

An evaluation of Guided Reading in three primary schools in the Western Cape

by
Alide Kruizinga

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Supervisor: Dr. Renee Nathanson
Department of Curriculum Studies

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Declaration

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Acknowledgement

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Abstract

Given that the South African government intends to improve its literacy rates by implementing Guided Reading in the primary schools, teachers are challenged to give good quality Guided Reading instruction. This study evaluates how teachers understand and implement Guided Reading in Grade 1 and 2 at three public schools in the Western Cape. It discusses how Guided Reading can be a teaching context in which children learn to construct meaning independently from text. In addition, the study gives explanation on how to implement Guided Reading into classrooms. To gather data on teachers' current understanding and implementation of Guided Reading, a Guided Reading Self-Assessment Inventory was used (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:283-285). Data were also drawn from observations of teachers during their Guided Reading instruction. Analysis of the above-mentioned quantitative and qualitative research data, indicate that teachers have a superficial understanding of Guided Reading. The new policy requirements for Guided Reading appear to fail to offer teachers a sufficient explanation of Guided Reading. Without clear explanation of Guided Reading and practical support, it is expected that South African teachers will continue with their traditional reading instruction, because they do not fully understand the concept and value of Guided Reading. This study suggests that South African teachers struggle to implement Guided Reading in their classrooms, because they do not create Guided Reading groups based on ongoing assessment and they do not have access to leveled Guided Reading books. Without addressing these basic requirements, it is unlikely that Guided Reading will be implemented with any success in South African classrooms. An overriding conclusion is that Guided Reading instruction needs further research before it can be implemented correctly on a large scale in the primary schools of South Africa.

Opsomming

Die Suid Afrikaanse regering se besluit om begeleide lees “Guided Reading” in primêre skole te implimenteer om gelettertheid te bevorder, plaas ‘n groot verantwoordelikheid op onderwysers om hierdie leesbenadering op die juiste manier aan te bied. Hierdie navorsing fokus op Graad 1- en 2- onderwysers se begrip en uitvoering van begeleide lees in drie publieke skole in die Wes-Kaap. Die studie poog om onderwysers bewus te maak dat begeleide lees ‘n raamwerk kan wees waarbinne kinders leer om met begrip te lees asook om hoe hierdie leesbenadering te implementeer. Om data in te samel oor die huidige stand van uitvoering van begeleidelees is gebruik gemaak van ‘n “Guided Reading Self-Assessment Inventory” (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:283-285). Waarnemings is ook gemaak van onderwysers se begeleide lees onderrig. Die analisering van die data dui op Suid Afrikaanse onderwysers se gebrekkige begrip van begeleide lees, tot ‘n mate as gevolg van onduidelike beleidsdokumente. Sonder duidelike instruksie en ondersteuning aan onderwysers is dit te verwagte dat hulle sal terugval op hul tradisionele onderrigmetodes, terwyl die volle waarde van begeleide lees hulle ontgaan. Die studie bevind dat onderwysers die leesbenadering nie korrek tot uitvoering kan bring nie omdat hulle nie hul kinders in groepe plaas aan die hand van deurlopende evaluering nie, maar ook weens ‘n tekort aan geskikte onderrigmateriaal. Die sukses van begeleide lees is onwaarskynlik indien hierdie tekorte nie aangespreek word nie. Die oorheersende slotsom van die studie is dat verdere navorsing in die onderrig van begeleide lees nodig is voordat dit op groot skaal ingestel kan word by alle primêre skole in Suid Afrika.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Learners' achievements are often used as indicators for the efficiency of an educational system. Research findings from studies in South Africa and elsewhere have shown that South African learners' achievements are poor for both mathematics and reading. To contextualize my study and highlight the need for good quality literacy instruction, I will discuss the South African learners' reading outcomes of two international studies, namely SACMEQ II 2000 (Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality) and PIRLS 2006 (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), and two national studies, namely the Department of Education Systematic Evaluation Foundation Phase 2007 and the Western Cape Education Department Learner Assessment Study Intermediate Phase 2007.

The SACMEQ II (2000) study showed that South African Grade 6 learners scored below the 500 points benchmark at 492.4 points for reading (Moloi & Strauss 2005:176). Noteworthy is that South Africa scored lower on the SACMEQ II test than poorer African countries, such as Kenya and Uganda. The PIRLS (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy 2007) showed that South African Grade 4 and 5 learners scored below the international mean of 500 points at 302 points. With regards to reading ability, South Africa was ranked the lowest of the 39 participating countries (Howie, Venter, van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Scherman & Archer 2007:5). The South African Department of Education Systematic Evaluation (2007) showed that the Grade 3 main achievement score for literacy was 36%. The highest average was the Western Cape Province where learners scored 48% in literacy. The Western Cape Education Department Learner Assessment Study (2007) showed that the pass rates for Grade 6 learners was 44,8%. Fleisch (2008) points out that the results of literacy tests indicate that large numbers of South African learners cannot understand what they are reading.

From observations, I know that above-mentioned percentages are not an exaggeration. In 2008, I worked at two primary schools and visited other schools, and the large numbers of learners who cannot read shocked me. South Africa faces the challenge of improving its literacy rates, not because of the illiteracy rates, but because of the person behind the number: a child who cannot read his schoolbook; an adult who cannot read his medicine prescription; a jobseeker who cannot read the paper to look for vacancies. It is clear that South Africa has to fight the illiteracy rates with a solid literacy approach - for her children, for her future.

As part of the governmental response to high levels of illiteracy in South African schools, the Department of Education implemented a balanced language programme, which includes Guided Reading, as set out in the National Reading Strategy (2008:4-21) and the Foundation for Learning Campaign (Government Gazette, No. 30880, 2008:4-11). Guided Reading is the heart of a balanced language program, because it teaches children how to construct meaning independently from text under a teacher's supportive guidance (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:1-2; Hornsby 2000:30-34). Guided Reading builds the process of individual reading and is particularly appropriate for children who are in the early years of literacy development and for the lowest performing children (Jaquinta 2006:413). Given that Guided Reading is seen by the South African government as a tool to improve the literacy rates, the question arises as to whether and how schools are implementing Guided Reading. As mentioned earlier, in 2008, I visited several primary schools in the Western Cape. What I noticed was that some teachers do not give Guided Reading instruction at all. It seemed to me that every school has its own literacy programme with its own books. This led me to speculate that Guided Reading instruction will be uneven across different schools and that schools will not have a coherent leveling system for grading Guided Reading books. While it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the understanding and implementation of Guided Reading in South African schools on a large scale, it is possible to conduct a study of a more limited nature. Therefore, the research question of this study is:

How do teachers understand and implement Guided Reading in Grade 1 and 2 at three public primary schools in the Western Cape?

Considering that understanding is an 'in the mind process', investigating teachers' understanding of Guided Reading is likely to be a complex process. However, it is possible to study how teachers' understandings manifest in their teaching. Therefore the following sub-questions will be explored:

- a. How are teachers' understanding and interpretation of the new policy requirements for Guided Reading reflected in their Guided Reading lessons?
- b. What books are the teachers using during Guided Reading and are these Guided Reading books leveled according to a gradient of difficulty?
- c. How do teachers create Guided Reading groups, and is the selection of these groups based on assessments which inform teachers' decision-making?

To answer the main research question and sub-questions, I conducted implementation evaluation research in Grade 1 and 2 at three primary schools, with approval of the Western Cape Education Department (see addendum 1) and the Ethical Clearance Committee (see addendum 2). I focused on Grade 1 and 2, because in this phase learners build foundational cognitive networks for future reading (Clay 1993:15). In addition, Iaquinta (2006:413) explains that “the early years are the focus for the prevention of reading difficulties and research conducted over the past two decades has produced extensive results demonstrating that children who get off to a poor start in reading rarely catch up”. Bell (2009:8) and Fleisch (2008:30) are of the opinion that unless the proper groundwork has been laid in South African primary schools, children will continue to struggle in education. This study therefore focuses on Guided Reading in the early stages of children’s reading development.

As mentioned, the aim of this study is to obtain data on teachers’ current understanding and implementation of Guided Reading. To gather data, the Guided Reading Self-Assessment Inventory (see addendum 3) developed by Fountas and Pinnell (1996:283-285) was used and nonparticipant observation were conducted. To see how the theory links with practice, I observed the teachers and children during Guided Reading instruction. I will compare the outcome of the reflection of the teachers and the outcome of my observations to see if the teachers’ self-reflection and understanding of Guided Reading agrees with my observations. In conclusion, I will use a triangulation mixed-methods approach for my research; the Guided Reading Self-Assessment Inventory will give me quantitative data and the observation will provide me with qualitative data.

This dissertation is organized as followed: The concept of Guided Reading instruction and its theoretical underpinnings are discussed in Chapter 2, where Guided Reading is placed in a South African educational context. Chapter 3 provides the research design for this study, and the research results are discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 contains the conclusions and reflections of this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ON GUIDED READING

2.1. Introduction

In addressing the alarmingly low literacy rates mentioned in Chapter 1, South Africa faces the challenge to improve reading instruction in schools. In 2008, the South African government introduced Guided Reading instruction in primary schools with the aim to improve the literacy rates (Bloch 2009:128; Curriculum GET Minute 0012/2008:1; Government Gazette No. 30880/2008:4-10). Guided Reading is recommended for children in the early stage of literacy development, because it teaches children how the reading process works and gives children the opportunity to read a book for meaning (McPherson 2007:1; Kouri, Riley & Selle 2006:236; Schwartz 2005:442; Malik 1996:1; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:156; Guastello & Lenz 2005:144). McPherson (2007:2) emphasizes the value of Guided Reading: “research has demonstrated that Guided Reading helps kindergarten through adult students build a repertoire of flexible reading strategies that they can use to independently and successfully read a variety of texts. Additionally, Guided Reading allows teachers to provide students with direct reading skill and strategy instruction tailored to their individual needs and abilities, thus reducing student frustration while developing positive attitudes toward reading”. Mooney (1995:16) describes Guided Reading as a methodology which helps children to “talk, think and read” their way through a text. The definition of Guided Reading that I will use for this study is based on Hornsby’s (2000:30) and Fountas and Pinnell’s (1996:2) views that Guided Reading is a teaching context in which children learn how to construct meaning independently from text under the teacher’s supportive guidance.

The aim of this chapter is to review literature on Guided Reading in order to understand the concept of Guided Reading and how it is implemented in selected schools in the Western Cape. In the next section, Guided Reading is first placed within a theoretical framework and then within the current South African educational framework. I describe a theory-based Guided Reading lesson and compare this with the South African government’s explanation of a Guided Reading lesson. Furthermore, I discuss the literature on the implementation of Guided Reading in the classroom and reflect on the implementation of Guided Reading in the South African classroom. Lastly, section 2.8 gives a summary of this chapter.

2.2. Guided Reading within a theoretical framework

In this section, I discuss several learning theories, reading models and instructional approaches that underpin Guided Reading, which are shown in Table 2.1. As Pruisner (2009:41) mentioned “all of reading—the process, effective instruction, and assessment of learning—is based on a model. A model represents a theory or view and portrays critical components in a graphic form”. All learning theories are rooted in the philosophical, social and political context of time and influence the way we teach children (Tracy & Morrow 2006:15). Skinner’s (1978) behaviorist theory, Bourdieu’s (1983) socio-cultural theory, Piaget’s (1959) cognitive theory and Vygostky’s (1962) social constructivist theory influence literacy education (Aldridge & Goldman 2007:96; Pugh & Rohl 2000:3; Tracy & Morrow 2006:108-112). I will build up a theoretical understanding of Guided Reading by comparing and contrasting each of the above-mentioned theories. I will start by discussing each learning theory respectively, followed by the reading model that represents the theory. After that I will discuss the instructional approach that is based on each specific reading model and learning theory. Finally, I will explore the implications of each theory, model and instructional approach for Guided Reading. Table 2.1 illustrates the learning theories, reading models and instructional approaches that I will discuss.

TABLE 2.1 Four learning theories, reading models and instructional approaches

Learning theory	Behaviorism <i>(Skinner 1978)</i>	Socio-cultural <i>(Bourdieu 1983)</i>	Cognitive <i>(Piaget 1959)</i>	Social Constructivist <i>(Vygotsky 1962)</i>
Reading model	Transmission <i>(Gough 1986)</i>	Concept-driven <i>(Goodman 1967)</i>	Interactive <i>(Rumelhart 1977)</i>	Transaction <i>(Rosenblatt 1963)</i>
Instructional approach	Skills based <i>(Adams 1990)</i>	Language experience <i>(Smith 1971)</i>	Reading strategy <i>(Clay 1991)</i>	Balanced <i>(Hornsby 2000; Fountas & Pinnell 1996)</i>

2.2.1. Behaviorist learning theory

Tracy and Morrow (2006:33) explain that behaviorism is connected with the conditioning theories of Pavlov and Skinner. Skinner (1978:169-170) explains that behavior is the result of a person's response to stimuli, and this stimuli can be manipulated to achieve the desired behavior. Behaviorism seems to overemphasize the environment – the nurture side of leaning (Tagatz 1976:9; Aldridge & Goldman 2007:96). According to Skinner's behaviorist learning theory, reading is a conditioned behavior composed of learnt, isolated skills (Skinner 1978:169). As described next, behaviorism has led to a transmission model of reading in which reading is viewed as the process of mastering isolated reading skills.

2.2.1.1. Transmission reading model

The transmission reading model, which derived from behaviorism, is often referred as the 'bottom-up' model (Pruisner 2009:42; Hornsby 2000:9). Gough's (1986) reading model became known as the transmission model, because it illustrates reading as a decoding skill (Gough 1986:6-7; Tracy & Morrow 2006:132). The transmission model underlines the idea that when children are reading they are mentally busy breaking the written code (Pugh & Rohl 2000:76). Hayes (1991:5) describes the transmission model of reading as "a process of translating graphic symbols into speech during oral reading or inner speech during silent reading". Barchers (1998:16) agrees with Hayes (1991) when she explains the transmission reading model as the process of mastering the relationship between the letters and sounds and "the process of systematically building letter-by-letter, word-by-word, and sentence-by-sentence". The application of the reading transmission model is a skills-based instructional approach, which I will describe in the next section (Tracy & Morrow 2006:39).

2.2.1.2. Skills-based instructional approach

The starting point of the skills-based approach is to first teach children the letters of the alphabet, before they can move on to reading a book. Adams (1990:102) supports the skill-based approach when she explains that reading for comprehension is reading each individual word and processing its component letters. This approach focuses on the reading skill, by teaching children specific reading concepts, such as phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling, vocabulary, and fluency (Tracy & Morrow 2006:40).

I will briefly clarify the five above-mentioned reading concepts i.e. phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, vocabulary and fluency. Firstly, phonemic awareness skill is the capacity to split words, put words back together again, and change words (Allington & Cunningham 1999:125). To instill phonemic awareness, a teacher may, for example, ask the children to clap out the three 'beats' of e/le/phant. Secondly, phonics skill is "the ability to associate the sounds we hear in words with the letters that represent them" (Paratore & McCormack 2005:16). A teacher could ask children to look at the alphabet chart to find the first letter they hear in the word elephant. Thirdly, vocabulary skill means that readers are able "to connect words with other words and to understand the connotations attached to them by virtue of their various uses" (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:166). Children can be instructed by a teacher to look at the picture of the elephant to support their understanding of the word elephant. Fourthly, children develop spelling skills when they write and begin to rely more on how words look like rather than how they sound (Dorn, French & Jones 1998:76). A teacher will for instance, ask children to write down the word elephant. Fifthly, the skills-based teaching approach will also focus on fluency. To build fluency, a teacher may request children to read the story of the elephant again and again. Clay (1991:184) agrees that fluency is essential for comprehension. She explains that "When children are allowed to re-read familiar material they are being allowed to learn to be readers, to read in ways which draw on all their language resources and knowledge of the world, to put this very complex recall and sequencing behavior into a fluent rendering of the text". However, Clay (1991:184-186) does not agree that one text should be memorized, but she argues that fluency can also be supported through reading different texts on the same reading level.

Aldridge and Goldman (2007:97) state that the skills-based method of teaching reading: "resulted in an overemphasis on isolated skills and drill, as well as a heavy reliance on teacher-directed and teacher-reinforced activities. Consequently, teachers often ignore children's curiosity and prior knowledge". This contradicts sharply with the socio-cultural learning theory that focuses on children's prior knowledge and purpose for reading, as discussed in section 2.2.2.

2.2.1.3. Guided Reading and skill-based instructional approach

Advocates of Guided Reading disagree with a skill-based teaching approach in which acquiring isolated skills is a precursor to reading and therefore with behaviorism and a transmission reading model. They do not believe that the starting point of teaching children reading is the study of letters or the alphabet (Clay 1991:260). Within a skills-based instructional approach, children learn letters in isolation through contrived language, which contradicts the principles of Guided Reading, where children have the opportunity to read a complete meaningful text in one sitting. I agree with Fountas and Pinnell (1996:171): “We certainly would not support the fairly common practice of not having children read and write until they know the alphabet letters. Learners may begin reading and writing during Guided Reading as we have suggested while at the same time building their knowledge of letters and words”. In addition, Guided Reading lessons integrate knowledge of the alphabet by doing word study after children read the text. However, the word study is often linked with a sentence in a book, for the reason that children must comprehend what they are reading and studying (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:171).

Another distinction between Guided Reading and skill-based instructional approach is the manner in which children read in the class. The skill-based instructional approach often results in ‘round-robin’ reading (children take turns reading a story orally) and choral reading (all children in the class read the story aloud) (Weaver 2002:241-242). Guided Reading, by contrast, fosters independent reading (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:2). Malik (1996:1) also emphasizes the difference between the skills-based instructional approach and Guided Reading by stating that Guided Reading “differs from oral reading or the ‘round robin’ approach because Guided Reading requires students to read the selected text to themselves first”. Choral reading, reading aloud in a group and copying the sounds is, in my opinion, not reading. Reading is not just breaking the letter code or memorizing a text. Of course reading is attending to letters, words and sentences, but reading is also much more. Reading is also communicating as an individual person with the text. Different people will read and interpret the same text differently (Dorn & Soffos 2005:15-16). The socio-cultural theory that I will describe in the following section acknowledges the person behind the reading process.

2.2.2. Socio-cultural learning theory

Social-cultural learning theory has its roots in the work of Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner (Pugh & Rohl 2000:3; Tracy & Morrow 2006:104). Bourdieu (1983:107) argued that the social and cultural context in which literacy is learned has a great impact on the literacy knowledge and competence of children: “The naïve question of the power of words is logically implicated in the initial suppression of the question of the uses of language, and therefore of the social conditions in which words are employed. As soon as one treats language as an autonomous object, one is condemned to looking within words for the power of words, that is, looking for it where it is not to be found”. I agree with Bourdieu (1983) that the social environment plays a role in children’s literacy achievement, for the reason that before children can learn to read, the people in their environment need to talk to them (Elkin 2007:3). The strength of social-cultural theory is that it acknowledges the role of the social environment in the reading process, but the weakness is that social-cultural theory overemphasizes the influence of the environment on children’s learning process and therefore does not seem to recognize the role of children’s cognition during the reading process (Tracy & Morrow 2006:195-198). Social-cultural theories of learning underpin a concept-driven reading model, because it focuses on the role children’s background plays in the reading process (Pressley 1998:53).

2.2.2.1. Concept-driven reading model

Concept-driven model of reading is often referred to as the ‘top-down’ model (Dechant 1991:25). Hayes (1991:6) explains that the concept-driven model emphasizes the idea that readers go directly from print to meaning without first decoding the print, in contradiction to the transmission model of reading which highlights the decoding skill of reading. The concept-driven model illustrates that children make meaning of text by using their experience and knowledge, linked with their purpose for reading (Tracy & Morrow 2006:149; Cooper 2000:93). Children’s predictions about the meaning of the text help them not to rely only on the exact interpretation of the symbols (Barchers 1998:17). Goodman (1967:128), who aligns himself with a concept-driven reading model, described reading as a process in which children try to understand the text in light of their own knowledge of language and of the world. A concept-driven reading model laid the foundation for the language experience approach, because the latter is based on children’s language and experiences (Tompkins 1998:167).

2.2.2.2. Language experience instructional approach

Like Goodman (1967), Smith (1971:22-25) agrees that prior knowledge plays a significant role in reading. Smith (1971:23) suggests that children must learn to read from meaningful books that correspond to their experiences. Smith's view of reading laid the basis for the language experience approach, which underscores that the most effective way to teach children to read is to help them read stories with familiar language (Pressley 1998:14-17; Weaver 1998:27). Therefore, language experience is an instructional approach that builds on children's experiences for understanding, reading and writing the text (Davidson 1991:32; Cambourne 1988:30). Children will make the link between their spoken language and reading and writing when the teacher writes down children's dictated stories about their experiences. The assumption is that children will read the text easily, because of its natural language patterns (Tompkins 1998:167). The language experience instructional approach establishes links between the world of the children and the symbols of language (Iversen 1997:32-33; Askov & Dupuis 1982:7-15). Besides the children's own text, it uses books that are connected to the children's lives and their cultural identity (Paratore & McCormack 2005:32). The language experience instructional approach is often referred to as the 'whole-to-parts' instruction, since the starting point of teaching reading is the whole text (Holdaway 1979:71). As Weaver (1998:28) explains, "children acquire print words with similar parts, they will begin to see the parts in the wholes, and use that knowledge to pronounce more and more unfamiliar words through analogy". The language experience instructional approach seems to be the opposite of the skill-based instructional approach, since it emphasizes the idea that children will develop letter-sound system through reading whole text (Pressley 1998:53). In contrast, the skills-based instructional approach is grounded in the thought that children must learn the letter-sound system before they can read the whole text (Tracy & Morrow 2006:186-187). The next section will compare and contrast Guided Reading and the language experience approach.

