in alignment with not with READ, but with the Balanced Language Approach. So people are getting the same message all the time.*"

One of the other things mentioned in order to sustain the partnership is that the schools should have a system in place to manage the utilisation of their resources. Lots of resources are available, but needs to be monitored and utilisation should be optimised. Classroom and time management should be seen as very important. Teachers want practical strategies to use in classroom.

The Facilitator felt strongly that more emphasis should be placed on teachers planning together. She suggests that: "*Regular meeting together, planning together. That I think is going to, phase planning together, schools planning together.*"

Ongoing training is important. In the interview it was stated that: "on-going training is needed."

The Facilitator summed up her experiences of being part of the partnership as being rewarding. To see the teachers implement the strategies was a good experience. It shows that the effort has paid off. Being part of the partnership have her a broader understanding of what was really happening in classroom. If the partnership never took place, then there would have been lots of connections that could not have been made. Through this partnership the partners were able to move closer towards one common goal. The partnership made it possible for the Facilitator to really understand what teachers grapple with. It was an opportunity to help the teachers on the spot when and where it matters

most. Teachers became familiar with the approach of the “outsider” and was were to ask questions which they normally would not have asked. The Facilitator claims that none of the successes would have been possible without the partnership. The fact that a relationship of trust was developed made it easier to change existing mind-sets. The Facilitator was quick to state, however, that there are many aspects which could enhance the partnership even further, if put in place. This partnership was an example of how teachers and outside service providers can work together to create better teaching and learning opportunities. The most rewarding experience is when you see the change which the teachers have undergone from being anxious at first and totally apprehensive about what to do to a state of being so comfortable with the methodologies. I would agree that there is still lots of room for improvement, but the partnership managed to get some momentum going, which under normal circumstances would not have been the case.

#### 4.3 CURRICULUM ADVISOR

##### 4.3.1 Roles and responsibilities

The Curriculum Advisor taught at several schools and has teaching experience of more than 25 years. She became a Curriculum Advisor for Intermediate Phase Languages 8 years ago. She is experienced in the field of language development. Her role as Curriculum Advisor is to support teachers with the implementation of the curriculum. This means that she does classroom visits and also runs afternoon sessions with teachers to improve language skills.

In this partnership her role as Curriculum Advisor was mostly of a monitoring nature. She monitors the implementation of the curriculum with special emphasis on how the Balanced Language Approach is used to enhance the teaching and learning process. Officials do not necessary change the programme of the facilitator or veer away from the prescribed methodology. The following were key aspects which the Curriculum Advisor commented on in the interview.

##### 4.3.2 Summary of Curriculum Advisor Interview

###### 4.3.2.1 Positive aspects

In response to the interview question which referred to factors impacting positively on the partnership, the Curriculum Advisor made the following interesting comments. There is evidence of teachers using certain methodologies such as the group teaching, shared writing and guided reading. The Advisor stated: *“The biggest improvement is the fact that teachers are displaying their word walls and reading corners.”* There is also evidence that the teachers are using them when implementing the various methodologies: *“I do see the excitement; let’s put the reading corner there for kids to have access to the books.”* Due to the intervention the Curriculum Advisor has observed that creative writing has improved. There is a greater buy-in from the teachers. Facilitator noted: *“Grade 4 and 5 teachers, they*

*were doing group teaching which was a no no before.*" She added: "*I can tell you they do a lot of shared writing and they have to move towards independent writing.*"

Another positive aspect the Advisor noted during the interview was that adequate reading materials were available such as the core readers, textbooks, reading pieces and the workbooks. She commented: "*I think adequate resources, the core reader, they have the textbook, enough reading pieces and the workbooks. The workbook is brilliant for shared writing, it covers the different texts, the genres.*" She noted the following regarding teachers using the writing methodologies: "*This came about because of the training they received. Group and guided reading was taught in the class.*" These positives aspects are examples of factors which promote the partnerships.

#### **4.3.2.2 Challenges**

Based on the response from the Advisor there are a number of factors stemming from the interview question on challenges experienced during the partnership. According to the Curriculum Advisor, the teachers' understanding of draft writing needs attention. The entire concept needs to be thoroughly explained. This gave raise to misconceptions. Teachers are also not assisting learners with editing and revising. The Advisor stated: "*Teachers are not aware of what the difference between editing and revising is, so they don't teach the children the difference between editing and revising.*"

One of the big drawbacks is that not all teachers are on board and implementing the Balanced Language Approach: "*Negative is not everybody is doing it.*" Not being part of the partnership does influence the process. This indicates that there is value in taking part in the interactions of the partnership.

Teachers have to learn how to use resources. There are lots of resources, but teachers are not sure when to use them and in some cases even how to use them: "*Teachers must learn how to use it.*"

The Advisor also notes that there is lots of room for improvement. More structure and tightening up of existing processes are needed. She states in the interview that "*There are lots of gaps.*" This indicates that more attention needs to be placed on holding the implementation of the Balanced Language Approach together.

#### **4.3.2.3 Ways to improve**

When the Advisor was asked during the interview what she would change about the partnership, she made the following comments. HODs and principals need to hold teachers accountable for the implementation of the methodologies. The Curriculum Advisor stated: "*Either HODs and the principals must come into play and hold the teachers accountable.*" Teachers have to believe in the process.: "*I want a teacher to believe that it is going to work.*

*We got to get teacher to feel confident.*" Teachers need to learn how to use the resources with confidence. The knowledge and understanding of the process needs to be improved.

It would be better for the partnership if as curriculum advisor say: "*Teachers must be held accountable. Either HODs and the principals must come into play and hold teachers accountable.*" Teachers have to believe in the process. This is a key determinant in our quest to reach quality. "*Teacher must not feel like a failure.*" "*We got to make the teacher feel comfortable.*

The Curriculum Advisor summed up her experiences of the partnership by highlighting the fact that having READ come on board as a service provider supporting the different reading methodologies was good for the schools in the district. Although the methodology was not new to the advisor, she still found it useful as *she* could see it being done by another teacher in the class. The manual was very well set out which meant that the teachers and advisor included could always go back to the manual to review and brush up on knowledge. The partnership can be seen as an answer to what teachers were asking for all along and could be used to assist in promoting better teaching and learning. The partnership was geared more towards the weaker schools, and according to the advisor, experience has taught her that even better performing schools would benefit from this partnership where outside service providers and district officials work with teachers of participating schools to improve the levels of language acquisition.

#### 4.4 TEACHERS

##### 4.4.1 Roles and responsibilities

The 5 teachers are from schools in a Metropole Education District. Schools are from diverse settings. Teachers are all Intermediate Phase teachers and teach either Grades 4, 5 or 6. All these teachers are passionate about teaching language. Their experience ranges from 5 to 30 years. All teachers have a responsibility to effectively teach the learners to read and write at the grade-appropriate level. Learners are to be taught the language skills to master the four language skills and in so doing demonstrate their competencies. Each teacher has to work with learners and take them through a process that entails teaching, assessing, reflecting and re-teaching in order to make learning happen.

##### 4.4.2 Summary of teacher interview data

###### 4.4.2.1 Positive aspects

The teachers generated good comments pertaining to the interview question which refers to the positive impact of the partnership. All teachers found the 5-day training valuable. Teacher D felt: "*We had our processes in place before, but the processes we got for that 5 days were stronger than our own policies at school. So we benefited from all those methodologies that we got from the 5 days.*" Training outcomes were made clear from the

start. The facilitators were well prepared and set clear objectives that were easily understood. Teacher D felt: "*They felt confident and was eager to go back to school to implement.*" Teacher A stated: "*I was eager to start the methodology. We actually jotted down exactly what we would try and do immediately when we got back to the school.*" There was a high level of enthusiasm amongst the teachers. This feeling was largely due to the excellent facilitation skills, support and assistance provided by the facilitators at the training sessions and at the schools. Teacher D commented: "*Support that I received from the facilitator on the course and the ongoing visits by facilitator, all made up a highly effective intervention with practical, positive results.*" Other teachers made general comments relating to the fact that they understood the information and that the content made sense to them. Teacher C mentioned: "*The facilitator was talking right into the heart of things in the sense that this is what we are looking for.*" The format of the course was well structured and the course manuals made it easy to understand. Facilitators were well prepared and teachers felt secure. A relationship of trust was established between the teacher and facilitator. Teacher C mentioned: "*So the outsider/facilitator, she won by fulfilling her purpose in seeing a successful and sustainable implementation. So, I would say a relationship of trust was established.*" Facilitators provided positive feedback and gave immediate assistance if there was confusion. The facilitator kept the teacher on track. The outsider (facilitator) with expertise was a positive and was welcomed. Teacher C mentioned: "*It was also the first time we had someone come out and actually willing to have a partnership with us and supporting us. Not just somebody coming from the outside coming to appraise you or assess you, or evaluate you. Steered us in right direction.*" Teachers developed as a result of the partnership. The partnership has made the class a brighter place. The level of implementation exceeded expectations. The fact that the whole staff was involved helped.

The on-going support at school was deemed valuable. The modelling of the classroom environment during training was valuable and effective. The new strategies were helpful in the class. What helped was to plan a lesson to accommodate the methodologies and to plot it on the timetable. READ kept to their programme. Tutorials were valuable in terms of sharing. Teacher liked the fact that there were options. Teachers did not just see the visits by facilitators as a type of monitoring, but as useful guidance. Teacher E added: "*I saw the value of someone coming just to see how you getting on, not necessarily just snooping but you know if are you on the right track.*"

Writing process was well presented. Groups were started in classrooms and it was manageable. The word wall was easy to start and is valuable. Shared reading as a class and guided writing was conducted comfortably. Word- and sentence-level work is implemented. Independent reading and writing still happens. Shared writing is still done. Some teachers are very comfortable with implementation of this methodology. This partnership strengthens existing processes at schools. Only slight adjustments needed at times.

The focus of the programme was more learner-centred. Learner participation is encouraged and showed an increase. Learners enjoyed working in groups. Collaboration between student and teacher took place. Teachers gained insights by listening to each other. Responses also included that teachers appreciated the support from colleagues. Teacher B indicated: "*If you got praise for something or somebody else did something and they explain what they did, then you got insight, and you weren't maybe in the class, but you kind of understood how they were teaching.*"

There are enough resources and they are deemed valuable. Teacher E added: "And the resources are beautiful. I must say we are blessed with lots of resources." It is an excellent resource for CAPS. Reading resources are noted in planning. The introduction to CAPS assisted the process.

There were contributions made regarding good checking systems in place at particular school. Teacher D felt: "*We have a checking system, HODs and heads of grades coming along and see that you still implementing those different methodologies in class.*"

#### **4.4.2.2 Challenges**

In terms of the interview question on the negative aspects of the partnership, there were valuable comments made. Certain teachers felt that at the beginning teachers were not aware of what was expected. Not enough information was provided. Teacher A stated that: "*I have to say that I embarked on the training with not enough info about with a bit of negativity as there was not enough information. The holiday time is not a good time.*" Teacher E added: "*I think a lot of us, most of us had this glum feeling about spending a holiday at a workshop of that nature, because it's a holiday.*" Correct timing for the training needs to be found. One felt there was no choice. Five days was also seen as too long. All staff members are not on board. Teacher intake and movement is a challenge. It was a lot of information to digest.

With the introduction of CAPS, most of the Balanced Language Approach faded as a programme. There has been an impact. Aspects of the methodology were dropped to accommodate CAPS. Momentum was lost. Lack of resources was noted. Textbooks do not make reference to the Literacy Approach. Management of the resources is a challenge.

Establishing ability groups in class took up lots of time. Writing and group work still to be developed. Group reading not adequately addressed. It was mentioned that discipline causes a negative effect on the partnership. Learners don't always pay attention. Unsure about the use of writing frames. Not enough time for word and sentence level work. Guided writing is a difficulty due to space. Shared writing was a challenge. Teacher E added: "*For some reason I just backed off a little bit on the shared writing. My view has always been a child must be independent.*" Word and sentence level work is neglected.

Number of learners and confined spaces is a challenge. All learners are not participating in groups. Teacher A stated: "*I still find that that is the biggest drawback for me has always been how many children I have to work with, to find a corner, find the space to do the various things.*"

Lack of parental support and involvement. Parents are showing little interest in children's work. Social problems are prevalent. English is not their Home Language. There were also comments made contrary to previous contributions. E.g. Teacher D felt: "*Very important that stood out of us at school is the teachers and parents enjoyment and improvement to learners. Big enjoyment from parents and we getting them involved with these different implementations.*"

Afternoon tutorials were tiring. Teacher B indicated: "*Afternoons are very tiring and the last thing you want to do is sit for 2 extra hours listening to something you have already heard.*" Lesson observation causes stress.

Teachers felt pressurised by having to teach for the facilitator. Teacher B indicated: "*I think whenever somebody comes into your class and you have to teach for them, it becomes a little bit pressurised.*" Tutorials were just a repeat of the 5-day course. Facilitator did not teach the class herself.

Not all teachers are on board in the way they should be. Teacher C mentioned: "*Every school has staff members who are willing to change and others who are not willing to at all.*"

The language issue is a challenge as the majority of learners in class speak a different language at home. So learners are not familiar with the basics of the language they are taught in. Teacher E added: "*What language do you speak to your parents and friends at home. 21 out of 27 speak Afrikaans at home.*"

#### 4.4.2.3 Ways to improve

The teachers stated during the interview that there were lots of areas where the partnership could be improved upon. More explanation of the programme needs to be provided at the beginning of the intervention for all to understand the procedure. School management should play a greater role. The management needs to have strategy in place for new teachers. There should be a built-in strategy to accommodate new teachers. Timetable has to explicitly indicate the BLA methodologies.

