ASSESSING LEARNERS' READING SKILLS: A DEVELOPMENT OF AN IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR JUNIOR PRIMARY TEACHERS

MARK GORDON BUNDING

DISSERTATION PRESENTED FOR THE

DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

(EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY)

AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH
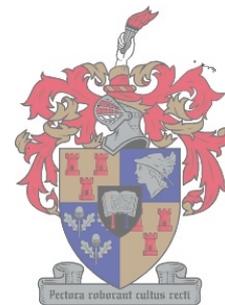
PROMOTOR: PROF P. ENGELBRECHT

SEPTEMBER 1999

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university in order to obtain a degree.

SUMMARY

Most learners in South Africa are only taught knowledge-based skills, and reading skills are assessed according to a prescribed curriculum. The emphasis seems to be on what the learner cannot do, instead of what the learner can do. South African educational system is currently in a transitional phase, where teachers are required to assess learners on their critical outcomes. This transitional phase demands that teachers make a mindshift from the old traditional, deductive teaching approaches to literacy to the more inductive, cognitive, social and sociopolitical constructions of literacy. Against this background, the study investigated first of all the beliefs of teachers concerning their teaching reading approaches and reading assessment. This information was then used as a point of departure in the development of a framework for an in-service training programme in order to provide teachers with the skills and confidence that will enable them not only to identify and assess reading problems in the Junior Primary phase, but also to teach reading effectively.

To achieve the objectives, a qualitative research approach was used. Data collection methods included a literature review, a semi-structured questionnaire and three in-depth interviews with Junior Primary teachers at six primary schools (ex-HOR and ex-model C) in the Bellville area, near Cape Town. Although the results of the semi-structured questionnaires provide a reasonably clear picture of the beliefs of teachers pertaining to learners reading skills, more information was gathered by

means of the in-depth interviews. From the analysis of data, it became apparent that there is a need for further training and support regarding the implementation of Outcomes Based Education; teachers are currently focusing on reductionistic teaching approaches and are not knowledgeable about how to assess and rectify reading problems. In spite of these problems, most teachers expressed a willingness to learn new teaching reading approaches.

The framework for an in-service training programme focused, as a result of the literature review and qualitative data analysis of the questionnaire and in-depth interviews, on a holistic teaching and assessment approach to reading within an ecosystemic framework. The active involvement of teachers and learners in the teaching and assessment of reading was stressed.

OPSOMMING

Die meeste leerders in Suid Afrika word slegs volgens kennisgebaseerde vaardighede onderrig, terwyl hul leesvaardighede volgens 'n voorgeskrewe kurrikulum geëvalueer word. Die klem blyk geplaas te word op wat die leerder nie instaat is om te vermag nie, in plaas van wat die leerder instaat is om te vermag. Suid Afrika se onderrigstelsel is tans in 'n oorgangsfase, waar daar van onderwysers verwag word om leerders volgens hul kritiese uitkomste te evalueer. Hierdie oorgangsfase vereis dat onderwysers 'n denkpatroon verandering moet ondergaan vanaf die ou tradisionele, deduktiewe onderrigbenaderings ten opsigte van geletterdheid na 'n meer induktiewe, kognitiewe, sosiale en sosiopolitiese verwysingsraamwerk met betrekking tot geletterdheid. Teen hierdie agtergrond, poog hierdie navorsing eerstens om 'n ondersoek in te stel na die oortuigings van onderwysers rakende hul leesonderrig- en leesevalueringbenaderings. Hierdie inligting word dan benut as vertrekpunt vir die ontwikkeling van 'n raamwerk vir 'n indiensopleidingsprogram om aan onderwysers die nodige vaardighede en selfvertroue te bied, wat hulle instaat sal stel om nie net leesprobleme te identifiseer en te evalueer in die Junior Primêre fase nie, maar om lees meer effektief te onderrig.

Kwalitatiewe navorsing is gebruik om hierdie doelwitte te bereik. Data insamelingsmetodes het 'n semi-gestruktueerde vraelys en drie in-diepte onderhoude met Junior Primêre onderwysers van ses skole (ex-RVV en ex-model C) in die Bellville area naby Kaapstad, ingesluit. Alhoewel die resultate van die semi-gestruktueerde

vraelys redelike inligting oor die oortuigings van onderwysers oor leerders se leesvaardighede na vore gebring het, is daar meer inligting deur middel van die in-diepte onderhoude ingesamel. Inligting verkry vanuit die data analise het aangedui dat onderwysers 'n behoefte het aan verdere opleiding en ondersteuning ten opsigte van Uitkoms Gebaseerde Onderig; onderwysers gebruik tans reduksionistiese onderrigbenaderings en hulle beskik ook nie oor die nodige kennis en vaardighede om leesprobleme te identifiseer en korrigeer nie. Ten spyte van hierdie probleme, het baie onderwysers hulle bereidwilligheid verklaar om nuwe onderrigbenaderings aan te leer.

Die raamwerk vir 'n indiensopleidinsprogram het op grond van die literatuur studie en kwalitatiewe data analise van die vraelys en in-diepte onderhoude gevolglik gefokus op 'n holistiese onderrig en evalueringsbenadering ten opsigte van lees binne 'n ekosistemiese raamwerk. Die aktiewe betrokkenheid van die onderwysers en leerders in die onderrig en evaluering van lees is beklemtoon.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere acknowledgement and appreciation to the following people:

- **Prof Petra Engelbrecht. Thank you for your continual encouragement and positive attitude.**

- **Briggett, Luke and Lee. Thank you for your love and support.**

- **My parents. You have worked very hard over the years. Thank you for that example.**

- **My colleagues at Bellville School Clinic.**

- **The educators who participated in this research. Your contributions are appreciated.**

- **The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this thesis and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.**

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

CHAPTER TWO

TEACHING READING

2.5 CONCLUSION

x

CHAPTER THREE

ASSESSING READING

CHAPTER FOUR

TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING READING: PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

CHAPTER FIVE

DEVELOPMENT OF A FRAMEWORK FOR AN IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR JUNIOR PRIMARY TEACHERS

CHAPTER SIX

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

For years the teaching of reading and assessment of reading skills have remained one of the most controversial topics in education. Intense debates between researchers who support different reading approaches, have existed for more than a century. Consequently, teachers still have to choose from a plenitude of approaches, techniques and materials in designing reading instruction and assessment programmes.

It has been reported that about 10 to 15 percent of the general school population in most countries experience difficulty in reading and that reading experiences within classrooms strongly influence school performance (Mercer & Mercer, 1998:282). In South Africa, numerous factors like cultural and racial intolerance, socio-economic disadvantage, big classes and rationalisation of teachers, contribute to learners experiencing reading problems. Teachers in South Africa , given its history of separate development and the concommittant unequal resource distribution, are currently provided with a reading curriculum that is not completely applicable to many learners (National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training, National Committee for Education Support Services, NCSNET/NCESS, 1998:12-15). Teachers seem to focus their attention on what are seen as deficits or weaknesses in the learner and see the cause of the deficiency as largely medically related and thus curable.

1

The existence of diverse learning needs, and therefore the need for diverse teaching strategies, have been minimally acknowledged and addressed in South Africa. Teachers have traditionally placed an emphasis on the acquisition of factual knowledge, to be reproduced on paper. The rigidity of the syllabus and time-table has been a further limiting factor in terms of addressing diverse needs, also the differing needs of learners to acquire an acceptable standard of reading proficiency (NCSNET/NCESS, 1998:16-17).

1.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO READING

The most appropriate framework within which to understand reading, is within the context of theoretical developments since the 1950's regarding learning disabilities in general. This will enable the researcher to provide perspectives for scrutinising and interpreting the various branches of the reading field. The purpose of theory is also to bring form, coherence, and meaning to reading in the real world (Lerner, 1993:167).

1.2.1 A perspective of reading within the medical theory

The medical theory of reading originated in the 1950's when its devotees believed reading problems were directly or indirectly a result of damage to the brain. This brain damage is caused through either a severe brain disease while in the uterus or through an acquired brain damage in early childhood (Torgesen, 1986:401).

According to this perspective, reading problems are caused by a dysfunction within the

central nervous system. This assumption was also emphasised when Strauss and Lehtinen discovered that reading problems could be caused by a cortical and subcortical imbalance. They also believed that it could be due to a lesion of the left occipital lobe, which causes functional blindness in the right visual field, or because of a temporal lobe dysfunction (Kriegler, 1988:23).

The medical approach to reading postulates that learners without any neurological dysfunction or brain damage will be able to read. Reading ability is ensured since the learner is neurologically intact (Botha, 1991:211). Further, being able to read, according to the medical theory, is genetically predisposed and assumed as a given. Reading is seen as an inherent genetic ability that manifests itself automatically with physiological maturity. The underlying philosophical orientation of the medical theory about the nature of reading, is that learners are not ready to read before they have attained a certain mental age, as well as a certain level of physiological maturation.

Reading readiness is perceived as something that can be rationalised, measured by tests and caused by simply waiting for nature to take its course. Learners must therefore be given time to mature and to develop. The followers of the medical perspective believe that reading should be taught through direct instruction in an extremely structured, clutter-free environment (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997:40). In addition, Poplin (1988:391) is of the opinion that the learner should be taught basic perceptual skills.

1.2.1.1 Definition of reading

In the late 1940's and early 1950's reading was narrowly defined as simply the production of spoken words or linguistic forms that coincided with the recognition of printed symbols. It is also the perception of and understanding of the meaning of the symbols. In other words, reading is first a process of recognising and decoding the smallest part of the printed word. Secondly, reading can occur by understanding the parts to comprehend the whole (Donald et al., 1997:40). It was accepted that letter and word recognition skills should be taught thoroughly before any attention could be given to comprehension.

1.2.2 Reading within developmental theory

The medical perspective of reading became unpopular in the 1960's because teachers had difficulty in embracing the view that reading and other learning problems were only due to neurological problems (Poplin, 1988: 390). The medical perspective of reading, it was felt, failed to produce evidence through neurological examinations that "neurologically impaired" learners differed significantly from learners without reading or other learning problems (Chia, 1992:12-17; Hoover & Gough, 1990:127-160).

A major critique against the medical perspective's premise is that it postulates that the "fault" must lie within the learner (Burden, 1996:99). The developmental theory differs from the medical perspective, in that it leans towards the nurture side of the nature-nurture continuum. It postulates that the learner's readiness can be influenced through

experience and stimulation (McGill-Franzen, 1993:6).

The developmental theory propagates that literacy development should be studied from the learner's perspective. The learner's experience of the world around him, be it developmentally, socially, emotionally, cognitively, physiologically, has to be considered. The basic assumption of this theory is that progression of abilities normally occur under appropriate conditions. The developmental theory's philosophical orientation, is empirical-analytical in nature. The assumption is that appropriate pre-reading experiences can hasten a learner's readiness to read, while a lack of these experiences may inhibit readiness (Barron, 1996:41-46). Each individual has a pre-set rate of development. Discrepancies in abilities do not necessarily show central nervous system dysfunction or brain damage, but rather that maturation can occur at different rates (Silver, 1987:498). A distinction should be made between neurodevelopmental dysfunction and general developmental delay. When learners are exposed to substantial social interactive stimulation, but fail to read or learn, general developmental delay may be present. Neurodevelopmental dysfunction, on the other hand, is evident when early illness or developmental anomalies occurs within the learner (Jansen, 1996: 151). The developmental model in the 1960's proposed to use the term reading disabled learner instead of referring to a brain damaged learner (McNutt, 1986:12-16).

The nature of reading, according to the developmental perspective, points to a learning

process (Nicolson & Fawcett, 1990:161). The followers of this theory believe that the curriculum must be skills-based so that learners can be prepared for formalised reading instruction. The assumption is that through the skills-based hierarchical structure, the learner will learn decoding first before he can obtain comprehension skills. Reading is learned best through direct, systematic instruction. Reading readiness has been redefined from the "sit back and wait" philosophy that undergirded the maturation mindset to the more active developmental position of **"teach learners what they need to know to begin reading instruction"** (Shannon, 1987:307-326).

1.2.2.1 Definition of reading

The definition of reading, according to the developmental theory, emphasises that the school must design learning experiences to enhance the establishment of natural developmental growth and not make unnecessary cognitive demands on the learner. Reading, in the developmental context, is the recognition of most of the words, the extraction of ideas from printed matter and the stimulative thinking and feeling about ideas insinuated by the printed matter. Reading is thus not just dependent on the maturational readiness of the learner, but also dependent on the nurturing and stimulation of the parents and the teacher (Crawford, 1995:71-84; Lerner, 1993:174;).

1.2.3 A perspective of reading within the behavioural approach

The behavioural perspective of reading corresponds with the importance and relevance of prerequisites of the developmental theory. It, however, focused in the 1970's on the curriculum or tasks to be taught and the analysis of behaviours needed to learn those tasks (Lerner, 1993:174).

The behavioural perspectives of reading are traced back to the works of Thorndike and Skinner (Mercer, 1983:197). Although the behavioural perspective is closely aligned with both the medical and the developmental perspective, it differs in that it is based on the belief that

> **"...knowledge is built upon elements, pieces, or components of our experiences..." and "...that it consists of learned   relations among them..."** (Adams, 1990:196).

The behavioural perspective can thus be considered as a connectionist theory (Crawford, 1995:77). This perspective arises from the idea that the application of a stimulus, which elicits response, can cause conditioning with repetition and positive reinforcement. The assumption is that everything the learner needs to learn to read has to come out of his/her environment within which learning occurs. Direct environmental stimulation is paramount (Lerner, 1993:175). The learner can imitate an independent reader and the correct responses can become a conditioned response by reinforcement. Although this theory values print-rich environments, it does not believe

7

that immersion in literacy events is sufficient for many learners (Crawford, 1995:73-78).

Bloom (1985:564) believes that what any person in the world can learn, almost all persons can learn if provided with appropriate prior and current conditions of learning. Bloom also postulates that under favourable learning conditions, such as direct instruction, learners' level of learning tend to develop over a series of tasks. A major goal of the behavioural perspective in the 1970's was the effective mainstreaming of learners with learning problems in the normal classroom. The behavioural perspective was very popular in the United States of America by 1975 when legislation (Public Law 94-142) was inaugurated. The implication of this law meant that learners with special education needs were not discriminated against, but had the right to equal education where their potential could optimally be developed.

The nature of reading, according to the behavioural perspective, can be contemplated as responses made to graphic stimuli. These responses, including the vocal responses made at the sight of the word, the eye movements and physical adjustments during reading, will empower the learner to read, if these responses are rewarded (Byrne, Fielding-Barnsley, 1993:104-111; O'Connor, Notari-Syverson & Vadasy, 1996:117-130). Adams (1990:29) emphasises the importance of automaticity in letter and word recognition and outlines the strengths of including direct instruction. The behavioural perspective propagate that reading behaviour can be improved through the manipulation of stimulus and reinforcement factors in the environment (Lerner,

1993:315). The infant begins with no knowledge of reading, but gradually acquires reading skills, largely through the reinforced imitation of models.

1.2.3.1 Definition of reading

Reading, according to the behaviour perspective, can be defined as successful when stimuli and events in the environment of the learner can be organised so that the learner receives reinforcement contingent upon appropriate behaviour. Priority is placed on learning the alphabetic print code as a means to fluent reading and to increase comprehension (Adams, 1990:2-29).

1.2.4 Reading within the cognitive approach

The cognitive perspective of reading, which had its origins in the 1980's, is regarded as an extension and an improvement of the developmental and behavioural perspective (Lerner, 1993:178). The cognitive approach in congruence with the developmental perspective, is also developmental in nature (Sulzby, 1992:290-297). The behavioural perspective only emphasises the observable and the controllable behaviour of the learner. It propagates that the learner's feelings, thoughts, decisions and problem-solving skills cannot be measured empirically (Engelbrecht, 1990:13).

According to the cognitive perspective, the learner reads about and gives meaning to his/her world through his/her own experiences. Meaning is found through the learner's thinking, reasoning, analysing, and problem-solving with the use of print, in other words

9

information-processing (Burden, 1996:106). The learner needs to select important information (input), refine it in an effective and practical method (elaboration), and depict a solution that is appropriate to the demands of the situation (output). Information-processing, according to Rossouw (1991:27), refers to a series of consecutive stages where each stage fulfills a specific function, for example, when decoding routines are fully automated, learners can begin to read for information and comprehension. Information is received through the sensory receptors, where it is conveyed through a series of mechanisms and memory functions.

Reading occurs when new knowledge is assimilated with existing knowledge and existing ideas are altered (accommodation) to form new ideas (Reid & Hresko, 1981:50). The cognitive perspective theorists believe that the reader, rather than just responding to a stimulus, starts to decode the alphabet sequentially from left to right which depends upon consistent mappings between letters and sounds. The environment, according to the cognitive perspective, influences the learner's acquisition of language, but more importance is placed on what happens between the stimulus and the response. The focus in the learning process thus shifts from the prominence of the environment to the significance of the learner himself (Mercer, 1983:219). Therefore, one most important factor in reading is what the learners already know. They must learn to use the experiences, knowledge and skills they already possess.

The cognitive perspective also emphasises the importance of self-regulation in reading.

To take responsibility for their reading, the learner must want to be, and know how to be, a more self-regulated learner (Monteith, 1996:207). Self-regulation refers to the ability the learner develops to take control of and to monitor the reading activity. The learner is neither driven by inner forces, nor controlled by external stimuli. This allows the learner to be able to paraphrase as they read, asking themselves questions, and rereading or reading ahead when they are unsure of what they have read. The cognitive approach takes as its premise that the learning event can only be directed positively if the learner both knows and can evaluate his/her own inherent capabilities and limitations (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1989:9-30).

The nature of reading, according to the cognitive perspective, can be seen as the act of responding with appropriate meaning, especially with reasoning, to printed word symbols. Literacy learning is not viewed as the acquisition of a series of reading skills, but rather as a dynamic, on-going process that begins long before children begin formalised schooling (Strickland & Morrow, 1991:1-10). The reasoning side of reading becomes increasingly important as recognition is mastered.

1.2.4.1 Definition of reading

Reading, according to the cognitive perspective, can be viewed as an active means of information processing. The learner is regarded as an active participator to and receptor of the influences of the environment (Brown, Bransford, Ferrara & Campione, 1983:79). Reading is thus not a simple mechanical skill, but a thoughtful self-regulating

11

process where all types of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning and problem-solving skills are involved.