2.2.2.3. Guided Reading and the language experience instructional approach

There are aspects of congruence between Guided Reading and the language experience instructional approach, because Guided Reading stimulates the reading process of children by using books that match their knowledge and experience (Dorn et al. 1998:42-43). I will discuss Guided Reading books in section 2.4.1. It is also important to give children books they like, so that they will have positive experiences with reading. The more children like to read, the more they will read and become independent fluent readers (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:107-109). To conclude, there is place for language experience in a comprehensive literacy program, because it enables children to use their own language and experience to construct text (Hornsby 2000:37-39). However, Guided Reading differs from the language experience instructional approach, because Guided Reading often includes word study which is linked with the skill-based teaching approach (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:166-176).

From the discussion so far, it is evident that neither behaviorism nor the socio-cultural learning theory fully underpins Guided Reading. Therefore, to gain a clearer understanding of Guided Reading, I will discuss two other learning theories, namely the cognitive learning theory and social constructivism to see how they underpin Guided Reading.

2.2.3. Cognitive learning theory

Cognitive theories of learning have their origin in Piaget's view on children's development. Piaget (1959:79) states that: "Each child has his own world of hypotheses and solutions which he has never communicated to anyone, language is moulded on habits of thoughts". The cognitive theory of learning describes the process, storage and retrieval of knowledge from the mind (Tracy & Morrow 2006:198). Although Piaget focused strongly on the cognition, he also acknowledged the role of the environment. Piaget believed that cognitive development is a continuous interactive process in which nature and nurture play important roles (Piaget 1959:78-79; Tagatz 1976:54-55). "When an individual interacts with an environment, the new experience must be fitted into the individual's present cognitive structure" (Tagatz 1976:55). The interaction of nature and nurture that cognitive learning theory highlights, did the groundwork for an interactive model of reading, which I will discuss in the next section.

2.2.3.1. Interactive reading model

Tracy and Morrow (2006:139) explain that Rumelhart (1977) developed the interactive model and that this model underpins a “cognitive processing theoretical orientation to reading because it hypothesizes about unobservable, underlying cognitive processes that take place during the reading process”. The interactive model is a combination of the transmission model and the concept-driven model. As mentioned, the transmission model is also referred as a ‘bottom-up’ model and it suggests that meaning is in the print (Gunderson 2009:36). In contrast, the concept-driven model, which is often referred to as a ‘top-down model’, suggests that meaning resides in the minds of readers (Gunderson 2009:36). The interactive model combines the transmission model and concept-driven model in suggesting that children use their decoding skills (bottom-up information) and their background knowledge (top-down information) simultaneously to find meaning in text (Gunderson 2009:36; Barchers 1998:17). Thus, the interactive model of reading accepts that nature and nurture interact in the process of literacy development (Tagatz 1976:16). A cognitive learning theory and interactional reading model support a reading strategy instructional approach, because they emphasize the idea that readers make use of complex cognitive systems that are working together in parallel rather than acting alone (Clay 2001:237; Pruisner 2009:44; Tracy & Morrow 2006:200-201; Pressley 1998:177).

2.2.3.2. Reading strategy instructional approach

A reading strategy instructional approach suggests that children use strategies to construct meaning from text (Kouri et al. 2006:238; Fountas & Pinnell 2006:366; Dorn & Soffos 2005:37). Reading is seen as a message-getting process; this process is often referred to as a ‘metacognitive information process’, which entails thinking about your thinking (Clay 1993:10; Dorn & Soffos 2005:37; Tompkins 1998:7-8). Kouri et al. (2006:237) make it clear that the reading strategy instructional approach contradicts the skills-based approach: “Instead of relying on letter-sound information to decode unknown words in text, good readers will use meaning-based information for predicting and inferring text information”.

A reading strategy instructional approach is built on Clay's (1993:10) work, which emphasizes the idea that children develop reading strategies in order to gather information from the text by using at least three information sources. These information sources, namely meaning, and syntactic and visual information, will give children cues for problem solving while they are reading. Firstly, the ability to draw meaning from different sources of information is derived from children's experiences that language makes sense and their expectations that the text will have meaning as well. Secondly, children make use of syntactic information based on their intuitive knowledge that language is put together in rule-governed sentences. Finally, children can find visual information in text and use this information to understand the relationship between oral language (sound), graphic symbols (letters), pictures and layout. The children use reading strategies to construct information obtained from above-mentioned information sources. This construction of information happens inside the children's minds. Clay refers to this process as the construction of 'inner control' (Clay 1991:18). Clay (1991:333-340) divides reading strategies in three categories, namely strategies which maintain fluency, strategies which detect and correct error, and strategies for problem-solving new words. Strategies which maintain fluency assist children in using their knowledge of oral language and comprehension of words to predict texts and read fluently. Strategies which detect and correct error imply that children use meaning, structure, and visual information to confirm reading (self-monitoring) and notice mistakes and correct them based on new information (self-correction). Strategies for problem-solving new words means that children check one information cue with another information cue to understand new words (cross-checking).

Now that I have discussed the three categories of strategies and information sources, the question arises: How does a teacher teach reading strategies? Many researchers agree that strategies cannot be directly observed, because strategy use is an in-the-head process (Dorn et al. 1998:26; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:149; Clay 1991:18). Although we cannot see strategies, we know they are there because learners give evidence through their behavior while reading and after they read (Fountas, Pinnell Scharer, DeFord, Fried, Henry, Lyons, McCarrier, Mundre, & Wiley 2002:6). Likewise, Dorn and Soffos (2005:41) also acknowledge that reading strategies cannot be observed, but strategic behaviors can be observed, such as re-reading and clarify thinking in order to understand the text. Because reading strategies cannot be directly observed, teachers cannot directly teach reading strategies (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:149).

Reading strategies would therefore not be taught in a directive style, but in the manner of modeling, demonstrating, and supporting strategic behaviors (Hornsby 2000:14). I will discuss modelling, demonstrating and supportive teaching in section 2.2.4. Weaver (2002:331) agrees with Hornsby that “we can generate children’s metacognitive awareness of these strategies and usefulness by naming the strategies, demonstrating them, and involving children in applying the strategies themselves”. To generate children’s awareness of strategies, we teach *for* strategies, which means that teachers support children in developing a strategy system (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:149).

Dorn et al. (1998:11) explain that teaching for strategies is “when a teacher is prompting the child towards processing activity based on the child’s existing knowledge and ability to apply problem-solving strategies while working with unknown information”. Fountas and Pinnell (1996:160) agree that “teachers use questions or prompts to help children learn how to think about different sources of information as they put together a flexible system of strategies they can apply on increasingly difficulty text”. For instance, the teacher prompts the child to use strategies when she asks “Does it make sense?” or when she instructs the child to look at a picture to search for meaning (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:161). She helps children to become aware of their strategy use through instructing children to crosscheck one source of information against other information sources (Hornsby 2000:32). Hornsby (2000:12) explains that “we want children to become consciously aware of the reading strategies so that they can pause, reflect, consider options, and take control of their own reading”. Children’s development and awareness of reading strategies improve when we allow them to read (Cooper 2000:426). Cooper (2000:403) makes it clear that a critical ingredient of effective strategy instruction is the actual practice of strategies in the meaningful context of reading. Fountas and Pinnell (1996:157) agree that “information-rich text at the right level of difficulty allows children to develop strategies”. Teaching for reading strategies from meaningful text helps children not only to engage with and understand texts, but also to make connections with other texts, the world, and their own lives (Weaver 2002:329). It is clear from this that teaching for strategies cannot occur in the absence of meaningful, continuous texts. The next section will discuss how Guided Reading is connected with the cognitive learning theory, interactive model of reading and the reading strategy approach.

2.2.3.3. Guided Reading and reading strategy instructional approach

Avalos, Chavez, Plasencia and Rascón (2007:324) explain that Guided Reading is “a meaning-making process while vocabulary and strategy instruction are introduced within the context of texts”. To achieve this constructing of meaning from text, children use reading strategies (Fountas & Pinnell 2006:366; Dorn & Soffos 2005:37). Guided Reading creates an excellent context to teach for reading strategies. Iaquina (2006:418) points out that: “Guided reading provides the necessary opportunity for teachers to explicitly teach reading strategies at the students’ individual levels. Guided Reading reinforces problem-solving, comprehension, and decoding. And, it provides opportunities for establishing good reading habits and strategies”. Similarly, Clay (1991:199) is of the opinion that “children come to know reading as a process of actively reconstructing meaning and as a process of predicting one’s way through print”. Although Guided Reading is connected with the teaching-for-strategies approach, this approach does not totally explain Guided Reading, because it mainly focuses on children’s cognitive ability to construct meaning from text and does not focus on the social context of Guided Reading. The social context during Guided Reading includes the interaction between the teacher and the children, which also helps children to construct meaning from text. The next section will discuss how the social constructivist learning theory underpins Guided Reading.

2.2.4. *Social constructivist learning theory*

Social constructivism found its origin in Vygotsky’s (1962) work on children’s development. Tracy and Morrow (2006:108) clarify that, although “Vygotsky’s theory is literally entitled the Socio-Historical Theory of Cognitive Development, it is commonly referred as Social Constructivism”. I also will use the term social constructivism in my study to describe Vygotsky’s theory. Vygotsky (1962) agrees with Piaget (1959) that children’s thinking is internal, the so called ‘egocentric speech’. However, he does not agree with Piaget that children’s thoughts remain entirely egocentric. Vygotsky (1962:133) says: “Egocentric speech is a phenomenon of the transition from interpsychic to intrapsychic functioning, i.e., from the social, collective activity of the child to his more individualized activity”. Vygotsky’s (1962) point of view is that cognitive development begins with a social interaction and then directs itself inward.

Conley et al. (2007:3-9) classify Vygotsky's perspective on learning under the cognitive theories alongside that of Piaget. In contrast, Murphy and Marling (2003:293) classify Vygotsky's theory of learning under the socio-cultural theories along with that of Bourdieu. It shows that Vygotsky's perspective on learning cannot be placed under the cognitive theories; neither can it be placed under the socio-cultural theories. Vygotsky (1962) found a way to combine cognitive and social perspectives on learning. Social constructivism emphasizes that cognition and social context are not opposites, but that they influence each other in the learning process (Purdy 2008:47; Dorn & Soffos 2005:81; Ageyev, Gindis, Kozulin & Miller 2003:6). The learner constructs knowledge in his own mind through cognitive and social processes (Barchers 1998:189-190; Conley, du Plessis & du Plessis 2007:3; Bednarz, Garrison & LaRochelle 1998:21-28; Wood 1988:6-11). Table 2.1 illustrates that a transaction reading model, which I will discuss in the next section, is based on social constructivism: "the transaction model is based on the knowledge that humans fundamentally construct their own knowledge" (Hornsby 2000:8).

2.2.4.1. Transaction reading model

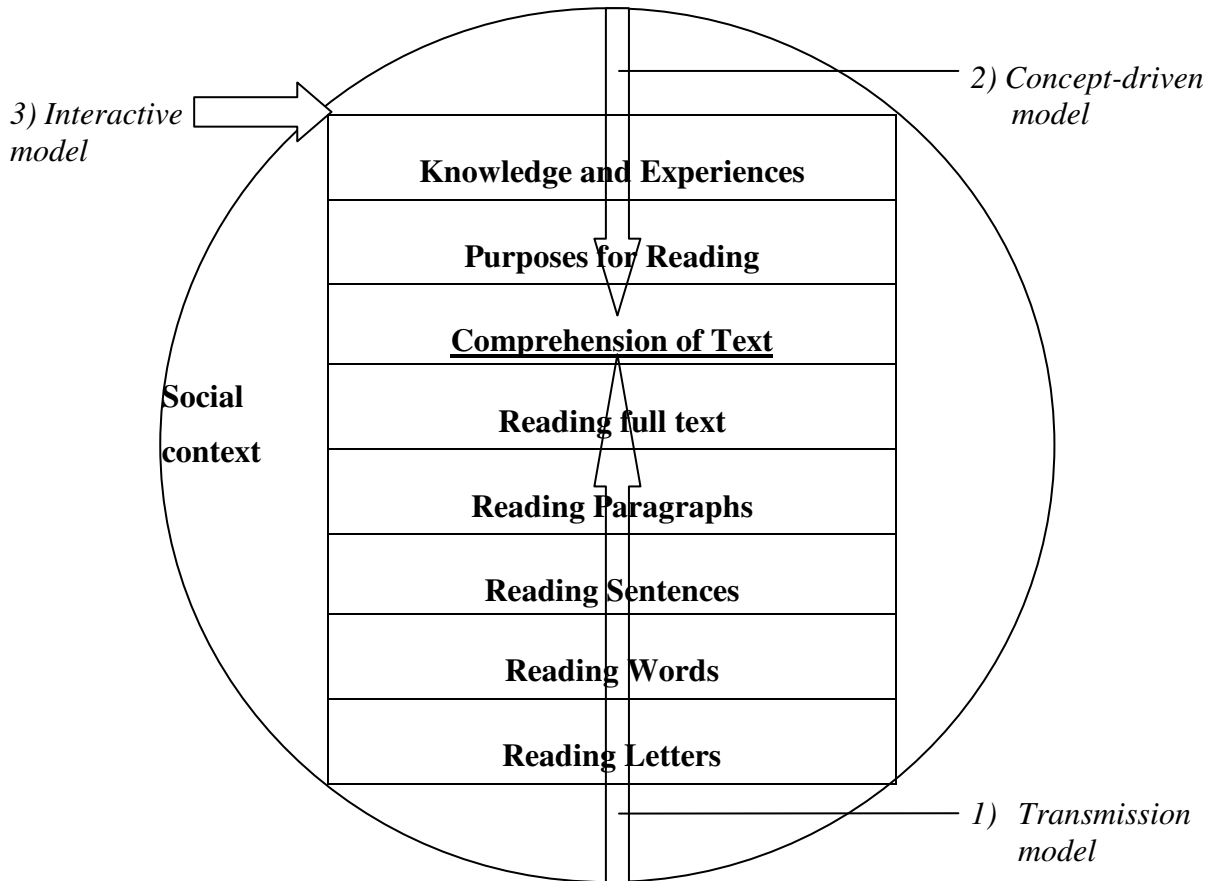
The transaction model of reading illustrates the idea of reader and text having a circular relationship and that such relationship is conditioned by social context (Cooper 2000:6; Barchers 1998:20-21; Lose, McEneaney & Schwartz 2006:122; Weaver 2002:24). Rosenblatt suggested that reading is a transaction between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt 1963:4). The transaction model, which is shown in Figure 2.1, combines the three other previously discussed reading models, namely the transmission model, the concept-driven model, and the interactive model of reading. The transaction model includes the transmission model (shown in Figure 2.1 as the first arrow,) in that the knowledge of letters and words helps children to read (Pressley 1998:212). However, knowledge of letters and words is not enough to construct meaning from text. Therefore, the transaction model of reading also embraces the concept-driven model (shown in Figure 2.1 as the second arrow) in that children's knowledge of words and previous experience support children while they are reading (Barchers 1998:20-21; Conley et al. 2007:16). Murphy and Marling (2003:119) state that "the child learns through his individual interpretation of and transaction with the text encountered in his daily experience". Finally, the transaction model endorses the interactive model (shown in Figure 2.1 as the third arrow), because children's cognition and social experiences interact with each other (Tracy & Morrow 2006:55).

The transaction reading model goes even further and argues that decoding skills and background knowledge not only interact with each other, but they influence each other as well. The transaction reading model provides an extra element, namely, the influence of social context on comprehension (Gunderson 2009:36). Where the children sit at the moment of reading, whether they allow themselves to daydream during reading, and whether they talk with others about the text after reading are all conditions that influence children's reading process and what they are going to remember from the text (Barchers 1998:24). Lose et al. (2006:120-121) explain that "a transaction perspective adopts a broader, pragmatic, and situated view of reading within the complex social context and events in which it occurs". Reading, seen in light of the transaction model, can be described as "a sociopsycholinguistic process, because the reader-text transaction occurs within situational and social contexts" (Weaver 2002:26).

The ultimate goal of the transaction model is comprehension. In other words, the main aim is that we understand what we are reading (Murphy & Marling 2003:104). Barchers (1998:188) explains that "reading without comprehension is frustrating, demoralizing, and a waste of time for everyone". I agree with Fountas et al. (2002:4) that reading without understanding is not reading at all: "reading is comprehension; without understanding, a person may be noticing and responding to graphic symbols but not processing them in the meaningful way that is required of reading".

FIGURE 2.1 Transaction Reading Model

1) Transmission model+ 2) Concept-driven model = 3) Interactive model
3) Interactive model + Social context = 4) Transaction model



This model is adapted from four figures of Barchers (1998:15-20)

- Figure 1.3 Bottom-Up Theory of Reading
- Figure 1.4 Top-Down Theory of Reading
- Figure 1.5 Interactive Theory of Reading
- Figure 1.6 Transaction Theory of Reading

2.2.4.2. Balanced instructional approach

Fisher (2008:20) argues that reading approaches such as Guided Reading are “drawn from a social constructivist perspective, where children are encouraged to talk, think and read their way to constructing meaning”. A balanced instructional approach not only underpins social constructivism and a transaction model of reading, but it is also influenced by whole language philosophy (Purdy 2008:45; Guastello & Lenz 2005:144; McPherson 2007:1; Malik 1996:1; Kouri et al. 2006:237; Iaquina 2006:413; Pruisner 2009:42; McInnes & Tobin 2008:4; Cooper 2000:5-6). Although a balanced instructional approach is based on different theories, it does not mean that the approach is a random mixture of educational philosophies, learning theories, reading models and instructional approaches. Hornsby (2000:14-15) explains that a balanced approach means that it is theory-driven and research-based.

Weaver (2002:279) explains that whole language philosophy in a balanced instructional approach means that the literacy programme is “integrative, with skills and strategies taught and used in context, and with emphasis upon the guided and sustained reading and writing of whole, meaningful texts, an emphasis that is sorely needed to help children become both functionally and joyfully literate”. A balanced approach draws from a whole language philosophy, because the instructions are based on whole text and integrates reading, writing, speaking and listening (Gunderson 2009:171-172; READ 2009:5). While many researchers refer to whole language as a theory or approach, I agree with Weaver (2002:36) that whole language is a philosophy on which teachers base their teaching and which leads to the acceptance of certain methods and materials (Tracy & Morrow 2006:59; Barchers 1998:1). Moats (2000:6) clarifies that “whole-language advocates find agreement that it is primarily a system of beliefs and intentions”. The whole language philosophy is a holistic view on literacy, because it emphasizes the idea that literacy is an ongoing process and an integration of reading, writing, speaking and listening (Pressley 1998:12; Weaver 2002:252). In contradiction to the skills-based approach that suggests that reading is an isolated skill, the whole language philosophy accentuates that reading strategies can only be taught on continuous text – the whole text (Cambourne 1988:204; Kouri et al.2006:236). Children construct the meaning from text because words are contextualized; hence, they gain a ‘sense of story’. To conclude, a balanced instructional approach, which includes Guided Reading, is based on whole language philosophy, social constructivist learning theory and a transaction reading model.

A balanced instructional approach, which is influenced by previously discussed theories, has its own perspective on children's reading development and the teacher's role in it. It highlights that literacy is a process that starts at birth and continues for life (Elkin 2007:1-2; Riley 1999:3-9). By contrast, Gesell (1948:182) believed that "Developmental diagnosis is a diagnosis of maturity status. The infant is a growing action system. He comes by his mind in the same way in which he comes by his body – that is, through processes of development which create maturing patterns of behavior". I question if there is such a close link between the physical age and the mental age of children as Gesell described, namely that children need to reach a certain age before they can start to become literate. This view has led to the 'readiness' approach, which is not endorsed by whole language theorists, who maintain that reading is an 'emerging' process (Weaver 1998). Nevertheless, nobody is born literate; we all have to learn how to read. A child will become older no matter how well the parents look after the child, unlike the growing process the child will stay illiterate if he does not learn how to read.

Furthermore, a balanced instructional approach highlights that children's reading development is a process with "predictable patterns or trends, but individual pathways" (Hornsby 2000:16). Although, there are no universal terms for reading stages, many theorists speak about reading stages to explain the reading development process of children. Fountas and Pinnell (1996:178) talk about four developmental stages for reading: emergent readers, early readers, transitional readers, and self-extending readers. Emergent readers are children who are starting to control reading behaviors. Mostly, they use information from pictures and begin to make links between their oral language and print. Early readers tend to rely less on pictures than emergent readers. Early readers increase their control of reading strategies such as self-monitoring, self-correction and cross-checking. Transitional readers use multiple sources of information while reading for meaning. Children who are self-extending readers tend to read much longer and complex text, and read a variety of genres. They use all sources of information flexibly to read for meaning and solve problems in an independent way (Brabham & Villaume 2001:260). Iaquinta (2006:414) explains that "The goal of Guided Reading is to develop a self-extending system of reading that enables the reader to discover more about the process of reading while reading. As children develop these understandings, they self-monitor, search for cues, discover new things about the text, check one source of information against another, confirm their reading, selfcorrect, and solve new words using multiple sources of information".