More teachers needed to be able to share their findings. More time for feedback and learning from each other. Longer period of support is required. Programme should have a built in re-cap phase. More support is needed. More stakeholders to be roped in to support the process. Teacher felt that he would like to go again for training, as he enjoyed it that much.

Same-ability groups need more attention. Bigger variety of texts required. Implementation of Balanced Language Approach to be compulsory. Schools challenges needs to be taken into account. The programme should be result-orientated.

More frequent visits would be required. Contact with service provider needed to take place over a longer period of time and more visits were needed. Teacher A stated: "*So I would like more frequent visits from here and especially, because we a large group of teachers she had to spread herself thin amongst us.*" Teacher B felt that "*Because things change as your class changes. It is not the same from one year to the other. So maybe another year support or possibility of more support would have been better.*"

Social context plays an important role in any partnership. Teacher E added: "*A lot of learners come with serious problems. Aspects such as substance abuse, single parenthood are mentioned.*"

Table 7: Extract of summary of the responses from teachers.

Promoting	RESPONSES	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
	Hindering					
	Not aware of what to expect	✓	✓	✓		
	Holiday time is not a good time		✓		✓	
Training facilitation a success					✓	✓
Teacher felt competent/ enthused		✓		✓	✓	
Teacher felt eager and secure to learn		✓	✓			✓
Greater understanding of methodologies		✓			✓	✓
Course well-structured and helpful		✓	✓			
Course manual helpful		✓			✓	
Facilitator willing to assist / support		✓	✓		✓	✓
Feedback was valuable		✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Shared writing was a challenge				✓	
Managed to start group work		✓			✓	
Word wall is an excellent tool			✓	✓	✓	
	Behavioural problems in class	✓	✓			
Insights gained from sharing				✓	✓	
Teacher feels competent		✓			✓	✓
Shared reading - confidence			✓	✓		
Support from facilitator			✓	✓		
	Teachers deviated from CAPS	✓	✓			
Excellent resources for CAPS				✓	✓	

	Class sizes hindering process		✓	✓		
	Lack of parental support		✓		✓	
In line with process / competent			✓	✓	✓	✓
	Thorough explanation to be done at the start	✓	✓			
	Longer period of support required	✓		✓		

#### 4.4. 3 Summary of all partners

The responses made by the three participants indicate various opinions on the success and or challenges experiences during the partnership:

- The facilitator
- The Curriculum Advisor
- The teachers

In general, all the partners gained from being part of the partnership. The relationship of trust and mutual respect was key to this partnership. All were in agreement that the Balanced Language Approach methodologies were implemented to varying degrees. It appears that the aspect of accountability by school management and the length of the partnership were two key aspects which all participants felt needs to be addressed.

These ideas are discussed in terms of the literature reviewed in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### Analysis and discussion of findings

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the main themes are highlighted as extracted from data by participants and explain the significance of this data through the lens of previous studies done in the field of partnerships between external services and teachers at schools. Themes emerged from an analysis of the interview data. The transcripts were analysed in terms of summarising the responses and the themes presented were derived from the data. I present the discussion in two main or broad themes derived from the research question, namely what *promoted* and what *hindered* the partnership process in this study. The data from different partners were presented separately in the previous chapter, but are discussed collectively here. I review the theoretical position framing this study, namely activity theory and later highlight important aspects of this theory as it played out in the partnership process.

#### **5.2 ACTIVITY THEORY AS A BACKDROP TO THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS**

To describe the conceptualisation of this study, I employed the theoretical tools of Engeström (2001), as a theoretical and partly as a methodological lens to better understand the processes and the data produced. This framework is called the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström ,2001). It best suits the dynamic and multifaceted nature of my study. Engeström (2001) is interested in the process of social transformation and includes the structure of the social world, taking the conflictual nature of social practice into account.

The focus of this study was to understand the experiences of the teachers, external service provider and district curriculum advisors in a partnership. Essentially the study involved enquiry into an inter-agency partnership which had three main “constituents” listed below and earlier in the report. The reason I choose to make this link to CHAT is because within the larger collective system of activities and opportunities this theory makes provision for boundary crossing (see Chapter 2) within multiple social worlds. This crossing is done by boundary brokers through boundary objects and mediating tools. This speaks directly to my study, which describes my findings based on an investigation into factors contributing or hindering the success of partnerships between READ as the NGO (service provider) and teachers at schools in Metropole South district.

The interpretation of the data collected in my study is best depicted by illustrating the findings against the backdrop of the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as the partnership involves multiple activities within different activity systems where constant boundary crossings are undertaken by partners within the partnership.

In my study Activity Theory is depicted by two activity systems to adequately outline the multiple levels of interaction.

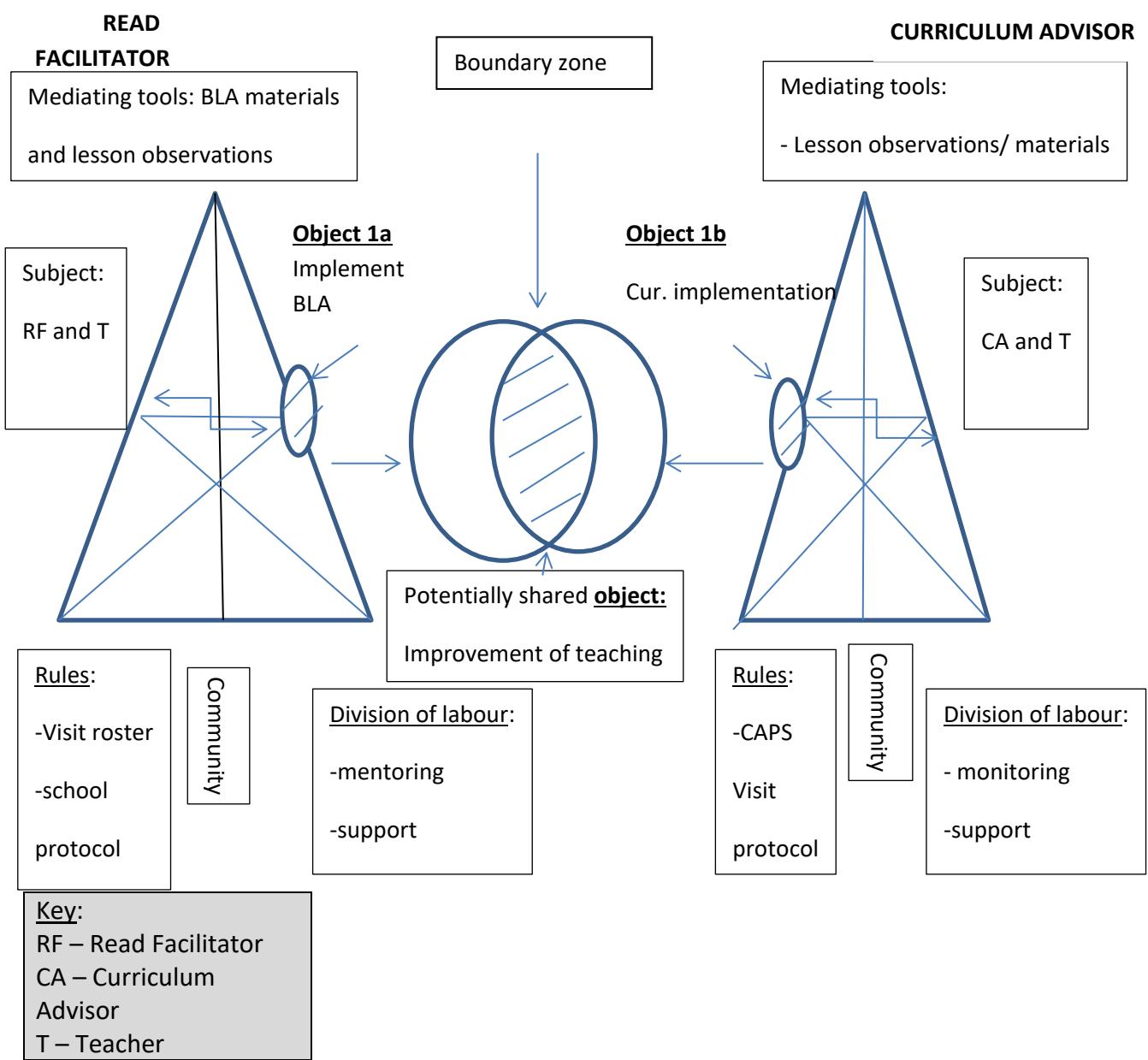


Fig. 5: Diagram illustrating Activity Theory as applied in this study

(Summary of the study framework adapted from Engeström's Activity Theory, 2001)

As indicated above, the crossing of boundaries between the READ facilitator, the teacher and the curriculum advisor takes place with the shared object promoting the improvement in language teaching. The primary object of the above activity systems is to ensure that the

teachers teach competently and that the curriculum content is covered adequately in order to improve language teaching and learning.

The left triangle the central activity is that of mentoring. The subjects are the READ facilitator and the teacher. The object of this activity system is to assist the teacher with the implementation of the Balanced Language Approach. The READ facilitator has to negotiate the process of mediation by adhering to the rules such as the set visitation roster to schools as well as the school protocol. The mediating tools in this activity system were the resources introduced to teachers such as the wall charts, reading corners, vocabulary charts, word walls and writing frames. The division of labour component of this activity system is mentoring and support by the READ facilitator, and from the teacher it is teaching lessons. The school is the basis of the community.

The right triangle represents the curriculum advisor and the teacher as the subject. The object of this activity system is to ensure curriculum implementation and compliance. The curriculum advisor negotiated the process of mediation by making use of the rules such as the CAPS document as a policy requirement and the school visit protocol. The mediating tools used by the curriculum advisor are the lesson observation and the BLA materials including the textbooks and workbooks. The division of labour component of this activity system is monitoring and support by the curriculum advisor, and from the teacher it is to teach competently. The school again forms the basis of the community.

The teachers are expected to comply with the requirements and operate in two different systems, though related objects. When the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor collaborate to offer advice to the teachers on classroom teaching, a boundary zone is created as they cross community boundaries (potentially shared objective) and are engaged in a new activity system. The crossing of boundaries led to renewal as the teachers created new tools and made new discoveries as to how to teach language strategies more effectively in their classes. Examples of these are the newly developed writing frames, the word walls and the adjustments to the timetable and lesson planning. Teachers have discovered that placing learners in ability groups help to address the learning barriers.

The greatest value of the partnership has been that the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor could jointly advise the teachers on classroom practice. The shared object has been the boundary zone where elements of both activity systems are present. New boundaries were crossed and new activities were formed. Teachers felt comfortable to try out new activities that they might previously not have attempted. Multiple activities, such as the afternoon tutorial discussions and best practice sharing, which were non-existent previously were now important aspects in improving language teaching at schools. These activity systems were further enhanced by the boundary crossing involving outsiders. This propelled the school community to a new level of pedagogical understanding.

## 5.3 EMERGING THEMES

### 5.3.1 What contributed to the success of the partnership?

#### 5.3.1.1 Structured language intervention programme

The innovation was different to what teachers had previously experienced. The partnership had a definite objective with a prescribed model of operations. Firstly, it took teachers “out of the classroom” into a 5-day intensive and focused training period, which the teachers had undergone have previously. The added benefit of this partnership is that it had built-in on-site support for an additional year. The teachers found this addition to the intervention useful as a good relationship could be built up between the facilitators and the teachers. It was not a “once-off” occurrence, never to be experienced again. The READ facilitator stated that the language intervention was focused. This made the partnership useful as teachers could zoom in on language methodologies for a sustained period of time. A similar point is raised by Ndlovu (2011) when he implies that workshops has been shown to have limited effectiveness, because of strong central and limited room for teachers’ voices, leading to inadequate professional appreciation.

#### 5.3.1.2 Effective collaboration between partners

Teachers found the collaboration effective and benefited from the interrelatedness of the partnership with READ. A similar comment was made in a study conducted by Thomas, Poetter and Eagle (2005), who stated that when people work together across institutions to pool resources and talents, it can have a significant impact on students’ learning and community wellbeing. I agree with this statement on the basis of my research, because teachers saw the potential of certain methodologies and felt comfortable learning about them, as well as implementing them. Sim (2010) states in her study on the community of practice approach that the partnership provided a framework which prioritised enabling a dialogue among the participants, whereby their assumptions and goals as teacher educators would be made explicit, the constraints and possibilities of their contexts would be recognised, and the ongoing work of all participants would be valued. The READ facilitator added that she realised the importance as a mentor and coach. It helped to strengthen the partnership. Furthermore, this partnership also created a better working relationship with the district officials. The partnership brought a greater sense of cohesion and there were no conflicting messages. District and service provider could speak with “one-voice”.