1.2.5 A holistic approach towards reading within an ecosystemic framework

The ecosystemic perspective propagates that cause and effect are not observed in an one-directional way, but rather, where thinking and actions of the learner are seen as activating and modifying one another in cyclical patterns (Donald et al., 1997:37). The individual learner is seen as part of a family system, an educational system and a community system. These systems are linked within a social context in a dynamic, interdependent and interacting relationship (Donald et al., 1997:34).

The ecosystemic perspective propagates the following:

- Understanding the development of learners in more holistic and interactive terms;

- Understanding classrooms and schools by reviewing these as systems within the social context;

- Understanding how the origins, maintenance, and solutions to social problems and special needs cannot be separated from the broader context and systems within it (Donald, et.al; 1997:39).

The ecosystemic perspective represents a school of thought of the 1990's (Crawford, 1995:78-79). A cognitive and the ecosystemic approach to reading are similar in that both recognise literacy learning as an on-going process that begins in home long

before the onset of formalised schooling within the framework of a print-rich environment. The ecosystemic perspective to reading diverges from the cognitive perspective in that it is based in socio-psycholinguistics and cultural anthroplogy (Crawford, 1995:78-80). Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky did not believe that development precedes all learning but that **"...learning and development... are interconnected from the first days of a child's life"** (Arnold, 1985:29).

Vygotsky emphasised the importance of the active involvement of the learner within the social context. He was concerned with how reading happens from "the outside in" (Donald et al., 1997:48). Language is viewed as leading development in contrast to the Piagetian notion that development leads language. Because of this, the ecosystemic perspective rejects the idea of universal developmental stages (Barron, 1996:41-43).

Reading, according to the ecosystemic perspective, arises from the learner's participation in social activities in which there are real reasons to use written language (Englert & Palincsar, 1991:226). Reading is seen as a holistic activity and cannot be regarded as simply a cognitive skill to be learned. Learners are taught to learn best when they are experiencing the total venture of the activity in which they are involved (Crawford, 1995: 82; Palincsar & Perry, 1995:333).

The holistic approach does not break down the activities of reading into components, but rather encourages learners to experience it as a holistic, meaningful activity.

Learners are stimulated by their teacher to write about their own experiences within their social contexts and then encouraged to read their own writings (Rich, 1985:717-724). This approach to reading also inspires learners to bring their prior experiences and knowledge to the task of reading, hoping that the learners will make sense of what they read.

Learning how to read, within the ecosystemic perspective, is a complex process and in order for it to be effective, the learner is expected to learn to read as he learns to talk. Before a learner can begin to read, he must be exposed to oral language gradually, naturally, with a minimum of direct instruction (Weaver, 1991:28-44). Literacy is based on the intent to make sense of social events, because language and literacy are culturally specific. Although oral language can be considered as a facilitator to literacy learning, it is reciprocal, because reading experiences influence oral language (Strickland & Morrow, 1991:4).

Reading acquisition, derived from a combination of a "top-down" and a "bottom-up" view of reading, assumes that both psycholinguistic (top-down) and phonological processes (bottom-up) are carried out simultaneously and compliment each other (Andrews, 1989:15-20).

The recognition and comprehension of written symbols in reading, however, are not just influenced by language abilities, but also by perceptual skills, decoding skills, the

learner's experience, and the reasoning ability of the reader. The learner must be holistically and actively involved with the environment that he/she happens to find himself/herself in (Weaver, 1991:28-44). The ecosystemic perspective postulates that such an experience will allow the learner to anticipate meaning based on what he reads.

1.2.5.1 Definition of reading

Weaver (1988:38) is of the opinion that the reader-text transaction occurs within a social and situational context. There are no set of universal, invariant developmental stages. Opportunities for social interaction allow learners to engage in dialogues that form the basis for thinking, and eventually reading (Goodman, 1989:208). Meaning is not derived from reading the text, but rather arises during the transaction between the reader and the text. Reading is thus regarded as a synthesis of experiencing, recognising and comprehending, in which the absence of either make true reading impossible (Weaver, 1988:153).

1.2.6 A critical literacy perspective

The critical literacy perspective is in congruence with the ecosystemic perspective in that it is assumed that language and literacy development happen within a social context. In addition, the congruency between the critical literacy and ecosystemic perspective is further underscored in that literacy is perceived as specific to different cultures and communities. Learners are viewed as active sense makers who construct

meaning based on their own social contexts (Shannon, 1993:9-13).

The critical perspective however diverges from the ecosystemic perspective in that it also acknowledges the historical and socio-political relationships embedded in them. It postulates that the power bases within these socio-political contexts are not equal ones (Shannon, 1993:9-13). The premise is that the dominant culture and the needs of the privileged are accepted more readily. Followers of this perspective believe that learners from different cultural backgrounds, also bring different primary, home-based dialogues to school with them. These debates do not just include language, but also their behaviours, values and beliefs of their cultures (Lankshear, 1994:59-66).

The problem, according to the critical literacy perspective, arises when these learners come to school and are confronted with different values and languages from the dominant, privileged society. Paulo Freire, a critical theorist, recognises the differences of cultures, but is sceptical and critical when a large gap exists between these cultures. He believes that since a construction of reality is contained within language, the masses have a construction of reality imposed upon them, which is false to their own heritage. Freire also believes that the objectified culture is false and hostile to the indigenous learner and it gives them an idea of a false self-identity (Jarvis, 1995:84).

Lankshear (1994:59-66) thinks the dominant culture will help to establish and maintain the hierarchical power relationships in schools, communities and in larger society.

Learners experiencing a large gap between their culture and that of the dominant culture will be marginalised by them. It is thus imperative for teachers to know that literacy learning becomes more than just reading and writing. It also goes beyond constructing meaning solely from a printed text. Followers of the critical literacy perspective believe early literacy learning and the ways in which it is facilitated in school systems become a powerful force in identity formation (Jarvis, 1995:83-85). For learners to be able to read critically with meaning, and to learn to think critically, the teachers will be required to foster multicultural sensitivity, address issues of social injustice, and promote non-violent conflict resolution (Jarvis, 1995:85).

From a critical literacy perspective, the concern is not the nature of the correct theory, knowledge, morality or teaching approach, but rather how various theories and teaching approaches fashion what counts in literacy practices and how these practices become institutionalised and work to advantage some groups and disadvantage others. Critical literacy, in contrast to other perspectives to reading, seeks to promote ways in which literacy is involved in the distribution of power and capital (Luke, O'Brien & Comber, 1994:140).

The critical literacy perspective aspires to shift the emphasis from differences in individual performances, such as the inability to read, to a concern for the cultural, social, historical and therefore political contexts of literacy learning. It is because of this assumption that Gee (1987:30) postulates that critical literacy needs to challenge

technocratic approaches to literacy which construct reading purely as cognitive processes and consequently locate literacy problems within the learner, rather than in schools and other social institutions that sustain social elitism and hierarchies. Paulo Freire and other advocates of the critical literacy perspective, believe that there is no such thing as a neutral text, because no text is unbiased. All texts are political (Jarvis, 1995:85; West, 1992:4).

A basic tenet pertaining to reading, according to the critical literacy advocates, is that meaning is dependent on context (West, 1992:4-5), and not based on a fixed body of skills (Lankshear, 1994:59-72). The critical literacy perspective believes that the teacher in the teacher-learner and learner-teacher dialogue must allow the learner to reflect upon their own experiences. In addition, the teacher must allow the learner to harmonise their reflections and act upon their socio-cultural milieu to humanise and transform it (Jarvis, 1995:86). It is the purpose of critical theory advocates to encourage pleasure in reading and allow learner's not only to attach value to the text, but to engage with the text (Crawford, 1995:82-83).

1.2.6.1 Definition of reading

The definition of reading according to the critical literacy perspective as underscored by Luke (1993:4), can be summarised as follows:

> **"Literacy is a dynamic, evolving social and historical construction. It is not a fixed body of skills... literacy refers to social practices that are put to**

work in institutions such as the family and community, school and workplace.... It is shaped and used in particular sites and events - whether the classroom lesson or bedtime story, the social encounter or political meeting, the retail sales transaction or legal briefing".

Giroux (1993:367) defines critical literacy not as something to teach as a series of subskills, but rather as an **"emerging act of consciousness and resistance".**

1.2.7 Conclusion

Prior to the 1980's teachers world-wide assessed learners' reading skills according to the skills-based approach. These traditional medical, developmental and behavioural approaches to reading were increasingly critised because of their reductionist orientation (Peverly & Kitzen, 1998: 29-36; Poplin, 1988:389; Smith-Burke, Deegan & Jagger, 1991:58).

The assumption was that reading could be broken down into its component parts such as phonemes, graphemes and words. These units were taught in a stepwise manner, beginning with the most simplistic, and working towards more complex combinations until the entire language system was covered. The cornerstone for this reading instruction approach had its roots in the maturationalist (nature), developmental (nurture), behaviouristic (reinforcement and automatisation) and cognitive (emergent) philosophies (Barron, 1996:41-43; Strickland & Morrow, 1991:2-3). The philosophy of

19

modernism, to which the skills-based approaches belong, advocated that there was a fixed set of foundational criteria against which the truth of all theoretical claims were measured (Kvale, 1992:32).

In the 1980's within the post-modernist movement, there was a move away from a positivist and traditional scientific approach to the assessment of reading where the teaching of reading is viewed in a meaningful, whole manner. The isolated parts of the language system were increasingly viewed as meaningless (Smith-Burke, et al., 1991:59). Watson (1989:133), contemplated the need of teachers,

"for a new and broader perspective on language and literacy learning".

Language, and reading specifically, is perceived as an interactive dynamic process. In other words, understanding is seen as dynamic, fluid, socially and culturally located and it acquires only temporary stability in a specific context (Crawford, 1995:71-83). The activity of reading can therefore not be broken down into component parts, but the learner should rather be encouraged to experience the holistic, meaningful activity of reading (Weaver, 1988:29).

The followers of post-modernism believe that literacy should not be taught to learners in isolation, but should occur within cognitive, ecological and social contexts. Learners are viewed as active sense makers who construct meaning based on their own social contexts (Foorman, 1995:387-388). Post-modernism gives rise to diverse assessment

techniques and interpretations of the current culture (Kvale, 1992:32). It does not support a prescribed and systematic set of criteria, but rather rejects or deconstructs modern knowledge (Crawford,1995:83; Poplin,1988:389-391). Postmodernism, however, cannot be considered as independent of modernism, because both are developmental in nature. Both assume that, although learners emerge into literacy, they also pass through certain stages (Crawford, 1995:84).

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

The researcher is of the opinion that the reductionistic approaches within teaching reading could directly or indirectly contribute to reading problems instead of reducing it. In addition, it is also the researcher's assumption that most learners in South Africa are only taught knowledge-based skills, and reading skills are assessed according to a prescribed curriculum. The emphasis seems to be on what the learner cannot do, instead of what the learner can do. Learners who attended schools of the House of Representatives (HOR) and Department of Education and Training (DET) in the apartheid dispensation, have a disadvantage when they attend ex-model C (House of Assembly) and ex-HOR schools, because their social and historical life-experiences are not taken into consideration by various teachers. The implication is that these learners are perceived as "backward", lazy or are labelled as learners with learning problems.

South Africa's educational system is currently in a transitional phase, where teachers are required to assess learners on their critical outcomes as formulated in the

21

NCSNET/NCESS report (1998:49). This transitional phase demands that teachers make a mindshift from the old traditional, deductive teaching approaches to the more inductive, cognitive, social and sociopolitical constructions of literacy. The former is predominantly knowledge and skills-based, while the latter is predominantly content and response-based. Outcomes-based responses also encourage comprehension, while the former advocates decoding and encoding of letters (Heshusius, 1991:315-325; Peverly & Kitzen, 1998:29-35).

Many studies suggest that a complexity of factors contribute to reading problems (Adams, 1990:2-28; Law & Kratochwill, 1993:119-148). Regarding the role of the classroom teacher, research indicates that teachers lack sufficient training in reading instruction techniques as well as in the assessment of reading problems. Another factor which may complicate the process is that most teachers may have a philosophical orientation towards learning to read that precludes the use of innovative interventions (Peverly & Kitzen, 1998:29-42).

Taking the above into account, it is necesary to determine first of all Junior Primary teachers' beliefs about teaching reading and reading assessment and its influence on the specific teaching reading and assessment model currently implemented in schools. A framework for the development of an in-service training programme for the assessment of learners' skills in reading that will promote effective and efficient instruction will subsequently be discussed.

1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

In view of the above-mentioned research question, the first aim of this study is to attempt to determine the beliefs of teachers concerning their teaching reading approaches and reading assessment. The second aim is to design a framework based on the preceding chapter for the development of a core-curriculum for an in-service training programme in order to provide teachers with the skills and confidence that would enable them not only to identify and assess reading problems in the Junior Primary phase but to teach reading effectively.

1.5 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF RELEVANT TERMS

1.5.1 Assessment

Considerable confusion exists in the minds of educators and researchers as to the conceptual distinctions between such terms as assessment, evaluation, testing and measurement. Many teachers and researchers fail to understand that one can assess without measuring, test without appropriately assessing, and assess test or measure without evaluating.

Key terms related to the study are clarified to preclude confusion.

1.5.1.1 Measurement

Measurement refers to assigning numbers to things and to relations between things.

It is dominated by relations of imposition in which it is required of the learner to learn in a prescribed way, without regard to their own views. Measurement is equated with "to observe," "to know," and "to document effectiveness" in the form of counting correct responses to controlled tasks. Measurement-driven conceptions of assessment provide answers before asking questions (Heshusius, 1991:318).

1.5.1.2 Testing

Testing refers to normative assessment where the goal is to compare the performance of a learner with the average performance of similar learners in a normative sample. Standardised tests have the purpose to assess performance at some specific moment, with no attempt to change that performance (Haywood, Brown & Wingenfeld, 1990:411).

1.5.1.3 Evaluation

The purpose of evaluation is to ascertain whether any particular educational intervention (testing, measurement, assessment) has achieved its aims. This is sometimes referred to as summative assessment (Burden, 1996:100).

1.5.1.4 Assessment

Assessment should be understood as a continuous, dynamic process. Continuous or dynamic assessment is usually contrasted with normative, standardised or static assessment (Haywood et al., 1990:411). Assessment, in

this context, can be considered as any set of measurement procedures using direct observation and recording of a learner's performance in a local curriculum as a basis for gathering information to make instructional decisions (Shapiro, 1990:331-349; Shinn, Rosenfield & Knutson, 1989:299-316).

1.5.2 Learners

The term "learners" refer to all learners, ranging from early childhood education through to adult education. A learner can be defined as somebody who is in need of teaching (NCSNET/NCESS, 1998:72).

1.5.3 Skills

"Skills" refers to abilities to cope and transcend enabling a learner to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. In reading," skills" can be viewed as those abilities needed by every learner in the classroom to cope with the demands of education. "Skills" must be presented in the best possible way to develop the learner optimally according to his or her potential (NCSNET/NCESS, 1998:75-76).

1.5.4 Reading

The complexity of the concept "reading" can be understood in the light of the numerous problems that exist when attempting to define it. Agreement on what "reading" is seems to be complicated by the fact that different meanings are attributed to the term by various teachers and professionals from different theoretical perspectives as discussed

in 1.2. Kriegler (1988:133) indicated that "reading" is a holistic activity, where the various components for example the learner's emotions, cognitions and language development are interrelated.

According to Adams (1990:3-6), reading means that the learner can decode letters and words fluently. Furthermore, reading occurs when the learner brings meaning, based on his or her sociopolitical context, to the text. Reading also occurs when the learner can derive meaning from the printed text.

According to the holistic approach based on an ecosystemic theoretical point of departure favoured by the present researcher, reading for the purpose of this research, is an active holistic process in which learners/readers shift between sources of information (what they know and what the texts says), elaborate meaning and strategies, check their interpretation (revising when appropriate) and use their social context to focus their response.

It is of the utmost importance that reading should not be regarded as a special kind of activity, but rather as an activity involving aspects of the reader's thoughts and behaviour. Reading thus cannot be understood and achieved without consideration of the nature of language and of the various operating characteristics of the reader's brain (Smith, 1988:3). Furthermore, Meadows (1993:10) is of the opinion that the reading process consists of various activities that occurs on the perceptual,

26

linguistic and cognitive levels. The manner in which the various activities are utilised on the different levels will depend on what the reading task demands of the learner.

1.5.5 In-service training programme

An in-service training programme is designed for qualified and experienced teachers. Its purpose is not to train teachers the basics of teaching, but rather to add to their existing knowledge gained through experience.

The framework for the development of an in-service training programme in this study, will entail a new approach for Junior Primary teachers to identify and assess reading by learners. It may assist teachers to combine the reductionistic teaching approaches with the ecosystemic and critical literacy approaches. The combination of these teaching approaches will be placed within the sociopolitical contexts of the learners.

1.5.6 Junior primary teacher

The Junior Primary teacher educates learners in the foundation phase, which is from grade "R" to grade three. The Junior Primary teacher normally specialises in teaching for the Junior Primary phase, and seldom teaches in the Senior Primary phase.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

Thomas (1984:15) is of the opinion that "**...making interventions without a design**

27

methodology is like making bridges without mechanical engineering or creating computers without electrical engineering".

1.6.1 Introduction

Merriam (1991:6) compares a research design to a plan for assembling, organising and integrating data in a specific end product. The selection of a particular design is determined by the problem, the questions it raises and by the type of end product desired. For the purposes of this study, the researcher concluded that a qualitative approach would best meet the aims of gaining greater understanding of and insight into Junior Primary Teachers' beliefs about teaching and assessing reading. Understanding and insight into their beliefs about reading will enable the researcher to develop a framework for an in-service training programme.

Quantitative research is worthwhile when comparing programmes with each other and deciding which would be more beneficial. A qualitative approach is valuable as the findings are rich in description on how inhabitants of a specific context make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals and social structures (Berg, 1995:3). This approach will allow the researcher to study issues or events in depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:1-15). It will allow rich descriptions of the process and the problems in its context to be recorded as they unfold with time (Miles & Huberman, 1994:6). It is therefore contextual or context-bound (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:43).