As mentioned, a balanced instructional approach also has its own view on teaching. The teacher plays an important role in the balanced instructional approach, because the teacher supports children in their learning-to-read process (Dorn et al. 1998:16). The teacher's support can be described as scaffolding, which is based on Vygotsky's social constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky 1962:5; Clay & Cazden 1992:131). "Consistent with the constructivist approach of providing an environment that encourages students to explore and learn, a Scaffolded Reading Experience provides students with the elements of a meaningful, worthwhile reading experience" (Barchers 1998:198). Dorn et al. (1998:21) describe it as a "complex interactive process whereby the teacher regulates levels of supporting according to how well the children understand the task at hand". Scaffolding children is based on Vygotsky's (1962) perspective on teaching, which emphasizes the idea that children have a zone of actual development (what children know and can do alone) and a zone of proximal development (what children can reach with assistance). When applied to reading instruction, this means supporting children in their zone of proximal development until they can read independently in their zone of actual development (Hornsby 2000:11; Dorn et al. 1998:3). Cordon (2000:10) explains scaffolding strategies as:

- Modeling: showing children examples of work produced by experts (Reading Aloud);
- Demonstrating: illustrating the procedures experts go through in producing work (Shared Reading);
- Supporting children as they learn and practice procedures (Guided Reading).

Scaffolding is removed during Independent Reading (see below). I will briefly discuss the teaching strategies and their link with Guided Reading instruction in the next section.

2.2.4.3. Guided Reading and balanced instructional approach

Dorn et al. (1998:29) state that a balanced instructional reading programme includes: Being Read To, Re-reading Familiar Books, Shared Reading and Guided Reading. Likewise, researchers at the Ohio State University created a literacy collaborative framework for a comprehensive reading and writing program, which also includes: Reading Aloud, Shared Reading, Guided Reading, Independent Reading, as well as Shared Writing, Interactive Writing, Guided Writing and Independent Writing (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:22-24; Hornsby 2000:26-27). (Addendum 4 contains the Literacy Collaborative Framework developed by Ohio State University).

During Reading Aloud, the teacher reads a book to the class and the children observe her modelling the reading process (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:22). Dorn and Soffos (2005:28) clarify what children learn from Reading Aloud: “As they hear books read aloud, children acquire knowledge about print concepts, story structure, literacy language, and specialized vocabulary and begin to anticipate that particular structures will occur within books”. Lapp, Flood, Moore and Nichols (2005:40) explain that during Reading Aloud, the teacher models fluent reading and comprehension strategies that children need when they read on their own or when they read independently during Guided Reading. Dorn et al. (1998:19) have the same opinion: “Being presented with simultaneous models of language and action enables children to observe the types of strategies and skills they need to apply as they problem-solve on their own”.

The children are more involved in the reading process during Shared Reading than during Reading Aloud. As Lapp et al. (2005:44) explain: “During Shared Reading we ask the children to begin to take on more responsibility for reading and making meaning”. During Shared Reading, the teacher demonstrates the reading process with an enlarged text, which gives children the opportunity to read with the teacher (Hornsby 2000:29; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:29; Dorn et al. 1998:32). “An important purpose of Shared Reading is the explicit demonstration of reading strategies, and the articulation of what those strategies are” (Hornsby 2000:30). Such strategies include prediction, monitoring, self-correction, early concepts about print, directionality, return sweep and that one reads print from the top of the page to the bottom (Allington & Cunningham 1999:51). This knowledge will support children when they have to construct meaning independently from text (Dorn & Soffos 2005:28-30; Cordon 2000:125).

The other reading components of a balanced instructional approach are Guided Reading, (which will be discussed in section 2.3) and Independent Reading. Hornsby (2000:26) states that “Independent Reading provides time for children to enjoy reading a text without the need of assistance”. Children have the opportunity during Independent Reading to sustain reading behavior and work on their own (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:23) During Guided Reading, children read independently under teacher guidance; during Independent Reading, children read without any help. Fostering the development of independent readers who understand what they are reading is the goal of a balanced comprehensive reading programme.

2.3. Guided Reading lesson

As discussed, the teacher models reading strategies during Reading Aloud and demonstrates the strategies during Shared Reading. During Guided Reading, is it time for the children to use the reading strategies themselves under the teacher's supportive guidance. Avalos et al. (2007:324-325) describe the role of the teacher during Guided Reading as follows: "The teacher's role is to maintain anecdotal records as he or she listens and observes the students implement strategies, stepping in to guide by reinforcing and providing appropriate prompting as teachable moments present themselves". The teacher has to predict how much support the Guided Reading group needs in order to be able to read and understand the text. Furthermore, she prompts children to apply reading strategies and assists individual children in the group (Dorn et al. 1998:40). Iaquina (2006:414) clarifies that: "Teacher prompts help children learn how to think about different sources of information as they put together a flexible system of strategies they can apply to increasingly difficult text". The teacher's role is very important in Guided Reading and it differs before, during and after Guided Reading lesson (Hall, McClellan, & Sabey 2005:118; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:7).

2.3.1. Before Guided Reading

Before the Guided Reading lesson, the teacher selects an appropriate book, which means that the book must have enough challenge to support problem-solving skills and be easy enough to support comprehension skills (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:6-9). The texts match the instructional reading level of the children, which means that they can read the text independently with 90 – 94% accuracy (Paratore & McCormack 2005:55; Clay 1993:23). Avalos et al. (2007:321) explain that once the teacher has selected the text, she has to analyze it to prepare herself for the introduction. The introduction sets the children up for success; the teacher introduces the story in a manner that gives children access to the concept and vocabulary of the book so that they can comprehend the upcoming reading material (Hornsby 2005:79; Tracy & Morrow 2006:142). As Simpson and Smith (2002:10) outline, "In effective book introductions we have seen, the teacher gives a clear overview of the meaning of the text. This gives the children ideas about what they might expect to happen, which will inform them when reading and problem solving". How long the introduction will take, depends on the group of children the teacher is working with. If they are emergent readers, she will take more time during the introduction to explain difficult words and concepts (Avalos et al. 2007:323).

2.3.2. During Guided Reading

During Guided Reading, the children read the text softly to themselves while the teacher listens in (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:6-9). Simpson and Smith (2002:10) observed that when Guided Reading was introduced, teachers were worried that they would not hear every child read every word. This is indeed the case, which does not matter: “because the book is matched closely to the child’s reading ability, we only need to intervene to help solve problems rather than listening for each word read correctly” (Simpson & Smith 2002:10). Avalos et al. (2007:324) explain that children vocalizing softly as they all read independently in the Guided Reading group may distract some children, but as soon as they become familiar with Guided Reading, it will no longer be an issue. When the children are reading independently, the teacher confirms children’s problem-solving attempts and successes (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:6-9; Arnfield, Perez-Parent & Skidmore 2003:47-50). It is very important to give positive feedback to children and encourage them when they are busy trying to understand a new text. As Avalos et al. (2007:324-325) outline: “Fundamental to the success of this approach is the teacher’s ability to create a learning environment that facilitates a high level of comfort”. When the teacher notices that a child stops and cannot read further, she has to scaffold the child to ‘get him back on track’ and to support the child in understanding the story. In order to support the children better the next time during Guided Reading, she can write down which reading strategies the children have already made their own and which strategies should receive more attention.

2.3.3. After Guided Reading

Tracy and Morrow (2006:142) state that the after-reading activities of Guided Reading “are designed to reinforce and extend learning that was inspired during the Guided Reading experience”. Discussing the book after reading supports children in constructing the meaning of the story (Cooper 2000:41; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:6-9). The teacher gives children the feeling that their thoughts and emotions about the book matter and creates a safe environment for children to share their thoughts about the text, including questions and connections they may have had during the reading (Avalos et al. 2007:325). For this reason, it is important for teachers to ask open-ended questions to enhance comprehension and generate dialogue (Whitehead 2002:33-35). Discussion allows children to reach for meaning by building on one another’s knowledge by sharing thoughts (Brabham & Villaume 2001:261; Simpson & Smith 2002:11).

According to Rosenblatt (1989:173): “When students share their response and learn how their evocations from transactions with the same text differ, they can return to the text to discover their own habits of selection and synthesis and can become more critical of their own processes as readers”. After the children have had the opportunity to talk about the story, the teacher returns to the texts for one or two teaching opportunities such as finding evidence and word study (Fountas & Pinnell 2007:224). Paratore and McCormack (2005:55) explain that “the teacher may stop at different points to ask the students to display the strategy taught, make connections, or draw conclusions”. Sometimes she engages the children in extending the story through activities such as drama, writing art or more reading (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:6-9). To plan such activities for every book is not always possible because of time constraints, although these activities can be beneficial for children to further develop their understanding of the text (Avalos et al. 2007:325).

2.4. Implementing Guided Reading in the classroom

Fawson and Reutzel (2000:84) explain that “when teachers implement guided reading in classrooms, children are matched with books that appropriately support the development of each child’s self-extending reading strategies”. A successful Guided Reading program involves arranging children in Guided Reading groups and selecting leveled books for each group (Guastelle & Lenz 2005:145). Hornsby (2000:52-73) concludes that before Guided Reading the teacher has to create groups based on assessment and organize the appropriate books. The next section, will discuss the requirements for implementing Guided Reading in the classroom, namely Guided Reading books and groups.

2.4.1. Guided Reading books

Guided Reading books must be challenging in order to support problem-solving skills yet easy enough to support comprehension skills independently (Paratore & McCormack 2005:55; Clay 1993:23). I agree with Clay (1991:202) that the criteria of progress “are not whether the child can read unseen text, or what new words the child can decode without assistance. The criteria are whether the child can read the text he needs to read in his education with a problem-solving approach which allows him to understand the passage, and makes his reading strategies more effective”. For children who are at the emergent stage of reading, Guided Reading books “combine a repeated, single sentence pattern with high levels of meaning support from the pictures for any variation in the pattern” (Schwartz 2005:438).

To select Guided Reading books that match the instructional level of the children is not an easy task. It is much easier for teachers to select the right Guided Reading book if they are leveled according to difficulty. Some publishers level their books using readability formulas. “These formulas are usually based on two factors: syllable count and sentence length” (Barchers 1998:349). However, Peterson’s (2001:120-121) research indicates that readability formulas are designed to predict the grade level of text, but do not account for factors that influence the quality of reading, such as “familiarity with the story, the match between the illustrations and text, and the predictability of language patterns and story episodes”. Clay (1991:183) accentuates that children have more opportunity to develop reading strategies when they can relate to the story. Fountas and Pinnell (1996:107 –113) discuss nine characteristics of a Guided Reading book collection, namely enjoyment, meaning and interest; accuracy and diversity in multicultural representation; breadth of type and genre; depth in number of titles at each level of difficulty; links across the collection (common characters, authors); quality of illustration and their relation to the text; content; length; and format. Preferably, schools must have a large number of leveled Guided Reading books and many different Guided Reading books in each level (Peterson 2001:122-124). As mentioned, it is not a straightforward task for the teacher to select the appropriate text for Guided Reading. A book level comparison chart can help the teacher to select Guided Reading books that correspond with the individual reading level of children (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:107). (Addendum 5 gives an example of a book level comparison chart).

2.4.2. Guided Reading groups

McPherson (2007:2) comments that “frequent reading assessment (e.g. running records) is foundational in an effective Guided Reading approach”. The outcome of the assessment gives the teacher insight in the child’s reading development and directs her Guided Reading instruction, groupings and the way she promotes to new, more challenging books (Lapp et al. 2005:101). Fountas and Pinnell (1996:8) suggest that the teacher should keep records of Guided Reading that “include books read, running records, and any notes on specific reading behaviors”. On the books read list, the teacher writes down which books the children have already read. During Guided Reading, the teacher can take notes on which reading strategies children are using.

Most important is taking running records, because these give the teacher information on which books she has to select for the Guided Reading groups, what to instruct, the level of scaffolding to connect with each child's individual level of development and when to promote a child to a more challenging book (Hornsby 2000:52-53). Fountas and Pinnell (1996:xvi) describe running records as "the most powerful tool for fine-tuning Guided Reading", because running records assess children's ability to read and comprehend text (Lapp et al. 2005:116). Clay (1993:20-42) developed running records (see addendum 6). The strength of running records is that it provides insight into the kinds of errors children make while reading so that the teacher can understand where the children need more support. The teacher's analysis of a child's pattern of errors and self-corrections assists her in placing the child in the correct Guided Reading group and moving the child to a new group when necessary (Tracy & Morrow 2006:141; Hornsby 2000:54). Hornsby (2000:56) and Fountas and Pinnell (1996:97) agree that three children in a Guided Reading group would be ideal, but eight children would be the largest workable Guided Reading group. Thus, in order to group children for Guided Reading, the teacher has to consider both her class size and the reading development stage of the children. Iaquina (2006:414) states that "small-group instruction is effective because teaching is focused precisely on what the students need to learn next to move forward. Ongoing observation of students, combined with systematic assessment, enables teachers to draw together groups of students who fit a particular instructional profile". Small-group instructions inquire management skills of the South African teachers, because they often have to deal with forty or more children in one class (see 2.7.2).

After the teacher formed her Guided Reading groups, she has to manage the groups. This means she has to plan when she is going to see each group, what she is going to focus on during the session, which book she is going to use for each group, which child's turn it is for a running record, and what kind of independent work the other children will do while she is busy with Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:66-70; Hornsby 2000:64-69). Furthermore, the teacher should regularly rearrange her groups, because Guided Reading groups are expected to change based on the individual reading development of each child. Thus, in each Guided Reading group, the teacher focuses on an identified need and disbands the group when that need is fulfilled (Lapp et al. 2005:79).

Fountas and Pinnell (1996:99) argue that “any particular grouping is a hypothesis that is continually being tested”. Groups are made based on assessments (running record) and are changed based on the child’s individual development and reading needs. This process of grouping is named dynamic grouping (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:97-106). Iaquinta (2006:414) points out that “Dynamic groups avoid the traditional problems of grouping, because teachers change the composition of groups regularly to accommodate the different learning paths of readers”. The teacher’s goal is not to keep the children in the same Guided Reading group, but to support the reading development of children through letting them read an appropriate level of text (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:104).

2.5. Guided Reading within a South African educational framework

The previous sections discussed relevant literature on Guided Reading. In this section, I want to discuss the implementation of Guided Reading in South Africa. Christie (2008:24) explains that South Africa invests in education to enhance the development of the country in general and the development of the individual. Nevertheless, Christie (2008:43) predicts that South Africa faces great challenges to provide quality teaching for all citizens, no matter what their socioeconomic status is, to prepare them for their lives beyond school. The South African government attempts to provide good quality teaching for all the children in South Africa through an outcomes-based education approach. Outcomes-based education relies on performance assessment to make sure that all children achieve the desired teaching outcomes (Barchers 1998:399; Conley et al. 2007:42; Soudien 2007:182-189). The Revised National Curriculum for Grade R-9 is outcomes-based (Revised National Curriculum 2002:6).

2.5.1. Revised National Curriculum

Christie (2008) gives a brief outline of the development of the South African education curriculum. In 1994, the government ordered curriculum developers to remove racist language and policy from the apartheid curriculum. In 1997, the National Department of Education launched the outcomes-based Curriculum 2005. This curriculum received many commentaries. The main complaints were that Curriculum 2005 used incomprehensible terminology, did not connect with actual classroom conditions, did not specify theory or pedagogy, and did not supply real guidance (Christie 2008:199-200). In 2000, Curriculum 2005 was reviewed, which resulted in the Revised National Curriculum Statement 2002.

The Revised National Curriculum (2002:8) has six learning outcomes for both the home language and first additional language in Grade 1 and 2 (see addendum 7). The educational trust organization READ (2008:20) explains that Guided Reading can be done in both home language and first additional language. This study endorses this view and therefore does not focus on the difference between home and first additional language classrooms instruction, but concentrates on Guided Reading practice, which is similar in the home and first additional language (García 2009:393).

READ (2008:20) also states that Guided Reading “is a methodology that is particularly suited to meeting the assessment standards of Language LO 1 Listening, LO 2 Speaking, LO 3 Reading and Viewing and LO 5 Thinking and Reasoning”. However, they omit LO 6 Language Structure and Use. This means that they ignore the fact that Guided Reading advocates the use of syntactic cues in interpreting and understanding texts and that Guided Reading lessons are often followed with Word Study (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:22-24; Hornsby 2000:26-27). Although Guided Reading is not described in the National Curriculum (2002), it certainly forms part of the balanced language programme of the South African Foundation for Learning Campaign (2008), which is linked to the National Curriculum (Government Gazette No. 30880, 2008:10; READ 2009:4).

In addition, the South African government supports schools in implementing Guided Reading by providing them with several documents that contain information on Guided Reading in a balanced language programme. These are:

- “Government Gazette, 14 March 2008, No 30880: Foundation for Learning Campaign 2008 - 2011
- Foundation for Learning, Assessment Framework: Intermediate Phase
- Foundation for Learning, Assessment Framework: Foundation Phase
- National Reading Strategy Document” (Curriculum GET Minute 0012/2008).

Above mentioned documents are the most recent on reading policy that have been distributed to all schools in the Western Cape. Using different documents to clarify different aspects of Guided Reading could be confusing to South African educators. In the next section, I will discuss the documents relevant to the foundation phase as my study was conducted in Grade 1 and 2.

2.5.2. Foundation for Learning Campaign

The National Department of Education started the Foundation for Learning Campaign in May 2008. It was officially launched by the Western Cape Education Department on 1 November 2008 (Curriculum GET Minute 0012/2008:1). The campaign gives guidelines on how to improve the literacy and numeracy levels of children. The goal is a minimum pass rate of 50% per Grade by 2011 (Curriculum GET Minute 0012/2008:1). The Government Gazette No. 30880 (2008:4) provides the background of the campaign: “The campaign is a national response to national, regional and international studies that have shown over a number of years that South African children are not able to read, write and count at expected levels, and are unable to execute tasks that demonstrate key skills associated with Literacy and Numeracy”. After four years, the Foundation for Learning Campaign (2008) will be concluded with a national evaluation.

According to the Government Gazette No. 30880 (2008:10), the weekly contact teaching time for Foundation Phase in Grade R – Grade 2 is twenty-two hours and thirty minutes. The teachers have to spend one hour and fifty minutes on literacy each day. In this time, teachers have to plan nine activities, namely Oral Work, Shared Reading or Shared Writing, Word and Sentence Level Work, Group Guided and Independent Reading/Writing, Handwriting, Writing, Listening and Speaking, First Additional Language and Reading for Enjoyment (Government Gazette No. 30880, 2008:9-11). In teachers’ daily planning thirty minutes are reserved for Guided Reading. In section 2.7.2., I will discuss how South African teachers can plan Guided Reading instruction in thirty minutes.

2.5.3. Assessment Framework Foundation Phase

Whereas the Foundation for Learning Campaign (2008) was launched to improve the literacy and numeracy levels of children, the Foundations for Learning Campaign Assessment Framework (2008) provides support to teachers in monitoring children’s progress in literacy and numeracy. The Assessment Framework (2008:19) stresses to teachers that assessing children is an ongoing process: It states: “on a daily basis you must observe your learners” and “assessing for reading is continuous and not a once-off assessment”.

It also emphasizes that reading assessment must assess the comprehension reading skills of the learners: “It is important, too, that learners’ understanding of what they are reading is assessed and not just their ability to recognize words” and “you want to assess what learners understand and not what they can just memorize, so integrate your activities as much as possible e.g. learners may spell all their words correctly during a test on Friday, but are they able to use those same words correctly spelt when writing/ recording their personal news or a story?” (Assessment Framework Foundation Phase 2008:19). Even though the running records test is an excellent tool to assess children’s comprehension and to create Guided Reading groups, the Assessment Framework Foundation Phase (2008) does not mention running records.

From the Assessment Framework Foundation Phase (2008:19-45), I understand that each school year has four terms, and that there are four assessment tasks in literacy for each term (so sixteen assessment tasks each year per child). Each assessment is divided into five topics, namely oral, phonics, reading, handwriting, and writing. The rating scales for the assessment are: not achieved, partially achieved, satisfactory achieved, and outstandingly achieved. However, a weakness is that the Assessment Framework (2008) does not elaborate on an assessment for Guided Reading that monitors children’s reading development and instructs the teachers on how to teach specific reading strategies (see 2.3.3.2).

2.5.4. National Reading Strategy

The National Reading Strategy (2008), which includes Guided Reading, is a response to two systemic evaluations held by the Department of Education: “these surveys showed shocking low levels of reading ability across the country. Large numbers of children simply do not read” (National Reading Strategy 2008:4). It is hard to find all the answers to why the illiteracy rates are so high in South Africa. Terry Bell outlines his thoughts about South African education in the *Sunday Times* of July 19 when he says: “the major problem of course, is the almost complete lack of pre-primary schools and nursery teacher training facilities along with overcrowded primary school classes, staffed by over-stretched and often under-qualified teachers”. His views are endorsed by the National Reading Strategy (2008:8-10), which also mentions under-qualified teachers, poor instructional materials and uneducated parents. In addition, the fact that the language of home and school do not match contributes to the high illiteracy rates (National Reading Strategy 2008).