#### 5.3.1.3 Developing relationship of trust

All the teachers in this study mentioned the relationship of trust that was developed between the READ service provider and themselves. Teachers felt secure and comfortable having facilitator at their school and even in their classrooms. This relation of trust was earned by the way in which the facilitators approached the teachers. Their attitudes drew teachers closer instead of alienating them. This was also apparent in the University of

Colorado study done by Marlow and Nass (2000), which stated that on-going professional interaction forms a basis of trust. They reiterate in their study that it is a meeting of equals, where each colleague is respected for his or her own unique contribution to the whole. In the North West University study conducted by Frost (2009) the issue of trust was raised as the key, and the increasing sense of involvement and group trust were similar to other group members' description of positive outcomes. This notion was also raised by facilitators from the Ohio University project, who clearly stated that honesty was the key to establishing a fruitful project and open dialogue was key to the success. This relation of trust is further emphasised by Frost (2009) during a study on learning communities – to develop trust the process requires that the collaborating members of a group are willing to risk vulnerability as they work through the initial ambiguity and complexity related to the different cultures and goals of the members, develop common goals for their work together, and develop trust that in turn engenders taking more risks. The READ facilitator noted that the teachers appreciated the fact that she did not come into class to monitor, but to assist. The facilitator negotiated with teachers and "walked beside" the teacher by doing co-teaching and demonstration lessons. Frost et al. (2009) state that to develop trust the process requires that the collaborating members of a group should be willing to risk vulnerability as they work through the initial ambiguity and complexity related to the differences and goals of the members. This idea resonates with the findings of Frost and seems to be similar in this study.

#### 5.3.1.4 Confidence-building exercise

Trust in turn contributed to the confidence of teachers. The partnership brought about a huge drive towards making teachers feel comfortable. Many teachers mentioned how their confidence grew. The teachers were eager to go back to school and start new methodologies. They could only accomplish this if they had built up enough confidence to try something new. This was also the case noted by Thomas, Poetter and Eagle (2005) in the Board of Education for the Talawanda Schools for improvement in Mathematics. These teachers repeatedly stated how they began to gain and build confidence levels in using the programme. Teachers worked through the challenges of the curriculum in implementing the new programme. The READ facilitator stated that there was a distinct change in the mind-set of the teachers. The teachers became more competent.

#### 5.3.1.5 Value of the outside service provider

In this study the teachers mentioned that they appreciated the presence of the service provider as the person with knowledge coming into their schools. The respect for and confidence in the facilitator, and vice versa, is worth mentioning as a positive contributing factor to the success of the partnership. The facilitator in this study mentioned that it was important just to listen and walk beside the teacher by doing demonstration lesson and co-teaching. Although it is noted that teachers were not able to sustain all the methodologies, it is good that the small steps were gained. Freiberg (1999) in his findings on school climate

and measuring improvement says that it may be more the little things linked together over time that sustain a healthy climate conducive to learning compared to a larger one-time organisational change. A case in point is the need for school members to celebrate collective success and accomplishments rather than individual efforts. A similar supporting comment is from Blankstein (2008), who states that in implementing Balanced Language Literacy strategies, students needed to manage their emotions, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish positive goals, make responsible decisions and maintain relationships. This was echoed by teachers in the Ndlovu (2011) study conducted at the University of Stellenbosch. The teachers had a lot of faith in the university facilitators, because they kept their promises and were knowledgeable. Thomas, Poetter and Eagle (2000) shares that in the Miami University and Talawanda Schools partnership, teachers said that the university facilitators were offering their expertise rather than placing expectations on them as teachers. These positive factors were also prevalent in my research findings and certainly contributed to the success of the partnership in the context of my study.

#### 5.3.1.6 Enthusiasm generated

Teachers in this study repeatedly mentioned that they felt extremely enthusiastic to apply the methodologies after they had completed the initial contact sessions. The new strategies made sense to teachers. Teachers wanted to go and try out their new-found competence. The training gave them insight into other more effective ways to teach writing and reading. Cardini (2006) states that vital ingredients in successful partnerships are the commitment and enthusiasm of partners. This was also the case with teachers in the research done by Thomas, Poetter and Eagle (2000), who went back to their classes to launch the fast plant project which was started by the University of Wisconsin. The Wisconsin teachers were excited and were looking forward to going back to their schools. It is well documented in this study that teachers responded with excitement and enthusiasm after being introduced to the BLA. Similar feedback was noted in the Ndlovu (2011) study, where teachers expressed their satisfaction with the impact of the intervention. Curriculum advisors noted that there was renewed energy amongst teachers and there was evidence to support the notion that teachers were implementing the BLA methodologies, such as group reading and guided writing.

#### 5.3.1.7 Value of reflection

The element of sustaining productive collaboration was important in this study. This was particularly evident where teachers across grades gathered to share ideas and practices. The afternoon tutorial sessions facilitated by READ became a community of practice which aimed to further develop the teachers' understanding of the BLA through sharing practices. Frost (2009) stated that most of the group acquired this shared direction. They began to see positive outcomes emerging from the process. As in the Ndlovu (2011) study, it is said that when teachers become reflective practitioners who are able to engage in reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action, they develop the conceptual tools and capacity to improve

their own practice on a sustained, critically reflective and reflexive basis. The findings of this research study revealed that being part of the partnership made it possible for teachers to be involved in this type of collaboration. The READ facilitator added that the reflection sessions were particularly useful as teachers could discuss what is working, what is not working and find solutions. Ndlovu (2011) agrees and states that when teachers become reflective practitioners who are able to engage in reflection-on-action (after teaching) and reflection-in-action (during teaching), they develop the conceptual tools and capacity to inform and improve their own practice on a sustained, critically reflective and reflexive basis.

To further strengthen the argument regarding the importance of reflection, teachers in this study made reference to the fact that they enjoyed the afternoon sessions as they could learn from each other by listening. This was also the case in the Thomas et al (2005) study on the Ohio State University partnership, where the facilitators mentioned that their willingness to listen and respond to the needs of the classrooms teachers was one of the most powerful tools of the partnership. The Thomas et al (2005) study also indicated that teachers felt that it was important to bounce ideas off each other and just hearing each other talk Mathematics was enriching for teachers. Similarly, as indicated by Thomas et al (2000), this was evident during the Wisconsin fast plant project. Those teachers also constantly referred to the opportunity to share as extremely valuable. Ndlovu's (2011) study revealed that affording teachers a forum within which to interact and share experiences, ideas and fears with peers from different schools tended to reduce professional isolation and encouraged the formation of what Wenger (1998) called learning communities. In a similar research study as indicated by Thomas et al (2005) on the fast plant study done on at the University of Madison, the teachers talked positively about their experiences and encouraged other teachers to do more Science in their classrooms with their students. In this study teachers frequently mentioned how good it was to hear other teachers saying good things about their lessons.

### 5.3.1.8 Positive interaction with resources

In the analysis of the data it became evident that teachers really appreciated the fact that they could interact with apparatus at the 5-day training session. This support in resource development also continued during the on-site visits. Teachers were happy that they could see the use of it and have first-hand experience of using it themselves. This aspect is confirmed in a similar study done by Marlow and Nass (2000) at the University of Colorado in Denver with Science teachers. Here it was discovered that public school teachers tend to want practical resources and ideas that can be immediately used in their classrooms. The READ facilitator indicated that the language intervention included practical strategies and teachers really appreciated the practical tips. The partnership provided teachers with the opportunity to see these steps demonstrated by facilitator. The Curriculum Advisor further

mentioned that there was a definite increase in the effective utilisation of resources such as wall charts, word walls and reading corners.

#### 5.3.1.9 Increase in learner involvement

Teachers in this study stated that there was an increase in learner participation. Learners were more involved in lessons and learnt new aspects from each other. In a study done at the Michigan State University on Mathematics reform programmes conducted by Thomas et al (2005), teachers facilitated learning by having students think through and solve problems using their own strategies. They work to make sense of the Mathematics through their experiences and discussions with their classmates as they share their strategies. In this study teachers mentioned that the partnership made it possible for learners to become more involved in the learning process. In the Talawanda School District Study with regards to Mathematics project, teachers were saying that the kids enjoyed the hands-on approach. The READ facilitator said in her interview that the partnership increased the learner engagement. The BLA really provided the teachers with a greater variety of ways to get learners involved.

The aspects described in other studies having a positive bearing on partnerships are remarkably similar to the findings in this study. In particular, the findings revealed that teachers found the relationship of trust and collaboration between partners a rewarding experience. In terms of the value of partnerships, the teachers and facilitator in my study had lots of praise for the confidence the partnership instilled in them. Teachers felt comfortable trying new methodologies because of the engagements made possible by the partnership. The service provider, curriculum advisor and teachers stated that the partnership managed to generate enthusiasm and excitement. Teachers were eager to go back to class to implement their new skills. The curriculum advisor mentioned that during classroom visits, it was observed that there was a definite increase in the number of BLA methodologies used by teachers. New strategies were implemented.

#### 5.3.1.10 READ facilitator as critical mediator of knowledge

The READ facilitator played a critical role as mediator of knowledge. When the facilitator acts as a facilitator of learning, the importance of procedural knowledge is stressed. The development of skills, competencies and abilities is important. When the facilitator is concerned with transmission of knowledge, the focus is on propositional knowledge. When the facilitator is busy with dispositional knowledge, the focus is on social and cultural values and knowledge.

### 5.3.2 What hindered the success of the partnership?

#### 5.3.2.1 Initial uncertainty amongst teachers regarding expectations

Certain teachers stated that they were not fully aware of what was expected of them. Teachers in this study added that they were not aware of how the partnership would work. They felt that they needed more initial information. In the Northwestern University study completed by Frost (2009) teachers commented on the importance of defining roles and responsibilities. Frost (2009) added that in his study there were others who felt that the group did not have a shared understanding of what the process or expectations would be. In a similar study, the Innovative Links Project by Peters (2002), personal conditions included initial confusion about what was expected. In the initial processes of getting the project started, there was no real attempt to work out a shared understanding of what the roles would be. Thomas (2005) stated that the intention of the partnership was to identify common goals to put people to work together on a common project and to support each other in the process. This meeting place of professionals was viewed as essential in the study by Sim (2010), who says that adequate time needs to be dedicated to ensure that, whatever the purpose, for the first “coming together” of all participants everyone can access knowledge and understanding of each other’s views and behaviours. She continues by stating that a critical point in the development of a community of practice is the initial contact phase, whether it be to participate in a research project or a professional development activity, so that everyone can access knowledge and understanding of the views and behaviours of others.

#### 5.3.2.2 School Management Team (SMT) not fully on board

Teachers indicated that the fact that the SMT did not play a major part in strengthening the process made a difference. Teachers felt that the management role of the SMT and their responsibility to hold teachers accountable were not effectively executed. The READ facilitator noted that the teachers were not held accountable for implementing the language methodologies. She added that the BLA is not seen as a priority. The fact that the methodologies are not made part of the daily teaching plan hindered the process. The principal is not really involved in the partnership. According to the facilitator, certain principals informed her that they really didn’t know what the intervention was about. The management of the resources also created a challenge. To support this, the curriculum advisor added that there is a lack of monitoring from the side of the SMT. This is supported by research conducted by Kruger (2009), where it is emphasised in the Australian study on Effective Partnerships that the following aspects are important in contribution to partnerships: the role of the principal, connections, taking into account teacher workload pressure, and allocation of defined responsibilities. Further comments on the lack of SMT involvement come from Darling-Hammond’s (2009) status report on teacher development

in the United States and abroad, which mentions that this area of SMT involvement is also absent in her study. She states low levels of agreement on cooperative effort and coordination among teachers, reflect the lack of school governance structures and professional communities that involve teachers in collective decision-making and problem-solving. Furthermore, Chrispeels (2002) in her study on School District partnerships raises the importance of school leadership teams, by saying that the principal and the leadership team guide the staff in setting improvement targets and developing action plans. Chrispeels (2002) emphasises the critical need for shared governance between the district and the school leadership. Principals are often caught in the middle of the hierarchical web of district / school relationships, which can undermine site-level collaboration.

#### 5.3.2.3 Varying degrees of implementation

During analysis of the data it was evident that only a few of the methodologies were actually maintained after a year. Many teachers felt that they were comfortable with a few of the methodologies and others not. The teachers implemented the methodology with varying degrees of success. Not all methodologies were sustained. Certain easier methodologies were sustained and others were omitted as too difficult to implement. Lochran and Gunston in Ndlovu (2011) states that even when teachers are eager to improve their practices within their own schools and classrooms, their professional development work might end once the intervention has come to an end. In this study the evidence indicated that teachers definitely had different perceptions and understandings of the methodologies. Peters (2002) states in her study that the data analysis revealed a number of key themes related to participants' perceptions about conditions underpinning the project and the conditions they actually experienced. In this study the teachers experienced the implementation of the BLA on different levels.

#### 5.3.2.4 Teachers felt uncomfortable during visits

A few teachers commented on the fact that they did not feel comfortable having somebody else in their classrooms. This was also a factor in the Innovative Links Project of the Australian University, as outlined by Peters (2002), where most teachers also felt that they did not want to open up their practice to scrutiny. One teacher mentioned that they found it quite distressing. However, most teachers in the Australian University study did value the chance to have an outside perspective on their work and were accepting of that aspect of the critical friend role.