1.6.1.1 Contextual orientation

This study will be placed in a macro-context, though the research will be focused at the micro level. The physical setting will be in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The educational context will be normal mainstream schools, three ex-model C schools and three ex-HOR schools. Department of Education and Training (DET) schools will not be included due to language constraints. The schools will be state subsidised in the Bellville urban area (a suburb near Cape Town), ranging from middle to lower income, socio-economic residential areas. Most learners at the ex-HOR schools will be predominantly coloured (children of mixed racial origin) and some black African language speaking learners. There are no whites at these schools. The learners at the ex-model C schools will be predominantly white, with some coloured and black learners. The assumption is that the teachers at the ex-model C schools will be white and not totally representative of the school population. The teachers at the ex-HOR schools will be coloured and will be fairly representative of the school population. Within the schools, the research will be conducted in the Junior Primary phase, which is the first three years of formal schooling.

1.6.1.2 Descriptive, interpretative and exploratory

According to Mouton and Marais (1990:52), qualitative research demands familiarity with the everyday life of the setting chosen for study; it values participants' perspectives on their worlds and seeks to discover those perspectives; it views enquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants; it is primarily

29

descriptive; and it relies on people's words as the primary data. Through detailed, rich descriptions, the actions, meanings and feelings of the experiences will be recorded and understood (Hamel, Dufour & Fortin, 1993:30).

Rich descriptions will form the foundation for the research interpretation and understanding of learners reading skills. The emphasis will be on process, on understanding why certain things occur in a particular way, and not only what is occurring. Interpretation will thus lead to the furnishing of meaning of experiences to truly understand them. Denzin (1989:108) views it as follows:

> **"Interpretation precedes understanding... requires that one be able to enter into, or take the point of view of another persons experience".**

The research design will also include elements of exploration and discovery since the study may dispense new insights into learners reading skills. (Mouton & Marais, 1990:45). The research design will allow for categories and themes to emerge from the participants, rather than being identified before the research begins. These emergent themes will provide rich, context-based information leading to the patterns that will help to explain the phenomenon (Creswell, 1994:95).

1.6.2 Methods of data collection

Firstly a **literature review** in Chapters Two and Three will be conducted in order to define the research problem more clearly, and to develop a framework of reference with

30

which to interpret the findings (Merriam, 1988:63). This will be followed by **in-depth interviews** and a **semi-structured questionnaire**.

The eighteen Junior Primary teachers from six schools and the one Junior Primary teacher and learners from one class at a school will be selected purposefully (not all schools at the time of the study were representatively racially integrated) as opposed to random selection. Hamel, Dufour and Fortin (1993:43) believe purposeful sampling is based on the assumption of discovering and understanding to gain maximum insight. When sampling is carefully executed, it will yield maximum knowledge.

Merriam (1991:48) argues that criterion-based sampling could be used. The following criteria will be used:

- Eighteen Junior Primary Teachers, from six different schools (ex-model C and ex-HOR schools) will be selected.

- Three teachers, grade one to three, respectively will be selected for in-depth interviews.

- Junior Primary teachers to be selected will be from a school where the population of South Africa is significantly represented. It will be an ex-model C school.

- Junior Primary teachers to be selected will preferably be a department head and thus able to influence the school system.

- Teachers do not need to have a suitable remedial teaching qualification.

The implication is that the researcher will have limited control over variables within the context of the research.

The research format will be limited in scope to Junior Primary teachers, grades one to three, in six schools in Phase One. Principles for the development of an in-service training programme for the Junior Primary teachers will be presented during Phase Two. The implementation of an in-service training programme within the entire school system will be beyond the scope of this study. After the six schools have been identified, and the eighteen Junior Primary teachers (grades one to three) a selected, semi-structured questionnaire will be presented to them. In addition, after completion of the questionnaire, three teachers (grades one to three respectively) will be selected for in-depth interviews. The themes in the interviews will be recorded, transcribed and analysed.

During Phase Two, the researcher will be the primary instrument for the research. Following the identification of the teachers in the Junior Primary phase, the researcher will introduce the in-service training programme on assessment of learners' skills in reading.

The researcher will be involved in guiding the process using skilful consultations and well-timed interventions to sustain the participant teachers during change. Data collection and data analysis will occur simultaneously as an interactive process (Merriam, 1991:119).

1.6.3 Data analysis

Data in this study will be analysed according to the methods described in Bryman and Burgess (1994) and Miles and Huberman (1994). Data will be reduced by means of coded themes and transcriptions which will be clustered. The data will be displayed by means of matrixes. The aim of the data analysis will be to identify patterns and draw conclusions in order to ultimately understand teachers' beliefs about reading and teaching and assessing reading.

1.7 STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK OF THIS STUDY

Chapter One will introduce the research.

Chapter Two will focus on the different teaching reading approaches and the stages of reading.

Chapter Three will review the assessment of reading problems.

Chapter Four provides the analysis and the interpretation of the questionnaire and in-depth interviews concerning teachers' beliefs about their teaching approaches. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings.

Chapter Five focuses on the framework for the development of an in-service training programme.

Chapter Six provides the final interpretations and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

TEACHING READING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of chapter two in this study was necessary because the development of reading skills and the various teaching reading approaches have its roots in the theoretical perspectives of reading as discussed in chapter one. This chapter will attempt to critically analyse the various approaches to the teaching of reading. In addition, a model of the stages of reading will be presented.

2.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS

Learning to read is fundamental to the social and intellectual development of learners. In the development of reading skills, it is possible to identify various reading stages that may be based on a single reading perspective or on several reading perspectives.

An understanding of the development of reading skills may enable teachers to understand how individual learners develop. This will contribute to the effective teaching of reading skills. It may also enable teachers to select assessment tasks, develop instructional goals and choose instructional approaches. An attempt will be made to describe the various reading stages realising that it is not possible to deny the fact that individual learners will vary in how and when they move between stages. In order to gain the most value out of these reading stages, one also has to understand

34

individual readers in relation to their social context, to their resolution of previous stages, and to the development of their potential in relation to stages to come.

2.2.1 The pre-reading stage

During the pre-reading stage, from birth to about age six, learners gradually accumulate an understanding about reading. In the pre-reading stage learners are exposed to literature by listening to adults reading to them. This phase of reading can also be described as role-play reading (Booysen, 1996:406-412). Learners can display reading-like behaviour by holding the book the right way up or looking at words and pictures. They become familiar with the various letters, learn what print looks like, show progress in phonemic awareness, and develop and process messages (Chall, 1989:522). The reinforcement stimulus-response of the behaviour model seems to play a vital role within this reading stage.

At this stage most learners are not actually reading, but are preparing to do so. In reading, there is an emphasis on pre-literate reading in which the learner begins to use their individual, non-standard language systems to create and share written messages. As the learner is exposed to all these metalinguistic abilities, initial reading or emergent literacy can take place (Goswami, 1990:302). The learner's initial reading development depends on his intellectual, physical and emotional maturity, as well as his/her background of environmental experiences.

2.2.2 The trial-and-error stage

During the first school year the development of the learner's reading ability involves the acquisition of the sight vocabulary and word attacking mechanical skills (Doctor, Dear & Makgamatha, 1996:365). The "look-and-say" approach used by various teachers is very common in the trial-and-error stage. This stage is also known as the initial mastery or linguistic-guessing stage, because certain learners through trial and error, actually begin to read and write. The behavioural perspective principles are imperative in this reading stage.

This reading phase can also be considered as the experimental reading stage. The learner might start to realise that the text has a meaning or can realise that the print contains a constant message. Learners at this stage lack knowledge of the phonological code and thus cannot engage in phonemic segmentation. They rather focus on prominent details of letters, and are unable to analyse the word into separate parts (Goswami & Bryant, 1990:142). In addition, at this stage of a learner's development it is possible to define precisely the vocabulary that should be found in appropriate reading material. It will entail all words within the sight vocabulary pool and phonetically regular words capable of analysis through word attacking skills.

Gough and Juel (1991:49), postulate that the learner scrutinises the word and selects from it some signal, anything with which to associate the spoken word, and by doing that the child distinguishes it from other words or from other stimuli. Certain learners

36

are able to read the words in the environment but not from print. The learner, for example, can read the word "Shoprite", but only if it appears on a storefront. Many learners are unable to read the same word in detachment.

2.2.3 The letter and word identification stage

Most second grade learners are at the letter and word identification stage, because they identify words based on salient graphic signals or by guessing. This stage can also be called the logographic stage or the early reading stage. Learners attach a sound to letters or words in this stage and normally adopt a global strategy by either recognising the word as a whole pattern or remembering it as a sequence of letters (Goswami & Bryant, 1990:46). The learner is also capable to read familiar texts confidently and is capable of retelling major contents from visual and printed texts, at this stage.

Rayner and Pollatsek (1989:360) believe the learner uses graphemic cues only to the extent to which he is confident discriminating one printed word from another. In contrast to the trial-and error stage where the learner employs direct visual access to read a small set of words, the learner in this stage counts on cues such as the length of the word to find a partial corresponding word in his memory. The underlying assumption is that when the vocabulary explosion occurs, word recognition is no longer a major problem to the learner. As the word identification need diminishes, more emphasis is placed on comprehension.

A problem, however, may arise, when learners are exposed to words at an increasing rate, where word identification by shape becomes less effective. The memory load generated by having to learn hundreds of new less discriminable words quickly become exhausted and partially explains the reading difficulties that one observes between third and fourth graders so frequently (Aaron, 1995:347-351).

2.2.4 The phonetic cue stage

The phonetic stage differs from the previous stages in that it is considered as the beginning of analytic processing, of phonological recoding, of the learning of the grapheme-phoneme correspondences, and of deciphering the alphabetic code (Stahl, 1992:619). This stage can also be called the transitional reading stage, because the learner displays an ability to fabricate meaning by integrating knowledge of text structure, text organisation and language attributes.

Phonetic cue reading refers to the use of phonological cues where the learner focuses on single letters and links the letters' names and/or sounds to the pronunciation of the total word. Phonetic cue reading is similar to visual cue reading in that only one or a few visual cues are used, but it is different from it in that the cues are letters that join the spelling to the pronunciation of the word. The learner makes phonetic associations between printed words and their pronunciations. For example, the learner reads "jail" by focusing on the "j" and "l" and associates the names of these letters with sounds heard in the word's pronunciation (Foorman, 1995:376-392).

Word identification and reading in the linguistic-guessing stage and the logographic stage are essentially phonics-free (Rieben & Perfetti, 1991:136). These researchers argue that there is a total absence of any idea that there might be a link between the orthographic form of the word and its phonological representation. The perception of a relationship between the printed word and its sound or meaning, is totally accidental.

Ehri (1987:7) notes that the visual cues selected in the linguistic stage are unrelated to the meanings of the word and that they are not necessarily related to sound. Learners process words as strictly visual forms without analysing the grapheme-phoneme relations. Sawyer (1992:91), postulates that, although the driving force in reading is meaning (not naming words), word recognition affects comprehension on first graders.

Phonetic cue reading is thus a primitive form of deciphering, but it is not deciphering because it focuses only on some letters. Since the reader has not yet mastered the orthography, he cannot decode unfamiliar words accurately. Rieben and Perfetti (1991: 137), suggest that the transition from the logographic stage to the phonological stage may be viewed as the result of an awakening of the segmental structure of speech that they believe is a necessary condition for understanding the alphabetic code.

2.2.5 The sequential decoding stage

As in the linguistic and the logographic stages, the initial letter may sometimes be

salient because of its visual distinctiveness, and whereas in the phonetic stage, the single letter-whole word sound relationship may play a vital role, the child at some point begins to comprehend in some small measure, the orthographic regularity of the alphabetic principle (Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989:376). The sequential decoding stage is thus considered as the beginning of an appreciation of the alphabetic principle. This stage can also be called the independent reading stage because the learner is capable of recognising and discussing the elements and purposes of different text structures and to read and comprehend text that is intangible and detached from personal experience.

The learner during this stage, cultivates an awareness that spoken words consist of phonemes, learns to segment words into phonemes, and perceives spoken words as sequences of sound. The learner also distinguishes written words as a sequence of letters and recognises that print is encoded in speech. Stahl (1992,619) identifies this stage as the orthographic stage. Learners begin to see patterns in words, are particularly sensitive to the visual sequence, and begin to process the visual sequence in analogy. It is thus imperative that emphasis is placed on phonological awareness, because it is the critical mechanism that sustains the alteration from the logographic to the alphabetic stage.

2.2.6 The fluent decoding stage

This is the stage where phonic knowledge and the development of an understanding

of the grapheme-phoneme rules are refined. The learner during this stage can process letters and words the way adults do, and they can read novel words in isolation. This stage of reading can also be appraised as the advanced reading stage because the learner is capable of critically reflecting on and responding to text and managing different levels of interpretation (Stanovich, 1990:72-100; Walczyk & Taylor, 1996:537-545).

Learners can learn the higher order grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules (e.g., "c" is pronounced as "s" before e,i, and y), and they can progress in the understanding and use of the identification-by-analogy strategy (Goswami & Bryant, 1990:143). During this stage, also known as the alphabetic stage, the learner matches the orthography of a word's letters and groups of letters with its phonemic counterparts (Rieben & Perfetti, 1991:137). The learner does not yet process each letter into its phoneme. At a more advanced stage, the learner uses context and analogical procedures to develop phonological rules that apply to letter sequences. Researchers also argue that the learner moves from the logographic stage to the phonological-orthographic stages through an awareness of speech segmental structure and that the latter is a necessary condition for understanding the alphabetic code (Rieben & Perfetti, 1991: 138-140).

2.3 TEACHING READING APPROACHES

The following teaching reading approaches emphasise daily, sequential instruction and most are based upon the different stages of reading development as discussed in 2.2.

2.3.1 Basal reading approach

The basal reading approach is currently considered the most popular approach and is used by over 95 percent of primary school teachers (Dechant, 1993:85). The supporters of the basal reading approach believe that a learner begins to learn to read by using one or more sets of books, where sequence and control of new words and fundamental reading skills are introduced (Duffy & Roehler, 1993:262). The teacher's manual is usually highly structured and each lesson is completely outlined. The content is based upon common learner experiences and insight.

This eclectic approach can reflect the phonic, linguistic and the sight word or "look-say" approaches in varying degrees, as well as a whole language approach through the reading of children's literature stories. The basal reading approach makes use of teaching letter/sound correspondences and phonic rules. It emphasises basic sight words and writing the written text in such a manner to fit a high degree of phonic regularity (Weaver, 1988:43).

A major advantage of the basal reader approach is that the vocabulary is ordered and controlled with colourful, attractive illustrations so that the skills of both decoding and comprehension may be stressed (Lerner, 1988:371).

A major disadvantage of the basal reading approach is that the language patterns are relatively simple. It is detached from the learner's oral language and racial, ethnic,

class, or sex stereotypes may make text and pictures unrealistic and misleading (Lerner, 1988:371). Another criticism of the basal approach, is that it emphasises skills rather than strategies, and content rather than process (Duffy & Roehler, 1993: 261-262). Furthermore, many widely used basal reading programmes offer no or only a few teaching suggestions for planning and implementing instruction for learners with reading problems (Schumm, Vaughn, Haager & Klinger, 1994:14-20).

A major criticism against the basal reading approach, is that it declines to consider the learner's ecosystemic context. Many books use words and pictures that are far removed from the vocabulary of the learners that they are exposed to.

2.3.2 Phonics Approach

Lerner (1988:372) postulates that phonics instruction for any learner cannot be considered as an end in itself, but should rather be viewed as a means to independent reading. The basic assumption of this approach to reading is that learners can learn to read when they can sound out words by combining sounds and blending them into words. This approach emphasises fluent decoding of words rather than the comprehension of words and has become almost universal in beginning reading programmes (Mercer & Mercer, 1998:316).

The phonics approach firmly proposes that the learner can derive meaning from text once the words can be read. Chall (1989:521-538) argues that some learners

experience failure in phonics because emphasis is placed on word pronunciation without stressing comprehension. In addition, it is also pointed out that some concentrated phonics programmes can give the learner the impression that reading is merely a process of sounding out words.

The phonics approach on its own is, according to Duffy and Roehler (1993:138), a very ineffective approach of teaching learners to read. It requires that each separate letter-sound unit be retrieved from memory and then blended. A related finding by Lerner (1988:370) indicates that some teachers of reading are uncertain of phonetics rules and generalisations. Many had not received phonics instruction in their pre-service teacher education. The unphonetic character of written English with its large number of phonetic exceptions has been one great liability of this approach.

The phonics approach is, however, helpful with beginner readers in a developmental programme and can be added effectively to a literature-based, whole-language or language-experience approach (Mercer & Mercer, 1998:316-320).

2.3.3 Linguistic approach

The linguistic approach emphasises decoding print into meaningful oral language. The linguistic approach also employs linguistic principles to the teaching of reading, because they view reading as part of the language process (Weaver, 1988:42). Words are taught in word families and only as wholes, and introductory reading words usually

consist of three letter words that follow a consonant-vowel-consonant pattern containing only short vowels (e.g. fan, hit, pot, etc.).

Although the linguistic approach differs from the phonics approach in that letter and sound equivalents are not presented in isolation, it still relies heavily on the same theoretical principles as the phonics approach. In addition, many linguistic series have no pictures or illustrations that may provide clues and tempt learners to guess rather than recognise the printed word. Comprehension and reading for meaning are not emphasised in early linguistic instruction because of the importance of learning the essential mechanics of reading. The linguistic approach also differs from the phonics approach in that it does not teach conscious learning of rules. It teaches regularly spelled words from which children can unconsciously imply the common spelling/sound patterns (Weaver, 1988:42).

2.3.4 Whole-language approach

The whole language concept focuses on using learners' language and experiences to increase their reading and writing abilities (Goodman, 1986:18). The whole-language approach is similar to the language-experience approach as discussed previously (in 2.3.5), in that both emphasise the importance of language and literature, treat reading as a personal act and advocates an abundance of books written by learners about their own lives (Stahl & Miller 1989:1-101).

45

The whole-language approach, however, differs from the language-experience approach in that letter/sound relationships and sight words are not taught as prerequisites to reading. The advocates of the whole-language approach insist that from infancy already, learners must be exposed to meaningful print, written in natural language.