The above-mentioned problems are many, but the National Reading Strategy (2008) also offers possible solutions that will help to reduce the illiteracy rates. It explains that monitoring children's performance will give the teacher information on if and how their teaching methodologies help to improve the reading skills of children. In addition, it recommends that teachers should use different methods to teach reading comprehension and reading enjoyment (National Reading Strategy 2008:15-18). It states that the Department of Education will train and support teachers to become good reading teachers, help principals in their leadership task to manage the reading programme in the school, and provide schools with good reading materials to create reading/library corners (National Reading Strategy 2008:18). Furthermore, the Department of Education will work together with universities, reading organizations, teachers, principals, district officials, parent communities, non-profit organizations, the higher education community, the business community, and the broader community (National Reading Strategy 2008:13-18).

The National Reading Strategy (2008:5) accentuates that improving reading is part of nation building. The desired outcome is that "all children must be able to read basic text by the end of Grade 3" (National Reading Strategy 2008:11). In order to achieve this, the National Reading Strategy (2008:21) highlights seven reading activities for teachers: Reading Aloud, Shared Reading, Guided and Group Reading, Independent Reading, Word and Sentence Level Work, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. However, as discussed in section 2.5.2, the Foundation for Learning Campaign (2008) highlights nine teaching activities, which could be confusing to teachers.

Although neither the National Reading Strategy (2008) nor the Foundation for Learning Campaign (2008) mentions any theoretical base to support their decisions, the activities they recommend do correspond with the research-base which supports Reading Aloud, Shared Reading, Guided Reading, Independent Reading, Shared Writing, Interactive Writing, Guided Writing, Independent writing, and Letter and Word Study (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:22-24; Hornsby 2000:26-27). Despite this positive development, both the National Reading Strategy (2008) and the Foundation for Learning Campaign (2008) seem to fail to offer teachers a clear explanation of Guided Reading and its theoretical underpinnings. Consequently, it is likely that South African teachers could become confused as to what Guided Reading is all about, which could result in individualistic teaching practices and uneven reforms (Fisher 2008:136; Schwartz 2005:443).

2.6. The South African government's explanation of Guided Reading lesson

To support the National Department of Education's Foundation for Learning Campaign 2008 – 2011 and National Reading Strategy (READ 2008:20), the South African government is adding more documents and DVD's to the existing documents on Guided Reading. These documents agree and differ with theory-based literature on Guided Reading (see section 2.2.-2.4.). For example, the Government Gazette No. 30880 (2008:10) defines the process of Guided Reading as follows:

“Groups of same-ability learners do Guided Reading with the teacher. They read a text at their developmental level (this can be the shared text or another text). The teacher uses the opportunity to:

1. revise reading skills and strategies already taught (sight words, sounding out, predications, etc.)
2. listen for fluency
3. check reading for meaning by asking a question”.

Although the Government Gazette highlights some previously discussed keywords in Guided Reading, namely ‘reading skills and strategies’, ‘fluency’ and ‘reading for meaning’, it does not explain the meaning of these keywords. This document is likely to be wasted effort, because it is full of terminology, it does not provide teachers with a clear explanation of Guided Reading instruction and it does not provide any theoretical underpinning for Guided Reading. Furthermore, the Western Cape Education Department sent a DVD titled *Group and Guided Reading 2006* to primary schools that illustrates a Guided Reading lesson. It shows a grade 7 class where all children are doing Guided Reading at the same time. This DVD explains a Guided Reading session with the following steps:

- 1) Silent reading
- 2) Write down unfamiliar words
- 3) Share unfamiliar words
- 4) Find meaning of unfamiliar words
- 5) Reading aloud in the groups
- 6) Call teacher
- 7) Write activity.

Section 2.3. explains that a Guided Reading lesson starts with a teacher's introduction, followed by children's independent reading and discussion afterwards (Fountas and Pinnell 1996:22). This threefold structure does not correspond with the Guided Reading steps the DVD highlights. Therefore, there seems to be a gap between theory (see section 2.3.-2.4) and the Guided Reading practices as shown in the DVD.

Besides the Government Gazette No. 30880 (2008) and the DVD (*Group and Guided Reading 2006*), the educational trust organization, READ, have been appointed by the Education Department to educate teachers in how to implement Guided Reading in South African schools. READ (2008) published a Guided Reading Handbook for teachers. The handbook provides a list of bulleted points for teachers to follow in doing Guided Reading:

- "Read the book together with the learners i.e. Shared Reading.
- Read a sentence and then let the learners read the sentence. This is called 'shadow reading'.
- Read the book aloud to the learners and have them follow" (READ 2008:6).

This advice clearly contradicts the theory base on Guided Reading (see 2.2.), Guided Reading instruction has nothing to do with children reading together, but with children reading independently at their own pace. Information about Guided Reading that contradicts the literature based on research, or information that does not specifically explain the concept of Guided Reading, could confuse South African teachers. As Fleisch (2008:136) points out: "The misinterpretation of the new curriculum leads to chaotic and undirected lessons". Furthermore, Fleisch (2008:138) argues that "Disadvantaged schoolchildren are typically exposed to inappropriate teaching caused by a combination of a misinterpretation of the new curriculum, a lack of and an under-utilization of textbooks and readers, poor subject and pedagogical knowledge and ineffective methods". Over time, these confusions become cumulative, blocking reform. Teachers' understandings of the educational policy are shaped by the social and school context within which they work. Consequently, reforms that are intended to transform classroom instruction, such as Guided Reading, are themselves changed as they "filter through teachers; knowledge, beliefs and practice" (Cohen 1996:116). To conclude, misinterpretation of the theory base on Guided Reading instruction will likely result in poor quality Guided Reading lesson for South African children.

2.7. Implementing Guided Reading in the South African classroom

Given that Guided Reading is part of the South African educational policy (Foundation for Learning Campaign 2008:9-11; National Reading Strategy Document 2008:21), it does not mean that teachers understand the concept of Guided Reading and that they are willing to implement Guided Reading in their classrooms. I agree with Brabham and Villaume (2001:260) that “willingness to assume personal ownership for the concept of Guided Reading is at the core of effective implementation” and that implementation is the core of successful reform. Furthermore, section 2.4. highlighted the importance of assessment-based Guided Reading groups and leveled Guided Reading books for the implementation of Guided Reading. Jansen (2005:73) points out that the essential issues in South African schooling are teachers, textbooks and time: “One way to explain the puzzle of increasing investments in national education without a corresponding increase in student achievement is to track the lack of concentrated and coordinated management of these three key factors: teachers, textbooks and time”. Conley et al. (2007:34) agree with Jansen (2005) that supporting South African teachers is a worthy investment, because the most significant effect on achievement for all learners is that of good teachers. Christie (2008:142) also outlines that poorly trained teachers in South Africa struggle to implement the curriculum, and that the teachers need more support such as teaching materials and training to be able to provide quality lessons. In addition, Fleisch (2008:v) makes clear that how well children are taught to read depends on “teachers’ understanding of what the official curriculum requires of them, teachers’ own knowledge and experience of teaching (reading), the amount of time available for learning and the use of that time, and the consistent and appropriate instruction”. Conley et al. (2007:35) state that teachers need to understand the process of learning in order to scaffold the learning process successfully (see section 2.2.-2.3.). Teachers will not work effectively if they are not able to “adapt their teaching strategies to the nature and content of the learning area or subject” (Conley et al. 2007:2). Fisher (2008:20) points out that “It should be acknowledged, however, that, in order to promote cognitive dialogue and a collaborative problem-solving approach to reading, teachers need to be confident, both in their subject knowledge and their ‘book knowledge’. Hence guided reading, properly undertaken, is an ambitious enterprise that requires a degree of confidence, understanding and knowledge”.

I agree with Fleisch (2008), Fisher (2008) and Christie (2008) that if teachers fully understand the concept of Guided Reading and are implementing it consistently, they could improve the reading achievement of South African children. However, teachers are likely to continue struggling with Guided Reading, if they do not understand how Guided Reading supports the reading process of children, what their role is in Guided Reading, how to create Guided Reading groups, and how to select appropriate Guided Reading books.

2.7.1. Guided Reading books

As previously discussed, a whole language philosophy underpins Guided Reading, which means that children develop meaning from the entire text. The teacher uses the whole book, isolates words and returns to the whole context to get the meaning of the story (Flood et al. 2005:44-45). This contradicts some of the documents distributed to South African schools. For example, a handout to teachers (*Leesleër Riglyne* 27 January 2009), mentioned that a variety of materials can be used during literacy, from newspapers to train schedules. It also tells teacher the following: “You do not have to spend money on reading materials! It is available everywhere!” It seems that there is a belief that children can learn how to read from any document, as long as there are letters on it. Children could possibly read a word from a train schedule but still not understand what the word means. Children need books that contain supportive structures in order to learn how to read; there is no other way of teaching reading comprehension (Weaver 2002:279). As Fleisch (2008:130) points out: “the increasing availability of textbooks in particular has been shown to be one of the most cost-effective ways of improving primary school achievement”. It should be added that Guided Reading requires textbooks that have the characteristics to support strategic problem-solving.

Section 2.4.1. stated that Guided Reading books must have depth in the number of titles at each level of difficulty so that the teacher can select the appropriate Guided Reading book (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:107-113; Peterson 2001:122-124). An appropriate book will have the right level of challenge to support problem-solving skills, yet be easy enough to support comprehension skills (Paratore & McCormack 2005:55; Clay 1993:23). Once again, these requirements are in contradiction with much of the information South African teachers received. The following example illustrates this point: “For Guided Reading you can use the same text for every group. Usually three texts, at different levels, will be enough” (READ 2008:8-11).

As mentioned, the Guided Reading books the children read must be unfamiliar to them so that children can read for meaning instead of memorizing the text, because they already know the story (Hornsby 2000:34). However, the South African teachers were told that Guided Reading books “may be the smaller version of the Shared Reading text that the class is reading” (READ 2008:8). A book is not unfamiliar to children if the teacher has already read and discussed the book during Shared Reading. Although the South African National Department of Education supports Guided Reading as part of their balanced language programme (Government Gazette No. 30880, 2008:10; READ 2009:4), it seems to me that the aforementioned statements demonstrate a lack of understanding of the concept of Guided Reading.

2.7.2. Guided Reading groups

Section 2.4.2 stated that Guided Reading groups are based on ongoing assessments of children’s reading ability. The South African teachers received a Guided Reading Handbook, which provides a teacher with different options for determining the reading levels of her learners.

“She could have:

- listened to each learner read and leveled him or her
- used a reading leveling test
- used a cloze test. (Write a text of approximately 100 words onto the board. Rub out every fifth word. Learners copy the text and fill in the missing words by guessing the words.)” (READ 2008:9).

The first option appears to be subjective. Moreover, the phrase “leveled him or her” is ambiguous. The literature on Guided Reading specifies the level of texts, rather than the level of the learners. The second option is unspecific and does not give teachers practical guidance on how to use a leveled reading test. The third option does not explain that there are different types of cloze tests for different purposes. Neither does it assist teachers in forming groups according to individual reading needs. The notion that children should “guess” words counteracts the concept of problem-solving words based on meaning. It does not provide teachers’ with the option of using running records which is an excellent tool to create Guided Reading groups (see 2.4.2.).

Fountas and Pinnell (1996:97) explain that a teacher should meet with her Guided Reading group at least twice a week for fifteen minutes. This is not in line with the instructions given to South African teachers that teachers should meet with each group “at least once in a two week cycle” (READ 2008:4). Despite large classes, I think it is possible that the South African teachers can teach their Guided Reading groups more than once in two weeks. Hornsby (2000:56) and Fountas and Pinnell (1996:97) state that three learners in a Guided Reading group would be ideal, but eight children would be the largest workable group. Thus, the not ideal but still workable Guided Reading setting is eight children in a group and two Guided Reading sessions twice a week per group. The class sizes in South Africa differ from school to school. In one of my classes in South Africa, I had fifty-seven children, but I also visited classes with thirty children. If, for instance, a South African teacher has forty children in her class, she can make five Guided Reading groups of eight children each. The teacher can see five Guided Reading groups twice a week during the hundred-fifty minutes per week specified by the Government Gazette No. 30880 (2008:10). South African teachers who have less than forty children in their class could have smaller groups and then they could see each Guided Reading group more often than once a week. Unfortunately, teachers who have more than forty children in their class would see their Guided Reading groups less than twice a week.

I admit that teaching Guided Reading in South Africa is not an easy task compared to countries such as America, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand where they also teach Guided Reading (Fawson & Reutzel 2000:84; Iaquina 2006:413; READ 2009:5). In Anglophone countries, where Guided Reading is a common practice, it is most likely that they have smaller classes, have less variety between the children’s literacy achievement and have longer school hours with more time for Guided Reading (Purdy 2008:45). Because Guided Reading was only introduced into South African schools in 2008, South African teachers face the additional challenge of implementing Guided Reading without any prior experience of this instructional approach.

2.8. Summary

Guided Reading is a teaching context in which children learn how to construct meaning independently from text under the teacher's supportive guidance (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:2; Hornsby 2000:30). In this chapter, I argued that Guided Reading is based on a social constructivist learning theory, transaction reading model and a balanced instructional approach (Vygotsky 1962:133; Dorn & Soffos 2005:81; Purdy 2008:45; Fisher 2008:20; Barchers 1998:20). Furthermore, I argued that Guided Reading draws on a whole language philosophy (Weaver 2002:24).

Guided Reading forms part of the in South African education policy as indicated in the following documents:

1. The Revised National Curriculum Statement 2002.
2. The Foundation For Learning Campaign 2008 – 2011.
3. Foundation for Learning, Assessment Framework.
4. National Reading Strategy 2008.

Furthermore, the South African Department of Education and the educational trust organization, READ, support the implementation of Guided Reading in primary schools. However, as discussed in this chapter these efforts are unlikely to succeed if they are not consistently implemented, resourced and aligned with the theory base on Guided Reading.

3. RESEARCH THEORY AND DESIGN

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework (research theory) and conceptual framework (research design) of this study. Research design, methodology and methods are often confused with each other (Opie 2004:15; Mouton 2001:55). Research design is the conceptual framework that directs the study. It includes the context of the research question, the selected methodology and the procedure of collecting, presenting and interpreting data (Magilvy & Thomas 2009:298-299; Winn 2003:372; Mouton 2001:55). Methodology describes the nature of the research in answering the research question and involves certain methods (Leedy 1993:139; Opie 2004:16). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:47) point out that methods are the techniques and methodology is the strategy to use the techniques. The terms ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ should therefore be restricted to descriptions of methods rather than be used to refer to a research theory, design or methodology (Rolfe 2006:309). In addition, Pratt and Swann (2003:4) argue that there are not “quantitative or qualitative methodologies as such, only quantitative and qualitative techniques” and that it is possible to use mixed techniques in the complex field of education (see 3.3.2.2.). I agree with Pratt and Swann (2003) that the research methods can be quantitative or qualitative and therefore the research data can be quantitative or qualitative. Research methods can be mixed, but the research in total i.e. research design cannot be mixed. Thus, research design is the conceptual framework, which includes a methodology (strategy) of answering the research question and methods (techniques) of using research instruments to gather and analyze data.

First, this chapter discusses the selected research theory, which specifies my position as a researcher (see 3.2.). Second, this chapter sketches the research design for this study, which is organized as follows: In order to contextualize the study, the relevance of Guided Reading in the South African context is discussed, as well as the research question, research participants, aims, and justification for this study (see 3.3.1.). Furthermore, the research design outlines how my chosen research methodology directed me to specific research methods and research instruments (see 3.3.2.-3.3.4.). Finally, the research design acknowledges the limitations of the study (see 3.3.5.). Section 3.4. gives a summary of the chapter.

3.2. Research theory

The selected research theory emphasizes my understanding of what knowledge is and influenced my research-related thinking and practice. First, I will explain a post-positivist perspective on knowledge and educational research, which I endorse. Next, I will discuss the three-world framework designed by Popper (1972), which helped me to understand how research assists in the production of knowledge.

3.2.1. Post-positivism

Pratt and Swann (2003:3-4) outline the idea that research is often divided into two categories, namely positivism and interpretivism. Positivism is sometimes referred to as the objective, scientific, paradigm (Opie 2004:13-18). Interpretivism, on the other hand, is often referred to as the subjective, naturalistic, paradigm (Opie 2004:13-18). Positivism is a form of empiricism, which suggests that knowledge derives from experiments (Burbules & Phillips 2000:5). Positivist educational researchers suggest that knowledge is “independent of context, neutral with respect to social values and generalizable to many situations” (Pratt & Swann 1999:5). Positivist researchers use quantitative methods for research, which are consistent with their experimental approach (Opie 2004:18). Interpretivism, on the other hand, finds its origin in rationalism, which suggests that people construct internal reality (Pratt & Swann 1999:17). Interpretivist educational researchers suggest that knowledge is “a product of reflective practice, dependent on context and related to special values” (Pratt & Swann 1999:5). In keeping with their interpretative stance, researchers who adopt an interpretative paradigm tend to use qualitative methods in their research (Opie 2004:18).

Post-positivism challenges the positivist and interpretivist perspective on knowledge. Post-positivists suggest that objective reality (positivism) is possible, but acknowledge that subjectivity shapes the reality (Gattei 2009:2; Pratt & Swann 2003:6). Popper is one of the key figures in the development of post-positivism (Burbules & Phillips 2000:29-30; Pratt & Swann 1999:67-69). He believes that “we inhabit a reality, shared by all of us, and that knowledge of this reality is possible, and our knowledge should be treated as conjectural and provisional – there is no certain or secure knowledge” (Popper 1994:97). Muijs (2004:5-6), who endorses Popper’s view, explains that post-positivist education researchers do not focus on certainty or absolute knowledge, but on “confidence – How much can we rely on our findings? How well do they predict certain outcomes?”

For this study, I take the position of a post-positivist educational researcher, because my research design reflects the aforementioned theoretical concepts e.g. confidence and prediction. Furthermore, I believe that objective knowledge is possible, but I also acknowledge that my research is shaped by subjectivity.

3.2.2. Three-world framework

Recently, Mouton (2001:137-142) revived and described a useful three world framework, which was originally developed by Karl Popper in 1972. Popper's three-world framework is based on his post-positivistic view on knowledge and illustrates how three worlds interact with each other to produce knowledge (Popper 1978:143-145). World one is the world of physical objects – real life that provide us with pragmatic knowledge (Popper 1972:119; Pratt & Swann 2003:217). World two is the world of mental objects – science that gives us scientific knowledge (Popper 1978:143-144; Mouton 2001:138-139). World three is the world of abstract objects – theories that shape our critical knowledge (Popper 1994:110). In this study, world one is the real life problem: the high illiteracy rate in South Africa, as outlined in chapter one. World two emphasizes the scientific nature of my study, which is outlined in my research design (see 3.3.). World three comprises my post-positivist theoretical paradigm, which influenced my reflections on the research data (see 3.3.4.).

3.3. Research design

As mentioned, a research design is the conceptual framework from which the study is conducted (Winn 2003:372; Mouton 2001:55). Research designs are classified as experimental or nonexperimental designs (Cohen et al. 2007:287-289; Kumar 2005:80-84). Research within one of the experimental designs tests cause and effect relationships within a closed system, whereby the researcher controls or manipulates subjects and conditions (Kumar 2005:84; Leedy 1993:296). Research within one of the nonexperimental designs, on the other hand, is conducted when a number of human characteristics cannot be studied experimentally (Beck & Polit 2004:188). There are three types of experimental research design i.e. pre-experimental design, quasi-experimental design and true-experimental design (Cohen et al. 2007:287-289). Researchers are not all in agreement on how to classify nonexperimental designs, yet there seem to be two broad classes, namely descriptive design and correlational designs (Beck & Polit 2004:197).

For this study, I selected a nonexperimental descriptive design, which means that this study does not use experiments that can be statistically analysed, rather it describes how teachers instruct Guided Reading without manipulating the research results (Purcell 2000:3-4; Beck & Polit 2004:188). Leedy (1993:122) points out that the descriptive design is “appropriate for data derived from simple observations, whether these are actually observed or observed through benefit of questionnaire or poll techniques”. Section 3.3.3 explains that data for this study are obtained by means of nonparticipant observation and an inventory. Magilvy and Thomas (2009:298-299) mention that “A research design indicates the full research process from conceptualization of the research problem, generation of data, analysis and interpretation of findings, and dissemination of results”. In addition to that, the next section will clarify the foundations of the descriptive research design, namely the context of the research, research methodology, research methods and data management.

3.3.1. Context of research

As mentioned in chapter two, Guided Reading is the heart of a balanced literacy program, because it helps children become independent readers (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:2; Hornsby 2000:30). In 2008, the South African National Department of Education introduced a balanced language programme, which includes Guided Reading (Foundation for Learning Campaign 2008:9-11; National Reading Strategy Document 2008:21). The goal of the South African balanced language programme is to achieve a minimum literacy pass rate of 50% per Grade by 2011 (Curriculum GET Minute 0012/2008:1; Government Gazette No. 30880/2008:4-10). Guided Reading is therefore one of the tools to fight illiteracy in South Africa (Bloch 2009:128).

3.3.1.1. Research question and sub-questions

It is clear from government’s educational policy that, at present, South African teachers have to implement Guided Reading in their classroom. This begs the question of whether teachers understand Guided Reading sufficiently to implement it properly in their classrooms. While it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate this question on a large scale, it is possible to conduct a study of a more limited nature. Therefore, the research question of this study is: How do teachers understand and implement Guided Reading in Grade 1 and 2 at three public primary schools in the Western Cape?