#### 5.3.2.5 Timing and duration of training

The timing of the training, which took place in the holidays, was regarded by teachers as inappropriate. Time is a crucial factor as most teachers in my study mentioned that more time was needed and that a year was too short. They also mentioned that the number of times the school was visited was not enough. In Ndlovu's (2011) study the teachers also

mention the time factor and add that more workshops should be held and that the intervention should be extended to other teachers within and beyond the project schools. All schools attested to the fact that they still needed the intervention for a longer period of time before they could be weaned off the intervention. It is significant that even in the University of Australia's Project with teachers, which stretched over three years, this was also the case. It was unrealistic to expect all teachers in the school to engage with their academic associates, because of the constraints of lack of interest and time, as well as workload and staff turnover. It was difficult for most schools in the project to achieve school-wide change within the limited time frame of the partnership. The READ facilitator stated that the short timeframe of the partnership had a negative impact on the partnership. Due to time constraints, not all teachers could be visited.

#### 5.3.2.6 Not all teachers at the participating schools were on board

New teachers who were not part of the initial training were a concern for certain teachers in my study. The fact that not all teachers were involved meant that with any further discussion there would be a breakdown of understanding. This was also the case in the Talawanda study researched by Thomas et al (2005) as teachers stated that in order to meet the challenges ahead they had to make a commitment to make provision for consistent time to plan lessons, to collaborate and to support each other. Thomas et al (2005) further states that this time is essential for supporting new teachers and those teachers who were unable to attend. This challenge of not having all the teachers present at the workshop was also highlighted in my study. The fact that not all teachers were part of the partnership had an impact on the success of the process. The findings indicate that not all teachers are on board regarding the expectations and outcomes of the partnership. Only a small number of teachers are actually involved. Peters (2002) reiterates this by stating that in their study many of the other staff members remained largely unaware of any kind of partnership or collaboration. The Peters (2002) study found that in most schools only a small number of staff were actively involved. The READ Facilitator mentioned that not all teachers at the school were trained. This hampered the process as you are not sure how to continue the support. The Curriculum Advisor also noted that a great factor hindering the success of the partnership is that not all teachers are involved.

#### 5.3.2.7 Context of the school not considered

Based on the findings of this study, teachers mention that the context of the schools must be taken into account when looking at the partnerships. Teachers spoke of service providers who needed to have a greater understanding of the school context and the challenges teachers are faced with on a daily basis. Aspects such as language competence, learner behaviour and socio-economic issues were some of the factors mentioned. This is a crucial comment to take into account when doing partnerships with schools and learnings can be taken out of this experience.

Researchers are in agreement about the importance of having an understanding of the school context. For example, Richmond (1996) valued her partnership with schools and adds that after the partnership she now understands the culture of schools better and could more effectively foster a sense of belonging, regardless of the cultural factors involved. Similarly, Thomas et al (2005) in the study based at the Miami University with Talawanda Schools realised that we have to respect each other's individual and cultural differences in ways that actually advance our work. In the South Australian study Peters (2002) agrees that for university participants working with schools to be successful, the focus should be framed with reference to the conditions that actually exist in schools and universities.

This point was also highlighted by Cardini (2006) in her study on Education Action Zones, where she mentions that partnerships have to deal with organisational differences around professional languages and culture. Different professional languages – and values associated with them – are an important source of misunderstandings within partnerships. On this point Sim (2010) states that through enabling a dialogue among the participants, the constraints and possibilities of their contexts would be recognised and the ongoing work of all participants would be valued.

## 5.4 ACTIVITY THEORY AS FRAMEWORK OF THIS STUDY

### 5.4.1 Applying principles of activity theory

This research involved an inter-agency partnership where different interactions took place. In all the interactions respondents exercised particular agency in terms of their positions and roles in the partnership. The framework of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) formed the theoretical basis of my study as it provided me with multiple levels and different perspectives through which I could conduct my research. In this sense my study can be viewed in the light of the studies by Oswald and Perold (2011) as well Tsui and Law (2007). These studies were used explore to the various dimensions of my research as they provided key information that could be used to analyse the value of the partnership I studied.

Mediation was however considered to be an important aspect in the activity systems presented by Oswald and Perold (2011). One aspect highlighted by Oswald and Perold (2011) was the division of labour amongst participants in their study. The different partners had particular roles and were responsible for particular functions. However, there was potential for overlap and interaction across and between systems. They mentioned the idea of a dialogic space in their study which involved students and university lectures. The parallel to my study was that the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor served as mediators and developed and conducted the programme for teachers. However, the teachers exercised their agency in developing classroom activities and resource materials for presenting the balanced learning approach. The discussions between the teachers and

the facilitators /curriculum advisors were made possible because of the existence of the dialogic space in the programme. New ideas emerged in this setting in the space where discussion and deliberation could take place.

In this study teachers did not have the liberty to have input into the development of the programme but were expected to learn during and from the sessions. Tsui and Law (2007), commenting on cultural historical theory, state that we should not only be concerned about what our students know, but more importantly, whether they have developed the capability to engage in expansive learning by tackling-ill-defined problems. While the READ programme had particular intended outcomes these were not necessarily going to be achieved. This study, which involved a partnership, has highlighted the importance of really understanding the complexities of what happens during mutual engagements, but more importantly how partners experience this.

The study required interactions with teachers, the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisors responses in the earlier discussion of the data. An important interaction in this partnership involved an overlap of different activity systems, for example the work of the facilitator with the teachers and the implementation of the curriculum by the teachers. The second system involved the curriculum advisor as a guiding person. However, the agency of teachers featured strongly in this process of overlap. The Ideas of the BLA as mediated by the read facilitator had to find expression in teaching in classrooms. Teachers needed to internalise and implement this approach and also to maintain some form of curriculum procedures as outlined in the documents. The teacher agency and understanding as applied to curriculum in their contexts provided the space for overlap between newly acquired skills and the realities of their classrooms as well as curriculum imperatives. It is here where new ideas flourished and took root as future practices.

#### **5.4.2 Boundary crossing as a generative space in partnerships.**

According to Akkerman and Bakker (2011), a boundary can be seen as a socio-cultural difference leading to discontinuity in action or interaction. The term boundary crossing was introduced to denote how professionals at work may need to enter to enter into territory with which they are unfamiliar. Boundary objects in turn refer to artefacts doing the crossing by fulfilling a bridging function. The boundary object can also indicate how artefacts can fulfil a specific function in bridging intersection practices. Studying boundary crossing requires an analysis of all the loosely connected systems involved.

According to Tsui and Law (2007), the concept of boundary crossing has been developed to help understand the interaction between the activity systems, the multiple perspectives and the multi-voicedness inherent in these systems. Similarly, Akkerman and Bakker (2011) view the communicative connection between the diverse practices or perspectives that are shared by multiple parties as a vital ingredient in boundary crossing. In this study this communicative connection which took place between the READ facilitator and the teachers

proved to be of value in the partnership. Teachers stated that the supportive nature of the facilitator in the partnership encouraged them to try out new teaching methodologies. The conversations which took place between the READ facilitator and the teachers made crossing the boundary a worthwhile exercise. The teachers extended their roles beyond their activities to include discussion and dialogue as well as the development of new resources.

Akkerman and Bakker (2011) emphasise that reflection within boundary crossing creates a possibility to look at oneself through the eyes of other worlds. In my study the value of the partnership became evident when teachers came together to reflect on lessons in the afternoon tutorial sessions conducted by the READ facilitator. Teachers valued the opportunity to meet and discuss the lessons which took place during that particular day. This raised awareness of common challenges and teachers could find solutions in a collective way.

Akkerman and Bakker (2011) add that for transformation to take place continuous joint work at the boundary is required to preserve the productivity of boundary crossing. In my study this joint work added value when curriculum advisors and teachers became involved in joint interactions to improve classroom practice. This meant that curriculum advisors visited the school and worked on shared problems at the boundary. This raised awareness of language teaching and learning strategies at schools and teachers started to talk about their experiences. Curriculum advisors are working closer with teachers and are finding out what teachers are thinking. According to Akkerman and Bakker (2011), this multi-voicedness at boundaries trigger dialogue and negotiation of meaning. This leads to development of new ideas and strategies as well as materials which can be seen as boundary objects for sharing. These often lead to more generative ideas in the activity system which serves as resources for learning for all involved in the partnership.

Boundary crossing was significant in my study on partnerships. It provided opportunities for teachers to come into contact with new innovations and opened the door to a new transformed way of learning about language teaching and learning. This value was added when teachers came into contact with the service provider, in this case the READ facilitator. The new Balanced Language Approach methodology was explained and demonstrated to teachers in a manner which was previously not possible. This led to an improvement in classroom practice.

Another benefit which was added through boundary crossing was that the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor came into the classroom to observe the teacher and support them in teaching the methodology. Through boundary crossing the teachers received immediate guidance from the facilitator. Boundary crossing took place when the READ facilitator brought the new teaching materials into the classroom and demonstrated how to use the materials such as writing frames and word wall charts to improve reading and writing.

The value of this partnership came about when the curriculum advisor visited the school to provide guidance to the teachers regarding lesson planning and aspects related to the curriculum policy requirements. The partnership increased the confidence of teachers. Teachers felt comfortable to try out new methodologies which they previously would not have attempted. Boundary crossing added value to the partnership since teachers improved their practice. Teachers felt comfortable about trying our new methodologies.

According to Akkerman and Bakker (2011), not only the people, but also the objects play an important role in crossing boundaries. They see boundary objects as artefacts that articulate meaning and address multiple perspectives. The concept of boundary object was introduced to indicate how artefacts can fulfil a specific function in bridging intersecting practices. The two activity systems framework of Akkerman and Bakker (2011) indicate the presence of the potentially shared object at the crossing of the boundaries. They emphasise that the people in the partnership also facilitate the crossing of boundaries which further serves to enrich partnerships and develop new ideas and objects in the activity systems involved.

Tsui and Law (2007) also found that teachers felt that they have gained new insights just because they were part of the partnership; Tsui and Law's (2007) research indicates that in a study done in China teachers also noted that they valued the information shared by university teachers. Evidence in my study indicates that the READ facilitator and curriculum advisors crossed the boundary and came into schools to provide guidance to teachers regarding the implementation of the BLA.

#### a) How boundary objects added value to the partnership

The boundary objects within the two activity systems of the partnership added value by creating a continuous programme of support. This approach to teacher learning assisted in increasing the teachers' enthusiasm and commitment. This shift in the teachers' understanding of what is expected of them gave them renewed confidence. The positive cognitive retooling added value to this partnership.

The boundary object guided the three subjects in the activity system. The objects opened up domains for the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor to cross boundaries and assist teachers at the boundary zone, which is the classroom. In this zone the subjects used the same terminology, and the same teaching materials to assist teachers. Teachers gained momentum and valued the common focus. The teachers became more familiar with the methodologies.

Boundary objects in this study added value as teachers created new objects such as word walls to assist learners with vocabulary and sentence construction. Further materials, for example, developed by teachers which were not previously used were the writing frame. The writing frame made it possible for teachers to explain the writing process to learners. These new objects added value as they assisted teachers in their teaching practice. Teachers

could utilise these objects to strengthen the lessons and led to an improvement in classroom practice.

Another example of how boundary objects added value was the creation of new lesson plans. The collective support provided to teachers by the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor in the terms of the CAPS policy requirements and the inclusion of the practical implementation of the BLA methodologies gave rise to these new lesson plans. The difference between the old and the new lesson plans was that previously the teacher did not include the BLA methodologies. Teachers could now plan their language lessons with a clear indication of how the BLA will be incorporated into the lesson.

This partnership is a collaboration between three subjects: the READ facilitator, the curriculum advisor and the teachers. Due to the difference in the expertise, there were two activity systems drawn up to distinguish between the motive of the activities. However, the greatest benefit was reaped when the subjects crossed boundaries to assist teachers with classroom practice. The READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor went into unfamiliar territory. These boundary crossers introduced new elements from one community of practice into another. For example, the READ facilitator came with a wealth of experience in the field of language teaching and learning, and teachers would gain from these tried and tested concepts. On the other hand, the curriculum advisor came with experience regarding how to best understand and effectively implement the curriculum policy requirements.

In this partnerships the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor crossed boundaries when they interacted with teachers in the schools. The crossing of boundaries afforded the READ facilitator opportunities which would not have been possible before the inception of the partnership. This made it possible for teachers to take a fresh look at their long-standing practices and assumptions. For the teachers this was a deep source of learning to interact with the READ facilitator in the classroom. The curriculum advisor came into schools with a focus on strengthening the interventions brought about by the READ facilitator. They acted as subjects with a joint motive to improve the teacher's knowledge of how to teach the new BLA. It was as a result of these crossing of boundaries that the teachers gained new insights.

The members of the partnership – in this case the READ facilitator, curriculum advisor and the teachers – interacted with one another and the boundary zone was created. Boundary zone is the place where elements from both activity systems are present. This boundary zone was the classroom as this was the place where what the READ facilitator recommended and what the curriculum advisor required were negotiated. Elements of both activity systems were thus present. The classroom is also the intersection of all interactions and the place where all learning by the teachers is implemented. The focus of the interaction was the improvement of language teaching and learning.

The sustained boundary crossing led to innovations and new product developments typically involved horizontal boundary crossing. These products involved the development

of new teaching materials by teachers, such as word wall charts, writing frames, group work cards and new lesson plans to reflect the methodologies of the Balanced Language Approach. What made it work were the rich conversations which took place between the partners as boundaries were crossed. These interactions made possible positive engagement between the READ facilitator and the teachers as well as between the curriculum advisor and the teachers.