Zola (1989: 170-174), and Ogle (1990:46-490) are of the opinion that the whole-language approach is not simply a teaching technique, an approach or a strategy. This approach encourages social interactions, learners talking about what they have written and about what they are reading. It engages learners in authentic and real-life tasks, like field trips, and so forth. The main focus of the whole language approach, is the construction of meaning through the relating of new information to prior information. Reading is therefore taught as a holistic, meaning-oriented activity and is not broken into a collection of separate skills.

Learners, according to Weaver (1988:44), are expected to learn to read and write as they learn to talk. The teacher gives minimum instruction and encourages the learner, rather than to correct him/her constantly. According to the whole-language approach learners, when given the opportunity to read and write in holistic, authentic contexts, learn faster and are more productive (Goodman, 1989:213). Cambourne and Turbill (1990:338) also believe that when learners have real choices to make, it leads to personal responsibility for one's own learning.

The whole-language classroom is one in which the teacher has high expectations of the learner. Teachers respect each learner's unique timetable and celebrate their successes (Barron, 1990:5). Stahl and Miller (1989:87-101) note in a review of research on the whole-language approach that the strategy is most effective when used early in the process of learning to read and for teaching functional aspects of reading such as print concepts and expectations about reading. This approach could also have an effect with populations who are disadvantaged.

In the last decade, the whole-language approach has gained popularity in countries like Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the U.S.A.

2.3.5 Language-experience approach

The language-experience approach, according to Weaver (1988:43), allows a learner to read as part of the process of language development. Reading is thus perceived to be an integral part of listening, speaking and writing skills. The oral language-experience of each learner is thus highly valued. Therefore, the reading and written experiences of each learner suffice as the primary reading materials in this approach (Weaver, 1988:44).

The language-experience approach is also built on the theory that communication skills are related and are essential to success in academic achievement. It does not consider reading as a separate subject. Reading should incorporate all communications and

experiences of the learner. The language-experience approach is based upon the fact that what a learner thinks about, he can talk about; what he can talk about can be expressed in painting or writing; anything he writes can be read, and finally, he can read what he writes and what other people write. The language-experience approach seems to presume that learning to read means learning to construct meaning from a text, and that to construct meaning, we must bring meaning to what we read. Learners are encouraged to proceed at their own pace and progress is addressed in terms of each learner's ability to express ideas in oral and written form (Spiegal, 1992:38-43).

Although the language-experience approach has the advantage that emphasis is placed on meaning and interest and the close relationship between oral and written language, it seems to present disadvantages as well. Ringler and Weber (1984:96-102) are of the opinion that this approach advocates too much memorisation rather than mastery of sight words. They also suggest that the control of vocabulary is difficult, because too many words might be introduced at once. The language-experience approach is not without criticism. Chall (1989:521-528) postulates that, although learners develop confidence, there are some reservations, especially regarding the lack of assistance in the approach to the writing skills of the learners. Many learners use words that do not guarantee recognition in the text. Words are used rather "unconnectedly" (Chall, 1989:521-528).

2.3.6 Critical literacy approach

The critical literacy teaching approach is rooted on many of the same hypotheses as the whole-language and the language-experience perspective. Although it does not propagate a specific teaching approach, it acknowledges that meaning is socially dependent on context. West (1992:4) is of the opinion that meaning is provisional and can change over time as learners share and compare meanings which differ in interesting and essentially non-conflicting ways. Literacy is thus specific to different cultures and communities.

The teacher's role is to observe learners as active-sense makers who construct meaning based on their own social contexts (Crawford, 1995:71-83). Luke (1988: 518) is of the opinion that the aim of the teacher is to get learners to construct and to challenge texts, to see how texts provide selective versions of the world with an eye towards transforming social, economic and cultural conditions. Freire (in Jarvis, 1995:86) encourages adult learners to reflect upon their own experiences and to harmonise their reflections and actions and act upon their socio-cultural milieu in order to humanise and transform it. The critical literacy approach is thus ultimately concerned with bringing about social change to address systematic inequalities in society. This kind of change can only occur if there is a sense of both individual and collective responsibility.

Critical literacy demands that learners not merely read and write about the world, but

49

also act upon it materially in their daily lives. The critical literacy approach challenges the reading idea that is purely a cognitive process and that reading problems are within the learner. It seeks to move the debate from differences in learners' performances, such as the inability to read, to a concern for the cultural, social, historical and therefore political contexts of literacy learning (Gee, 1987:30). The critical literacy approach also aims to explore the idea that power inequalities are played out at every level in the acquisition and exercise of literacy. It requires that pedagogies would enable learners of all social groups to celebrate, value, construct and reconstruct multiple literacies-pedagogies that would allow bridges to be built between the learner's cultural and linguistic resources and the texts of the school. These teaching strategies will need to explore conflicting meanings and highlight the politics of difference as these are played out in local contexts (West, 1992:4-6).

2.4 ANALOGY AND DIVERGENCE OF VARIOUS TEACHING READING APPROACHES

Researchers and teachers have been debating whether the code-oriented or the holistic approaches to teaching reading benefit learners more effectively (Cunningham, 1990:429-444; Foorman, 1995:25-47).

The code-oriented approaches (phonics, basal, and linguistic) view reading from the unit to the whole. The reason for this is that the advocates of the code-oriented approaches argue that, because pre-readers have a vast verbal knowledge base, they

will be able to read and attach meaning to the printed text. However, what they do not take cognisance of, is that these learners do not know how to translate print into spoken language; that is, how to decode. The code-oriented approaches can however be integrated into a total reading programme after learners have acquired some basic sight vocabulary.

The meaning in text-oriented approaches (whole language, language-experience approach and the critical literacy approach), in contrast to the code-oriented approaches, focus on the "top down" and inductive techniques. The premise is that learners learn to read as they learn to speak, through exposure to a literate environment, and that they learn best when asked to read for authentic purposes. Reading is considered as a natural extension of oral language competencies. Advocates of the meaning in text-oriented approaches, therefore believe that explicit instruction in the alphabetic code (decoding) is not always necessary, because oral language competencies allow skilful use of meaningful context (Goodman, 1989:205-221; Newman & Church, 1990:20-26).

The advocates of the meaning in text-oriented approaches consider the code-oriented approaches as reductionistic, not ecologically valid, and solely dependent on a teacher-directed, drill-orientated type of instruction. In addition, the code-oriented approaches have also been critised, because teachers are told what to teach, how to teach, and to depend on learners' scores on standardised reading tests.

The critical literacy approach is critised, because researchers believe it is only suitable for adult learners, and too political for younger learners (Jarvis, 1995:82-84). Freire's approach to teaching adults to read should not be viewed as trying to make learners radical political activists. The role of the teacher should be that of a facilitator of learning. Education is an active process in which the teacher controls neither the knowledge learned, nor the outcomes. Teachers have to break down the barriers between teacher and learner; should speak the same language as the learner; should be aware of how learners construct their universe of meaning and what they see as their learning needs, and lastly, should start where the learners are and encourage them to explore and learn from their experiences.

In spite of severe criticism against the code-oriented and meaning in text-oriented approaches, there are researchers who believe that, rather than looking for points of conflict, these two approaches can be combined (Mosenthal, 1989:628-629; Slaughter, 1988:30-34). Spiegel (1992:40) argues that the concept of systematic instruction is misused by teachers when used only in a prescribed, sequential manner. She believes that teachers choose to use it in that manner, because it is not mandated by the nature of systematic instruction itself. Yatvin (1991:1) is of the opinion, that even if the meaning in text-oriented approaches are being utilised, there must be **"a rational and orderly distribution of content and materials over the grades",** otherwise chaos may result if each teacher follows their own curriculum.

Spiegel (1992: 42) is also of the opinion that the debate between direct versus indirect instruction approaches can only be solved if common ground can be found. Direct instruction approaches should not be just viewed as "teacher-centered", but also "learner-centered". Yatvin (1991:1-4) postulates that direct instruction is also learner-centered, because what is taught, is determined by what learners need to learn and can learn.

Delpit (1991:541-543) firmly believes that indirect instruction in the whole and critical literacy language approaches will not benefit learners from the disadvantaged areas, because indirect instruction will only be appropriate for the development of personal literacy as opposed to power code literacy. She argues that power code literacy will give readers access to the world beyond their immediate environment and that failure to use direct, explicit instruction will deny these learners the skill development they need to succeed within the majority culture, that is, power code literacy. Learners from the middle and upper classes come to school knowing the codes and rules in participating in power and the "culture". Learners from disadvantaged areas might find themselves "lost" within the dominant culture (Delpit, 1991:541-543).

Mosenthal (1989:628) suggests that literacy educators should focus on how traditional and holistic approaches can complement each other rather than examining how they are incompatible. Heymsfeld (1989:65-68) also argues for a combined approach in which aspects of traditional instruction are used to fill what she perceives as the "hole

53

in whole language".

2.5 CONCLUSION

Teaching reading to learners is a very complex and unique phenonemon. One type of teaching reading approach should not be considered as superior to another, because every learner's reading experience is unique (Gipps, Gross & Goldstein, 1987:11).

It is thus advocated by numerous researchers that no specific reading approach be used with an entire group of learners. Successful reading is rather based upon the knowledge teachers have of the developmental stages in reading as well as teacher innovation in selecting various materials and techniques that are most appropriate for helping individual learners to read efficiently.

Matching instructional materials and approaches to the needs of learners is a vital educational process, in which the classroom teacher plays an important role (Donald et al.,1997:61). Teachers should rather use a combination of teaching approaches, rather than to use one approach taught in isolation. As patterns of similarities and differences in reading ability emerge, the reading programme should include a holistic (code-oriented and meaning in text-oriented) reading approach.

CHAPTER THREE

ASSESSING READING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed the various teaching reading approaches and the different stages of reading. This chapter will attempt to critically discuss the possible causes of reading problems, the identification of reading problems and the assessment of reading proficiency.

3.2 POSSIBLE CAUSES OF READING PROBLEMS

Despite the improvement in assessment techniques and teaching reading approaches in recent years, there are still many learners who find reading difficult and who leave school with attainments too low for reading to be a useful and pleasurable activity (Robb, 1994:7-10). Many of these learners have great difficulty in developing healthy attitudes towards reading, learning in general, towards themselves and others. Many of them isolate themselves and become withdrawn and depressed. Others compensate for feelings of inadequacy, become aggressive, uncooperative, unreliable, pleasure-seeking and, perhaps, delinquent (NCSNET/NCESS, 1998:12-16). The causes of failure may be difficult to detect, because the relationship between causes and manifestations may sometimes be obscured. The results of failure are usually obvious (Derbyshire, 1991: 382-383).

Failure in reading is due to a variety of causes that are significantly interrelated and interdependent. The failure may be due to a combination of inherited, congenital, physical, emotional, or environmental factors (Jansen, 1996: 144-153). The causes of reading problems can therefore either be of an intrinsic or of an extrinsic nature. According to the findings of the NCSNET/NCESS (1998:18) report it seems as if most of the learning problems including reading problems within the South African education system could be within the system, rather that within the learners themselves.

3.2.1 Extrinsic causes of reading problems

3.2.1.1 Environmental and cultural deprivation

When a learner experiences serious problems to reading effectively, it does not necessarily follow that it is the result of limited potential, a defective sensory system or neurological disturbances. Some learners' reading problems are associated with the environment or the cultural circumstances in which those learners grow up. Learners from culturally different environments, especially black learners from rural places, are currently "of the most at-risk populations" in South African schools (Kriegler, Ramarumo,Van der Ryst, Van Niekerk & Winer, 1994:23-34). They experience language problems, socialising problems and may have poor self-concepts.

A learner from a culturally poor home, will not always have the necessary experiences to stimulate his/her general development. He/she will most probably have had few opportunities of socially acceptable behaviour in a group. As the language with which he/she comes into contact, is impoverished, his/her vocabulary and grammar may be

56

poor. As a result the development of information processing skills may be hampered (Booyse, 1991:122). Furthermore he/she has most probably not had the opportunity to see, experience and witness life in the practical sense and therefore much of the subject-matter are meaningless symbols to him/her. If a learner grows up in impoverished surroundings, it is highly probable that many educational opportunities will pass him/her by. Lerner (1993:115-116), is of the opinion that such learners are sometimes also not equipped by preschool and extramural experiences to the extent required for optimal school achievement. They are thus not brought up in a way which prepares them for school and the consequences of this is usually poor reading achievement.

The extent of the influence of environmental and cultural deprivation is often underestimated in reading problems (Whitmore, 1988:12). Poor socio-economic circumstances and an environment which is culturally poor, may hamper the learner's development in reading (Baca & Harris, 1988:32). When the parents are illiterate or pay too little interest in the learner's school work, or where books do not exist and no journeys are undertaken, one cannot expect the learner to compete with other learners whose material and cultural needs are adequately provided for (Kriegler, et al., 1994:23-34).

The learner's vocabulary is so limited that he/she is not even conversant with the most common words in the language. Consequently he/she can neither recognise nor

understand the words when he/she is reading. He/she lacks an opportunity for social and emotional interaction, lacks appropriate stimulation, and poor nutrition (Jansen, 1996:152). This can result in diminished motivation as well as a negative attitude towards school work in general, and reading in particular (Bond, Tinker, Wasson & Wasson, 1984:83-84). The standard of syllabuses and vocabulary used in the normal classroom situation is determined more by the language of the economically privileged section of society than by that of the lower socio-economic group. As a result the learner from the lower group has an immediate disadvantage in this respect.

Because learners are sometimes discriminated against their home language at the school they are attending, it is thus imperative that learners be asssessed in their home language to determine their reading proficiency (Ortiz, 1997:326).

3.2.1.2 Emotional deprivation

Some learners grow up in good homes, under sound economic circumstances and receive adequate didactical guidance, but nevertheless develop reading and behaviour problems at school owing to adverse influences from their own subculture and peers (Bryan, 1991:195-231). Most of these learners, who experience reading problems, seems to suffer from anxiety, insecurity and tension (Wood, 1988:8). The insecurity, anxiety or tension may be caused by constant failures. When the learner continues to struggle to read, he may lose his interest in reading. The inability to read satisfactorily can lead to serious frustration which may develop into an aversion to reading (Bond,

et.al., 1984:84).

Neglect of emotional aspects is thus not only limited to the poorer socio-economic environment. It can also be found in other strata of the community, for example the middle income groups, where both parents are forced to work full-time and therefore does not have the time nor the emotional energy, after a tiring day, to communicate properly with their children or read to them. This also applies to the upper income group where the parents sometimes are so tied up with social duties that they neglect the emotional needs of their children in the process (Lerner, 1993:115-118). Such a learner often feels that he/she is rejected by his/her parents, experiences the family environment as no longer a safe retreat to which he/she can return when he/she experiences failure in his/her exploration. Without such a safe retreat, it is inevitable that his emotional development will go awry. The learner will either be terror-stricken of his/her world or react in an aggressive and destructive manner towards his/her world of reading (Bryan, 1991:195-231; Vaughn, McIntosh & Hogan, 1991:279-303). According to Lerner (1993:516-517) almost all learners experiencing reading problems, have in a sense emotional instability due to academic frustrations.

3.2.1.3 Educational deprivation

Failure at school can be described as maladjustment of the performance of the learner's mind to the requirements of the school. An unfavourable atmosphere in a school can have a detrimental effect on the development of the learner's potential

(Bryan, 1991:191-231).

Indifferent attitudes, inadequate assessment techniques, lack of challenging or stimulating teaching approaches, and poorly trained teachers, are all contributing factors to educational deprivation of learners (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1986:159-160). Numerous reading problems are conveniently explained in terms of factors such as poor home background, lack of motivation and uninterested parents, but research seems to indicate that poor assessment techniques and instructional practices contribute to reading problems (Gipe, 1995:86-97; Rupley & Blair, 1989:73-76). Teachers must assume much more responsibility for learners' success or failure in reading, because they are responsible for adjusting their assessment and instruction to take these factors into account.

Many reading problems can be prevented if deficiencies in the reading assessment and reading instruction are identified and corrected before it contribute to or cause reading problems. Teachers can also prevent or minimise reading problems if suspected educational deficiencies are identified and corrected through corrective instruction (Rupley & Blair, 1989:74).

Constant staff changes, due to rationalisation or redeployment from school to school, can result in a lack of continuity in teaching. It can often be contributing reasons for various reading problems. Lerner, (1993: 519-520) points out that the learner who

initially enters school happily may, as a result of reading problems, go through painful experiences and show behaviour problems. Learners can develop reading problems if they have to commence formal reading before they are ready to read. In addition, excessive emphasis on word recognition, perfect pronunciation, intonation and speed can lead to beautiful articulation of words without comprehension.

Reading performance is strongly influenced by the teacher-learner relationship. In a class of 40 learners the teacher normally finds it difficult to render individual and effective attention to every learner. Incompetence on the part of a teacher, a lack of interest, irritability, intolerance, discipline that is either too strict or too lenient, are all factors which can prejudice this relationship, resulting in the learners' rejection of the help and support which a teacher must offer (Human Science Research Council, 1981:47).

De Boer (1980:99-100) makes a distinction between learners who are "handicapped" and those who are "being handicapped". The latter are those who enter school without problems and then begin to pick up problems in school. According to him the fault lies not so much with the individual teachers, but with the school system as a whole. This notion is underscored by the NCESS/NCSNET document (1998:18).

3.2.2 Intrinsic causes of reading problems

Some learner's reading problems are directly related to their biological position. Innate or acquired disabilities such as deafness, blindness or a mental handicap, complicate a learner's education to such an extent that the parents and the learner require learning support (du Toit, 1991:18-19). Not all reading problems are equally conspicuous. Sometimes learners experience reading problems because of neurological dysfunctions that are difficult to identify, such as in the case of the learner with epilepsy (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1986:342).

3.2.2.1 Brain damage

Damage to the brain early in life is a common cause of reading problems. Such damage may occur for a variety of reasons and at a variety of stages of development. Prenatal maternal infections, such as rubella and syphilis, can adversely affect the brain of the developing foetus (Lerner, 1993:39-40).

Similarly, malnutrition or drugs taken during pregnancy can disturb foetal brain development, as may irradiation, or the mother's own antibodies, as in the case of rhesus incompatibility (Botha, 1991:247). Any of a wide range of factors that adversely affect the foetus prior to birth may result in impairments of brain function which later in life can lead to reading problems (Hynd, 1992:110-113).