To answer the main question, a number of sub-questions regarding teachers' understanding and implementation of Guided Reading will be explored. Section 2.1 defines Guided Reading as a teaching context in which children learn how to construct meaning independently from text under the teacher's supportive guidance (Hornsby 2000:30; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:2). The teachers in the participating schools will likely have their own understanding and interpretation of Guided Reading. To determine teachers' understanding of Guided Reading instruction, the following sub-question will be investigated:

- a. How are teachers' understanding and interpretation of the new policy requirements for Guided Reading reflected in their Guided Reading lessons?

As described in section 2.4., the successful implementation of Guided Reading in the classroom has everything to do with leveled Guided Reading books and the teachers' selection of Guided Reading groups. To discover how teachers implement Guided Reading in their classroom, the following sub-questions will be explored:

- b. What books are the teachers using during Guided Reading and are these Guided Reading books leveled according to a gradient of difficulty?
- c. How do teachers create Guided Reading groups, and is the selection of these Guided Reading groups based on assessments which inform teachers' decision-making?

3.3.1.2. Participants

Three primary schools in the Western Cape participated in the research. School A and B served historically disadvantaged children from low socio-economic backgrounds. School C served mostly children from middle-class backgrounds. School A and C were Afrikaans-medium schools and school B was an IsiXhosa-medium school. Class sizes varied from 25 to 49 children per class. This study focused on the teachers in Grade 1 and 2 at the aforementioned primary schools. Six qualified Grade 1 and 2 teachers took part in the research. They were all female and non-mother-tongue speakers of English. Table 3.1 captures the key information on the teachers' work setting.

TABLE 3.1 Information on the work setting of the participating teachers

	Type of school community	Medium of introduction	Grade	Number of children in the classroom
School A	Ex-HOR school serving low-SES communities	Afrikaans	1	45
			2	49
School B	Ex-DET school serving low-SES communities	IsiXhosa	1	37
			2	39
School C	Ex- HOA school serving middle-class communities	Afrikaans	1	25
			2	27

3.3.1.3. Aims

The research aimed to gather data on six teachers' current understanding and implementation of Guided Reading in six South African classrooms. Based on these data, the research intended to help inform South African teachers (and other educational members, such as policy-makers) to develop a deeper understanding of Guided Reading and to help improve practice in local classrooms by considering how Guided Reading should be instructed if it were implemented in accordance with theory base. By comparing theoretical knowledge to actual practice, the study aims to make a contribution to Guided Reading instruction in South African schools, because Guided Reading is the key instructional context for improving literacy (Jaquinta 2006:413; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:1-2; Hornsby 2000:30-34; National Reading Strategy 2008).

3.3.1.4. Justification

The primary justification for this study is the need for good Guided Reading instruction, because Guided Reading has the potential to improve the reading outcomes of South African children by teaching them to construct meaning independently from continuous text. However, Guided Reading is a new concept for South African teachers, because Guided Reading only became part of the South African educational policy at the beginning of 2008 (National Reading Strategy 2008:4-21; Foundation for Learning Campaign 2008:4-11). Therefore, during my literature review I did not find any previous studies on teachers' understanding and implementation of Guided Reading in South Africa.

However, in Anglophone countries, Guided Reading instruction is common practice (Purdy 2008:45; Fawson & Reutzel 2000:84; Iaquina 2006:413). I found some international studies related to Guided Reading, but they were not necessary directly applicable to the South African context (Fisher 2008; Arnfield et al. 2003). Thus, an additional justification for this research is the fact that research on Guided Reading in South Africa is a new terrain.

3.3.2. Research methodology

Evaluation is a methodological area which is well-known in the educational research field (Grammatikopoulos, Tsigilis, & Koustelios 2007:100-101). The major goal of evaluation is to provide useful feedback that will influence decision-making or policy formulation (Demetriou, Charalambous & Kyriakides 2006:2; McMillan & Schumacher 2001:545-555). The goal of evaluation underpins the ambitions of education research, which are outlined by Pratt and Swann (1999:39-40): “Educational research can and should serve instrumental ends, such as improvement of decision-making in the classroom or school, and actual educational practice. More generally, it can contribute to policy-making through its ability to problematize and inform issues faced by policy-makers and practitioners”. In addition, McMillan and Schumacher (2001:555) explain that evaluation is used to plan, improve, and justify (or not justify) educational practice. Justification for Guided Reading is provided by a large research and theory base, which indicates that Guided Reading is a powerful teaching context in which children learn to read for meaning, and therefore Guided Reading has an important role to play in South African education (see 3.3.1.4.).

The methodological area of evaluation can be categorized as either formative or summative evaluations (Demetriou et al. 2006:5). Formative evaluations aim to improve the object being evaluated. Summative evaluations, in contrast, examine the outcomes of the object (Tuckman 1994:5; Demetriou et al. 2006:6-10). Formative evaluation includes several methodologies, such as process evaluation and implementation evaluation (Kumar 2005:80-87; Demetriou et al. 2006:5; Airasian, Gay & Mills. 2006:7).

Implementation evaluation methodology evaluates the implementation of an educational program or policy (Mouton 2001:158-159). McMillan and Schumacher (2001:537) explain that this methodology is a strategy that “assesses the extent to which a program is developed or implemented as planned, and it identifies any defects in the program”. Implementation evaluation methodology underpins my study, because it aims to answer the question whether a Guided Reading program has been well conceptualized and implemented (Airasian et al. 2006:7; Mouton 2001:158-159). To conclude, the selected implementation evaluation methodology forms part of the study’s nonexperimental descriptive design, which shares the aim of contributing to educational research that can inform policy and practice (Purcell 2000:3; Demetriou et al. 2006:2-3).

3.3.3. Research methods

Many researchers agree that qualitative methods and quantitative methods can be mixed to provide a more comprehensive answer to the research question (Mouton 2001:159; McMillan & Schumacher 2001:541; Burbules & Phillips 2000:26; Slavin 2007:8-9; Pratt and Swann 2003:4). Fleisch (2008:141) argues that a mixed-methods approach is the best for complementary research, because it “draws on the strength of both qualitative and quantitative approaches and minimizes their weakness”. Mixed-methods approach is used in order to understand a phenomenon more fully than is possible using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone (Airasian et al. 2006:490; Connelly 2009:31; Golafshani 2003:603).

Airasian et al. (2006:490-492) state that there are three types of mixed-methods approach, namely the exploratory, explanatory and the triangulation mixed-methods approaches. The different types of approaches depend on the weight given to quantitative and qualitative data (Connelly 2009:32; Slavin 2007:138-139; McMillan & Schumacher 2001:542). In the exploratory mixed-methods approach, qualitative methods are used first and then tested with quantitative methods. The qualitative data are often more heavily weighted than the quantitative data (Airasian et al. 2006:491; Slavin 2007:138). The explanatory mixed-methods approach uses quantitative methods first, followed by qualitative methods. In this approach, the quantitative data are more heavily weighted than the qualitative data (Airasian et al. 2006:491; Slavin 2007:138-139).

In the triangulation mixed-methods approach, “quantitative data and qualitative data are equally weighted and are collected concurrently throughout the same study” (Airasian et al. 2006:491). Thus, triangulation integrates data-gathering methods throughout the study, which contributes simultaneously to the findings (Opie 2004:72; Slavin 2007:133-139). In my opinion, a mixed-methods approach is best suited to answer my research question, because this approach has the advantages of providing observational notes to add meaning to numbers but also uses numbers to add precision to the observational description (Connelly 2009:32). Therefore, I selected a triangulation mixed-methods approach and used quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. I obtained quantitative data from the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:189-194) and qualitative data from nonparticipant observation (Slavin 2007:130; Airasian et al. 2006:414).

3.3.3.1. Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory

Addendum 3 shows the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory which was used in my research. I selected this specific inventory, because it is a reflection tool especially developed for Guided Reading instruction by researchers at Ohio State University who are leaders in the field of Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:189-194). An inventory is a questionnaire that asks descriptive questions about the development of certain behaviours with the aim that participants can evaluate themselves (Leedy 1993:195). The Guided Reading inventory requires teachers to question their current practices by marking descriptors of their teaching behaviours on a scale of 1 to 4 (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:283-285; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Teaching behaviours are categorized under the following ten headings: materials, classroom management, grouping, lesson management, text selection, introduction, teaching decisions, children’s talk, engagement and pace (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:283-285). For example, under the category ‘text selection’, the teachers can choose a descriptor on a continuum of 1 to four. Score 1 indicates that the teacher is “just beginning to understand how to select text that is right for the group, whereas at the opposite end, score 4 indicates that a teacher can “select texts that are at an appropriate level for most of the group and that support their development of strategies”. The Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory also has an open-ended section, which gives teachers opportunity to add any comments. Table 3.2 describes how to score the answer for each question i.e. 1 indicates ‘very minimal evidence of supportive teaching’ whereas 4 indicates high evidence of supportive teaching as well as how to score the total inventory (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

TABLE 3.2 Rating scale Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory

	Description
Score 1	very minimal evidence of supportive teaching
Total 1 -10	
Score 2	some evidence of supportive teaching
Total 10 - 20	
Score 3	moderate evidence of supportive teaching
Total 20 - 30	
Score 4	high evidence of supportive teaching
Total 30 - 40	

Use of the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory served two purposes in my research. On the one hand, it assisted participating teachers in self-reflection on their Guided Reading teaching. Elder and Richard (2008:32) describe the value of self-assessment for teachers: “Self-assessment is an integral part of educated thinking; it would be unintelligible to say of a person that he or she is thinking in an educated manner but is not skilled in evaluating that thinking”. On other hand, I used the inventory as a performance-based assessment tool. For these reasons, each teacher completed an inventory and I completed an inventory for each teacher after I observed her Guided Reading lessons. This allowed me to compare teachers’ ratings of themselves with my ratings of their behaviours.

3.3.3.2. Nonparticipant observation

In addition to completing the inventory for each teacher, I made field notes that described any aspect of Guided Reading instruction I observed. During the observation, I took the position of a nonparticipant observer, which means that I tried to interact as little as possible with the participants during the observation (Slavin 2007:130; O’Donoghue & Punch 2003:30-37). Airasian et al. (2006:414) explain that “nonparticipant observation, also called external observation, is observation in which the observer is not directly involved in the situation being observed”. I chose to take this position, for the reason that I wanted to observe the teachers in their daily practice to investigate how they understand and implement Guided Reading in their classroom. I did not want to change teachers Guided Reading instruction, based on my understanding of Guided Reading.

3.3.4. Research process

The selected research theory, design, and methodology influenced my research process, in particular the way in which I managed my data. In accordance with my post-positivist theoretical perspective, I did not search in the research data for absolute knowledge, but I focused on the concept of confidence, which means that I relied on the research data and predicted certain outcomes (Popper 1994:97; Muijs 2004:5-6). Furthermore, in keeping with a non-experimental design, the research data were descriptive, rather than manipulated (Purcell 2000:3-4; Beck & Polit 2004:188). Implementation evaluation methodology enabled me to explore the data for useful feedback that could inform policy and improve Guided Reading practice (Airasian et al. 2006:7; Mouton 2001:158-159; Purcell 2000:3; Demetriou et al. 2006:2-3). The next section explains how a triangulation mixed-methods approach influenced the way in which I collected, presented and analyzed the research data of this study to provide an answer to the research question (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:541; Burbules & Phillips 2000:26; Slavin 2007:8-9; Pratt and Swann 2003:4; Airasian et al. 2006:489).

3.3.4.1. Collecting data

The triangulation mixed-methods approach uses different sources to gather information (Slavin 2007:133). I obtained information in the following ways:

- a. I wrote observational field notes, which described any aspect of Guided Reading instruction that is relevant to teachers' understanding and implementation of Guided Reading.

I conducted classroom observations in grade 1 and 2 for a period of one school week at every participating school. Seated in the back of the class, I wrote down anything I saw that was linked with Guided Reading instruction.

- b. Collection of the teachers' Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory, which gave information on teachers' self-reflections of their understanding and implementation of Guided Reading in their classroom.

After each teacher had conducted a series of eight Guided Reading lessons, the teacher completed the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory anonymously. These forms were handed in to me.

- c. Collection of Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory completed by me, which codified my reflection on the teachers' understanding and implementation of Guided Reading in the classrooms.

Based on my classroom observations, I completed the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory for each teacher.

- d. Review literature with the aim of describing theories regarding the understanding and implementation of Guided Reading in the classrooms.

My observations and analysis of data were guided by and interpreted in the light of my understanding of the literature base on Guided Reading.

3.3.4.2. Presenting data

I presented the data obtained from the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory graphically to show how the teachers rated themselves and to indicate any differences between the teachers' and my scores (see 4.2. and addendum 8, 9 and 10). Field notes taken during observations are presented in descriptive sketches which reveal differences between practice and theory (see 2.3. and 4.2.).

3.3.4.3. Analyzing data

Drawing on a triangulation mixed-methods approach, qualitative data (obtained from nonparticipant observation and literature review) and quantitative data (obtained from the teachers' completed Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory) were used simultaneously to construct an answer to my research question (Airasian et al. 2006:491; McMillan & Schumacher 2001:541-543). My literature review formed the conceptual base for analyzing the data of the inventory. I compared the teachers' outcomes of the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory with the assessment outcomes of my observations and inventories to see if the teachers' self-reflection and understanding of Guided Reading agreed with my observations. I used the ten previously discussed categories of the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory to codify patterns, such as text selection and lesson management, in the Guided Reading instructions at all three schools (see 4.2. and 4.3.).

3.3.5. Limitations of research

Each study has its limitations, mainly because financial and time limitations influence the scale of the research (Airasian et al. 2006:83). Although my small-scale research involved only six primary school teachers at three different schools, I spent enough time at each school to gather data that assisted me in answering my research question. The selected Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory has its limitations, for the reason that “the researcher can never be sure that individuals are expressing their true attitude, interest, values, or personality, as opposed to a socially acceptable response” (Airasian et al. 2006:132). In observation, the researcher is one of the key instruments, which suggests that the observational field notes and the analysis of these are by nature subjective to a certain extent (Golafshani 2003:600). My position as a nonparticipant observer also has its limits, because I was not personally involved with participants, which means that I may have missed in-depth information on participants’ opinions and attitudes towards Guided Reading (Slavin 2007:130).

Research is often assessed on reliability and validity criteria. However, Golafshani (2003:597) argues that reliability and validity are rooted in positivism and therefore should be used in experimental research. Rolfe (2006:310) argues that research should not be judged on a set of criteria, but should be appraised on its own merits. In addition, some researchers believe that criteria for research in the social sciences should go beyond the categories of reliability and validity, on condition that social researchers have to find a balance between generality and contextual detail (Terre Blanch & Durrheim 1999:433-434). Looking at the nature of the research question and my selected nonexperimental descriptive research design, I also question whether the requirements of validity and reliability are applicable to my study. Rolfe (2006:305) and Golafshani (2003:601) point out that at the core of the discussion regarding reliability and validity is the question if an instance of research is trustworthy. Therefore, establishing the trustworthiness of my research cannot be avoided. Moss (2004:371) defined trustworthiness as “acts of integrity that researchers take to ensure they seek truth by contextualizing their studies and disclosing all relevant procedures used in the study”.

A way of improving the trustworthiness of my research was to use the triangulation mixed-methods approach to compare and crosscheck teacher data with my own observational data (Slavin 2007:133; Airasian et al. 2006:137-153). Furthermore, the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory was developed by the Ohio State University to specifically assess teachers' Guided Reading instruction. Another way in which I attempted to improve the trustworthiness of my research was to make my research theory, design and methodology clear to the reader, so that the reader knows what my standpoint was in this study (Moss 2004:317). In addition, my literature review demonstrates that my understanding of Guided Reading was research-based and theory driven. Finally, approval from the Western Cape Education Department (see addendum 1) and the Ethical Clearance Committee (see addendum 2) was obtained to ensure the study met ethical requirements.

3.4. Summary

This chapter outlined the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. The selected research theory is post-positivism, which suggests that objective reality is possible, but acknowledges that subjectivity is shaping the reality (Popper 1994:97). The nonexperiential descriptive research design (Beck & Polit 2004:188) of this study emphasizes the following:

- a. Research question: How do teachers understand and implement Guided Reading in Grade 1 and 2 at three public primary schools in the Western Cape?
- b. Research methodology: implementation evaluation research that aimed to answer the question whether a program has been well conceptualized and properly implemented (Mouton 2001:158-159; McMillan & Schumacher 2001:537).
- c. Research methods: triangulation mixed-methods approach was used to collect, present and analyze qualitative and quantitative research data simultaneously (Airasian et al. 2006:490-492; Opie 2004:72; Slavin 207:133-139).
- d. Research instruments: Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory and nonparticipant observation to investigate how teachers understand and implement Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:189-194; Leedy 1993:195).

Furthermore, this chapter outlined the process of the study; the way of collecting, presenting and analyzing data. Trustworthiness of the study was maintained through the triangulation mixed-method approach of comparing and crosschecking of research data, and through clarification of theoretical underpinnings of the research and of Guided Reading instruction (Connelly 2009:32; Rolfe 2006:305; Golafshani 2003:601; Moss 2004:371).

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This study is based on the view that Guided Reading teaches children to read for meaning (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:2; Hornsby 2000:30). In chapter 2, I argued that Guided Reading is built on a social constructivist learning theory and a transactional reading model, which means that during Guided Reading children construct meaning from text through cognitive and social transactional processes (Vygotsky 1962:133; Dorn & Soffos 2005:81; Purdy 2008:45; Fisher 2008:20; Rosenblatt 1963:4; Lose et al. 2006:122; Barchers 1998:20; Weaver 2002:24). Furthermore, I argued that Guided Reading is underpinned by a whole language philosophy, which recommends that reading should be taught from meaningful whole texts (Pressley 1998:12; Weaver 20002:252). This is important because reading strategies can only be taught on continuous texts (see 2.2.4.2.). In addition, it should be a key component of a balanced approach, which recommends that reading instruction should be situated in a literacy framework of reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:22-24; Hornsby 2000:34; McPherson 2007:1; Malik 1996:1; Kouri et al.2006:237; Dorn et al.1998:29; Iaquina 2006:413).

Chapter 3 explained that in order to investigate teachers' understanding of Guided Reading, and to examine how Guided Reading is implemented in six South African primary classrooms, I used the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory and conducted nonparticipant observations. The Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory (see addendum 3) contains descriptive questions of Guided Reading teaching, which gave me information on how teachers evaluate themselves on their Guided Reading performance (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:189-194; Leedy 1993:195). This enabled me to compare teachers' views with the inventories I completed (see 4.2.1.). In addition, the nonparticipant observations of Guided Reading lessons allowed me to compare what teachers say about their progress in implementing Guided Reading with observational data (Airasian et al. 2006:414; Slavin 207:130). Thus, in combining research instruments simultaneously, I used a triangulation mixed-methods approach (see 3.3.3-3.3.4.) to collect, present and analyze the data (Airasian et al. 2006:490-492; Opie 2004:72; Slavin 207:133-139).

This chapter presents the research results. First, I emphasize the important role understanding Guided Reading plays in good quality literacy instruction. Next, I reflect on the main outcomes of the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory. Then I use observational field notes of Guided Reading lessons to support the outcomes of the inventory. The analyses of the research data are based on the comparison between the observed practices of Guided Reading and the theory regarding Guided Reading, as discussed in chapter two. My discussion focuses on teachers' understanding of Guided Reading, as well as on the books the teachers are using and the way teachers create their Guided Reading groups.

4.2. Understanding of Guided Reading

Fisher (2008:19) suggests that “effective teaching of Guided Reading depends both upon the understanding of its psychological underpinning, and also on the teacher’s ability, through sharing responsibility for problem solving with the children, to build bridges between what is known and what is new”. To support effective teaching, the Department of Education sent several documents of Guided Reading to the primary schools (see 2.5.-2.7.). However, these documents are not always clear in their explanation of Guided Reading, which can result in uneven practice. Cohen (1996:112-113) states that one of the most stringent criteria of success of reforms is whether teachers incorporate new instructional methods in practice. Both Clay (1993) and Cohen (1996) found that teachers often report significant changes and great progress in their instructional practice, when teaching had hardly changed at all when viewed against theoretical principles and instructional goals. They concluded that this was partly due to large differences in teachers’ interpretations of new policies, which resulted in reforms being implemented in a disorganized and individualistic manner. In the next section, I will discuss how each participating teacher’s understanding manifested in her Guided Reading lesson, as illustrated by the data collected from the inventory and the observations. I will start with a brief overview on the outcomes of the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory.

4.2.1. Overview outcomes Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory

Section 3.3.3.1. explained how the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory was used in this research to obtain quantitative data. These data are presented graphically in Figures 4.1, 4.4 and 4.7. The main findings derived from these graphs are summarized in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1 Overview score Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory

		Teacher's score	Researcher's score
School A	Grade 1	25	18
	Grade 2	24	17
	Total	49	35
School B	Grade 1	29	12
	Grade 2	28	13
	Total	57	25
School C	Grade 1	35	13
	Grade 2	38	13
	Total	73	26

Table 4.1 shows that there are differences between the teachers' scores and my scores (see table 3.2. for the description of the scores). In all cases, my scores were lower than the teachers' scores, especially in School C. The latter finding is surprising, in that one would expect that economically advantaged schools would have well-educated teachers with much insight into their own practices. However, this does not seem to be the case. Possibly, because these teachers worked with middle-class children, they were not challenged to change their current practices because their students' performed well in their current reading programme. This brings to mind Witte's (1996:164) study, which indicated that if you control for students' background variables, teachers from schools serving middle to high class students add very little value to actual learning compared to schools that serve low SES communities. Another explanation for the differences between teachers' scores and my scores can be that the teachers were not familiar with the theoretical base of Guiding Reading, and therefore they were not as critical of their own practices as they could have been.