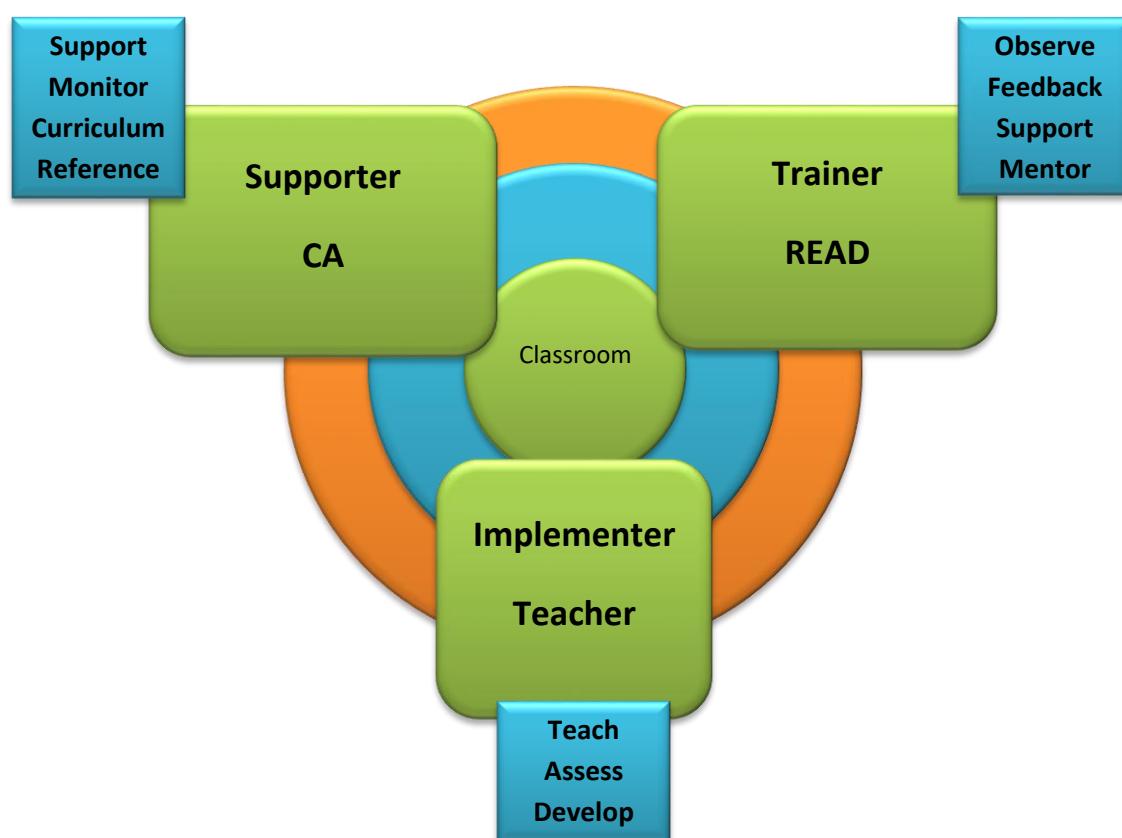


Fig. 6: Illustration of partnership interaction through boundary crossing

#### **5.4.3 Boundary Object (How it worked and what made it work well.)**

The two activity systems are best represented in the activity framework of this study. The object of the first activity system is to ensure that teachers are able to teach. In the second activity system the object is to cover the curriculum adequately.

Through interactions between members of the partnership contradictions and tensions emerged which led to transformed boundary objects. The first changed emerge as moving from separate activity systems to a joint activity system with a focus on collaboration. The new boundary object was the innovative approach to improve language teaching and learning.

The boundary object was negotiated, resulting in a transformed activity system of learning for all participants. Crossing the boundary led to the introduction of new boundary objects and ultimately can lead to profound changes in the activity system. These elements referred to as “boundary objects” led to the creation of new tools. Examples of these objects are the new word walls and writing frames which were developed by the teachers. There were also changes in the lesson plans as the BLA had to be incorporated into the lesson plans.

What made it work was the fact that the boundary object was not static. As the need arose, the object could be changed to accommodate the suggestions of teachers.

The new objects were tangible and teachers could see first-hand how the learners are enjoying the engagement with the teaching materials. Teachers could implement the BLA methodology with confidence as they understood how it worked and were personally involved with its development. Mutual engagement and collaboration are two key factors in the success of this partnership.

A further value which was brought about by the boundary objects was the change in the timetable. The new timetable accommodates the Balanced Language Approaches. The teacher could now confidently state, for example, when she was going to teach shared reading or guided writing. The boundary object added value by creating a formalised structure which the teachers could use to improve classroom management. The boundary object was of great significance at the school level as well, since teachers started to share their materials and experiences. When new materials were developed, they were shared and this led to an increase in interactions between teachers.

#### 5.4.4 Extending activity theory to improve interactions

In the study by Oswald and Perold (2011) the third-generation activity theory framework as developed by Engeström (1987) is used to bring about a deeper understanding of the interactions of participants with a focus on mediation. Mediation is recognised as a further important principle of CHAT as it emphasises the role played by humans and the tools placed between the individual learner and the object of the activity.

This third-generation activity theory (Oswald and Perold, 2011) is interested in the process of social transformation and includes the structures of the social world by taking its complexities into account. Participants bring their own unique histories into the activity system and the activity system itself bears its own history as engraved in its tools, rules and practices. In this activity theory the subject-object relationship is related to the larger cultural and historical context by relationships represented by the triangles. The subject-object relationship is modified by the cultural rules, norms or conventions that apply to this relationship and by the division of labour in which it is embedded. The activity theory framework is intended to develop conceptual tools to understand the dialogue, multiple perspectives, voices and networks of interacting activity systems.

In the Oswald and Perold (2011) study the conceptual framework is comprised of three activity theories, termed third generation activity theory by Engeström(1987). In the first activity system the boundary object is student learning made possible by the university lecturers. In the second activity system the boundary object is immersion in complex practice by students going out into the field of practice. In the third activity system, where lecturers and students go into the field together, the boundary object is the innovative and collaborative approaches to enablement. Due to the contradictions and tensions which emerged during interaction, the activity system and the boundary object were changed. Dialogue and collaboration are used to optimise learning and development. The new boundary object in the Oswald and Perold (2011) study is the innovative approach to optimise learning and development and to address complex educational challenges.

In this study on partnerships there were two activity systems within the conceptual framework of activity theory. In the first activity system of mentoring the boundary object was ensuring teachers are able to teach. In the second activity system the object was for teachers to cover the curriculum competently. Because of the tensions which emerged during boundary crossing interactions, the object was changed to incorporate a more collaborative approach to teacher learning. New boundary objects emerged by combining the previous two activity systems to create a merged version. The new boundary object became known as improved teaching. The focus was on teachers learning to teach better.

The activity theory model as explained by Oswald and Perold (2011) enables and encourages an innovative approach, as it allows for the possibility that rules may be changed or the division of labour may be modified or other semiotic tools may be valued in creating different activity systems. Oswald and Perold (2011) state that, according to Engeström collaboration involves practices and activity systems, and takes place through objects and not just between people. This implies that the focus is not on individual learning or collective learning, but on how they can both be directed and organised towards developing shared objects. Collaboration within the Engeström (1987) model is clarified as not taking place between people, but through object construction. The collaborative object construction is fundamental to all three activity systems under discussion.

Expansive learning, as indicated in the Oswald and Perold (2011) study, develops from learning prompted and motivated by constraints, and it actively and collectively develops a new pattern of activity, which leads to the transformation of the object (problem space). Oswald and Perold (2011) believe that CHAT in turn opens new ways of looking at the rules, division of labour and community of an activity system, where the scope of the activity needs to be redefined to encompass all pluralities of agents whose actions dovetail or mesh to express new patterns of relationships.

Both this study and the study by Oswald and Perold (2011) are represented by a network of interacting activity systems within the sphere of influence. This study fits into this framework as it presents the diverse activities of subject groups which are directed by an object to be transformed into outcomes with the help of mediating tools. In the Oswald and Perold (2011) framework there are three activity systems, whereas in this study there are two activity systems. However, the salient components are similar in the sphere of teaching and learning.

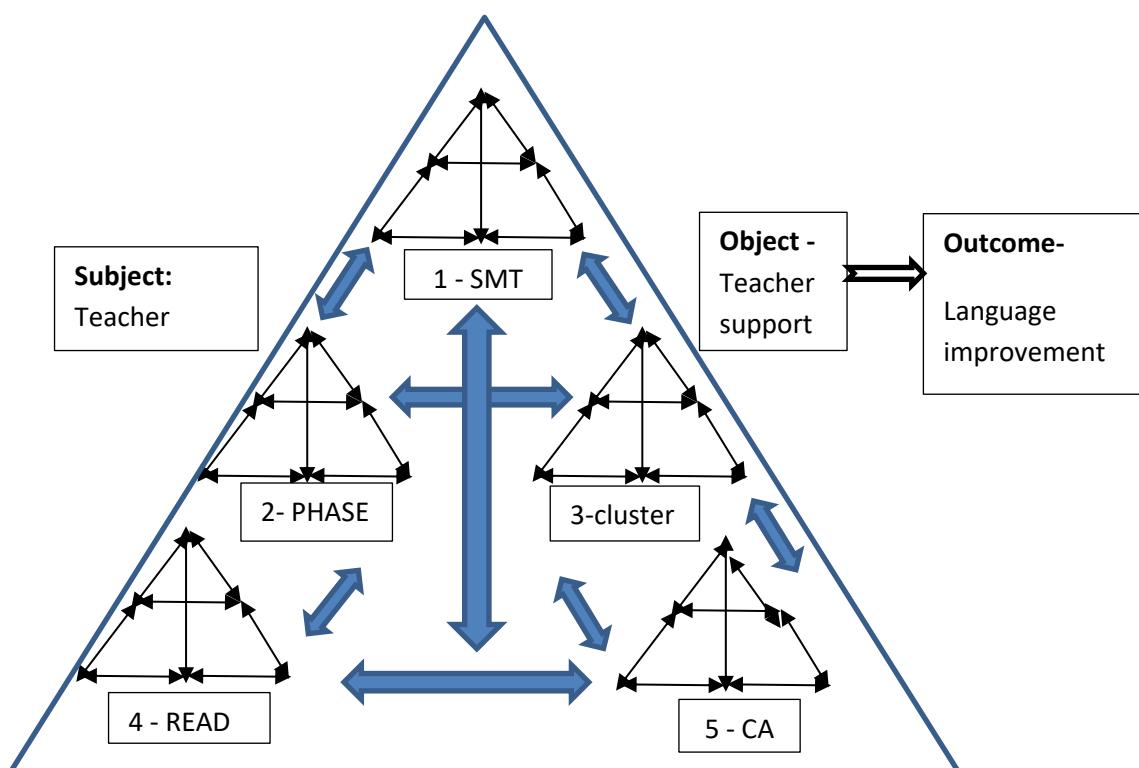
The concept “dialogic space” as implemented by Oswald and Perold (2011) to construct their conceptual framework is one which I would employ in my study. The opening of freedom and dialogue amongst multiple voices is a key aspect which will be able to be utilised with great effect. Foregrounding dialogic space, flexibility, openness and trust as in the Oswald and Perold (2011) framework are crucial elements which could add to the success of my partnership. Teachers need the space to make meaning which will ultimately lead to personal growth and greater knowledge and implementation of the pedagogical methodologies required to improve Language teaching and learning. This study revealed that it is not easy to speak about difficult issues, or as the Oswald study states, to reflect jointly on practices and to pursue transformations by asking questions and examining emerging and pedagogical approaches in practice. I would use the development of shared objects to provide teachers with the opportunity to discuss key challenges in their quest to improve practices.

Another key link between my study and the Oswald and Perold (2011) study is the component of rules and the division of labour. According to Oswald and Perold (2011), the

relationships between components are not static and are continuously being constructed and reformulated in the course of their development in particular situations. This allows for rules to be changed or the division of labour to be modified. In my study, although the rules and division of labour components were set at the start, they changed as the process unfolded. For example, the curriculum advisor who had the task of monitoring policy requirements and looking at lesson plans, found them doing demonstration lessons as the need required. The most valuable aspect of Third generation Activity theory I would include would be to change the rules and activity objectives and to include a third activity that would assist in making the process more effective as well as more sustainable.

In both this study and the Oswald and Perold (2011) study, participants brought their own unique histories into the activity system, while the activity system itself bears its own history as engraved in its tools, rules and practices. Participants in both studies had shared values, beliefs, group identities and interpretations of meaning. In the course of realising the object of the activity, the subjects also produced their identities and reproduced their identities as members of the community.

This study's new framework will have collaboration amongst the partners within the partnership as the most important binding agent. More room needs to be made available for all to discuss the challenges, make recommendations and view the progress with the aim of improving practices. This new framework would also include the role of the School Management Team as an additional activity system.



### Fig. 7: This study's new collaborative approach to improved teaching

Fig. 7 illustrates the new activity systems which can be used to improve the partnership and subsequently the learning. Within the central activity system of language teaching in the classroom, there are several additional activity systems impacting on the operation in the classroom. These small activity systems represent the different activities (communities of practice): (1) the School Management Team – SMT; (2) the phase interactions; (3) the schools in the area who are part of the cluster; (4) READ facilitator; and (5) the curriculum advisor. There is a collective of interrelationships at play. Boundaries are crossed as various subjects interact to support the improvement of language in the classroom. Each of these activity systems has a different object, but ultimately they contribute to the broader scope of language improvement. The arrows in Fig. 7 show the interaction and secondary tensions between communities of practice. The subject is still the teacher implementing the BLA strategies. The object is teacher development through support and the outcome is the successful implementation of the BLA methodologies.