Injury at birth may also result in brain damage which in return can cause reading

problems. Most commonly this may result from anoxia or hypoxia: too little or too much oxygen reaching the brain (Gaddes, 1985:59-61). There may also be a raised incidence of reported obstetric complications, such as prolonged labour and forceps deliveries, amongst individuals who are later found to develop reading problems. After birth there are rare cases where normal development is arrested or delayed as a result of an accident involving head injury, or because of infections that affect the central nervous system, such as meningitis (Botha, 1991:245-252).

Left-handedness or left-eyedness, although not considered organic defects, may cause certain learners to experience difficulty in reading. Research on lateral preference, however, presents mixed findings about differences in reading ability between learners with consistent laterality and mixed laterality (Biegler, 1987:579-580; Obrzut & Boliek, 1991: 121-145).

Spear-Swerling and Sternberg (1994:91) in their study made a distinction between normal poor reading and specific reading problems. Specific reading problems, according to them, is caused by biological dysfunctions. Siegal (1992:626) disagrees with Spear-Swerling and Sternberg, because she proved that there were no significant difference between learners with normal poor reading and those with specific reading problems. Siegal (1992:626) found that these two groups of readers did not differ in their scores accomplished through the reading of pseudo-words, where phonological processing is required.

3.2.2.2 Physical disabilities

A learner born with a physical disability, or who later sustains a disability because of illness or an accident, will, apart from the hardships caused thereby, be subject to surgical treatment which may cause prolonged hospitalisation and absence from home and school. The latter may deprive the learner of natural development and stimulation, which may directly affect his/her motor development, language skills, emotional security and reading achievement (Smith, 1991:431-434).

The learner with a physical disability may feel most of the time "different" towards other learners because he/she finds that he/she cannot participate or compete with his peers in most of their daily activities (Lerner, 1993:128-129). These learners are inclined to feel inferior and this feeling is unavoidably transferred to their school work. Although the learner may have the intellectual potential and the sensory equipment to realise this potential, his/her whole development of reading may be impeded (Mosse, 1982:44-45).

3.2.2.3 Visual disabilities

It can be assumed, in general, that normal vision is a prerequisite for reading efficiency because it forms the basis for perception. The ability to see clearly is obviously critical to the reading process. The following visual problems, however, can have a negative effect on reading ability. Glaucoma (increased pressure in the eyeball), causes blurred vision and is often accompanied by pain in the eye (Pauw, 1991:360). The learner may

experience difficulty in concentrating to read. The photophobic (or light-shy) learner may experience difficulty with reading if he is exposed to bright light. The far-sighted (Hyperopic) learner can usually read from the blackboard, but has difficulty with ordinary print (Lerner, 1993:236-237).

In addition, learners with mascular degeneration or retinal detachment have "blind spots" in their field of vision, because the pertinent areas of the retina do not register light stimuli. Lastly, learners with strabismus (squint) may also experience difficulty in reading words (Pauw, 1991:360-362).

3.2.2.4 Auditory disabilities

The ability to hear letter-sounds clearly and accurately is a prerequisite for successful reading. The following symptoms may be an indication that learners might be experiencing hearing problems:

- When learners do not give attention or ask the teacher quite frequently to repeat instructions;

- When instructions are not acted upon correctly or if the learner speaks in a monotonous tone of voice;

- The learner turns his head to listen;

- He always watches the teacher's lips and cannot understand properly if the teacher's head is turned away or if his lips are covered;

- He has problems with his auditory memory and finds it difficult to retell a story

65

(Hallahan & Kauffman, 1986:251).

3.2.2.5 Undernourishment, chronic illness and fatigue

These physical factors do not only have an important influence on the emotional level, but also on the general physical preparedness of the learners and on the development of his/her personality. Owing to these physical conditions, his/her attention span may be limited, perseverance may be relatively poor, his/her desire to discover minimal, and his/her behaviour characterised by passivity (Morrow, 1993:82). These physical shortcomings may affect the "whole" learner. His/her reduced energy does not only influence his/her physical activities, but also deprives him/her of the emotional energy to comply with the demands of a school day (Smith, 1991:176).

3.3 GENERAL CLASSIFICATION OF PREVALENT READING PROBLEMS

The following represents a general classification of prevalent reading problems:

- Inappropriate directional habits – the tendency to reverse the direction of letters of words, such as **b** for **d**, **no** for **on** and **saw** for **was**;

- Faulty word identification and recognition: ham/bam, bug/dug, month/mouth and wash/mash;

- Interchange of letters in words: left/felt, card/crab, bread/beard and from/form;

- Confusion of vowel digraphs: house/hause, meat/moat and hail/heal;

- Difficulty with blends (gliding sounds): black/back, left/let, swung/sung, stick/sick and from/form;

66

- Difficulty with long and short vowels: cases/casses, later/latter and lady/laddy;

- Deficiencies in basic comprehension abilities;

- Addition of letters: sing/swing, one/once, fight/fright;

- Omission of letters or words: blowing/blow, remember/member, and insurance/surance, Mary wore a pretty dress/ Mary wore a dress;

- Limited special comprehension abilities, e.g. retaining of specific facts

(Grové and Hauptfleisch, 1982:46-49).

3.4 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS' READING SKILLS

3.4.1 Introduction

Meaningful reading assessment can only be undertaken if teachers understand the complexity of the reading process and what the many causes of reading problems can be. Meaningful reading assessment should indicate the learner's current reading ability, specific strengths and weaknesses and should aid in planning instructional objectives (Mercer & Mercer, 1998:290).

Although great strides have been made in the current situation in South Africa, pertaining to the integration of learners, the existing education system is still characterised by serious historical inequalities. There seems to be an increase in the enrolment of black learners at white and coloured schools and coloured learners at white schools. The opposite however, does not seem to occur. Many white learners are enrolling in private schools. The consequence is that many ex-white schools are

representative of the South African population, but the same cannot be said of the teacher population at these schools. Most of these teachers and learners from other cultures and backgrounds experience difficulty in understanding each other. In addition, the problem become aggravated when these learners are assessed by teachers with tests from a "white perspective". It is thus not surprising that learners from low socio-economic backgrounds and from different racial groups are almost categorically recommended for remedial and special education services.

South African assessment practices in education are closely linked to the changing nature of society and its effect on education. Many of the characteristics of past assessment policies and practices in South Africa, were the result of the main purpose towards assessment, namely classification and labelling for placement purposes (NCSNET/NCESS, 1998:82-86). In the past, most of the racially segregated departments of education insisted on large-scale administration of various standardised group tests often without questioning the real benefits that would be derived from them. Although the previous nineteen education departments are almagamated into one education department in 1994, these practises are still rife in many schools. Problems associated with intelligence and diagnostic reading tests which are routinely administered by most schools, are known to favour certain learners and disadvantage others if not administered according to these standardised procedures (NCSNET/NCESS, 1998:85).

Misconceptions about tests abound. Many norm-referenced and criterion-referenced standardised tests which are inherently sound if used and interpreted according to standardised procedures, have been unfairly devalued in the public eye as a direct result of the practices mentioned above. Responsible use of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced standardised tests requires a skill-base which some schools never had in the past and which many schools will only have in short supply in future. At issue is not the potential usefulness of norm-referenced or criterion-referenced standardised tests, but rather how useful such tests are if schools do not have access to sufficient numbers of teachers who are qualified to use and interpret it.

It is thus imperative that the new assessment strategies cannot ignore the realities of the past, since the legacies of the South African history provide many of the "givens" of the present. Reality dictates that a school-based team, supported wherever appropriate by education personnel, will be central to the process. It is the viewpoint of the NCSNET/NCESS report that in an inclusive system, the focus of education support personnel should be on supporting the school-based team rather than individual learners (NCSNET/NCESS, 1998:83). The NCSNET/NCESS report also emphasises that in such a system, assessment should merely become a part of the formal teaching and learning process in which the primary assessor is the teacher.

There are various diagnostic methods and some critique could most probably be levelled at each method. Reading problems is not a simple condition that can be

identified and corrected by a single approach (Bond, Tinker, Wasson & Wasson, 1984:125). Circumstances will thus largely determine how and when certain methods should be utilised. For this reason no definite method of investigation can be prescribed for general use. It is, however, imperative that some form of diagnosis is essential as no programme for assistance can be commenced without thorough diagnosis (Hammill & Bartel, 1990: 112-113). In addition, it is also very important that the nature and extent of a learner's problem be determined before any assistance can be given. Information on a learner's strengths and weaknesses in these areas can be obtained from a variety of assessment techniques which is also necessary to formulate an appropriate plan of instruction (Lerner, 1993:63-65).

Although individual learners will be subjected to various forms of assessment at different stages in their development, assessment itself may be conceptualised as a continuous process. Assessment is about monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and about evaluating the ability of the system to support and facilitate the teaching and learning process.

3.4.2 Emergent literacy assessment
Although emergent literacy is typically viewed as pertinent to understanding the language and reading development of preschool learners, it is also applicable to school attending learners (Aaron, 1995:345-360).Learners develop and refine concepts about print as they interact with it in the environment. As the learners interact, they learn to

manipulate speech segments at the phoneme level. Interaction with print also provides further experience and exposure to the structure of language. Learners who learn to read easily, generally are able to distinguish the different sounds in words, and more importantly, manipulate these sounds (Cunningham, 1990:429).

Assessing the learner's skill in manipulating phonemes requires close and often deliberate observation by the teacher. Assessment of this nature must be individually administered, using a familiar storybook (one that has been read to the learner several times). The teacher sits with the learner and ask him/her to read the book. As the learner reads, the teacher can observe the following:

- Does the learner hold the book right-side up?

- Are the learner's eyes focussed on print or pictures?

- Does the learner follow the print from left to right, either visually (with eye movements) or physically by pointing with a finger?

- Does the learner demonstrate an accurate print-to-speech match when asked to "point as he reads"? (Aaron, 1995:345-360).

It is important to assess letter-name knowledge. Learners who are unable to recognise letters presented at random, or who cannot do this fairly quickly, are likely to have difficulty learning to read (Foorman, Francis & Novy, 1991: 456-469). The teacher must approach the assessment process with awareness of the developmental issues tending literacy learning. Furthermore, it is essential to recognise the role that the learner's

prior experiences with text, play in their understanding and engagement in reading activity (Bryan, 1991:195-231).

3.4.3 Assessment of reading skills

Assessment of reading skills can point not only to the learner's current reading ability, but also to specific strengths and weaknesses and aid in planning instructional objectives (Mercer & Mercer, 1998:290). Both formal and informal reading assessment are useful.

3.4.3.1 Formal reading assessment

In South Africa, many teachers still assess the learners' reading skill through formal instruction techniques. The formal reading assessment technique is analysis of cognitive skills and it is based on highly structured, sequentially-organised, skills-based readiness tests.

The formal reading assessment method is driven by commercially produced instructional materials that are built around tightly-woven skills-based scope and sequence charts (Heshusius, 1991:315-325). Reading efficiency is defined from the "sit back and wait" philosophy that underscores the maturation mindset to the more active developmental position of "teach learners what they need to know in order to begin reading instruction". These programmes are seen as the key to reading success.

Learners' abilities such as visual discrimination, identification of letters and words, left to right progression and sound-letter correspondence are assessed (Pauw, 1991:352-360). Learners are then taught these skills through direct, teacher-led instruction. Learners have to practice their skills by working through prescribed exercises that usually comes in the form of workbook exercises. These practices are generally accepted by teachers and parents alike.

- **Norm-referenced assessment**

Norm-referenced assessment measures reading in a controlled, systematic fashion. It allows the teacher to compare a learner's reading performance with that of a representative sample. The value of norm-referenced tests has long been debated in education circles. Some of the most often cited shortcomings of such tests are that they are biased and are used only for purposes of labeling the learner (Rupley & Blair, 1989:96). Furthermore, norm-referenced tests require strict administration, scoring and interpretation procedures (Mercer & Mercer, 1998:290).

Peverly and Kitzen (1998:29-43) are of the opinion that norm-referenced tests are vague and do not lead to precise recommendations for the remediation of reading skills and cannot be used repeatedly to assess learners' reading progress. Examples of norm-referenced tests are the Burt Graded Reading Test and the Schonell Reading Test.

- **Criterion-referenced assessment**

Whereas norm-referenced tests compare a learner's performance with the score of others, criterion-referenced tests are used to predict future reading performance of the learner, or to provide an estimate of present performance on a related task (Rupley & Blair, 1989:103). The teacher discovers which skills the learner has mastered, which are being mastered how, and which should still be taught. Criterion-referenced tests relates to curriculum content and instructional objectives (Mercer & Mercer, 1998:291).

3.4.3.2 Informal reading assessment

Informal reading assessment focuses on administering teacher constructed tests based upon learner's daily work. Informal reading assessment is one that has not been standardised against performance norms or against set achievement objectives. Informal assessments may be either commercially prepared or teacher prepared (Rupley & Blair, 1989:71). It is normally used for determining placement in the grade level passage, assessing sight vocabulary for words in isolation, and getting some idea of how learners figures out unknown words. An experienced teacher can obtain diagnostic information through careful day-to-day observation of oral reading, assignments, testing sessions and recreational reading periods (Mercer & Mercer, 1998:291).

- **Curriculum-based assessment**

A common definition of curriculum-based assessment in the literature is

any set of measurement procedures that use direct observation and recording of a learner's performance in a local curriculum as a basis for gathering information to make instructional decisions (Reschly,1988:459-475; Shapiro, 1990:331-349; Shinn, Rosenfield, & Knutson, 1989:299-316).

Peverly and Kitzen (1998:29-30) are of the opinion that a curriculum-based assessment that is not adequately based in the cognitive processes that underlie reading skill, will not necessarily promote more effective and efficient instruction. If the curriculum-based assessment is not adequately grounded in the cognitive processes, it will fall prey to the same critique that has been made against norm-based and criterion-based assessments, namely that academic skills are not measured directly enough. Curriculum-based assessment of reading should focus on the constructs that underlie individual differences in learners' reading skill and the quality of the representation of these constructs in the content of the curriculum and in instruction (Heshusuis, 1991:315-325; Peverly & Kitzen, 1998:29-42).

Curriculum-based assessment determines desired learning outcomes so that it can be atomised, sequentialised, and quantified by the teacher. Instruction and assessment come to be equated with control over measurable performance, which means answers are given before they are asked (Heshusius, 1991:318). Wood and Shears (1986:60-67) argued that the teacher-learner relationship with the curriculum-based assessment, is dominated by relations of imposition. The learners are required to learn in a

prescribed way, without regard to their own views, thereby narrowing their options to such an extent that they have no alternative to compliance.

Curriculum-based assessment is rife in South African educational practices (NCSNET/NCESS, 1998:83-85). Learners are devalued by ignoring their goals and their point of view and by treating them purely as potential performers on some controlled task while ignoring their more general human status as rational, emotional, meaningful and creative beings.

- **Portfolio assessment**

A portfolio is a deliberate, strategic and specific collection of examples of learners' reading taken at different periods of time. Portfolios document and evaluate literacy using multiple sources of information (oral reading recorded on tapes, written think-a-louds, writing and retelling), and multiple contexts (alone, with a teacher or with a group), in a systematic fashion (Walker, 1996: 121-122).

Both the teacher and the learner make decisions about what is included in the portfolio. Active participation of learners are encouraged. Literacy portfolios, then, make connections among the contexts of literacy and document the unfolding of learner learning over time, providing a dynamic record of the learning process (Walker, 1996:121).

Portfolios assess literacy using artifacts from authentic activities in which learners construct meaning. It allows the learner to demonstrate his understanding during literacy activities. Portfolio assessment focuses on the learners' learning rather than on a specific curriculum (Walker, 1996: 122-125). It should reflect the uniqueness, emphasise the strengths and potential of the learner and must involve reflection and insight.

- **Self- and peer-assessment**

The greater involvement of learners in the management of their assessment and reading, is dependent upon the development of a teacher's confidence in her own abilities to maintain effective classroom management (Mac An Ghaill, 1992:177-199).

Negotiation with learners is very important to ensure clarity of expectations and a realistic understanding of approaches to be used in teaching new concepts and reading skills. Teachers who accept these principles adopt a less directive role and assume a more facilitative position in lessons. Such a role must not be regarded as an imposition upon the role or status of the teacher, but rather as a recognition that many of the demands made upon teachers in the current educational climate call for a greater flexibility of teaching styles and place more demands upon learners sharing responsibility for their own reading (Cooper, 1993:129-133).

The acquisition of knowledge and reading skills may well be achieved, in part, through

77

direct teaching, but their application depends upon learners being able to demonstrate that they are becoming independent readers who can generalise skills and apply information. Richmond (1994:157-160), in considering the involvement of learners in self- and peer-assessment, identifies the importance of providing learners with a range of skills before they can take more responsibility for their own and peers' reading. The learner should have the ability to recall, to summarise, to organise, to reflect, and to evaluate, as prerequisites for effective self and peer assessment. Self and peer-assessment, therefore, directs the learners' attention to the use of various strategies and to the effect its implementation has on their reading (Walker, 1996:63).

The involvement of learners in reading and writing reports demands that teachers value their opinions, and work towards the promotion of their learners abilities to express their views openly (Garner, 1995:3-7). Learners are asked to assess themselves against the given outcomes and consequently recognise their limitations.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Although it is conceptually important to distinguish between the idea of extrinsic and intrinsic causes of reading problems, in reality the distinction is much more blurred. There are a few reading problems that are clearly the result of one or the other. They extend across a continuum and in almost every individual case a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic factors are present. These factors have to be seen in ecosystemic interaction if teachers are to understand and address issues related to the teaching of

reading and assessment of reading skills.

Assessment practices in education in South Africa are closely linked to the changing nature of society and its effect on education. Many of the characteristics of the past assessment policy and practice in South Africa were the result of the main purpose towards which assessment was directed, namely classification and labelling for placement purposes. The situation currently in South Africa has not changed much, because assessment practices are still viewed as fragmented.

Formal and informal tests which are inherently sound, are still misused by teachers and other professionals - often without questioning the real benefits that could be derived from it. At issue is also not the potential usefulness of formal or informal tests, but rather how useful such assessments are if the education department and schools specifically do not have access to sufficient numbers of teachers who are qualified to use and interpret it.