Table 4.1 illustrates that the teachers of School A gave themselves the lowest score, but, based on my observations that the teachers in this school followed the steps in Guided Reading correctly, I gave them the highest score. At the time of this study, the teachers of School A were receiving training in Guided Reading from the Trust Organization READ, as part of the Western Cape Education Department's drive for improving literacy. This could have resulted in these teachers being more critically aware of their own practices.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows: First, I present a graphic representation of each school’s outcomes of the Guided Reading Self-Assessments. Then I present a descriptive sketch of Guided Reading lessons for Grade 1 and 2 respectively. This is followed by an analysis and discussion of the graphs and the lessons, because the scores in the graphs only gain real meaning when explained by the descriptive data in the sketches. Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative data support and ‘back up’ each other. The differences between the teachers’ scores within each school are too negligible to merit discussion.

4.2.2. Guided Reading lesson School A

In each of the following graphs, the horizontal line shows the ten question-categories of the Guided Reading Self-Assessment. The vertical line shows the rating scale of the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory (see 3.3.3.1.). The Grade 1 teacher’s score appears in the color blue and the Grade 2 teacher’s score in green, and each is followed by the researcher’s score in red. As mentioned earlier, my analysis of the data in these graphs will be incorporated into my discussion of the descriptive lesson sketch. Figure 4.2 gives a typical example of Guided Reading lesson in Grade 1 at School A.

FIGURE 4.1 Presentation data School A

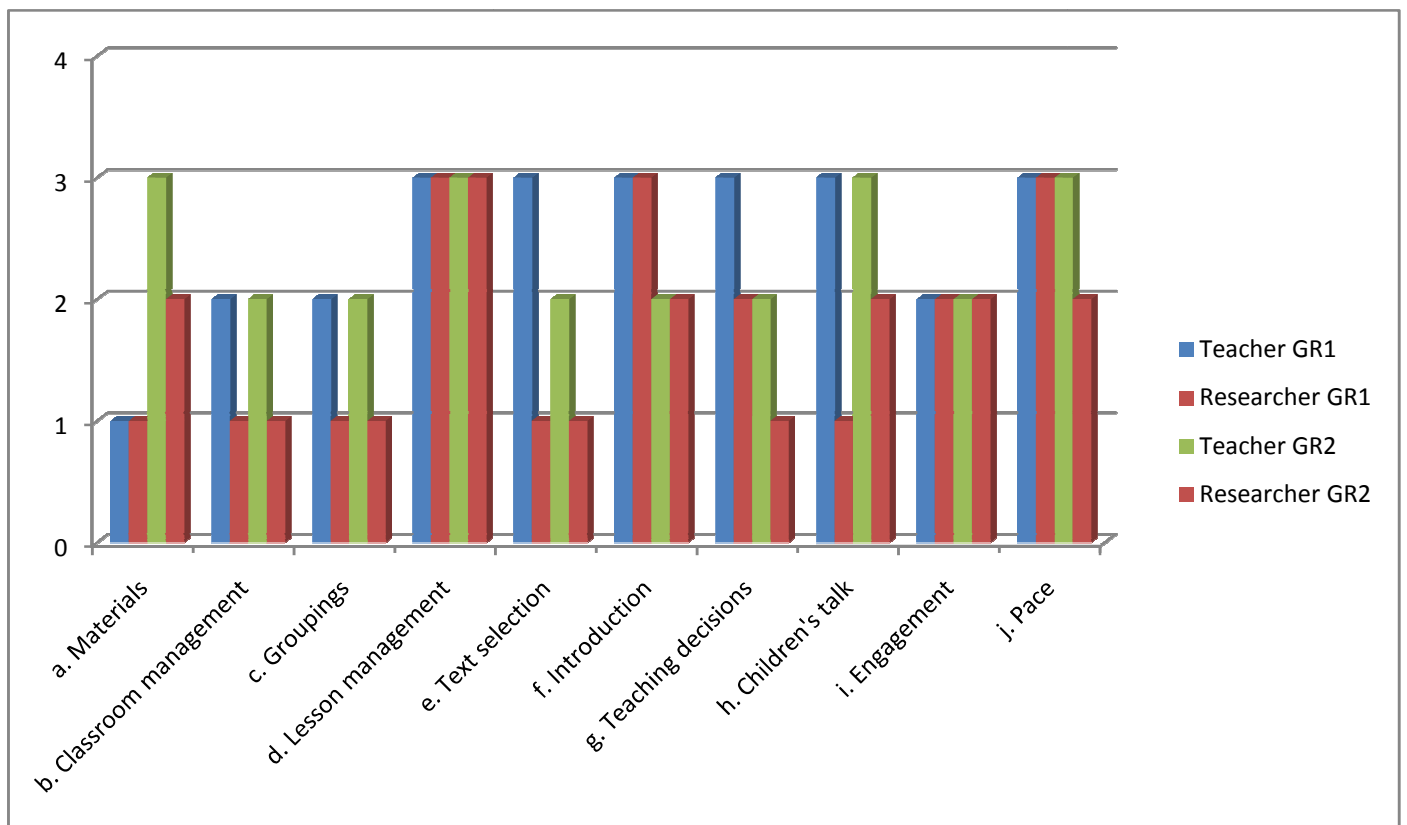


FIGURE 4.2 Observation Guided Reading lessons Grade 1 School A

- *The teacher takes a Guided Reading book from her bookshelf.*
- *She asks five or six learners to join her on a mat on the floor in the back of the classroom.*
- *The teacher gives each child a book and a whiteboard with a pen.*
- *Then the teacher introduces the story by asking questions about the front page of the book. (Example one of the lessons “What animals do you see on the front page? It looks they have to run from the fire, let’s read the book and found out what happened to the animals”).*
- *Next, the teacher will ask the children to read the story for themselves while finger-pointing at the words they read. When a child finished his book, the teacher asks the child to read the book again. If a child has difficulties reading a word, the teacher will read the word for him/her.*
- *After a few minutes of independent reading, the teacher will ask the children to open their books on a certain page and write down on their whiteboards a word they can read from the page.*
- *Three word exercises later, the teacher invites the children to read the story again for themselves.*
- *As soon as all children finished their book, the Guided Reading lesson ends and the children can go to their seats.*

4.2.2.1. Discussion graph in 4.1 and sketch in 4.2

The lesson in Figure 4.2 illustrates that the teacher in School A knew the steps of Guided Reading (*see Figure 4.1 outcomes: d. lesson management, j. pace*). She introduced the text, gave the children time to read the text independently, and revisited the text through a writing exercise (*see 2.3.3.*). Many teachers do not realize that children must read the book for themselves at their own pace under the teacher’s guidance (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:8; Schwartz 2005; 436-439 Hornsby 2000:31). The text introductions (*see Figure 4.1 outcomes: f. introduction*) of the teacher reached the aim of preparing children for the text (*see 2.3.1.*). Figure 4.2 shows that the teacher asked open-ended questions in her introduction and left some questions to be answered by the children through reading the text. However, none of the Guided Reading lessons I observed ended with discussions (*see Figure 4.1 outcomes: h. children’s talk*) that encouraged children to ask questions themselves to construct the meaning of the story.

When the children were reading independently and struggling to read a word, the teacher read the word for them; she did not use these opportunities to support the children in ‘working out’ the words for themselves (*see Figure 4.1 outcomes: g. teaching decisions*). My observations confirmed Schwartz’s (2005:436) research findings that teachers seem comfortable providing Guided Reading lessons with book introductions that prepare children to understand the meaning of the story, but the task becomes more complex as teachers try to support the children while they are reading. Observing the Grade 1 teacher gave one the impression that she found it difficult to support the children while all the children in the group were reading at the same time (see 2.3.2.). The observations of Guided Reading lessons of the Grade 2 teacher, as illustrated in Figure 4.3., also gave the impression that the teacher found it difficult to support reading strategies while the children are reading.

FIGURE 4.3 Observation Guided Reading lessons Grade 2 School A

- *The teacher asks five to six learners to join her on a mat on the classroom floor.*
- *She selects a book by asking the children which book they already read or did not read.*
- *The teacher introduces the story by reading aloud the whole book.*
- *Then she gives each child a copy of the book and asks the children to finger-point while they are reading so that she can see where the children are. The children are all reading at their own pace on different pages.*
- *When a child cannot read a certain word, the teacher will say the word and asks the child to say the word again. (The teacher instructs: “Repeat after me”).*
- *After all children read the book twice, the teacher asks the children to close the book. The teacher will end the Guided Reading lesson by asking open-ended questions about the story. (The teacher asks: “Why do you think the father was angry? What did the girl feel when the other members of the family did not watch her game?”).*

4.2.2.2. Discussion graph in 4.1 and sketch in 4.3

The Grade 2 teacher selected a Guided Reading book (*see Figure 4.1 outcomes: e. text selection*) by asking the children which book they had already read. This type of book selection implies that Guided Reading can be a last-minute event, rather than a planned teaching instruction that develops children’s reading strategies by selecting the right text for every group (Peterson 2001:122-124; Paratore & McCormack 2005:55; Clay 1993:23; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:115).

The teacher further introduced the book (*see Figure 4.1 outcomes: f. introduction*) by reading it aloud, with the result that when children finally read the book independently, it was already familiar to them so that the children could not make predictions (which is an important comprehension strategy) and they did not have many opportunities to problem solve new words on their own. My observations illustrated that this teacher had the same way of responding to children who experience difficulties in reading a word as her Grade 1 colleague, i.e. she reads the word for the children, which effectively removed the need for children to problem-solve (*see Figure 4.1 outcomes: g. teaching decisions*). This kind of teaching creates dependency on the teacher. It is not scaffolding, which is important during Guided Reading because it supports children in using contextual cues to independently work out the meaning of unfamiliar words (Clay 2001:237; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:366; Cooper 2000:426; Weaver 2002:329; Kouri et al.2006:238).

To conclude, the teachers of School A followed the structure of Guided Reading, namely introduction, independent reading and revisiting the text, which suggested they had developed some understanding of Guided Reading instruction. Although the teachers of School A implemented the form of Guided Reading, they appear to have great difficulty in implementing the intent of Guided Reading, namely supporting children to become independent readers through building reading strategies on unknown text.

4.2.3. Guided Reading lessons School B

Many teachers find it difficult to scaffold children so that they can construct meaning from text (Jaquinta 2006:414; Barchers 1998:198; Dorn et al.1998:40; Hornsby 2000:30). For instance, teachers do not ask questions or use prompts to stimulate children's development of reading strategies, such as cross-checking, self-correction and prediction (McPherson 2007:2; Kouri et al.2006:238; Fountas & Pinnell 2006:366; Clay 1993:10). The lack of opportunities for children to use and develop reading strategies is also a key issue in the discussion of the outcomes of School B. Figure 4.4 illustrates the outcomes of the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory of School B and Figure 4.5 outlines the grade 1 teachers' Guided Reading lesson. The findings are analyzed in section 4.2.3.1.

FIGURE 4.4 Presentation data School B

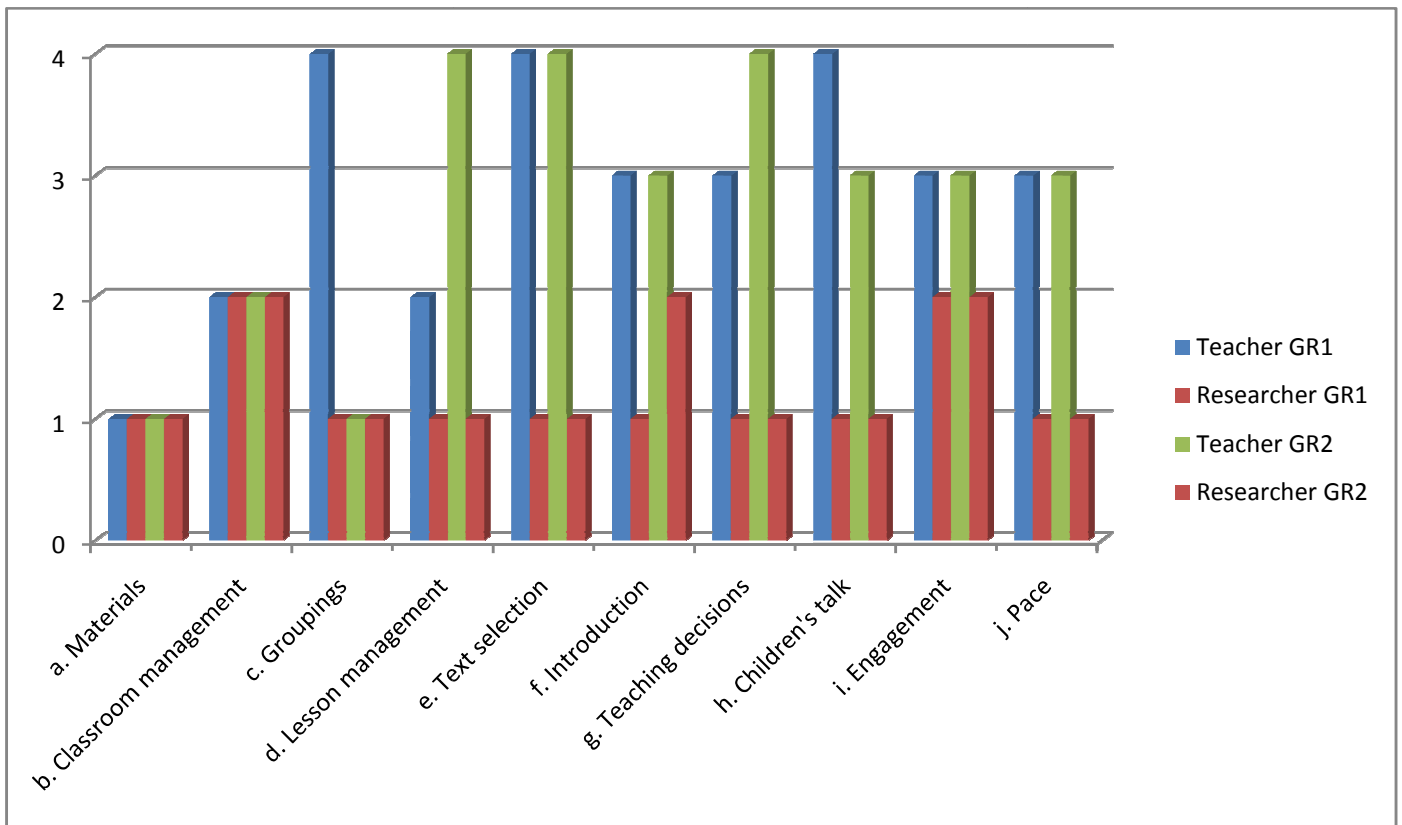


FIGURE 4.5 Observation Guided Reading lessons Grade 1 School B

- The teacher starts her Guided Reading lesson by giving each child in her class a book that they have to read (not every child has the same book).
- Then, the teacher walks through her class and helps the children who are struggling to read the text, by reading the text for them.
- When every child finished reading their book, the teacher asks one child to stand in front of the class and read a page aloud from their book.
- The last part of the Guided Reading lesson is the exercise of retelling, which means that one child has to retell the story of the book he/she read in her own words.

4.2.3.1. Discussion graph in 4.4 and sketch in 4.5

The Grade 1 teacher of School B seemed not to understand the structure of Guided Reading (see Figure 4.4 outcomes: d. lesson management, j. pace). She gave each child in the class a different book and instructed the whole class to start reading without providing any introduction to the text (see Figure 4.4 outcomes: f. introduction, g. teaching decisions). Because every child had a different book, a discussion of the meaning of the books was not possible (see Figure 4.4 outcomes: h. children's talk). The teacher used almost all the books she had in the class for Guided Reading. Therefore she was not able to select appropriate texts that support reading strategies for every individual child (see Figure 4.4 outcomes: e. text selection). The lesson ends with retelling the story, which is not a Guided Reading activity that supports peer discussion about the meaning of the book (see Figure 4.4 outcomes: i. engagement). In addition, observations of Guided Reading lessons of the Grade 2 teacher, as shown in Figure 4.6, also gave the impression that the teacher did not know the steps in Guided Reading.

FIGURE 4.6 Observation Guided Reading lessons Grade 2 School B

- *The teacher starts Guided Reading lesson by writing keywords from the book on the board.*
- *The children have to write these words in their workbook.*
- *After the writing exercise, the teacher gives every group in her class one book. The teacher has arranged her class in eight groups of six learners.*
- *All children in the group try to read from one book.*
- *The teacher walks through the class and reads the word for the children, if they struggle to decode the word.*
- *After the children read three pages, the teacher asks one child to collect the books and the teacher goes on with another lesson.*

4.2.3.2. Discussion graph in 4.4 and sketch in 4.6

As in the case of her Grade 1 colleague, the teacher of Grade 2 did not follow the structure of a Guided Reading lesson (see Figure 4.4 outcomes: d. lesson management, f. introduction, j. pace). She started her Guided Reading lesson with word study. Normally this activity takes place after the reading so that children can link the words with the text and therefore have more support to understand the meaning of the word (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:6-9; Avalos et al. 2007:324).

The teacher did not seem to find it difficult to manage her class (*see Figure 4.4 outcomes: b. classroom management*), because all the children were reading at the same time. This is not Guided Reading, which is reading instruction in a small group while other children in the class working independently. The lack of Guided Reading books (see Table 4.2.) restrained the teacher's opportunity to select appropriate text (*see Figure 4.4 outcomes: e. text selection*). Most of the time, the teacher only asked the children to read three pages of their books. It seemed to me that the teacher did not want to finish the book, because she did not have enough reading materials. Reading only three pages of a book prevents children from developing a 'sense of story'. In Guided Reading, children should read a complete little book in one sitting, which helps them to construct the meaning of the story (Hornsby 2000:32; Dorn & Soffos 2005:37). Asking six children to read from one book makes it virtually impossible for them to learn to read. I noticed that one child read silently and the other children in the group listened to her. Most of the time, the most fluent reader in the group read the book, which implies that struggling readers did not receive the chance to develop their reading. The Grade 2 teacher provided the same type of support that her Grade 1 colleague gave children who encountered difficult words, i.e. she read them for the children (*see Figure 4.4 outcomes: g. teaching decisions*). An interesting observation was that the Guided Reading lessons of the Grade 2 teacher occurred in silence (*see Figure 4.4 outcomes: h. children's talk, i. engagement*). The children were quiet when they had to write the keywords in their book and they listened in silence while one member of the group read three pages. As described in section 2.3.3, during Guided Reading the teacher and the children should be actively involved in constructing the meaning of the story through discussion and sharing thoughts that support their critical thinking.

To conclude, the teachers of School B seemed to lack an understanding of Guided Reading, because they did not follow the procedures or intent of Guided Reading (see 2.3.). Most likely, the teachers in this school need practical support that explains and demonstrates what Guided Reading instruction is and shows them how to scaffold children's development of reading strategies.

4.2.4. Guided Reading lessons School C

As discussed, Guided Reading asks some understanding from teachers about children's literacy development (Fisher 2008:19; Schwartz 2005:443). This includes knowing that children should read independently during Guided Reading instruction, with teachers supporting children's development of reading strategies in decoding and understanding whole texts (Clay 2001:237; Kouri et al.2006:238; Fountas & Pinnell 2006:366; Dorn & Soffos 2005:37). In contrast to these criteria, the teachers of School B and C seem to give reading instruction by making children read books aloud repeatedly until they memorize the text and therefore can read the text fluently. This idea of teaching reading does not develop children's abilities to read critically and independently discover the meaning of the text. Fleisch (2008:136) emphasizes that the achievement crisis in South African schools is based on teachers' misconceptions, namely, that memorization should not be part of learning; that children "should not be taught anything directly" and that "answers can be derived through discussion". Although critics may see Guided Reading as an indirect, vague teaching context based on children's spontaneous responses and discussions of books, this should not be the case, because in Guided Reading teachers should provide explicit demonstrations of reading strategies (Fountas & Pinnell 2007:224). My classroom observations contradict Fleisch's (2008) point of view and highlight that 'memorization of text' and 'directive teaching style' are still common practices in South African schools, which prevents children from creating their own meaning through critical discussion. This is visibly demonstrated in Figure 4.8 and 4.9, which illustrate that teachers use memorization as part of their reading instruction.