#### 5.4.5 This partnership study and the rhetoric of practice of partnerships

According to Cardini (2006), many comments are made in conversation, but in practice the realities are very different. This implies there is a lot of talk, but no real evidence is presented about what actually happens. The Cardini's (2006) study attempts to address a few of these aspects which need to be taken into consideration when starting a partnership. In my study there are a few fundamental links between what Cardini (2006) is saying and what actually happens in reality. I furthermore draw a correlation between my study and what Cardini (2006) states as being a successful partnership and what the possible pitfalls are.

##### a) Successes of this partnership

This partnership can be considered a good partnership as it encompasses concepts such as cooperation and coordination. Furthermore, the data revealed that my partnership also incorporated additional characteristics required to make it a good partnership: interdependence, flexibility and confidence. This partnership can be viewed as a good partnership because it is original, neutral and takes on a superior form to what had previously happened with regards to a language improvement intervention.

According to Cardini (2006), a good partnership is one which promotes collaborative participatory practices. In my partnership these characteristics were all prevalent. Evidence suggested that teachers enjoyed the collaborative approach made possible by the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor. This partnership had built-in opportunities for teachers to become involved and participate, be it in lesson discussions or developing teaching materials. Teachers felt confident because of the support provided by the partners.

A further key feature of a good partnership is that it is based on trust and a shared objective or aims. These aspects were present in my partnership. The teachers in this partnership valued the relationship of trust which they forged with the READ facilitator. This allayed the initial fear and teachers felt comfortable speaking about their challenges. A common focus was established and all parties worked together towards achieving the shared objective.

As in the Cardini (2006) study, partnerships can be seen as relationships where, through social coordination, different sectors are clustered together and complement each other. In reality this is evident in my study. The READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor worked together to support the teachers at the schools. They complemented each other. The READ facilitator shared expert advice on how to implement the BLA successfully. The curriculum advisor, on the other hand, supported the process by assisting the teacher with the curriculum requirements. Both partners, who had different assets and skills, together produced extraordinary outcomes.

Cardini (2006) states that the vital ingredient in a successful partnership is the commitment and enthusiasm of the partners. Based on the findings of this study, in reality these were the binding agents which made this partnership a success. The curriculum advisor and the READ facilitator commented on the keen interest and enthusiasm displayed by teachers. Teachers themselves indicated that they felt excited and enthusiastic to go back to school and start implementing their new-found knowledge and skills.

### b) Pitfalls of this partnership

According to Cardini (2006), often in good partnerships, where cooperation and trust are present, the reality is that there are the hidden power struggles. In this partnership there were no issues of power struggles. This could be because the partners came from different sectors of society. The READ Educational Trust and the district curriculum advisor both represented different sectors, which did not evoke a struggle for power. They each came with different expertise and had clearly outlined objectives, which were outlined in the division of labour component.

Cardini (2006) states that another pitfall in a partnership can be where partnerships seem to be closer to a classic contractual arrangement, where there is no evidence of trust. In this study the reality is that exactly the opposite emerged. The READ facilitator, although also bound by contractual obligations, always had the best interests of the teachers at heart and was goal-directed and driven by sheer passion.

According to Cardini (2006), when partnerships are forced, it is hard to guarantee trust and commitment in the relationships. Reality is that based on the findings certain teachers mentioned that it seemed as if they had no choice in the matter. This impacted negatively on the success of the partnership, especially at the beginning. However, it can be stated that in this partnership this sense of trust and commitment increased as the process unfolded.

I agree with the comment made by Cardini (2006) that in partnerships there are often various organisations with distinct and different relationships between one another. The reality is that that there are also different relationships within one organisation. In this partnership in particular it was evident that the degrees of involvement of teachers at the same school differed. Furthermore, the School Management Teams at schools also differed in their approach to the partnership. These complex relationships often lead to tensions and contradictions.

I am in agreement with Cardini (2006) that a further pitfall is the different professional languages, cultures, and contexts creates misunderstandings within the partnership. In this study the findings suggested that the partnership or programme of Intervention did not take into consideration sufficiently the context, cultures and in particular the language mismatch which is prevalent at the schools.

#### **5.4.6 How was the partnership set up?**

The partnership was a direct consequence of the poor language and mathematics learner performance results in the country and also in the Western Province. This brought about a massive literacy and numeracy intervention launched in 2009 by the Western Cape Education Department. It involved the training of teachers in the Foundation and Intermediate Phase by making use of a phased approach across a number of years. The READ educational Trust was successful in receiving the tender for the Language Intervention Training and was tasked with managing the entire process as an external service provider. The BLA formed the basis of the training. In addition to their services, the language curriculum advisors became part of the process. All Language curriculum advisors received training from the READ educational Trust facilitators and formed part of the Teacher Training team.

The participants in the partnership were the READ facilitator, the curriculum advisor and the teachers at the participating schools. The role of the READ facilitator was to conduct the 5-day initial teachers training session and then visit schools for a year to lend support in the classroom and also conduct afternoon tutorial sessions to further enhance teacher understanding. The curriculum advisor monitored and supported the teacher during school visits and also conducted afternoon workshops to strengthen the methodology. The teachers of the participating schools had to implement the new BLA.

The partnership commenced with a meeting attending by principals and members of SMT a month before the commencement of the 5-day training session in July. This meeting was conducted by officials from the WCED Head Office and district office. The course outline and objectives of the LITNUM training Intervention Programme were explained. The teachers

then attending the 5-day training session during the July vacation where they received the entire visitation programme with detailed times and visits to the school for the entire year. Teachers received course manuals at the session. The district officials also notified the schools of the intended visits at the start of each term.

#### **5.4.7 Conclusion**

As stated by Thomas (2005), partnership projects were not designed to dictate a curriculum, define classroom behaviour, or belittle teachers for their lack of efficacy. Partnership activities are designed to identify common goals, to put people to work together on a common project, and to support each other in the process. Thomas (2005) states that all participants in the project he studied were able to articulate benefits that had accrued from working collaboratively. A similar study conducted by Peters (2002) found teachers were overwhelmed at first, but totally enthusiastic about the training they received afterwards. The general findings of this research points directly to the fact that the partnership had a positive effect on the teachers. Frost, Akmal, and Kingrey (2009) state that by working together partners with different connections and perspectives are seen as having the potential to accomplish goals that the individual people or institutions could not achieve on their own.

Boundary crossing contributed to the success of this partnership. The level of engagement which took place between teachers and the READ facilitator, and the teachers and the curriculum advisor, would not have been possible without such boundary crossing. This indicates that we should continuously be searching for new ways to find meaning and in so doing improve on learning. We have to cross boundaries and be involved in activity systems which at times will overlap. The interconnectivity brought about by globalisation has blurred and penetrated traditional boundaries. We have to recognise this phenomenon and seek the opportunities to forge new activity systems by crossing boundaries. Knowledge should be generated in the course of interactions in different communities of practice and in particular from those outside of our own boundaries.

## Chapter 6

### CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

This research study on partnerships has been revealing of both positive aspects as well as challenges experienced in the process. The three partners in the process, namely the READ facilitator, the curriculum advisor and the teacher participants, provided useful insights into their experiences and also made suggestions for improved approaches to such partnerships.

The partnership can be represented in the diagram below.

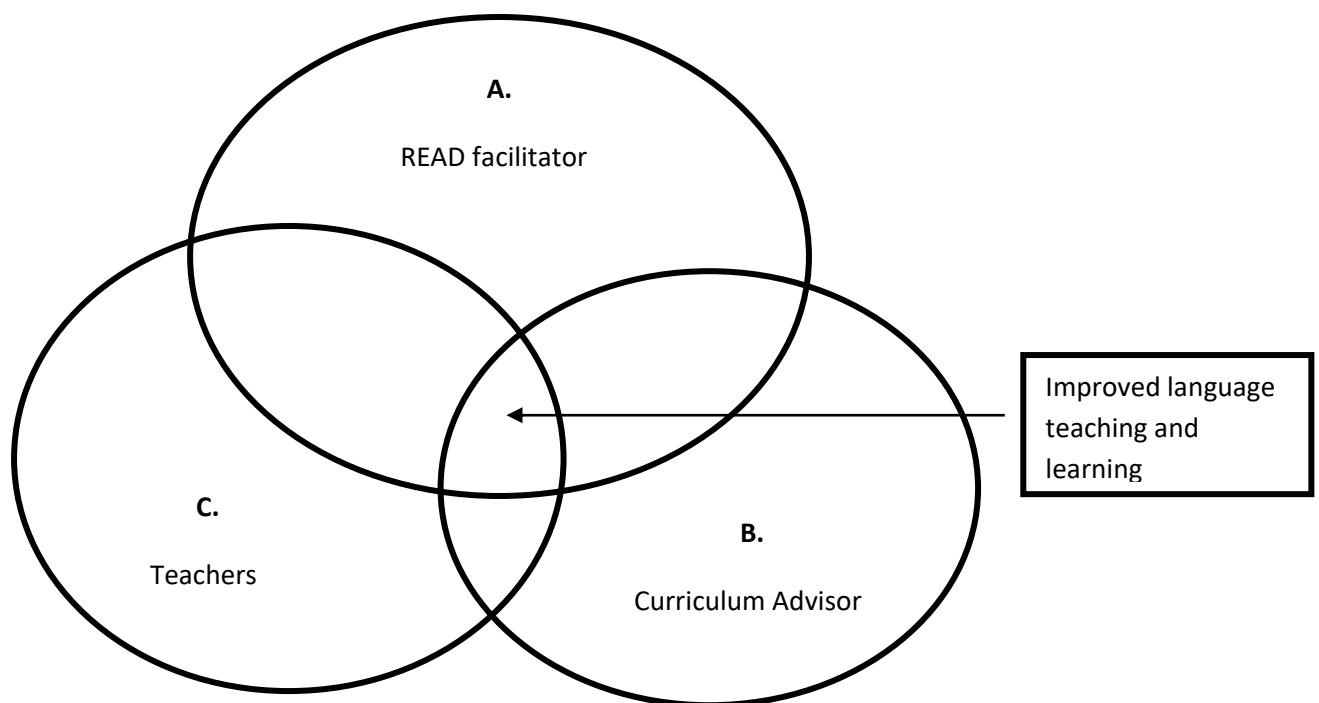


Fig 8: Partnership representations

The three partners were presented as activity systems in terms of CHAT. The areas of overlap were constructed as instances of boundary crossing and the partners, practices and materials emerged as boundary objects.

In this chapter I review the main findings briefly in terms of gains, challenges and what can be done differently. I also discuss some of the key emerging ideas and suggestions and provide suggestions for further research which are derived from the data.

## 6.2 Gains of the partnership

The most significant gain was the crossing of boundaries which this partnership made possible. The benefits of partnership achieved was made possible when boundaries were crossed. Tsui and Law (2007) state that information transmission and knowledge generation are made possible when we acknowledge that we cannot act in isolation and that by crossing boundaries we open the minds of teachers to a wealth of transformed activity systems.

A direct gain resulting from this partnership was the confidence it instilled in the teachers. Although this process is developmental and ongoing, there was a definite shift in the teacher's ability to teach new strategies. Teachers felt rejuvenated after the training and confident about implementing the new language methodologies. They wanted to try the strategies in the classroom.

A further gain was the fact that the partnership included a year-long support programme in addition to the 5-day training programme. This meant that teachers received intensive support in the implementation of the Balanced Language Approach. The experience was valuable as teacher had the opportunity to interact with the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor in their own classroom. There was enough time allotted for teachers to have the methodology explained and demonstrated in the classroom. This training model differed from the regular approach of afternoon sessions. The curriculum advisor and the facilitator both stated that classroom observation showed that teachers were implementing methodologies which they previously would not have attempted. Examples of such methodologies are group reading and guided writing.

A definite gain would be that the partnership included the district officials, who provided an added strengthening mechanism to the support structure of this intervention. Often external service providers act in isolation and the curriculum advisor does not have a firm understanding of what the outcome and procedure are. In this partnership the language curriculum advisor not only understood the process thoroughly, but also received training by READ regarding the Balanced Language Approach. The advisor thus visits with a clear objective and knowledge of how to assist the teacher. The role of the advisor in this partnership cannot be underestimated. This three-tier collaborative partnership certainly created opportunities which had previously not been available. This partnership certainly allowed many opportunities for teachers to develop vital classroom language-teaching methodologies.

The fact that classrooms were suffused with language-teaching tools was an added gain. Teachers were eager to develop word walls and writing frames which they displayed in their classrooms. The advisor mentioned that more reading corners were set up in classes. The gains were seen when teachers started to develop their own teaching materials and used

them in the lessons. The methodology of group work in particular received a boost as teachers could use the materials as demonstrated by the facilitator.

Teachers stated how important it was for them to reflect on their practice. This was a gain which was generated through this partnership. Teachers seldom reflect on their practice or discuss innovations. This partnership had a built-in afternoon tutorial session after every visit. The facilitator would then reflect on the day's observations, show a video, or share aspects of lessons observed. Teachers were then given an opportunity to view each other's lessons and provide feedback. This proved to be vital and teachers mentioned this benefit in their responses.