A possible answer to the current fragmented assessment in South Africa is responsive assessment within an ecosystemic framework. The main purpose of responsive assessment should therefore be to provide effective and sufficient information to the teacher (Engelbrecht, 1997:59). According to Harrison and Salinger (1998:16-17) responsive assessment is based upon the following principles:

• The emphasis in the assessment of reading is switched to the classroom and to

curriculum practices. Assessment evidence can therefore be of direct value to the learner and the teacher;

- Responsive assessment calls for increased emphasis on teacher assessment, self-assessment and peer-assessment;

- Responsive assessment of reading should not only draw upon

   a range of assessment strategies, but should be negotiated with participants. Learners should be involved in deciding what evidence of their response to reading is to be recorded;

- It is also important to increase the authenticity of the tests which form the basis of reading assessment;

- It is lastly very important to take greater account of a readers' response.

Assessment should also be viewed as continuous. As the learner reads, the teacher deals with the problem as he/she teaches, not after he/she has gathered the facts. Responsive assessment should also include diagnostic assessment during the lesson. It is efficient, because the reading lesson does not stop in order to assess (Walker, 1996:9). Responsive assessment emphasises not only what the learner knows, but also what the learner can do. The assessment process becomes an integral part of reading.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING READING: PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this chapter is to present a narrative of the field study, including a description of the data collection and the data processing procedures, followed by a description of the analysis and interpretation of the findings. Data examples will be used to illustrate and elucidate the findings. The chapter will conclude with a consolidation of the findings, which will then be networked and clustered into central categories and patterns.

4.2 PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

As mentioned in Chapter One, the aim of this study is to gain insight into the beliefs of teachers about teaching and assessing reading skills in order to develop a framework for an in-service training programme.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

As discussed in Chapter One, the research design of this study may be described as qualitative, contextual and descriptive.

4.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

4.4.1 Literature review

The literature review in Chapters One, Two and Three have contributed to the construction of a theoretical framework, namely a holistic approach based on an ecosystemic perspective, which will now serve the purpose as a framework of reference by which data will be collected, analysed and interpreted.

4.4.2 Semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix A)

Eighteen semi-structured questionnaires will be distributed among of the Junior Primary teachers (grade 1-3 respectively) after the rationale of the research are explained to them. The questionnaires are a non-verbal conversation between two people in which the researcher elicits information from the respondent. The main purpose is to obtain a special kind of information. The researcher wants to know what is

"in and on someone's else's mind" (Merriam, 1991:72).

The researcher is entering the other person's perspective to find out about feelings, thoughts, beliefs and intentions. In focused or semi-structured questionnaires there are a predetermined set of questions. The completed questionnaires will all be encoded for data analysis. The following is an example of the semi-structured questionnaire:

TABLE 4.1: Example of the semi-structured questionnaire

1. How do you feel about your teaching reading approach that you currently use?

2. What gives you the most pleasure about your teaching reading approach?

3. What are some important concerns about your teaching reading approach that you have?

4. In your opinion, what should a reading approach have to make it an effective teaching approach?

5. Do you think the Colleges/Universities train prospective teachers sufficiently enough to be able to teach reading effectively? If not, what are your reasons?

4.4.3 In-depth interviews (Appendix B)

Interviewing as a method will allow for clarification of ideas such as teachers' beliefs, teaching approaches, reading problems, training of teachers and rectifying of reading problems. The researcher will check with the respondent if anything is not transparent. Brenner, Brown & Canter (1987:82) believe qualitative in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal, structured interviews. The researcher will explore a few general topics to help uncover the participant's meaning perspective, but will otherwise respect how the participant frames and structures the responses.

The strength of the interview method is that it allows for a variety of information from several of the subjects. Limitations and weaknesses of the interview include the fact

that the participants may not be willing to share all the information required with the interviewer. The following represent examples of leading questions to be used when conducting in-depth interviews:

TABLE 4.2 Example of in-depth questions

1. The traditional phonics approach has been used for years. How do the you feel about it?
2. What do you think is causing reading problems?
3. Do you find that the time allocated to teach reading is enough?
4. What do you think will help you as a teacher to minimise reading problems?
5. How do you assess to determine whether a learner has a reading problem?

4.4.4 Documents

Departmental circular documents are also consulted. According to Merriam (1989:104), documents are **"ready-made sources of data easily accessible to the investigator"**, and it can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding and discover insights about the research problem.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND PROCEDURE

Qualitative data analysis primarily entails **"classifying things, persons, and events and the properties which characterise them and the seeking to**

identify and describe patterns and themes in an attempt to understand and explain these patterns and themes" (Creswell, 1994:167).

The interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The transcribed interviews, with the answers of the semi-structured questionnaire, will first be broken down into the predetermined areas of focus. It will then be gathered and organised chronologically to build the case study data-base. The process of content analysis using the procedure of open coding as described by Berg (1995: 185), will be used:

- The transcripts will all be read to get a sense of the whole.

- Similar topics will be clustered together. Each topic will be subjected to a specific, consistent predetermined set of questions or criteria (Berg, 1995:175). After sifting through the content of the data and marginalising irrelevant information, the researcher will determine repetitive emergent themes that will be coded.

- The coding will frequently be interrupted to write theoretical notes for later use (Merriam, 1991:131). The reflective, margin notes will be used to describe and highlight the meaning of the particular unit of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994:67; Morse, 1994:225).

4.5.1 Data reduction

The process of qualitative analysis will be based on data reduction where a volumnuous amount of information will be reduced to certain patterns, categories and

themes (Bryman & Burgess, 1994:217). The analysis of the data will be completed by using the content analysis procedure. Units of data will be coded into themes clustered to find the most relevant categories for interpretation (Bryman & Burgess, 1994:218). This will be done for both the questionnaires and the in-depth interviews. The analysis of the data will be completed, using the content analysis procedure.

The data reduction process
↓
Read through all transcripts to
get a sense of the whole
↓
Cluster topics into categories
by grouping topics that relate
to each other
↓
Repetitive themes:
Coding
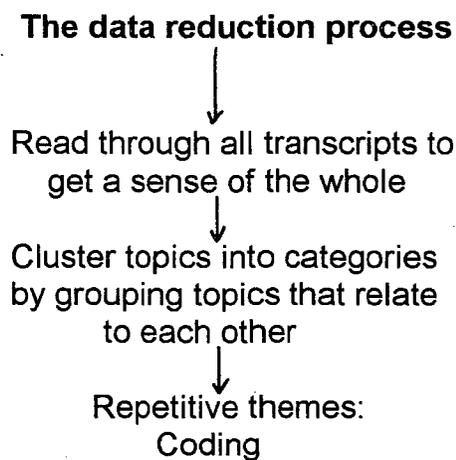
FIGURE 4.1 The data analysis process

4.5.2 Data display

Miles and Huberman (1994:50-86) support the idea of displays of the information. These displays are tables of tabular information. They show the relationship among categories of information, display categories by informants and other possibilities. Data will be displayed by giving examples of tables of tabular information, extracts from the questionnaires and verbatim transcribed information from the interviews. The following represents a depiction of a preliminary grid of respondents answers on the question

how teachers feel about their reading approach:

Respondent	Satisfied	Sceptical	Interesting	Failing	Dissatisfied
Grade 1	*				
Grade 1			*		
Grade 1	*				
Grade 1			*		
Grade 1		*			
Grade 1				*	*
Grade 2					*
Grade 2					*
Grade 2	*				
Grade 2			*		
Grade 2	*				
Grade 2	*				
Grade 3	*				
Grade 3				*	
Grade 3	*				
Grade 3	*				
Grade 3		*			
Grade 3			*		

FIGURE 4.2 An example of a preliminary grid of respondents' answers on the question how teachers feel about their teaching reading approach.

87

The following represents an example of how data could be displayed on a grid after the

process of reduction was used:

Respondent	Satisfied	Dissatisfied/ Sceptical
Grade 1		*
Grade 1		*
Grade 1	*	
Grade 1	*	
Grade 1	*	
Grade 1	*	
Grade 2		*
Grade 2		*
Grade 2	*	
Grade 2	*	
Grade 2	*	
Grade 2	*	
Grade 3	*	
Grade 3		*
Grade 3	*	
Grade 3		*
Grade 3	*	
Grade 3	*	

FIGURE 4.3 is an example of how data could be displayed on a grid after the process of reduction was used.

4.5.3 Data interpretation

The propositional themes that will be presented in Chapter Four, will be integrated with the holistic theoretical framework within an ecosystemic perspective presented in Chapter One, Two and Three of the study. Additional theory that will be used to support or disagree with the findings, will be incorporated (Miles & Huberman, 1994:69). This integration will be an attempt to deduce explanations regarding the findings of the research. It will also be used to develop a theoretical framework with sound guidelines for the improvement of the programme.

4.5.4 Data Consolidation

The focus of data consolidation will be to find out what the many propositional statements or themes that emerge from the analysis are. Some data are likely to be more important than others in contributing to and understanding of the focus of the inquiry (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:143). For this study the coded data will be organised into coding frames (Berg, 1995:188). The first coding frame will be a chronological framework of the process. The second coding frame will include the themes and categories that will emerge during the phases of the process.

The emergent themes will be reduced to relevant categories by clustering those themes

together which will be related in order

> **"to understand a phenomenon better by grouping and then understanding objects that have similar patterns or characteristics"** (Miles & Huberman, 1994:249).

The categories will be constructed to be internally homogeneous and thus inclusive of similar data. Heterogeneous data will, for example, be different between categories as it becomes transparent. The categories will be designed to reflect the purpose of the study (Merriam, 1991:136).

4.6 DATA VERIFICATION

Miles and Huberman (1994:2) are of the opinion that

> **"The most serious and central difficulty in the use of qualitative data is that methods of analysis are not well formulated. For quantitative data, there are clear conventions the researcher can use. But the analyst faced with a bank of qualitative data has very few guidelines for protection against self-delusion, let alone the presentation of unreliable or invalid conclusions to scientific or policy-making audiences. How can we be sure than an 'earthy', 'undeniable', 'serendipitous' finding is not, in fact wrong?".**

4.6.1 Credibility

Krefting (1991:215) postulates that credibility refers to the accuracy or truth of the findings.

"It establishes how confident the researcher is with the truth of the findings based on the research design, informants, and context".

The credibility of this research will be sustained by using a data base, triangulation, built in audit trail and an independent researcher. The independent researcher will be a colleague, an enrolled Ph.D student at the University of the Orange FreeState. The data base is the full collection of the original documents that can be made available for an independent researcher to scrutinise. The data base can then be the subject of separate, secondary analysis, independent of any reports by the original investigator (Yin, 1989:98).

The source of data that will be used to form the data base includes a literature overview, field notes, written observations, recorded interviews and circular documents. The use of multiple data sources will allow for the confirmation of the findings in a triangulation procedure (Merriam, 1991:169). By combining several lines of sight, **"researchers obtain a better picture of reality; a richer, comprehensive array of symbols and theoretical ideas; and a means of verifying many of these elements"** (Berg, 1995:5).

91

The triangulated data sources will be assessed against one another to cross check the data and interpretations. The original forms of the researcher's transcripts, questionnaires, audio tapes of interviews and the utilised analysed data, will all contribute to the audit trail. This will allow the researcher the pathway to 'walk' people through the research process (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:144).

4.6.2 Transferability

Transferability that is also called applicability refers to the likelihood that the findings will relate to other groups in other situations. Research meets the transferability criterion **"when the finding fits into contexts outside the study situation determined by the degree of similarity or goodness of fit between the two contexts"** (Krefting, 1991:216).

In qualitative research the transferability of the research findings is not so much the responsibility of the original researcher. It is responsibility of the researcher who wishes to apply the findings to another situation or population (Jorgensen, 1989:19; Krefting, 1991:216). The responsibility of the original researcher lies in providing a rich, dense description that will allow enough information to use in drawing comparisons.

4.6.3 Dependability

Dependability, also meaning consistency, refers to whether the findings would be consistent if the enquiry were replicated with the same subject or in a similar context.

Merriam (1991:172) is of the opinion, that dependability is obtained when **"outsiders get the same results".**

The researcher thus needs to leave an audit trail, describing in detail how data will be collected, decisions made and categories or themes derived (Merriam, 1991:172).

4.6.4 Comfirmability

Comfirmability, also known as neutrality, refers to the degree to which the findings depend on the conditions of the research. It does not refer to other biases, motivations and perspectives. The study's methods and procedures will thus be described in detail, providing the audit trail leading to conclusions, which exhibits condensed, displayed data to emphasise the relative neutrality of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994:278).

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Written consent will be obtained from the Western Cape Education Department to conduct research in their schools. Individuals involved in the research will be informed of the rationale of the research. Participants will participate voluntarily and informed consent will be gained. Research activities will not disrupt the normal functioning of the school. After the completion of this study, support and ongoing training for the teacher will be given to maintain the newly developed approach. To maintain and ensure the anonymity of the teachers concerned, no identifiable indicators will be used in the study.

4.8 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following discussion presents the main findings of this study as well as relating these findings to the literature findings in Chapters One, Two and Three. Examples of responses will illustrate the points made. The integration of the data with the theory, enables authentification and verification of the findings of this research. Processed data and consolidated data will be discussed. The researcher's rationale behind a qualitative research approach was to gain understanding about teachers beliefs about teaching reading and the specific teaching approach currently carried out in schools. What the researcher has attempted to do, was to draw data from the commonalities in teachers' beliefs that are directly related to understanding teaching reading approaches. The researcher does not maintain that the material that is presented, represents the views of all the teachers. The researcher does believe that it characterises the teachers dominant views.

4.8.1 Questionnaire

Various themes that emerged from the answers given by teachers of the questionnaire, will be discussed.

4.8.1.1 Teaching reading approach

The reading approach teachers follow was derived from questions 1 to 6 of the questionnaire. All the Junior Primary teachers have the responsibility and goal to teach learners to read. It is quite clear though, that various teachers carry out different

reading approaches to accomplish their goals. The information as derived from the data, seems to suggest that about 80% of the teachers in the sample still feel comfortable with the reductionistic teaching reading approaches. This is most probably because teachers are used to working with a prescribed curriculum. Teachers are also scared of change or to introduce new approaches.

- **Positive emotions**

About 75% of the teachers in the sample felt that their teaching reading approaches were satisfactory and interesting to them. They conveyed their satisfactory feelings in almost similar tones. It can be assumed that these teachers believe that their positive emotions contribute to reading to be more interesting for the learners. A Grade One teacher believed reading must be taught through reading from a story.

"I have changed my method, and approach reading from the story. I personally enjoy doing it this way and find it much more interesting".

A Grade Two teacher expressed a similar sentiment concerning positive emotions towards her reading teaching approach. She emphasised the fact that, besides the "deurbraak metode" (dreakthrough method), she was allowed to use various reading series. In her own words:

"Ons vind dit baie effektief" (We find it very effective).

It also became clear that teachers' positive emotions towards their teaching reading approaches, had different meanings to different teachers. A Grade Three teacher did not only state why she felt satisfied, but gave the following explanation.

"The learner is introduced to the single letters and then to the whole word. Sometimes the learner is introduced with the whole word and it is broken down into parts".

The notion of reductionistic teaching was postulated through the sentiment of the teacher's above statement. A Grade Two teacher did not elaborate on why she felt satisfied, but only gave an encompassing statement.

"Ek voel tevrede" (I feel satisfied).

Yet, another Grade Two teacher perceived her teaching reading approach as:

"Satisfied- the average child copes well with it".

Of all the teachers who felt satisfied with their teaching approach, the Grade Three teachers felt that their teaching approaches were the most satisfactory. The assumptions that can be derived from the above conclusion, are that learners are well prepared and ready to read when they get to the Grade Three teacher.

Teachers seem to find it extremely difficult to express how they really feel, especially positive emotions. Instead of expressing their positive emotions, some of them rather gave an explanation of what they are doing. The following statements seem to underscore this notion.

"Eclectic approach - a combination of methods that is complimentary to one another"

"We are currently busy with a whole language approach. The technique is

different and pupils are easy towards it".

It can be derived from the above statements that certain teachers may doubt their emotions about their teaching approach. They might also be afraid to express how they really feel, or haven't really given it in-depth consideration.

- **Negative emotions**

In contrast to certain teachers' positive perceptions about their teaching approach, there were a few teachers who had negative emotions. The teachers' emotions of scepticism and uncertainty about their teaching approaches, could be a reflection of both the transformation and uncertainty of the many changes that are taking place in the Education Department. Of all the teachers who felt dissatisfied or sceptical about their teaching approaches, the Grade Three teachers felt the least dissatisfied. The following responses were indications of two Grade One and a Grade Two teachers' negative and sceptical emotions about their teaching approach.

Grade One teacher: **"I am a bit sceptical about it because it only caters for part of the class".**

Grade One teacher: **"It does not really help all the children".**

Grade Two teacher: **"Could make do with some new methods".**

What became evident from these quotations was the fact that teachers defined their emotions much more clearly when they felt sceptical and negative, than when they felt

positive about their teaching approach. It can be hypothesised that it is most probably safer to criticise and blame the reading approach if learners in the class manifest reading problems. It is more difficult to suggest that the reading approach is unsuitable. In the latter case, the reflection might be on the teacher, and not on the reading approach itself.

4.8.1.2 Impact of reading performance

Although many teachers did not specifically suggest whether they felt positive or negative about their teaching approach, they believed they contributed to promote various skills that equipped learners to be able to read. Though the following statements from a few Grade Three teachers did not stipulate their specific emotion, it seems to suggest that the teachers felt that their teaching approach accomplished something with the learners.

"I find that it helps their memory and enables them to read very fluently and it enables them to read other books and newspapers".

"By dealing with the sight words first, the children will have a good knowledge of the vocabulary in the books. This also helps the learners to extend their vocabulary".

Most of the teachers found pleasure in the fact that their teaching reading approaches improved reading performance and reading comprehension. Some teachers found pleasure in the fact that their approaches allowed the learners to read independently

98

and with enthusiasm. Some teachers found pleasure in the fact that their teaching approach helped learners to progress at their own tempo. Responses revealing that Grade Three teachers found pleasure when learners experience a sense of independence and enthusiasm were the following:

"When I can observe children's enthusiastic expressions. They also display an aura of achievement".