FIGURE 4.7 Presentation data School C

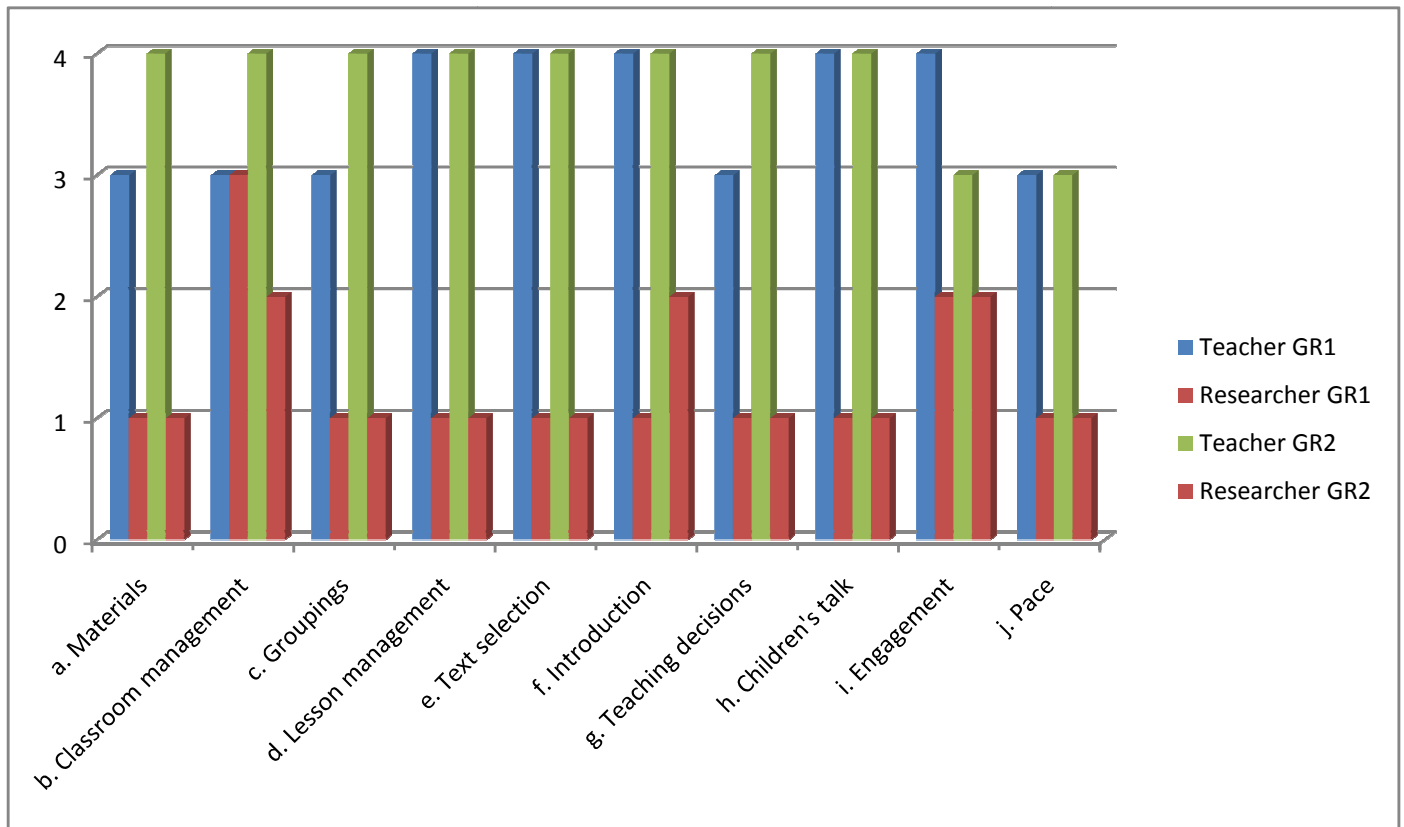


FIGURE 4.8 Observation Guided Reading lessons Grade 1 School C

- The teacher introduces the Guided Reading book by reading the story aloud.
- Next, the teacher gives a copy of the book to each of the six learners in her Guided Reading group and tells the children to read the story aloud in unison.
- Then, every child gets a turn to read two pages aloud.
- After that, the children have to read the story aloud all together again.
- All the children close their books and the teacher asks the children to look up the words in the book she mentioned. The children finger-point at the word the teacher says.
- The Guided Reading lesson ends with the so called sight-words exercise. It means that the keywords of the story are written on big cards. The teacher shows the children in the group the word cards in a high tempo. The children have to read the words aloud in unison.

4.2.4.1. Discussion graph in 4.7 and sketch in 4.8

Figure 4.8 illustrates again that children are engaged in reading aloud during Guided Reading, rather than being supported in their development of reading strategies (*see Figure 4.7 outcomes: d. lesson management, f. introduction, j. pace*). Children taking turns to read aloud around the group cannot be classified as Guided Reading and it does not create the opportunity for meaningful dialogue, which is an essential aspect of Guided Reading (Cooper 2000:41; Tracy & Morrow 2006:142). Reading aloud in a group is not a skill children need in their life, but being able to read and comprehend independently is. When the children in Grade 1 were not all reading nicely in chorus, the teacher made them start the book all over again (*see Figure 4.7 outcomes: b. classroom management, g. teaching decisions*). Thus, she used valuable Guided Reading instruction time to listen if her children could read smoothly in unison. These reading aloud and sight-word exercises focused children's attention on memorizing and fluency (Aldridge & Goldman 2007:97; Weaver 2002:241-242; 370; Malik 1996:1). Memorizing the text and attending to words in isolation cannot be described as reading for comprehension, the latter being essential in children's future educational careers. Hence, I disagree with Fleisch (2008:136) that teachers think that memorization should never form part of learning. Figure 4.9 also illustrates that reading instruction which emphasizes the memorization of the text by children, is a common practice in School B.

FIGURE 4.9 Observation Guided Reading lessons Grade 2 School C

- *The teacher starts her Guided Reading lesson with the whole class. She introduces the Guided Reading book by telling the class who the author and illustrator of the book are and she explains some difficult words in the book.*
- *Next, the teacher gives a copy of the book to each child in her class and tells the children to read the story aloud in unison.*
- *Then, every child gets a turn to read one paragraph aloud.*
- *After that, the children have to read the story aloud all together again.*
- *The Guided Reading lesson ends similarly to the Guided Reading lesson in Grade 1, with the sight-words exercise. The teacher shows the children in the group the word cards in a high tempo. The children have to read the words aloud in unison.*

4.2.4.2. Discussion graph in 4.7 and sketch in 4.9

The negative effect of memorizing text through reading texts aloud repeatedly has already been discussed. The Guided Reading lesson of Grade 1 and 2 in School C revealed no evidence of discussion of the book (*see Figure 4.7 outcomes: h. children's talk, i. engagement*). The children did not have the opportunity to interact with each other and discuss the meaning of the story (Avalos et al. 2007:325; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:6-9; Cooper 2000:41; Tracy & Morrow 2006:142). Without exploring the book through discussion, the children are unlikely to learn to think critically and challenge each other's points of view. Yet, the teachers of School C declared that they followed the Guided Reading guidelines of the South African educational policy. In my opinion, their understanding of Guided Reading was, at best, very limited with respect to theory supporting Guided Reading.

To conclude, the teachers of School C seemed to be guided by a behaviorist theory of learning and a skill-based approach to reading, i.e. they give the impression that repetition, drill and memorization are the key to learning (see section 2.2.1.). They also did not follow the structure of Guided Reading, namely introduction, independent reading and revisiting the text. Therefore, they appeared to have a lack of understanding of the procedures of Guided Reading. As was the case in Schools A and B, School C seemed to need practical support in Guided Reading instruction, particularly in the way teachers can scaffold children's development so that children can start constructing meaning independently from text.

Overall, the observation sketches show that all six teachers have their own interpretations of Guided Reading, which most of the time were not theory-based. This supports Cohen's (1996) observation that teachers' idiosyncratic interpretations were one of the main causes of failed reforms. It is likely that teachers' own interpretations will continue to hold back the implementation of Guided Reading in South African classrooms.

4.3. Implementation of Guided Reading

As can be expected, if teachers do not understand the concept of Guided Reading, they are likely to struggle with implementing Guided Reading in their classrooms (Fleisch 2008:138; Schwartz 2005:443). Additionally, in order to implement Guided Reading correctly, teachers have to create Guided Reading groups and select leveled books that match children's reading needs (Fawson & Reutzel 2000:84; Guastelle & Lenz 2005:145; Hornsby 2000:52-73). This section discusses the way the teachers in Schools A, B and C selected books and grouped their children before the Guided Reading instruction.

4.3.1. Guided Reading books

Section 2.4.1 explained the importance of selecting the right text from leveled Guided Reading books for reading instruction. Table 4.2 shows the book series the schools were using for Guided Reading as well as the publisher of the books and the language in which the books are written. Furthermore, Table 4.2 illustrates the leveling system of the book series and in which grade the books were used. The last row gives the size of the books, because some publishers provide big books, which are used for Shared Reading instruction (see 2.2.4.3.), as well as smaller versions of the same books for Guided Reading.

TABLE 4.2 Guided Reading books

	Series	Publisher	Language	Leveled	Grade	Type of books
School A	Sunshine books	Wendy Pye – span	Afrikaans	Not leveled	Same books in Grade 1 and 2	Big books and small books
	Kagiso	Kagiso education	Afrikaans	According to Grade 14 books per Grade	Different books in Grade 1 and 2	Big books and small books
	Oxford Storieboom	Oxford University Press	Afrikaans	According to Grade 18 books per Grade	Grade 2	Big books and small books
	Ster Stories	Juta	Afrikaans	Not leveled	Grade 2	Small books
School B	Sunshine books	Wendy Pye – span	IsiXhosa	Not leveled	Grade 1	Big books and small books
	Kagiso	Kagiso education	IsiXhosa	According to Grade 14 books per Grade	Different books in Grade 1 and 2	Big books and small books
School C	Oxford Storyboom	Oxford University Press	Afrikaans	According to Grade 18 books per Grade	Different books in Grade 1 and 2	Big books and small books
	New ways	Nelson	English	Leveled according to difficulty	Different books in Grade 1 and 2	Small books

Table 4.2 illustrates that School A and B used the Sunshine book series that have big books for Shared Reading and small books for Guided Reading. However, the big books and the small books were the same, which meant that children read familiar books during Guided Reading because they already read the book during Shared Reading. School A even used the Sunshine book series in both Grade 1 and Grade 2, which implies that children read the same book in the next year. Hornsby (2000:30-34) explains that it is very important to read unfamiliar books during Guided reading, because this stimulates children to use reading strategies independently. Children do not learn how to problem solve if they already know the book.

Furthermore, Table 4.2 shows that only the New Way book series at School C were leveled according to difficulty. If schools do not have enough books and the books are not leveled on a gradient of difficulty, teachers are unable to select books for children according to their reading behaviors and processes. This implies that children learn to read from texts that do not support their continuous development of reading strategies, because the books will be too easy for some children. Alternatively, some children will get frustrated, because the books are too hard for them to read. As explained, Guided Reading books should match the instructional reading level of the children, which means that they can read the text independently with 90% – 94% accuracy (Paratore & McCormack 2005:55; Clay 1993:23). The teachers at all three schools could not select books for their Guided Reading groups that corresponded with the reading needs of the children (*see Figure 4.1, 4.4 and 4.7 outcomes: a. materials*).

All schools had a limited number of books available for Guided Reading instruction. At the end of the second term of the school year, the teachers at School A had already used every book with all their Guided Reading groups. At School B, children even had to share books during the Guided Reading lessons. This is counter-productive, because in Guided Reading each child is meant to read at his/her own pace. That cannot happen if children are sharing a text.

School C had the largest collection of books. In every class, there were storybooks available for the children. Each class had enough copies of the books for Guided Reading and the school had its own library. However, both teachers of School C could not make efficient use of their resources, because they did not know how to select books based on the reading needs of each individual child. Table 4.2 shows that School C only used one book series for Guided Reading instruction in Afrikaans and one book series for Guided Reading instruction in English. This contradicts Peterson's (2001:122-124) advice that teachers should use a variety of books, seeing that every book series has its limitations. To conclude, the teachers did not have access to a coherent system of leveled Guided Reading books (see 2.3.3. and addendum 5), which meant that they cannot match children to appropriate books or promote them to more difficult books in accordance with Guided Reading principles.

4.3.2. Guided Reading groups

Section 2.4.2 explained that it is the teachers' responsibility to create Guided Reading groups in order to implement Guided Reading in their classroom. For Guided Reading sessions, teachers group children together who demonstrate similar reading behaviors and processes (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:101). These groups should be dynamic and flexible, that is, teachers should regroup their children based on ongoing assessment (Tracy & Morrow 2006:141; McPherson 2007:2; Hornsby 2000:54; Clay 1993:20-42). However, the teachers of all three schools had static Guided Reading groups; because they formed their Guided Reading groups according to their own criteria. In some instances, teachers put children in groups according to the place where children sat in the class (*see Figure 4.1, 4.4 and 4.7 outcomes: c. groupings*). Another grouping arrangement was to place the same number of boys and girls in each reading group. Because the teachers seemed to group their children based on what was practical for them to manage, their groups consisted of children with a mixture of reading needs and behaviours for example, children who were struggling to read were grouped with fluent readers. Even more distressing was that, in all three schools, the same children remained in the same group that was formed in the beginning of the year. Needless to say, this contradicts the concept of dynamic Guided Reading groups, which change based on each child's developing reading needs (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:97-106; Iaquinta 2006:414; Lapp et al. 2005:79). Each Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory leaves space for the teachers' personal commentaries. These will be discussed in the next section.

4.4. Teachers' comments

Teachers' comments were gathered from the open-ended section in the Guided Reading Self-Assessment inventory. These comments highlight some of the issues teachers face in trying to implement Guided Reading. I will discuss the comments of the teachers, starting with the Grade 1 teacher of School A:

FIGURE 4.10 Comments Teacher Grade 1 School A

I am in the beginning stage with Guided Reading. The learners enjoy it very much. The big problem is the 40+ kids I have in my class and I need more time with my lower group.

Section 2.7 highlighted that a class with forty or more children make it very hard to implement Guided Reading in the classroom and indeed has the implication that the teacher cannot spend enough time with the children who struggle to read. A large class demands organizational skills of the teacher; she has to manage her class in such a way that she can do thirty minutes of Guided Reading without interruption (see 2.7.2.). I noticed that the Grade 1 teacher at School A frequently got disturbed during her Guided Reading time, because some children wanted to show the teacher their work, whereas other children needed some attention because they were disturbing the class with their behavior. This interrupted Guided Reading lesson showed that children were not used to the Guided Reading settings in which they had to work independently. This can partly be attributed to the teacher's behavioristic and controlling style which cultivates dependent learners (see 2.2.1.2.) Furthermore, Guided Reading was also new to the teacher and she was uncertain about how to manage Guided Reading lessons. As discussed in section 2.3., it is not surprising that teachers will struggle at first to understand Guided Reading, because it is a new and complex instructional approach. The plea for practical support is also evident in Figure 4.11.

FIGURE 4.11 Comments Teacher Grade 2 School A

More practice in Guided Reading will give me the opportunity to get accustomed to the rules in Guided Reading. It gives me an idea who can read and who cannot.

Figure 4.11 illustrates that the teacher wanted more practical support, so that she can become familiar with the materials, structure and grouping procedures of Guided Reading (see 2.3). It demonstrates the need for educating teachers in assessment such as Running Records, which assist them to group their children based on their reading performance (see 2.4.2, 2.5.3. and 2.7.2.). Figure 4.12 and 4.13 both illustrate the negative impact of the lack of resources for Guided Reading instruction.

FIGURE 4.12 Comments Teacher Grade 1 School B

We need more storybooks at the moment. We are a new school and do not have storybooks to read to learners. Any resources regarding reading will be appreciated.

The implementation of Guided Reading depends on a good set of leveled books and on creating Guided Reading groups based on ongoing assessment (Guastelle & Lenz 2005:145; Hornsby 2000:52-73). However, Fawson and Reutzel (2000:96) state that “many teachers do not have access to large numbers of leveled books to use with Guided Reading”. The lack of books in School B was indeed a problem. It seems, however, that the Grade 1 teacher did not understand the need for leveled books, because her focus was on storybooks and not on leveled texts.

FIGURE 4.13 Comments Teacher Grade 2 School B

If I could have more books, the reading lesson would be more interesting for the learners. Our classes are too big in numbers of learners, so there is not enough space for reading corners. I think workshops on reading should be done as to be sure on how reading i.e. strategies to follow when doing reading. What we need mostly is the reading material.

The Grade 2 at School B teacher also draws attention to the need for books in her classroom. Furthermore, she suggests reading workshop for the teachers; most likely she wants more practical support in Guided Reading and in the other components of the balanced program (see 2.2.4.3.).

In comparison with the teachers of School A and B, the teachers of School C give the impression that they do not struggle to implement Guided Reading in their classroom. The Grade 2 teacher did not write any comments; the Grade 1 teacher wrote advice on her Guided Reading Self-Assessment:

FIGURE 4.14 Comments Teacher Grade 1 School C

Colorful posters with different text is very important in each class. A positive reading environment stimulates reading. Always necessary materials handy.

The Grade 1 at School C teacher highlighted that necessary materials must be available, which is logical. Furthermore, that a print-rich environment supports children in becoming familiar to text. This is especially useful for children who come from homes where there are no books available.

4.5. Summary

By using implementation evaluation methodology, this small-scale study examined how six South African primary teachers understood and implemented Guided Reading in their classrooms. All six teachers at the three schools declared that they followed the guidelines set out by the National Reading Strategy and the Foundation for Learning Campaign (see 2.5.). I argued that the Grade 1 and 2 teachers of School A were in the process of developing an understanding of Guided Reading, based on observations that they followed the structure of Guided Reading (see Figure 4.1, 4.4 and 4.7 outcomes: d. lesson management, f. introduction, j. pace). The teachers of School B and C, on the other hand, did not follow the steps in Guided Reading, which revealed a lack of understanding of Guided Reading instruction. The teachers of School B and C used their Guided Reading time to listen to children reading aloud instead of focusing on the development of reading strategies, which indicates that these teachers were still holding a transmission view on reading (see 2.2.1.). There was no evidence at all three schools of children who were interactively engaged during Guided Reading in discussing the meaning of books (see Figure 4.1, 4.4 and 4.7 outcomes: i. engagement, h. children's talk). To conclude, teachers' development in understanding Guided Reading is a process that needs ongoing theoretical and practical support. In addition, teacher's implementation of Guided Reading in their classroom requires the right materials e.g. leveled Guided Reading books and proper assessments (see Figure 4.10-4.14).

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers understand and implement Guided Reading in Grade 1 and 2 at three public primary schools in the Western Cape. I started my research with reviewing literature to understand the theoretical underpinnings of Guided Reading (chapter 2). Chapter 2 defined Guided Reading as a teaching context in which children learn how to construct meaning independently from text under the teacher's supportive guidance (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:2; Hornsby 2000:30). In addition, the structure of a Guided Reading lesson is threefold, namely it starts with the teacher's introduction of the text, followed by children's independent reading of the text and ends with revisiting of the text through discussion, word study or other activities (Hall et al. 2005:118; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:7). Chapter 2 furthermore outlined that the implementation of Guided Reading in the classroom involves the selection of leveled Guided Reading books according to gradient of difficulty and the arrangement of children in Guided Reading groups based on ongoing assessment (Fawson & Reutzel 2000:84; Guastelle & Lenz 2005:145; Hornsby 2000:52-73). After reviewing the literature, I conducted implementation evaluation research to investigate how six South African foundation phase teachers understand and implement Guided Reading in their classrooms (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:537; Airasian et al. 2006:7; Mouton 2001:158-159). The main outcomes of the research will be summarized for each sub-question in the next section. In addition, I give a conclusion on the central research question before considering recommendations for further research.

5.2. Summary of main outcomes

To answer the main research question, three sub-questions regarding teachers' understanding and implementation of Guided Reading were explored:

- a. How are teachers' understanding and interpretation of the new policy requirements for Guided Reading reflected in their Guided Reading lessons?

All six teachers at the three schools participating in this study declared that they followed the guidelines for Guided Reading as set out in the National Reading Strategy and the Foundation for Learning Campaign (section 2.5.). The teachers of school A seem to be developing an understanding of Guided Reading in that they followed the structure of a Guided Reading lesson. The teachers of school B and C, on the other hand, seem to have a lack of understanding of Guided Reading, because they did not follow the steps in Guided Reading but used their Guided Reading time to listen to children reading aloud. All six teachers gave the impression that they found it difficult to support children during Guided Reading; they frequently read the text for the children when the children struggled to decode the text. This type of teaching reading does not assist children in using reading strategies to decode unfamiliar text so that they can become independent readers (Clay & Cazden 1992:131; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:161 Hornsby 2000:32 Cooper 2000:426; Weaver 2002:329). In addition, there was no evidence at any of the three schools of children taking part in discussions about the meaning of the story. In conclusion, the participating teachers seem to have a very superficial understanding of Guided Reading, which indicates that reforms were not being implemented correctly in the classrooms in this study.

- b. What books are the teachers using during Guided Reading and are these Guided Reading books leveled according to a gradient of difficulty?

The teachers participating in this study did not have enough Guided Reading books to work with (see 4.4.1.). Most of the texts were familiar to the children, because the teacher had already read the texts to them during Shared Reading. Teachers did not select text based on each child's reading needs; instead every child read the same Guided Reading book (Peterson 2001:122-124; Paratore & McCormack 2005:55; Clay 1993:23; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:115). To complicate matters, none of the participating schools had leveled sets of books on a continuum from easy to more difficult to support children's developing processing systems.

Needless to say, this makes it challenging for the teachers to select appropriate text and implement Guided Reading as described in the theory base (see 2.4.). To conclude, South African teachers cannot be expected to implement Guided Reading properly in the absence of the essential materials i.e. texts leveled according to a gradient of difficulty.

- c. How do teachers create Guided Reading groups, and is the selection of these Guided Reading groups based on assessments which inform teachers' decision-making?