A partnership gain occurred as teachers were guided as to how to use the textbooks and the DBE workbooks to enhance teaching and learning. The training also focused on the introduction of CAPS, while the Balanced Language Approach would be the vehicle through which the curriculum would be delivered. The training assisted teachers in how to align the language methodologies with the CAPS curriculum. This link to the curriculum policy requirements was instrumental in terms of teachers' effective delivery in the classroom.

The contradictions generated by the interaction of three different activity systems could easily be viewed as problematic. However, in this study it was precisely these contradictions which provided pedagogical innovation and renewal. Once the teacher's confidence improved and the willingness to try new things emerged, this gave rise to a rich learning experience. Instead of interpreting this as failure, the teachers saw it as an opportunity to embrace group work in their classes. They resolved the contradictions through negotiation of meaning and created new mediating tools for learning. This partnership outlined that teachers are able to incorporate new methodologies into their classroom practices.

### **6.3 Challenges of the partnership**

One of the main challenges noted by the three participants was the lack of the School Management Team's involvement in the partnership. Nobody from the school management side could hold teachers accountable. The School Management Team's structures did not include the Balanced Language Approach as part of the school intervention plan.

Teachers noted the scheduling of the training during the holidays as a factor that hindered participation. Also the number of visits to schools by facilitator was seen as a challenge. Due to the size of schools, the service provider could not spend time in all the classes. This meant that certain teachers never received a classroom visit by the facilitator.

A further challenge was the fact that not all teachers were part of the 5-day training. This created a gap during the on-site support as certain teachers were not aware of the holistic view of the methodology as not all teachers were part of the partnership. Certain methodologies were not sustained, while others were used more frequently. Contextual

issues such as language barriers and learner behaviour were mentioned as aspects which hindered the progress of the partnership.

The wide scope of the partnership meant that the READ facilitator who was appointed to a particular school also had to visit a group of other schools. This meant that one school would probably get only one visit per term. If this was a large school, then it meant that certain teachers would never receive a visit from the READ facilitator for the full year. This was, because of the time constraints and the number of schools that had to be visited within the allocated visitation programme of the term.

The findings of the research indicated the teachers felt that they were not fully aware from the start of what was expected of them. This meant that teachers were not aware of what the outcomes of the partnership were, and neither were they aware of what their roles would be. Initially teacher felt as if they had been forced into something and that they didn't really have a choice in the matter. They attended, because they felt they had to attend.

This suggests that although all teachers were in agreement about the fact that this language intervention was a good initiative to start at schools, it also seems that the throughput of certain of the methodologies were not sustained. Certain methodologies were not implemented consistently by teachers, while others became common practice in the classroom. Teachers stated various reasons for this, including class sizes and group work being a new methodology in the Intermediate Phase.

#### **6.4 What can be done differently?**

The SMT will have to be included in the training process in order for management to be able to hold the teachers more accountable. After attending the full training SMT members will have a deeper understanding of what the Balanced Language approach entails. The SMT will then be in position to put more effective structures in place to ensure that the methodologies which were shared with the teachers are sustained and partnerships adequately supported. More discussions at school level between the SMT and the teachers regarding language improvement and in particular the incorporation of the BLA into classroom practice.

The process of advocacy regarding the outcomes and objectives of the language intervention needs to be introduced to the teachers in a different way. Teachers were told they were going for training, but only really understood the extent of this once they attended the 5-day training session. It would be more beneficial if teachers were informed earlier about their roles and the outcomes of the programme.

Based on my findings, it is evident that the extent of the training will have to be revisited in future so as to include all language teachers across the various phases. In the event of not all teachers receiving a classroom visit, key teachers at the school would have to be selected who would be able to share and demonstrate lesson approaches to other teachers. The lead

teacher or champion teacher at the school for language improvement will have to be incorporated into the structures of the school more effectively.

More collaboration between the curriculum advisor and the READ facilitator should take place. More time and space need to be provided for these two partners to discuss the progress and challenges experienced in the partnership. If this could be included in the activity system, then the partnership would be more collaborative.

More involvement of teachers during collaborative sessions is required. The participating teachers indicated that more teacher from their own schools should become involved in the discussion of lessons. Such discussion of each other's lessons should be incorporated into the partnership to a greater extent. It expands the teachers' understanding of what the current challenges in teaching and learning are. The teachers will then be in position to find solutions collectively.

### **6.5 Limitations of this study**

A small sample of schools was selected for this research study. If more teachers took part, then the sample data would have included a greater base from which to inform the research findings. The fact that there were only 5 schools involved means that the opinions of only 5 teachers have been taken into consideration.

The management of the new resources was also seen as a limitation. Resources in the form of books are normally welcomed in classes. However, this time round there seemed to be a bigger variety and the limitation was created when teachers did not exactly understand how to manage the utilisation of the resources. There was an interplay between the textbooks supplied by the WCED, the DBE workbooks and the READ materials.

A certain limitation was the lack of opportunities for the READ facilitator and the curriculum advisor to come together to discuss key aspects pertaining to the teacher support rendered to schools. Both partners visited the school with a common focus, but they never had time to engage in collaborative processes.

### **6.6 Recommendations for further study**

In line with the theoretical framework of the cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) it is clear that there were areas noted which need more detailed investigation in future studies. We should be engaged in expansive learning by tackling these ill-defined challenges in boundary zones. (Tsui and law, 2007) We constantly need to explore new ways of operating in order to push the boundaries in our quest to gain knowledge. Establishing whether or not a programme of this nature does have an impact on the quality of learning outcomes is the ultimate measure of its worth. This requires rigorous, longitudinal evaluation. In particular, it is important for the design of future programmes to determine the success of a intervention (NEEDU national report, 2012) in terms of student learning.

### 6.6.1 Specific recommendations

#### a) Greater accountability by the School Management Team (SMT)

The need for a more structured approach to language development at school was echoed by all three participants. This warrants a more structured school activity system with clear boundary rules and responsibilities pertaining to the activity of improving language teaching and learning at school are to be in place. The role of the SMT needs to be more effective at schools. The division of labour within the formation of an activity system at schools will undoubtedly have to include the role of the SMT in the activity system of language improvement at schools. This motive for improving language needs to be driven by the school SMT by reaching the shared object of implementing the BLA. Clear guidelines for how the boundaries between the various groups such as grade groups, subject groups and phase groups interact will have to be outlined. Before implementation there needs to be a process of mediation between SMT and all teachers. The SMT needs to ensure that all teachers are aware of what is expected and what the processes entail. The principal will have to formalise language improvement and prioritise the processes.

#### b) Intra-school collaboration

Within the activity system of language improvement at schools I recommend that more opportunities for boundary crossing be instituted between the HOD, Deputy, Principal and between teachers from the same and also different grades. More mediation needs to take place regarding how the object of the activity will be addressed at school. More opportunities will have to be created for teachers to work together collaboratively towards a shared goal.

#### c) Cross-school collaboration

Although the partnership, this study, focused on did not allow for cross-school collaboration, it is definitely an area which can be explored more. Data from my study revealed that the teachers enjoyed the reflection sessions and the fact that they could share ideas regarding lessons they observed or by just being part of discussions. I recommend that these opportunities for sharing be extended to other schools in the area, for example, those schools that were part of a similar partnership. The partnership initiative made it possible for boundaries to become blurred or broken down so that the education of students became the focus. Breaking down the barriers between schools by crossing boundaries will add value to language improvement. Teachers from different schools will be able to share and learn from each other. Together solutions can be sought to common challenges. When boundaries are crossed, it opens up avenues not previously explored and strengthens collaborative learning.

**d) Need for reflection sessions**

Most teachers also indicated that they enjoyed hearing what other teachers had to say during reflection sessions. I would encourage a structured time to be instituted at schools where teachers have an opportunity to talk about challenges and successes they are experiencing in their classrooms. Teachers have to become reflective practitioners. A study by Richmond (1996) states that at least once per month planning meetings were held across the team, although cross-team conversations were in fact a daily occurrence. This provides teachers with an opportunity to hear how other teachers are dealing with challenges that could be solved collectively. The crossing of boundaries across grades and even phases is significant. These conversations have the potential to create new activity systems which will lead to a renewed awareness of language teaching. A boundary zone where elements of all elements of the activity systems of the phases, grades and SMT come together is required. Open dialogue and the multi-voicedness of all participants will lead to strengthened classroom practices.

**e) Outcomes to be clearly defined**

Teachers indicated that they were not clear on what was expected of them. The outcomes and the roles and expectations of teachers should be clearly determined at the start of the partnership. Peters (2002) suggests that the solution is for school and university participants to clearly identify their separate specific goals at the beginning of the collaboration. When the boundary is crossed without proper ground work and preparation done at the zone where the foundation for the new activity systems is about to be established, members of the activity or the brokers are not prepared for the engagement. It is important that the boundary object of the activity system be clearly defined at the beginning of the activity. Perhaps the respective objects of the two different activity systems in this study were not clearly distinguished.

**f) Sustained support to teachers by curriculum advisors**

The nature of the district support to teachers place curriculum advisors in a favourable position to cross the boundaries of schools on a regular basis. The activity system of district support activities to schools is already in existence. My recommendation would be that the gains created by the partnership be strengthened by the curriculum advisors through continued support to teachers. This partnership can be sustained if the curriculum advisor continues with the support to teachers. The gains achieved during the partnership period should be continued. The curriculum advisor and the pedagogical procedures are critical to be incorporated in the district support plan to schools. The sustained monitoring and support role of the curriculum advisor is crucial to bring about change. The support of the curriculum advisor as mentor is critical to ensure that the efforts of the service provider is sustained after the partnership comes to an end. The boundary crossing between teachers and the curriculum advisors should continue and the detailed specific support as to how to

implement the BLA needs to be become embedded in the district support. Follow-up sessions and refresher courses for new teachers would be recommended.

**g) Taking context into account**

When entering any partnership, it is recommended that information is gathered regarding the context of the school. Before boundaries are crossed, there needs to be some form of fact finding and collation of information regarding the boundary zone, in this case the school and more specifically the classroom context. Boundary brokers have to be fully aware of the various contextual factors which will impact on the partnership. Linda Darling Hammond (2008) agrees that the context determines the specific strategy. She adds that if we do not take the context into account, then we perpetuate the same inequalities.

**h) Incorporating lesson sharing**

Based on the data, it can be said that teachers do not feel comfortable when an “outsider” visits their classroom. Within the activity theory framework, I would recommend that the object of the activity system be one where the focus is shifted from the teachers to perhaps a more collective responsibility for teaching. In the Tsui and law (2007) study the focus is moved to lesson study. This enables all teachers to work together on the methodology and preparation of resources, while the teacher who will be observed just teaches. Teachers then feel less pressure. Perhaps this partnership should in future be looking at such an approach. My suggestion would be that, similar to Tsui and Law's (2007) lesson study, teachers work together in teams to plan and execute a lesson.

**i) Time to plan**

Based on the research findings of my study, I would recommend that more time and space to meet and discuss be made available. I would recommend that time be made available to teachers to plan as a group. Frost, Akmal and Kingrey (2009) stresses the importance of time and states that for this reason time must be reserved for working through the difficulties that emerge along the way. Time to reflect is of equal importance. More specifically teachers have to be provided with time to discuss their planning and to determine what is working and what is not working. The importance of creating opportunities for teachers to share best practices should be recognized. This could include; share ideas about what the learners found useful. What in the lesson made it easier for the learner to understand? How could teachers understand the content better in order to teach it better? How can more learners benefit? Chrispeels (2002) in her study on Effective Schools in a district school partnership asserts that teachers repeatedly echoed such views about the value of having time to share and gain a deeper understanding of the performance indicators and curriculum maps.

## 6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I provide suggestions on how this partnership could be improved by looking at the challenges and gains experienced in the partnership. Although the gains made were significant and proved that the partnership provided real improvement in the teachers' understanding of how language is taught, the chapter also highlighted the gaps which need to be addressed in future studies.

One of the main areas to focus on would be that at the school the change needs to be system wide and include all teachers, but most importantly the School Management Team. Another key aspect would be the collaborative manner in which engagement takes place. In order for improvement to be sustained, all parties at school, be it grades, phases and management, will have to work together to effect change. The building blocks which were made possible by the partnership can be sustained if processes are sustained in a structured manner.