"When the learner develops self-confidence, reads for enjoyment and independently".

What can be derived from the above statements, is that teachers seem to prefer learners to be able to cope on their own. The assumption is that this characteristic is most probably associated with efficient stimulation at home. The emotional maturity of the learner may also be important. It is not necessarily the result of the teaching method. When learners can cope on their own and are emotionally mature, it may be to the advantage of the teacher, especially in the light of the bigger classes. Certain responses offered examples to support teachers' view that pleasure can be derived when learners progress at their own tempo. The remarks stipulated below are typical of those commonly heard by Grade One teachers.

"Dat elke leerling volgens sy eie tempo vorder. Geen druk word geplaas om 'n spesifieke leesboek in 'n beperkte tyd, of saam met die groep af te handel nie".
(Every pupil is allowed to progress at to his own pace. No pressure is exerted on the child to finish a reader within a specific time, or to finish it with the group).

"Daar's variasie en elke groep kan teen sy eie tempo vorder. Begaafde leerlinge

word ook verryk". (There are variation, and every group can progress at their own pace. Gifted children can also be enriched).

It most probably gives teachers great satisfaction when they know that learners make progress and understands what they are reading. A few responses of teachers experiencing pleasure when learners reveal reading performance and reading comprehension are highlighted.

Grade Three teacher: **"To see how the children improve in reading and how they like to read new books".**

Grade One teacher: **"Dat die kind se begripsvermoë ontwikkel". (That the child's comprehension ability develops).**

Grade Two teacher: **"When the pupils can recognise the words without hesitating, i.e. actually reading and understanding and not just reading parrot fashion".**

Though certain teachers felt dissatisfied or sceptical about their teaching approach, none of them expressed any sentiments that they did not derive any pleasure from their teaching approach. The fact that one teacher did not complete the question on pleasure, could mean that she did not understand the question. It may also mean that she was unhappy, and thus not deriving any pleasures from her teaching reading approach.

4.8.1.3 Concerns

Besides teachers' emotions and specific pleasures that they derived from their teaching reading approaches, they were also plagued by various concerns about their teaching reading approaches. The researcher is aware that certain teachers could be positive about their teaching reading approaches, yet have concerns. One would, however, expect that teachers who are negative or sceptical, would reveal more concerns about their teaching reading approach. The researcher attempted to establish whether some teachers, who responded more favourably towards their teaching reading approach, would have fewer concerns than those who suggested that they were negative about their teaching reading approaches.

About 70% of the teachers in the sample were concerned that the material is outdated and/or is culturally biased. Historically, the apartheid era caused the various education departments to cater for separate racial education. Usually, however, reading literature presented to various departments was from a "white" perspective and not the other way around. Certain ex-departments found the literature unacceptable, oppressing and dehumanising. This caused certain teachers to ignore the presented literature and create their own literature. Many, however, had no other choice, but followed the prescribed curriculum blindly. This state of affairs caused many South Africans to be alienated from fellow citizens languages and cultures. In the post-apartheid era, schools are open to every learner, irrespective of the learner's colour, race, language or culture. Certain department officials, and even teachers who clung to their traditional

perspectives, found it extremely difficult to accommodate and understand learners from other cultures. Many teachers who resisted an attitude change, especially the white and coloured teachers, found it difficult with black learners in their classes. White, coloured and certain black learners did not enrol in black schools. Many coloured and black learners enrolled in either elite white and coloured schools. Most white and coloured teachers suddenly discovered that their material was outdated and culturally biased regarding their black, and to a lesser degree, the coloured learners.

The following quotations from the various teachers who were concerned that the material was outdated or culturally biased, seem to reflect their perspective.

Grade One teacher: **"It does not cater for pupils from different cultural backgrounds".**

Grade Three teacher: **"Die leesmateriaal is uitgedien" (The reading material is outdated).**

Grade Two teacher: **"The words are sometimes not representative of the child's world".**

In support of certain teachers' concern about the outdated reading material, some felt that for a reading approach to be effective, it needs to be suitable for all learners.

Grade Three teacher: **"Suitable for all children from all backgrounds".**

Grade One teacher: **"Die metodes moet pas by die verstandsontwikkelingsvlak van die kind. Die leerder se vermoë on formele onderig te ontvang, moet goed**

ontwikkeld wees, anders werk geen metode nie". (The approaches must be suitable for the cognitive developmental level of the learner. The learner's ability to receive formal training must be well developed, otherwise no approach will work).

In addition to the fact that certain teachers felt that their reading teaching approach was outdated, they also indicated that their reading approach did not cater for the weaker learner. One pervasive belief among certain department officials is that the reading approach are differentiated and caters for all learners. Certain Grade One teachers, however, seemed to disagree with other teachers who were concerned that their reading approaches do not make allowance for the weaker learner.

"I can't use only one method, because of different ability groups in my class. I have to use another approach to accommodate the many weaker readers in the class".

"Many learners need individual attention".

"It does not cater for pupils with perceptual development problems who are behind in some areas. Pupils are from different cultural backgrounds".

Although about 75% of the teachers in the sample felt that the teaching approaches must be suitable for all learners, some felt that no technique will be suitable if learners are allowed to come to school too early. A few teachers seemed to resent the fact that certain schools allow learners to enrol for formal education too early.

Grade Two teacher: **"Children must be older than seven years when they start school in Grade One. We must not force them to read by a certain age. There must be movement in our work".**

Fewer teachers were concerned that not enough time was allocated to teaching reading. Most schools still seem to carry out the roster programme where a period is allocated for various subjects. It seems, as derived from the teachers' answers that they felt categorised and limited in their teaching. Some teachers suggested in their responses that they were concerned about the fact that not enough time was allocated to teach learners to read.

Grade One teacher: **"Dat daar te min ure in die dag is om meer aandag aan elke kind se behoeftes te gee" (There are too few hours in the day to attend to every learner's needs).**

Grade Three teacher: **"The time factor. The time at school isn't long enough, and the child need to follow-up at home".**

Grade Two teacher: **"It's time consuming. Many learners need individual attention".**

Various teachers felt concerned that drilling does not necessary lead to comprehension. It can be derived from this statement, that certain teachers are unhappy about the reductionistic and skill-based approach to teaching reading.

Grade Two teacher: **"Die klank, kyk en sê metode is nie altyd suksesvol nie". (The**

sound, look-and-say method is not always successful).

"Pupils don't get the opportunity to internalise the presented knowledge".

Certain teachers had other concerns about their teaching reading approach.

Grade One teacher: **"Children have a listening problem and find it difficult to hear the end sounds. They don't know their alphabet and can't figure out what the word is or sound it".**

Grade Three teacher: **"Children with bad memories find it very difficult to recall and remember the individual words and this causes major problems for some learners".**

One teacher did not complete the question.

4.8.1.4 Characteristic of an effective teaching reading approach

Although about 30% of the teachers in the sample were sceptical about their teaching approach, some teachers felt that, in order for an approach to be effective, it needed to include the following elements:

- It must have simple steps and be meaningful;
- Stimulate active involvement by using various techniques;
- Learner must experience success;
- It must be suitable for all learners.

About 70% of the teachers in the sample believed that a reading approach must allow the learner to be actively involved by introducing various techniques. Other teachers

105

believed their teaching reading approach can fit all learners. This assumption, however, seems to suggest that teachers are prepared to try new ideas to make their reading approaches more effective. They are not convinced that the learner would experience reading success. Teachers who believed that a reading approach has to have simple steps, yet meaningful, expressed themselves in the following manner.

Grade One teacher: **"A few simple steps that will stimulate the child's interest; easy to read text to build confidence in the reader, a few sight words and high frequency words that need to be mastered in a given period. Lots of fun and games for motivation".**

Grade Three teacher: **"Start with meaning. Should encourage the child to reach greater meaning".**

It also became evident that certain teachers seem to realise that reading can be made unnecessarily complicated through complicated reading techniques, or uninterested material that can cause a hindrance for learners to begin to read. Quotes from certain teachers seem to emphasise this assumption.

Grade Two teacher: **"Hulle moet op hoogte wees met tegnieke, en dus tred hou met veranderde tye" (They must keep up with the times and know all the lastest techniques).**

Grade Three teacher: **"Words from the child's life circumstances. The child must be able to identify with words that he experiences in his everyday life".**

Words that seem to capture the beliefs of teachers pertaining to the effectiveness of a reading approach, are the words "stimulate", "interest", "encourage", "easy", "mastery" and "meaning". Certain teachers felt that, in order for a reading approach to be effective, the learner must find it interesting and success will then be guarenteed. Grade One teacher: **"Die leesmetode moet die kind se belangstelling in lees aan wakker en 'n begeerte by hom wek om self te wil lees. Die kind moet sukses behaal". (The reading approach must stimulate an interest for reading by the learner to be able to read by himself. The child must experience success).**

4.8.1.5 Variation in teaching reading approaches

Some teachers maintained that in order for a teaching approach to be effective and useful, it must have a variation of teaching techniques. These sentiments were underscored by some teachers' answers on the questionnaire.

Grade One teacher: **"Variasie" (Variation).**

Grade Two teacher: **"It needs a balanced combination of various methods - intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Variation of reading methods".**

Grade Three teacher: **"Rhymes, jingles and songs with familiar words to serve as consolidation. Attractive and colourful pictures to attract interest of learners".**

4.8.1.6 Most popular teaching reading approach

It became evident that most teachers attached importance to the reading aspects of their work. It was thus not surprising that about 80% of the teachers in the sample

defined their popular reading approach as the reductionistic approaches.

Grade Two teacher: **"Picture reading; sentence strips attached to picture used. Learning the sentences parrot fashion; breaking the sentences into words".**

Grade Two teacher: **"Reading parrot fashion in a group".**

Grade One teacher: **"Look-and-say, sound method".**

It seems as if teachers use different terminologies for the same reading methodological orientation. Teachers seem to underline the differences between their own perspective and those of others. The conclusion that the researcher reached from the answers were that there was no significant difference. Most of the approaches were reductionistic, instead of inductive, content, and whole language-oriented. Judged from teachers' responses, there may not be much difference.

Grade One teacher: **"Deurbraak metode. Dit stel die leerlinge bloot aan 'n wye sigwoordeskat wat daartoe aanleiding gee dat hulle enige boek op hulle vlak kan lees"** (The breakthrough method. It exposes the learners to a wide range of sightword vocabulary that helps them to be able to read any book on their level).

Grade Two teacher: **"Deurbraak metode"** (Breakthrough method).

More Grade Three teachers, however, seemed to have a different reading approach. They emphasised the holistic reading approach.

"The holistic reading approach whereby the learner starts with story sentences and followed by the individual words. It's the only reading approach taught at

training colleges".

"Write about their own experiences and read it for news".

One Grade One teacher, though she supported the look-and-say approach, had the following idea.

"Dis die metode wat die beste vir my werk en waarmee ek vertroud is. Dit wil nie sê dis die metode wat werk vir elke kind nie" (This is the method that works the best for me, because I'm comfortable with it. It does not mean that this method will work for every child).

The conclusion that can be derived from this statement, is the uncertainty of teachers, concerning their teaching approaches. Many just follow the prescribed curriculum, because it is expected of them to complete the curriculum.

4.8.1.7 Training

Teachers' emotions, beliefs, pleasures, concerns and teaching reading approaches will largely depend on the type of training they've received at the Universities/Colleges. The emerging theme about training varied from being highly satisfied to being greatly disappointed with their training. Training did not just refer to when they were trained to be a teacher, but also refers to whether they received further training after they've become a teacher. Twelve of the eighteen teachers, when asked about their perception about the effectiveness their training, responded with a simple answer without elaborations.

"Ja" (Yes).

Six of the 18 teachers who were dissatisfied, elaborated in more detail. A few responses are given:

Grade Two teacher: **"Not at all. When the theory is accomplished at college, no results are visible. Not enough practical experience is done. Students go out practice teaching, try their approach out for two weeks, never getting a chance to follow up on that lesson and will never know whether it worked".**

Grade One teacher: **"Nee, gewoonlik word student opgelei deur dosente wat nie in voeling is met die praktiese sy van onderwys nie. Boeke kennis is nie die prakties in die klas nie"** (No, normally students are trained by lecturers who are not in touched with the practical side of teaching. Book knowledge is not the practical part in the classroom).

Grade One teacher: **"I think they are not up to date with Curriculum 2005".**

Grade Three teacher: **"No, because when a child has a reading problem, you are lost if you had no further training. I think a section for remedial teaching should be added on its own".**

It seems, judged from the teachers' responses, that they blame their negative emotions, concerns and reductionistic techniques on poor training at Colleges and Universities. In addition, however, it also became apparent that teachers do not seem to receive any sufficient further training once they've become teachers. Again, the notion that it seemed easier for teachers to express their negative emotions better than their positive experiences, were noted.

4.8.1.8 Causes of reading problems

There are factors other than training that support, intensify and validate teachers' beliefs and perspectives about their reading teaching approaches. An important idea to understand in this regard, is that teachers teach learners to read, but the majority do not know what a reading problem is. Many teachers do not know what causes reading problems. Ignorance and lack of knowledge can cause teachers to do more harm to a learner, especially when they start labelling the learner. Many teachers can spend three or four years at a College or University without having the opportunity to be trained about the causes of reading problems. Teachers in training, because of limited training time and lack of sufficient exposure to the practical side of teaching, also seem to have very little actual contact and experience with learners experiencing reading problems. New teachers' perspectives might also be discarded and indoctrinated by "older" teachers once they start their teaching career. Teachers also develop feelings of solidarity among themselves that could lead to the alienation of others who does not agree with the majority's beliefs.

On the question, "What colleges/Universities can do to minimise reading problems" (Question seven), some teachers responded in the following manner.

Grade Three teacher: **"Work on reading programmes that will be suitable for different levels of abilities in a class, i.e. weak, average and excellent".**

Grade One teacher: **"Om studente deeglik op te lei in een of twee lees metodes en nie net rakelings al die metodes bespreek nie. Wees ten alle tye prakties, sodat**

daar nie 'n gaping is tussen skool en kollege nie". (To train students thoroughly in more than one reading method, instead of only touching briefly on the teaching methods. Be practical always to prevent a gap occurring between the school and the college).

Grade Three teacher: **"Research in current class situation"**

Grade Three teacher: **"Remedial techniques need to be incorporated at colleges instead of the current optional fourth year module".**

About 70% of the teachers in the sample felt dissatisfied about the way they received training. They feel that it did not prepare them enough to deal with reading problems. The question whether reading teaching approaches are not contributing to reading problems or aggravating it, might be a valid one. Although many teachers were willing to render their opinions about what colleges could do to reduce reading problems, one grade three teacher viewed it as not only the responsibility of the college, but that of society.

"First you have to create a culture of reading. Our society must learn to read for the love of reading; maybe to instill this may change attention towards reading".

Although teachers seemed to suggest that their training be insufficient, many teachers' responses on "What is a reading problem?", seems to capture what a reading problem is. Grade One teacher: **"Reading at a staggering pace. Having to sound out a word, which will cause a break in the flow of the words being read. Not being able to**

identify any words in the sentence".

Grade Three teacher: **"The inability to encode and decode. The inability to integrate visual and auditory perceptions".**

Grade Two teacher: **"Not to be able to see sounds, not to understand that words form sentences, not to understand a sentence and its meaning"**.

Although 65% of the teachers in the sample indicated an understanding of what a reading problem is, one Grade Three teacher, however, had a different opinion.

"The problem should be looked in the word read. What do we mean by reading problem. Do we want the child to read books and books or do we want the reader to give back to you the meaning of the text. Pupils can read to you one word or two".

Even though 65% of the teachers in the sample were quite eager to admit that their outdated material, poor training, or reductionistic approaches could possibly be the main cause of reading problems, the quotations given below seem to suggest aspects to the contrary.

"The child's home environment"

"Illiterate society".

"Algemene gesondheid. 'n Kind met 'n swak gesondheid het alreeds 'n agterstand omdat hy nie kan byhou nie" (General poor health. A child with poor health already has a disadvantage because he cannot keep up).

113

"Children come to Grade one from the age of five and a half and are forced to read".

"Parents do not read stories to their children".

"Geen pre-primêre onderig nie" (No preprimary teaching).

"Too big classes - children do not get individual attention".

"Emosionele probleme". (Emotional problems).

It is probably easier to externalise the cause of a problem. Acknowledging or referring to the teaching approach as the main reason for reading problems, might lead to a reflection on the teacher herself or the Education Department she is working for.

According to 65% of the teachers in the sample, the inability of learners to recognise letters and words, may be the most common manifestations of reading problems:

- Reversals;

- Guessing of words;

- Keeps on losing his place;

- Lack of intonation;

- Stuttering;

- Omits or adds letters.

One Grade Two teacher responded on the questions about what causes reading problems and what the manifestations are, as follows:

"I don't understand what you mean".

One can most probably, on face value, derive from the above statement, that the teacher does not have learners in her class experiencing reading problems. On the other hand, she may genuinely not know the causes of a reading problem. Maybe the teacher did not understand the terminology, "common manifestations of reading problems".

The theme of parents being involved, and stimulating their children from early onwards were quite common in the answers teachers gave of why they thought learners did not experience reading problems. It is also very apparent that teachers seem to rely increasingly on the support, commitment and involvement of parents. In addition, teachers also felt that the following reasons could prevent or reduce reading problems.

Grade Two teacher: **"Children belong to a library"**.

Grade One teacher: **"Their listening skills are well developed".**

Grade Three teacher: **"Good motor skills".**

Grade Three teacher: **"Well-trained teachers".**

Grade One teacher: **"Good knowledge of his spoken language".**

Grade Two teacher: **"Some learners have a natural flair for reading".**

Grade Three teacher: **"Their own need to succeed".**

4.8.1.9 Assessment of reading problems

Most teachers could state that a learner has a reading problem, but they could not how

they came to that conclusion. The researcher wanted to determine how teachers assess or decide that a learner has a reading problem. It was interesting to detect that most teachers suggested that they knew how to assess a reading problem. Answers from teachers varied from just normal observation to making use of diagnostic and normative tests. Some also indicated that they used standardised instruments to validate their conclusions.