The teachers at the three schools did not create Guided Reading groups based on assessments, which can inform teachers on how to teach specific reading strategies. For example, Guided Reading groups in all three schools were based on the place the children were sitting in the class. Thus, the children were sitting in groups, but were not grouped according to similar reading behaviors. Assessment, such as running records, indicates when teachers should promote children to new books or move them to different Guided Reading groups. Dynamic grouping procedures are important to ensure that children do not stay in the same group all year (see 2.4.2.). Giving Guided Reading lessons to the whole class at the same time was a common practice in the participating schools (see 4.2.). This contradicts the research-based principles of Guided Reading instruction, which is a teaching context in which children in small groups learn how to read (Tracy & Morrow 2006:141; Hornsby 2000:34). Teachers are supposed to spend quality time during Guided Reading working with one group at a time and not have their time divided between different groups or the whole class. In conclusion, the participating teachers did not group children for Guided Reading according to research-based standards (see 2.4.2.). They did not group their children based on the outcomes of assessment, but followed their own procedures, such as forming groups on the place children were sitting in the class (see 4.4.2.).

5.3. Conclusion

As mentioned, the main research question of this study is: how do teachers understand and implement Guided Reading in Grade 1 and 2 at three public primary schools in the Western Cape? I acknowledge that this is a small-scale study and as such, it is hard to draw conclusions that can be generalized. However, this study does represent Guided Reading practice in six South African classrooms and underscores the trend that reforms are poorly implemented in South African schools, partly because of the lack of resources (Bloch 2009; Fleisch 2008; Christie 2008; Conley et al. 2007; Jansen 2005).

This study argues that the teachers participating in this study have a very superficial understanding of Guided Reading (see 4.2.), based on their behavioristic interpretation of the national literacy policy rather than on the research and theoretical base (see 2.2.). This raises the question why literacy reforms, such as Guided Reading, seem to be difficult to implement in the classroom. As I reflect on the route from theory and policy to practice, I identified some stumbling blocks to reform. First, the new policy requirements for Guided Reading as outlined in the National Reading Strategy and Foundation for Learning Campaign appear to fail to offer teachers a sufficient explanation of Guided Reading and sometimes even contradict the theory base (see 2.5.). Unclear governmental documents are likely to leave space for teachers' own interpretations of Guided Reading which works against reform. Second, teachers' interpretations of policy are formed by their teaching history, for instance their transmission view on reading, their school context, their own education. The cumulative effect of all these varied misinterpretations is individualistic Guided Reading instruction, as illustrated by my classroom observations (see 4.2). Although these observations show that there are certain overlaps between teachers' instructional practices, such as reading aloud, every practice was different as well. For example, some teachers gave Guided Reading instruction to the whole class; others first read the book to a small group of children. Without a clear explanation of Guided Reading and practical support, it is likely that South African teachers will continue with their traditional reading approach and individualistic way of interpreting and implementing Guided Reading, because they do not fully understand the concept and value of Guided Reading.

A third stumbling block to reform is the lack of resources, such as leveled Guided Reading books and assessment (see 4.3. and 4.4.). The participating schools did not have leveled books in a coherent system that allowed accurate matching of text and child. This meant that the schools did not have a consistent national standard to compare reading levels across schools. In the light of the above arguments, it is evident that the teachers in the three schools encountered serious practical problems in trying to implement Guided Reading in their classroom. In the absence of teacher education and clear explanations on how to create assessment-based Guided Reading groups and without leveled Guided Reading books, teachers will not have the opportunity to implement Guided Reading correctly into their classrooms.

To conclude, the disparity between theory, policy and practice resulted in individualistic disjointed implementation of Guided Reading in six South African classrooms. One is tempted to speculate that the problem is more wide-spread, because policy documents were distributed to all schools in South Africa and it is well-known that many schools are poorly resourced (see 2.5.). This is a serious concern, because Guided Reading is the heart of a balanced, comprehensive, language program and it therefore has the most potential for improving literacy rates in South Africa, especially for the lowest performing children (Jaquinta 2006:413; Fountas & Pinnell 1996:1-2; Hornsby 2000:30-34; National Reading Strategy 2008).

5.4. Recommendations for further research

The high illiteracy rates in South Africa underscore the importance of a solid literacy approach. Much has been done in the field of education with the aim to improve reading instruction. Improving instruction, however, is much more complex than writing guidelines for teachers, as indicated by this study and by other studies which investigated the negative impact that teachers' own interpretations of policy have on their classroom practice (Cohen 1996:112-113). Consequently, teachers need to be part of the reform process, especially if we want them to change their paradigms on literacy instruction (see 5.4.1 and 5.4.2). In addition, Guided Reading instruction seems to need further research before it can be implemented correctly on a large scale in the primary schools of South Africa. Therefore I will give recommendations on how further research can contribute to the improvement of (guided) reading instruction.

5.4.1. Research on teachers' paradigms

In 2008, the South African government introduced a balanced language programme into the primary schools (READ 2008:20). However, the traditional skills-based approach still appears to be a common practice in the South African schools (see 2.2.1.2 and 4.2.), which is possibly holding back the teachers from implementing the balanced language program in their classroom (Fisher 2008:136; Schwartz 2005:443). Therefore, I recommend that research has to be done on how to support teachers to move away from a behavioristic and transmission paradigm on learning and reading so that they are able to change their skills-based instructional approach to a more balanced instructional approach.

As mentioned, improving instruction is a complex task and teachers are possibly skeptical of continual educational changes and tired of trying to keep up with new reforms (Fisher 2008; Cohen 1996), especially, now that the outcomes based education in South Africa also seems to be something of the past (Peyper 2009). One thing is for certain, teachers need to be involved in the reform process of literacy education, as they are the ones who are implementing the programme. Teachers should take part in the discussion regarding the improvement of education. Second, they should know how theory is linked with practice and why Guided Reading has the good reputation of supporting children to construct meaning independently from text. Policy should not be dictated, rather it should be written for the teachers at specific schools. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all policy that explains Guided Reading is unlikely to work if the different school cultures we have in South Africa are considered. Teachers seem to need practical demonstrations that support Guided Reading instruction clearly (see 4.5.).

5.4.2. Research on introducing Guided Reading

As mentioned, there seems to be a lack of understanding of the balanced language program, in particular the way Guided Reading could develop comprehension in reading (McPherson 2007:1; Kouri et al.2006:236; Guastello & Lenz 2005:144; Mooney 1995:16). Teachers' misconceptions of Guided Reading result in uneven reading instruction, because such misconceptions are based on their own interpretation of Guided Reading (see 4.2.). It seems that teachers are having difficulty in using Guided Reading as a teaching context in which children read independently to construct meaning (Clay 2001:237; Fountas & Pinnell 2006:366; Dorn & Soffos 2005:37). Guided Reading is a new reading instruction for the teachers, and research indicates that it takes time before teachers change their teaching behavior (Fawson & Reutzel 2000; Kouri et al. 2006). This implies that teachers need ongoing support so that they can understand the concept of Guided Reading and are able to implement it in their classroom. For that reason, I recommend that research has to be done on how to introduce and demonstrate Guided Reading better to the teachers.

5.4.3. Research on Guided Reading books

As pointed out in section 2.4., access to leveled Guided Reading books is one of the main requirements for implementing Guided Reading in the classroom (Guastelle & Lenz 2005:145; Hornsby 2000:52-73). However, many teachers do not have access to large numbers of leveled Guided Reading books (Fawson & Reutzel 2000:96). Consequently, I recommend that research needs to be done on how teachers, publishers, linguists and other professionals can work together in producing and/or leveling Guided Reading books. South Africa needs a coherent leveled book system that allows accurate matching and comparison with consistent standards across schools (see addendum 5).

In conclusion, given that effective Guided Reading instruction is central to raising literacy levels in South African primary schools, it is hoped that this study will make a contribution to this important reading instruction.

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Addendum 1 Letter Western Cape Education Department

Navrae
Enquiries **Dr RS Cornelissen**
IMibuzo

Telefoon
Telephone 1.1 **(021) 467-2286**
IFoni

Faks
Fax 1.2 **(021) 425-7445**
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Verwysing
Reference 1.3 **20090529-0043**
ISalathiso



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Miss Alide Kruizinga

30 Kommandeur Avenue
Stellenbosch
7600

Dear Miss A. Kruizinga

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LITERACY: AN EVALUATION ON GUIDED READING IN THREE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE WESTERN CAPE.

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

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **20th July 2009 to 5th September 2009.**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 22nd June 2009

Addendum 2 Letter Ethical Clearance Committee



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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

27 November 2009

Tel.: 021 - 808-4622
Enquiries: Sidney Engelbrecht
Email: sidney@sun.ac.za

Reference No. 235/2009

Ms A Kruizinga
Department of Curriculum Studies
University of Stellenbosch
STELLENBOSCH
7602

Ms A Kruizinga

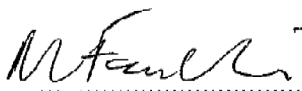
APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

With regards to your application, I would like to inform you that the project, *Development through literacy: An evaluation on guided reading in three primary schools in the Western Cape*, has been approved on condition that:

1. The researcher/s remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal;
2. The researcher/s stay within the boundaries of applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines, and applicable standards of scientific rigor that are followed within this field of study and that
3. Any substantive changes to this research project should be brought to the attention of the Ethics Committee with a view to obtain ethical clearance for it.

We wish you success with your research activities.

Best regards



.....
MRS. MALÈNE FOUCHÉ
Manager: Research Support



Afdeling Navorsingsontwikkeling • Division of Research Development
Privaat Sak/Private Bag X1 • 7602 Stellenbosch • Suid-Afrika/South Africa
Tel +27 21 808 9111 • Faks/Fax: +27 21 808 4537

Addendum 3 Guided Reading Self-Assessment

Date:

Grade:

Directions: Mark the characteristic within each category which most clearly describes your teaching at this time.

Materials: My goal is to have all necessary materials present, organized, and accessible for use during the lesson – particularly the leveled set of books, multiple copies.

My books and other materials are at a beginning point in terms of organization.

I have enough books to practice my teaching but I have not constructed a leveled set yet; I have other materials but they are not yet organized in the guided reading area.

I have a leveled set of books that I am piloting; I have all other materials – easel, white board, paper, markers, etc. – ready for use.

A leveled, well organized, and tested collection of books exists and is ready for use; I have an area for guided reading with an easel, white board, paper, markers and other materials.

Classroom Management: My goal is to engage all children in independent activities that are related to reading and writing so that I can work without interruption with small groups for 60 – 90minutes.

I have not yet established a work board and centers for use during reading time; many children need a great deal of attention in order to work independently.

I have established some centers but I am just beginning to teach children to use them; it is difficult to work with small group; I do not have a work-board.

I have established many centers; children can work in them independently. I have not yet organized a guided reading time with a work board.

My classroom is well managed with work board and a variety of appropriate activities in centers; almost all children work independently so that I can work without interruption with a small group.

Groupings: My goal is to form small groups of children who are similar in their development of strategies and in the level of text they can read and to regroup these children through ongoing assessment.

I am just beginning to group children and am not sure what measures to use; usually I teach the whole group; I do not know how to use running records.

I have formed and met with some groups in guided reading and am beginning to observe them more closely. I know how to take running records but not how to use them for grouping and regrouping.

I have established several groups for reading. I take regular running records and try to interpret the results. I have not yet worked through grouping and regrouping. I need more work in analyzing running records.

My groups are formed on the basis of systematic observation using running records; groups are formed so that individuals can use strategies effectively; groups are reformed based on assessment.

Lesson Management: My goal is to manage the lesson well with children demonstrating that they know the routines and all teaching procedures in place, in the appropriate order.

I have not yet implemented any of the steps in guided reading.

I have begun to introduce stories to children and ask them to read it.

I can introduce new books and have children read them but have difficulty in managing the lesson.

My lesson is smoothly managed and includes introduction, reading of the whole text by all children, and teaching after the first reading.

Text Selection: My goal is to select a text that is appropriate for the strategies that children are demonstrating and at the appropriate level for the group.

I am just beginning to understand how to select text that is right for the group.

I have difficulty selecting a text; often, it is too easy or too hard.

I can select a text that fits most of the group in terms of level but have difficulty relating the text to strategies children need.

I can select texts that are at an appropriate level for most of the group and that support their development of strategies.

Introduction: My goal is to provide access for children to the meaning, language, and print of the story, to support strategic reading, and to leave work that build the self-extending system.

Introducing texts is difficult; I can introduce words but do not understand how to use the introduction to help children use strategies.

I introduce texts but find it difficult to decide what features to attend to in order to support strategies.

I introduce texts in a way that provides children with control to read it but I have difficulty deciding how to lead strategies problem solving.

My introduction provides children with access but leaves work to do; the introduction supports strategies and places the text within children's control.

Teaching Decision During First Reading and Afterwards: My goal is to select powerful teaching points that illustrate the reading process and help children learn to solve words while maintaining a focus on meaning.

I am not sure how to make teaching decisions and I am concerned that my teaching points do not connect with what children know; I am not observing a shift in learning.

I am making some good teaching points and am observing shifts but my teaching is uneven. I need to work on decision making and on using running records.

I am generally pleased with my observation during reading but need to work on timing and quick decision making; I am observing progress; sometimes my intervention interferes with reading.

My decisions are well-timed and powerful in illustrating processes and allowing children to use what they know; my teaching points do not interfere with reading; children show evidence of strategic word solving.

Children's Talk: My goal is to engage children in talking about the meaning of the story and about the print.

Children either do not talk about the story or engage in talk completely separate from the story.

Children do talk about the story but not in a way that furthers their understanding; talk is distracting and random at times.

I can engage children in talk about the story; some talk furthers their understanding of the meaning; I would like to sharpen discussion to support strategic reading.

I am able to engage children in talk that furthers their understanding of the meaning of the story and assist them in solving words.

Engagement: My goal is to engage children's attention throughout the lesson.

I am constantly interrupted because my internal management plan isn't working; during guided reading, children's attention is inconsistent.

I can work with a group with a few interruptions but I have difficulty engaging all of the children in the group and focusing their attention on the text.

In general, I can teach a group with very few interruptions; children in the group are attentive, but attention is uneven across the group and from day to day.

During guided reading, children's attention is engaged; almost all members of the group attend; there are almost no interruptions.

Pace: My goal is to lead a fast-paced lesson with children who read fluently and are excited about the new story; another goal is to use all components of guided reading within a 10 to 30 minute period.

My lessons seem to "bog down"; I either have difficulty finishing all components of guided reading or the lessons take much too long.

I am able to use all or most of the components of guided reading but the lesson is slow-paced and I often run out of time in the morning.

I can include all elements – introduction, first reading, and teaching – in the lesson but I would like it to be more fast-paced and exciting for children.

My guided reading lesson is fast-paced and includes all components – children read fluently and I stay within time constraints to support my overall classroom management program.

Comments:

Addendum 4 The Ohio State University Literacy Collaborative Framework

Element	Description
1. Reading Aloud	The teacher reads aloud to the whole class or small groups. A carefully selected body of children's literature is used; the collection contains a variety of genres and represents our diverse society. Favourite texts, selected for special features, are reread many times.
2. Shared Reading	Using an enlarged text that all children can see, the teacher involves children in reading together following a pointer. The process includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Rereading big books, poems, songs * Rereading retellings * Rereading alternative texts * Rereading the products of interactive writing
3. Guided Reading	The teacher works with a small group of children who have similar reading processes. The teacher selects and introduces new books and supports children the whole text to themselves, making teaching points during and after reading. Sometimes the teacher engages the children in an extension to further their understanding in a minute or two of letter or word work.
4. Independent Reading	Children read on their own or with partners from a wide range of materials. Some reading is from a special collection at their reading level.
5. Shared Writing	Teacher and children work together to compose messages and stories; teacher supports process as scribe.
6. Interactive Writing	As in shared writing, teacher and children compose messages and stories that are written using a "shared pen" technique that involves children in the writing.
7. Guided Writing	Children engage in writing a variety of texts. Teacher guides the process and provides instruction through minilessons and conferences.
8. Independent Writing	Children write their own pieces, including (in addition to stories and informational pieces) retellings, labelling, speech balloons, lists, etc.
Letter and Word Study	Teachers provide minilessons to help children learn more about how letters and words work. Children work with letters and words at a letter/word study centre and share their learning. Teachers help children notice letters and words throughout the language and literacy framework.

(Fountas & Pinnell 1996:22-24)

Addendum 5 Book Level Comparison Chart

	Grade 1		Grade 2
Emergent	A, B		
Early	C, D, E, F, G, H		C, D, E, F, G, H
Transitional	I, J		I, J, K, L, M
Self-extending			N, O, P
Level	Title	Author/Series	Publisher/Distributor
A	I am happy

This figure is based on:

- Appendix M: Guided Reading Book List (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:287-389)
- Figure 10-15: An approximate grade level correspondence (Fountas & Pinnell 1996:132)
- Figure 3.1: Reading Recovery Levels and related groups or bands (Hornsby 2000:65)

Addendum 6 Running Record Sheet

RUNNING RECORD SHEET				
Name: _____		Date: _____	D. of B: _____ Age: __yrs__mths	
School: _____		Recorder: _____		
Text Titles	<u>Running words</u> Error	Error rate	Accuracy	Self-correction rate
1. Easy _____	_____	1: _____	_____ %	1: _____
2. Instructional _____	_____	1: _____	_____ %	1: _____
3. Hard _____	_____	1: _____	_____ %	1: _____
Directional				movement
<hr/>				
Analysis of Errors and Self-corrections				
Information used or neglected [Meaning (M) Structure or Syntax (S) Visual (V)]				
Easy				
<hr/>				
Instructional				
<hr/>				
Hard				
<hr/>				
Cross-checking on information (Note that this behavior changes over time)				
<hr/>				
Analysis of Errors and Self-corrections				
(see Observation Survey pages 30 – 32)				
<hr/>				

Page		E	SC	Information used	
				E MSV	SC MSV

(Clay 1993:25)

Addendum 7 Revised National Curriculum: Learning Outcomes Language

1. Listening: The learner is able to listen for information and enjoyment, and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations.
2. Speaking: The learner is able to communicate confidently and effectively in a spoken language in a wide range of situations.
3. Reading and Viewing: The learner is able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in text.
4. Writing: The learner is able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.
5. Thinking and Reasoning: The learner is able to use language to think and reason, and access, process and use information for learning.
6. Language Structure and Use: The learner knows and is able to use the sounds, words and the grammar of a language to create and interpret texts.

(Revised National Curriculum 2002:8)

Addendum 8 Data School A

Teacher's score		Researcher's score	
Grade 1		Grade 1	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>
Materials	1	Materials	1
Classroom management	2	Classroom management	1
Groupings	2	Groupings	1
Lesson management	3	Lesson management	3
Text selection	3	Text selection	1
Introduction	3	Introduction	3
Teaching decisions	3	Teaching decisions	2
Children's talk	3	Children's talk	1
Engagement	2	Engagement	2
Pace	3	Pace	3
Total	25	Total	18
Grade 2		Grade 2	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>
Materials	3	Materials	2
Classroom management	2	Classroom management	1
Groupings	2	Groupings	1
Lesson management	3	Lesson management	3
Text selection	2	Text selection	1
Introduction	2	Introduction	2
Teaching decisions	2	Teaching decisions	1
Children's talk	3	Children's talk	2
Engagement	2	Engagement	2
Pace	3	Pace	2
Total	24	Total	17
Total Grade 1 and 2	49	Total Grade 1 and 2	38

Addendum 9 Data School B

Teacher's score		Researcher's score	
Grade 1		Grade 1	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>
Materials	1	Materials	1
Classroom management	2	Classroom management	2
Groupings	4	Groupings	1
Lesson management	2	Lesson management	1
Text selection	4	Text selection	1
Introduction	3	Introduction	1
Teaching decisions	3	Teaching decisions	1
Children's talk	4	Children's talk	1
Engagement	3	Engagement	2
Pace	3	Pace	1
Total	29	Total	12
Grade 2		Grade 2	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>
Materials	1	Materials	1
Classroom management	2	Classroom management	2
Groupings	1	Groupings	1
Lesson management	4	Lesson management	1
Text selection	4	Text selection	1
Introduction	3	Introduction	2
Teaching decisions	4	Teaching decisions	1
Children's talk	3	Children's talk	1
Engagement	3	Engagement	2
Pace	3	Pace	1
Total	28	Total	13
Total Grade 1 and 2	57	Total Grade 1 and 2	25

Addendum 10 Data School C

Teacher's score		Researcher's score	
Grade 1		Grade 1	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>
Materials	3	Materials	1
Classroom management	3	Classroom management	3
Groupings	3	Groupings	1
Lesson management	4	Lesson management	1
Text selection	4	Text selection	1
Introduction	4	Introduction	1
Teaching decisions	3	Teaching decisions	1
Children's talk	4	Children's talk	1
Engagement	4	Engagement	2
Pace	3	Pace	1
Total	35	Total	13
Grade 2		Grade 2	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>
Materials	4	Materials	1
Classroom management	4	Classroom management	2
Groupings	4	Groupings	1
Lesson management	4	Lesson management	1
Text selection	4	Text selection	1
Introduction	4	Introduction	2
Teaching decisions	4	Teaching decisions	1
Children's talk	4	Children's talk	1
Engagement	3	Engagement	2
Pace	3	Pace	1
Total	38	Total	13
Total Grade 1 and 2	73	Total Grade 1 and 2	26