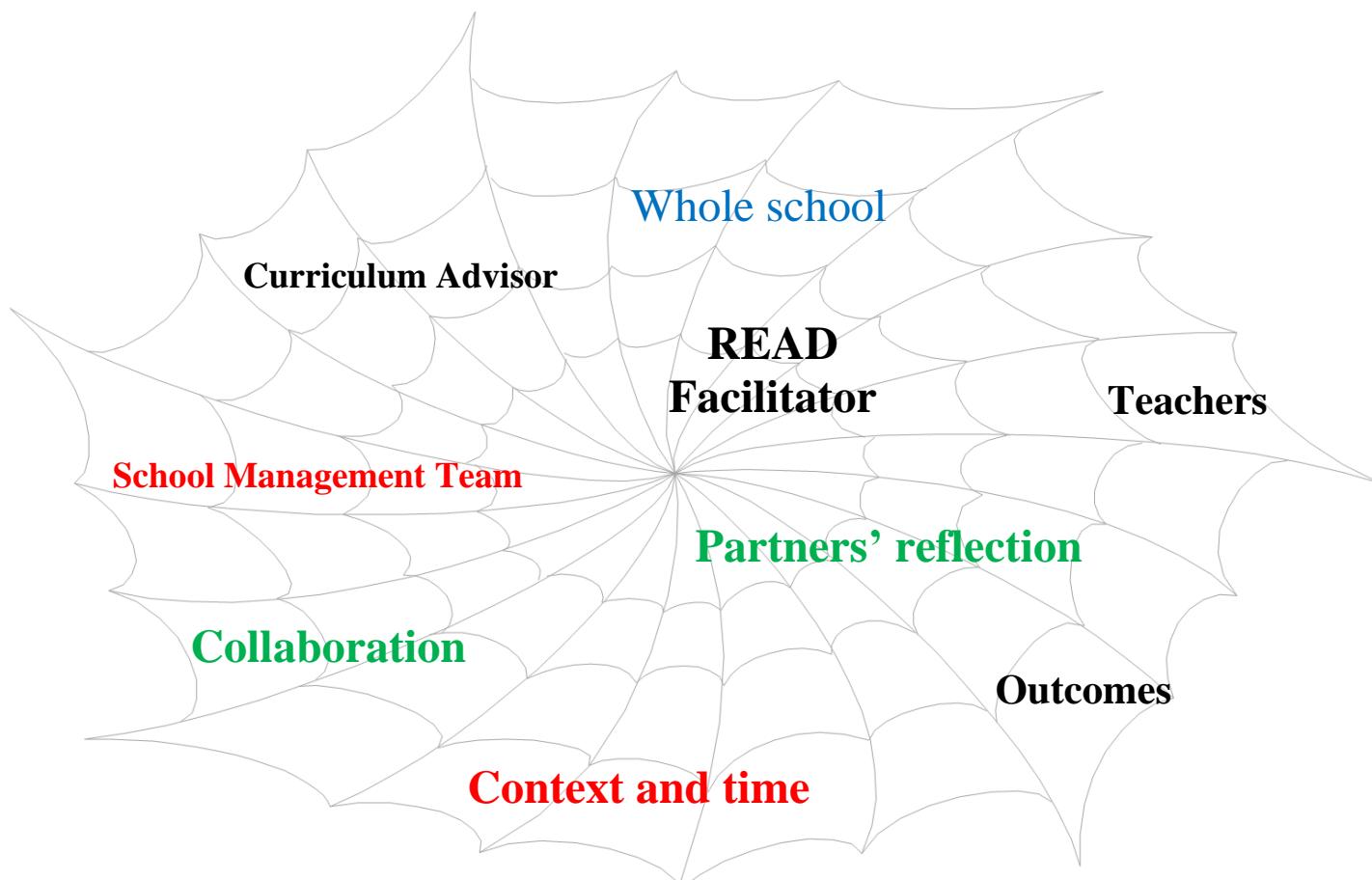


Fig. 10: Hoban's Change Theory ( Source: Hoban, 2006)

Hoban (2006) does well to weave systems thinking and complexity theory together to argue for approaches to teaching that are less linear, enable greater adaptability in the face of constant change and complexity, and that can cope with unpredictability. Hoban (2006) introduces the metaphor of a spider web to demonstrate the interconnectedness between

and the non-linearity of elements in complex systems. He examines educational change as a complex system and posits leadership, context, culture, structure, politics, teacher learning, and teachers' lives and their work as the key influences on change. I agree with Hoban as these are precisely the key aspects which were highlighted in the findings of this study.

Further studies need to take the above recommendations into account as learning is more complex and does not take place in a linear way. As boundary crossing has indicated, learning has become a more intertwined and multi-connected phenomenon.

To conclude, I wish to say that the research study has addressed how the READ facilitator, the curriculum advisor and most importantly the teachers have experienced the partnership. It appears that the partnership has had a positive effect on all partners. It is important to note that not all methodologies are currently sustained, but there are certainly methodologies which would previously not have been attempted had it not been for the Intervention. The partnership thus has played a huge role in providing teachers with the confidence to implement strategies and has provided service providers with the knowledge that the work done in schools is indeed having the effect of improving learner performance.

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## APPENDICES

## **Appendix 1: Questionnaire**

# SUSTAINABILITY OF PARTNERSHIPS

## Research study – M.Ed. University of Stellenbosch

## TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe your experiences regarding the 5 day – training session and the subsequent on-site support by READ facilitator?
  2. Were you able to implement the new Literacy methodologies immediately? What was your level of implementation before the facilitator left?
  3. Which type of support would you consider to have been valuable in assisting with implementation?
  4. It is now almost six months since the partnership between READ and the school has come to an end. How would you rate your implementation level at this point? Describe.
  5. Explain all factors impacting positively or negatively on the process.
  6. Is your implementation of READ ideas in line with your expectations of the partnership?
  7. If you were able to change any aspect/s of the partnership what would it be and why?

## Appendix 2: Interview schedule

Date of interview: 12 November 2013

### Background of facilitator:

She has been a facilitator for READ for the past 5 years. She has worked with schools in the Central , North and South Metropoles. She manages approximately 8 – 10 schools during a one year cycle. She has a broad understanding and deep knowledge of the intervention.

QUESTIONS	RESPONSE FROM PARTICIPANT	CATEGORIES	
		Activities	
1. What is the intended outcomes of the Partnership?	Ok, we were meant to train teacher in the Balanced Language Approach.	Promote F1M	Prohibit F1H
		We provide training for teachers.	
	Then we were meant to support and monitor the levels of implementation after the training at schools.	Support and monitor the implementation.	
	We set goals.	Set goals	
	And ultimately it was with improving the Literacy results.	Work towards improving the results.	
2. What are the positive aspects you wish to share regarding the READ Partnership?		General	
		Promote F2M	Prohibit F2H
	I think that we found is that with the partnership with the Dept. we were able to capacitate the system more.	READ was able to capacitate the system more.	
	To make sure that the officials as well as the service providers were speaking with “one voice”	Opportunity to ensure that READ and Department are aligned.	
	People are getting the same kind of support, and not conflicted.	Support to schools are the same.	
	At the schools I think definitely a change in mind set . As I said I think it's, the one thing was the change in attitude.	There is a good change in mind set.	

	People feeling more competent in the tools that they have to teach.	Teachers are feeling more competent.	
		<b>Challenges</b>	
		Promote F3M	Prohibit F3H
<b>3. What are the challenges you experienced during your on-site support sessions to school?</b>	I noted it's a problem sometimes when the school doesn't see it as much of a priority.		Teachers are not prioritizing the intervention.
	I think the other challenges is that teacher not always making the methodology part of their daily teaching, and maybe just keeping it for the trainer.		Methodology not always part of daily teaching.
	I also said that principals not involved in the project is a big thing.		Principals are not adequately involved .
	Another challenge is the timeframe is too short. It's a year. But not really a year. It's one visit in the month, which translates into 12 visits for the year.		Support to school timeframe is too short.
	And the other challenge is that not everybody at the school were trained.		Not all teachers at schools are trained.
		<b>Boundary crossing/ activity results</b>	
		Promote F4M	Prohibit F4H
<b>4. What are the most important aspects teachers would need to sustain the intervention?</b>	This whole notion of reflecting regularly on what you are doing and setting achievable goals.	Teachers need to set achievable goals.	
	I think that needs to be managed by the SMT's more.	Process to be managed by the SMT more.	
	I think internal moderation which you guys always are involved in, I think that needs	Implementation of the methodologies to	

	to include the implementation of the methodologies.	be included in moderation process.	
	At certain schools where teachers actually just share what's working with each other even if it's in formal stuff . Sharing of good practice. Seems to have bubbled over.	Sharing of good practice works.	
	So I also think that the district could have, I know it's part of their expectation, would have to follow up and ensure that implementation still happens.	District to play a greater role in ensuring implementation.	
	So I think that if schools continued with that (tutorials) practice as if the facilitator was there, then that might help.	Continue with tutorial style sessions on certain afternoons.	
	I think teachers also just in terms of their knowledge, you know the more you use these approaches the better you get.	Teachers need to practice approaches.	
	They have all the resources that they need.	Adequate resources	
	Another thing that they need to do is really make a more deliberate effort. Like linking these methods with what am I supposed to cover in the curriculum and start.	More deliberate links to the curriculum should be made.	
<b>Activity theory</b>		Promote F5M	Prohibit F4H
<b>5. What do you think impacts both positively and negatively on teacher's continuation with the methodology when the project comes to an end? Provide reasons.</b>	Well think lots of teachers are already have started to say things like they can see the children being more engaged , more involved in the lessons because there is more variety of ways kids can get.	Learner involvement has increased.	
	Practical stuff like – a school will continue if resources are	Ensure that teachers have the	

	provided . I mean whether it's a esel for a big book or, a flip chart paper for shared writing. Or simple things.	required resources.	
	I also think that everyone needs to be held accountable .	More accountability from all stakeholders.	
	So that's again that whole internal moderation aspect. I think for me , I think that's the biggest thing.	Internal moderation enforced.	
	I suppose on-going training. I don't mean retraining,	On going training. (B)	
	Well I said it earlier on sharing good practice.	The sharing of good practice.	
	Regular meeting together, planning together. That I think is going to , phase planning together, schools planning together	More effective planning sessions to be arranged.	
	Keep people motivated	Keep teachers motivated.	
	Really seeing how the methodology is making me implement the curriculum better. I think that's still the challenge.	Teachers have to see how the methodology is assisting the methodology better.	
	And I think a good coach. A good person you might take them or a good team of people, not necessary the SMT. To make sure that everyone understands what it is and when to use it.	Good leader of the process is vital.	
	It should be written into the schools policy	Intervention to be written into policy.	
	is it part of their mentoring, have you been trained yet in the Balanced Language. If not this is what we will give you.	Programme developed to address the intake of new teachers.	
		<b>Activities / Boundaries</b>	
		Promote F6M	Promote

<b>6. Have you achieved your intended outcomes?</b>	Partial, I think	Partial achievement.	
	<b>Activities / Boundaries</b>		
			Promote F7M      Prohibit F7H
<b>7. What type of learning or insights have you gained from being involved in this partnership?</b>	I think one of the things I've learnt is the value of having a really focused intervention.	Intervention should be focused.	
	I think that the other thing that I have learnt is that just how important it is to mentor and to coach people.	Importance of mentoring and coaching to be realised.	
	The other thing that I have learnt is that give teachers practical strategies that work . They will buy it.	Teachers want practical strategies to use in classroom.	
	I think I have also learnt the value of when you a service provider or official I suppose and you coming in the capacity of I am going to monitor you and how well you implementing , you can alienate people . But I think that what I've learnt is that if you come in and you really walking along side.	Facilitator to walk alongside the teacher and not to alienate.	
<b>Activities / Boundaries</b>		Promote F8M      Prohibit F8H	
<b>8 What would you say are the reasons why the intervention is sustained or not sustained after you have left the school?.</b>	Support that comes from the district around languages is should always be in alignment with not with READ, but with the Balanced Language Approach. So people are getting the same message all the time	All Language support from district to be aligned to Balanced Language Approach.	
	But the big thing is the district support	District support is essential.	

	The school and the SMT making sure teachers are accountable . It kind of should be a non-negotiable that you understand the Balanced Language.	Accountability to be ensured by SMT.	
	And the link with the curriculum.	Link with curriculum	
	I think one of the other things that schools should have in place in order to sustain what has been done is to actually manage their resources.	Management of resources	
	Classroom management and time management	Classroom and time management is important.	
	And then setting goals. Individual goals	Teachers to set individual goals for themselves.	
	We meant to share good practice. We meant to get teachers to reflect on what they are doing	Sharing of good practice amongst teachers.	
	I have found the best way to get the teachers really talking and sharing and looking at gaps is actually showing video clips of what happens in a day in a particular classroom.	Showing video clips of actual classroom experiences.	

### Appendix 3: Biographical questionnaire

BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE MASTERS RESEARCH STUDY					
No.	QUESTION	ANSWER			
1.	<b>What is your age?</b>	27, 40, 46, 56, 64			
2.	<b>At which institution did you complete your teaching qualification?</b>	Hewat College of Education x 3 UWC, UCT			
3.	<b>How many years of teaching experience do you have?</b>	5, 17, 20, 41			
4.	<b>What is your current qualification?</b>	HDE 1V x3 BA Degree BA Degree - PGCE			
4.	<b>Which grade/s are you currently teaching?</b>	4 5 x2 6 x2			
5.	<b>How many classes are there per grade? (your grade is in order)</b>	1, 2, 3, 4			
	<b>Have you taught any other grades previously? Please state.</b>	1 - 7			
5.	<b>Which subject are you most passionate about?</b>	Natural Science, English, English, English			
6.	<b>Which subject/s are you currently teaching?</b>	Most subjects			
7.	<b>How would you rate the community your school is situated in?</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Poor ✓</td> <td>Middle ✓✓✓</td> <td>Affluent ✓</td> </tr> </table> (indicate with a tick)	Poor ✓	Middle ✓✓✓	Affluent ✓
Poor ✓	Middle ✓✓✓	Affluent ✓			
8.	<b>Does the school have the necessary resources such as library, books, any additional ....? Please list.</b>	Yes, all schools have libraries (1 not functional) computer centres and a few white boards with Textbooks and workbooks			
9.	<b>Have you recently been involved in any training course/s besides the READ training? Please specify.</b>	All participants have been involved in training.			
10.	<b>Provide details regarding the success rate of this training if any. State reasons.</b>	All participants found the training to be valuable			