Grade One teacher: **"Ja. Deur blote waarneming in die gewone alledaagse leessituasie of deur middel van leestoetse". (Yes. Through observation in the normal everyday reading situation or by means of reading tests).**

Grade Two teacher: **"Yes, after 20 years of teaching, I know how to identify".**

Grade Three teacher: **"Individual testing and then I confer with the remedial teacher to confirm the results".**

Grade One teacher: **"Yes, because I do reading every day. When the child comes to me for the first time, I give them a basic reading test which consist of basic words and sentences. From there I determine if the child's got a problem".**

The teachers' method of assessing reading problems, may be based on the normative-based assessments, where the learner is evaluated against a set of norms. One should ask whose norms? In the light of this happening, it is not surprising so many black and coloured learners are identified as experiencing reading problems. One Grade One teacher felt differently concerning the assessment of reading problems.

"Ons is nie opgelei om gespesialiseerde remediërende probleme te identifiseer

en op te los nie" (We are not trained to assess and rectify specialised remedial problems).

It is probably any teacher's dream or fantasy to have a class of a well-behaved and a reading problem-free learners in her class. Reality, however, seems to show that every class statistically will have at least three percent to five percent learners with reading problems. The researcher believes a teacher's attitude towards those learners in her class might be a decisive factor about what will eventually become of that learner. This should be seen as important because it ensures the attitude of the learner at the end of the day, towards his schoolwork and his teacher.

In some teachers' answers, a sense of helplessness, inadequacy and frustration are noted. Grade Two teacher: **"It holds me and other children back. It can become very frustrating - you cannot move on sometimes, you feel helpless".**

Grade One teacher: **"I feel inadequate in that I'm unable to get through to them".**

Grade Three teacher: **"It is difficult to give individual attention in a class of 42".**

Others, on the other hand, are not deterred by the reading problems. They try to look for answers. The remarks quoted below are typical of those commonly heard by teachers.

Grade Two teacher: **"I feel challenged and try to find the problem. I don't move unless they have mastered the level that they are on".**

Grade Three teacher: **"I feel that they must just be exposed to interesting stories**

that are suitable for their age".

One can just imagine how helpless the learners must feel when they sense that their teacher feels helpless, frustrated and inadequate in helping them with their reading problems. It might then also become a chicken or an egg situation.

4.8.1.10 Rectifying of reading problems

It is one thing to be able to assess or be aware that the learner is struggling with reading, but it is quite a different scenario to be able to address the problem successfully. The researcher attempted to identify themes from the data regarding the rectifying of reading problems. It became quite clear, as can be derived from the data, that certain teachers felt that they were not trained to rectify reading problems.

Grade One teacher: **"No, I'm not aufait with rectifying reading problems. I haven't had enough theory and practical experience in this field. I am not sure whether I'm doing the right thing"**

Grade Three teacher:**"Geen formele opleiding om problem op te los nie" (No formal training to solve problems). "No - not trained. It is not my job to remediate - only to teach".**

Approximately 75% of the teachers in the sample feel inadequate to rectify reading problems due to lack of training and experience. Teachers most probably feel that they are there to teach reading, but they are not there to spend time sorting out learners' reading difficulties. Certain teachers indicated that they might have been more willing

118

to be involved in rectifying learners' reading problems, if they had more time available. One Grade One teacher explained:

"Tyd ontbreek in die normale klas". (Time is lacking in the normal class).

Others however, though they are in the minority, though seems to have a different opinion about how to rectify a reading problem.

About 25% of the teachers in the sample indicated that they can rectify reading problems.

Grade Three teacher: **"Yes - I had remedial as a major subject in my fourth year".**

Grade Two teacher: **"Yes. Eclectic approach, whole language approach, paired reading, etc.".**

Both teachers, quoted above, did not elaborate on how they were going to rectify reading problems. Certain teachers seem to know where their boundaries of speciality begin and where it ends.

Grade Two teacher: **"Yes, by testing and giving activities to alleviate the problem, and then to work from there, or if I'm not able, then to refer".**

Data derived from the teachers' questionnaires seems to indicate that about 75% of the teachers in the sample were quite prepared to meet the reading needs of learners in their classrooms. As stated, however, they feel that they lack sufficient training and experience. Witness the following comments offered by some teachers to show their level of preparedness. Grade Two teacher: **"Whatever it takes for me to gather more**

information and assistance in trying to help the learners who are struggling. I need to find out how to work with the children whom I must see everyday and at the same time not neglect the others who also need my attention".

Grade One teacher: **"To the point where I've tried everything".**

Grade Three teacher: **"I'll do anything or implement any way that will motivate or satisfy the reading needs of learners, even if it means having to bring comic strips into the classroom".**

Grade Two teacher: **"I do not have sufficient readers. We make our own readers; it takes time and lots of effort, but it helps".**

As witnessed from the above statements, many teachers are eager to rectify and help the learners who struggle with reading. This notion, however, is not supported by all the teachers. Grade One teacher: **"I cannot cope - I don't have time to spend with a child at the expense of others".**

The researcher also wanted to establish how teachers actually deal with learners experiencing reading problems, although the majority felt that they lack the necessary skills and training. About 65% of the teachers in the sample felt that they have to call in the parents for assistance or refer for professional help.

Grade Two teacher: **"I try to give them individual attention as well as involving the parents".**

Grade Three teacher: **"Ask the parents to assist or refer to a remedial teacher".**

Grade One teacher: **"The child gets an extra set of flashcards to take home. The parents are asked to assist the child".**

Other teachers were innovative and very understanding, and knowing that many parents are either too busy, or illiterate.

Grade Two teacher: **"Sympathetic approach - will not let them read aloud in the group, will help them individually".**

Grade One teacher: **"I've grouped them into groups of six. I use lots of encouraging comments to boost their self-confidence. I let them build their own sentences and then they read it back to me. They're totally thrilled when they've achieved their goal".**

Grade One teacher: **"Gebruik sterk leser om swakke te ondersteun" (Use better reader to assist the weaker one).**

One Grade Two teacher seemed adamant:

"Refer to remedial. If parents cannot afford, I'll try and support them. If, after I've tried to help children with my methods and it does not work, I leave them alone".

4.8.1.11 Support and assistance to teachers

The last focus was on the type, if any, of support and assistance teachers are getting in their teaching career. The assumption is that there are factors other than training that support, intensify, and validate teachers' role as secondary educators. Although this is not discussed in detail, an important idea to understand in this regard is that the researcher might term this profession as "the sisterhood at the bottom". By this, the

researcher is implying that teachers are both occupationally, politically, economically and socially isolated from the policy-makers, the experts, the administrators and educators. They are arguable the lowest paid professionals, in comparison with other professionals. Teachers have little actual contact with other teachers at the school specifically, or with the department officials in general, in their work. They spend some of their time at school with other administrative aspects, like completing inventories or ordering stationary, that hasn't got anything to do with their field of teaching. On the question whether teachers get assistance, approximately 80% of the teachers in the sample felt that no assistance was available. A few views by teachers were expressed. Grade Two teacher: **"No money, I guess. We must make do with very little"**.

Grade Three teacher: **"No, because the TST's (Teacher Support Teams) aren't in operation at schools yet"**.

Grade Two teacher: **"I am sorry, but not really, no. Bellville School Clinic seems to be either overloaded with pupils or they are difficult to get hold of"**.

Grade One teacher: **"No - very few parents show interest"**.

Although some teachers were willing to express their dissatisfaction about teacher assistance, the sentiments from approximately twenty five percent other teachers were a more positive. Grade Two teacher: **"Yes, from the remedial teacher and the School Clinic"**. Grade One teacher: **"Yes, only from the remedial teacher"**. Grade Three teacher: **"From N.G.O's"**.

No reference was made to any other department officials, like subject advisors or the circuit managers. It was evident that many teachers are in desperate need of assistance to help learners with reading difficulties. About 80% of the teachers were of the opinion that they could make do with specialised assistance, or just a teacher aid to make their teaching reading approach more meaningful and effective. One Grade Two teacher's comment summarised it comprehensively.

"Support from colleagues, remedial teacher, psychologist, parents, extra assistance in the classroom, i.e. aids to supervise most of the learners while the learners with reading problems are attended to".

Teachers acknowledge that they are overburdened and cannot deal with learners experiencing reading problems, at the expense of the other learners who not experience any reading problems.

The following represent examples of answers on the questionnaire used when conducting data analysis:

TABLE 4.3 Answers on questionnaire: Example of data analysis

Grade One teachers:	
"I am a bit sceptical about it because	Negative emotion
it only caters for part of the class"	
"It does not cater for pupils with	
perceptual developmental problems that	Cultural bias
are behind in some areas. Pupils are from	
different cultural backgrounds"	
"Dat daar te min ure in die dag is om meer	
aandag aan elke kind se behoeftes te gee"	Time
(There are too few hours in the day to attend	
to every learner's need)	
Grade Two teachers:	
"Not at all. When the theory is accomplished at	
college, no redults are visible. Not enough	Training
practical experience gained".	
"No money, we must make do with very little"	Financial
Grade Three teachers:	
Individual testing and then I confer with the	Assessment
remedial teacher to confirm the results"	
"Whatever it takes for me to gather more information	
and assistance in trying to help the learners	
who are struggling"	Support
"Refer to remedial"	Refer to specialist

4.8.2 In-depth interviews

Throughout the in-depth interviews the three teachers were willing to share their ideas and opinions about teaching reading. The researcher is aware that the three Junior Primary teachers are not statistically representative of the Junior Primary teachers' population, but feels comfortable that they represent the beliefs, attitudes and expectations of most of Junior Primary teachers. The themes that became apparent in analysing the in-depth interview data, were the following:

4.8.2.1 Teaching reading approaches

It is a given that teachers teach learners to read. How they accomplish their goal differ from school to school or from teacher to teacher at a particular school. The assumption was that teachers hang on to the reductionistic teaching approaches. The researcher's rationale with the in-depth interviews was to explore this assumption. The approaches described by the three teachers supported certain assumptions, but also challenged the reductionistic teaching approaches. The Grade One teacher, although she was not clear on her specific teaching approach, believed,

"...the reading approach must be used with the phonics programme".

The teacher's motivation for this statement was that she felt that learners become confused when they are taught the phonics apart from a reading approach or reading series. In her own words:

"..because you find that when teachers teach, they teach a phonics lesson like totally separate from the reading lesson..".

125

The Grade One teacher felt that teachers in general placed to much emphasis on single sounds:

"..in reading series, like say you using the reading series, Cathy and Mark, the child would in his phonics lesson be doing sounds only...".

"...so when you teaching something like Mark, you would say that is the 'au' sound..".

The teacher postulates that the learner, when taught the single sounds like 'a" and 'r', they get confused when they see it combined as 'ar' in Mark.

The following response seems to underscore her notion and belief:

"..the kids don't even know that its the same thing they are doing, or that they supposed to know their phonics to help them with their reading".

Evidently the Grade One teacher is frustrated with the phonics and the look-and-say approaches being used alone, as described in her own words:

".. they can only phonetically sound words if it is single sounds, but they don't know any other sounds".

In addition, she elaborates on her dissatisfaction:

"..That is why you'll find children who will read book three in their series; they will read all three books with the books closed, but they cannot actually read anything".

The Grade One teacher though, seems to support the breakthrough approach as a reading approach.

"...the words are broken up, they're single words, and the child builds sentences and writes his own sentences, so it gives the child more practice and he actually memorise the individual word out of context...".

The Grade Two teacher, in agreement with the Grade One teacher, is comfortable about her approach. She also is a strong spokesperson for the breakthrough to literacy approach in reading. She feels that the breakthrough to literacy approach is advantages, because it is based on the following philosophy:

"..what the child thinks, he can write down, and what he can write down, he can read".

In addition, the difference according to this teacher between the breakthrough to literacy and the look-and-say and phonics method, is that instead of the teacher presenting the reading material, the child can bring words from their experiences:

"...where there's a happening, and then as each child experiences that happening, you know, he can write it down".

She, however, revealed a criticism against the breakthrough to literacy approach. The Grade Two teacher believed:

"...they depend very largely on word recognition, and if you have a pupil who got visual problems, then it is rather a big problem for them to be able to sort of use the words..".

The Grade Three teacher, though she was very vague on elaborating on her specific teaching reading approach, mentioned the Cathy and Mark reading series that is being

used at their school. In addition, it seems as if their teachers would make use of a picture or pictures and would have sentences that would say something about the pictures. The learners through repetition of these sentences would eventually cut it up to formulate their own sentences. The Grade Three teacher was also of the opinion that, when the learner has mastered those words to start with, it would create the basis for further incidental learning.

"..now the rest of the words, the child might then need in his first year to read would come from the incidental learning..".

It seems, as derived from the data that teachers, on the one hand seem to still embrace the reductionistic teaching reading approaches. This is most probably because they feel inadequate and incompetent to deal with the various intricacies. The breakthrough to literacy approach is used by various teachers, but it is not deemed faultless.

4.8.2.2 Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes Based Education

The premise of the Outcomes Based Education idea is to look at the content of the curriculum and what the learner can do. The reductionistic approaches, in contrast, look at what the learner cannot do.

About 90% of the teachers in the sample have been introduced to the Curriculum 2005 and OBE ideas. Certain teachers' attitudes are very positive towards these ideas, while others remain sceptical and negative. The theory, principles and philosophy of Curriculum 2005 and OBE sounds very noble indeed, but the three teachers on

grassroots level seem to have ambiguous feelings. These sentiments were captured by the three Junior Primary teachers. In the Grade Two teacher's own words:

"..but at the moment, you know, we feel very, very unsure of this outcomes based teaching. I as an experienced teacher can see the wonderful advantages of this, but at the moment I feel scared, because I don't know how I am going to apply all those wonderful ideas in my classroom and still be able to teach my children how to read...".

The fear and anxiety of this teacher is almost tangible:

" You know it feels, and also the, the, we've been to the courses. The terminology is so difficult and it is not sort of classroom-based".

"..and I think, because we feel unsure about that, it does cause a lot of stress.."

"..we must start, next year with Curriculum 2005 must be implemented in Grade Two, and 'm telling you.."

"..its not going to be a very pleasant December holiday for me, because I'm really, I really feel inadequate at the moment".

The Grade One teacher is not threatened by the OBE and Curriculum 2005 ideas. She thinks, the learner needs to progress from the concrete to the abstract and go through the developmental stages when learning to read. In addition, the Grade One teacher also expressed herself in that she felt that with OBE, nothing has really changed. She sums it up in her own words:

"..move from the concrete to the semi-concrete and the abstract, so with OBE

nothing has really changed, the child still has to read, and you still has to follow the same developmental stages.."

"..you can never say with the OBE, they don't have to read or they don't have to spell correctly and they don't have to write correctly, they do, that's the skills they need to learn".

Though the Grade One teacher does not feel threatened by the Curriculum 2005 and OBE ideas, she has her reservations when it comes to the implementation of the concepts. Her ambiguous feelings are captured in her own words:

"I find that in the light of changing things in the country and the economic things, OBE, what its intending to do, mean like equips the child, it's like a survival kit, it's a good thing.."

"..but what I find is possibly going to happen and is happening in the past few years, that the basics of reading have fallen by the way side..".

Asked whether she taught OBE would help, she replied:

"I think it will actually aggravate the problem, where a child had potential to be academic bright, he would like be in an academic stream, he would fall by the wayside, because the possible motivation is not there to succeed, because everybody just does their thing."

The Grade Three teacher had less fears and ambiguous emotions about Curriculum 2005 and the OBE. She expressed herself in the following manner about the Curriculum 2005.

"..I am very excited about Curriculum 2005, because this takes away teaching by an approach".

4.8.2.3 Concerns

Besides the teachers' beliefs about OBE and Curriculum 2005, and what effect it will have on teaching the learner to read, they tend to have other concerns that might hinder the teaching process. The teachers had concerns concerning time, culture, language and outdated material. It was interesting to observe that the concerns did not just come from the white teachers, but also from the coloured teachers. The problems that they were experiencing were not with the learners themselves, but rather the learners having to adapt to the norms of the prescribed curriculum. So the problem at the end of the day, was not the learner or the teacher's, but the prescribed curriculum that the teacher had to uphold.

- **Time**

The time factor is a concern for some teachers. The Grade Three teacher felt that in allocating a specific time for reading, is not sufficient to teach readers to read. In addition, the sentiment was expressed that the role of the teachers has changed dramatically in that teachers must do much more than just teaching reading. The Grade Three teacher's sentiment was captured in her own words:

"The teacher has changed so dramatically over the past five to 10 years, which now your role or your job here, is much more, far much more than just teaching".

The Grade Two teacher seems to underscore the Grade Three teachers' sentiment about the insufficient time for teaching reading:

"..to tell you the honest truth, if I must look at my prescribed times, we often steal time from other subjects, especially from the practical subjects, because we, you take the allocated time for reading, that is definitely not sufficient...".

It became clear from the teachers' opinions that lack of sufficient time is an irritating factor, but they were not really specific what it was that caused them not to have sufficient time. The teacher's answers were a bit vague as demonstrated in one of the answers:

"So there is all these other things concerned, uhm, that you must also handle and take care of in your class. So that definitely makes demands on teaching time..".

The Grade Two teacher, although she was also vague in her explanation about the time factor, seemed to refer to a possible solution concerning the time issue.

"Time is definitely a problem, but I think we sort of straightened that out with a view that they have now the Curriculum 2005, which, you know, that is not going to be boxed in any more..".

- **Culture and language**

Another aspect that could be a concern for teachers as ascertained from the in-depth interview data, were culture and language. It was interesting to observe that the teacher who felt positive about the OBE and Curriculum 2005 ideas, was the same teacher who experienced no significant difficulties with culture. When asked whether she

experiences difficulties with various cultures in her class, she replied:

"..I never really experienced that..".

She did however express her concern about the language issue.

"..that lots of children, the parents, one is Afrikaans speaking and the other is English speaking...the child hear these two languages at the same time, like from the very early stages, and I've found with lots of children that they really struggle. You can see that they don't have a language that they can really think in..".

The Grade One teacher expressed her concerns about the fact that OBE will in reality not help the learner with language problems, because they cannot fail, and then at a later stage the department will come back to the basics, the three 'R's'.

"..if your medium of instruction is not in his language, you cannot fail that child, because that is not his first language, and most of our kids come from Zimbabwe, Angola and they cannot speak English. Kids coming from the Transkei, can only speak Xhosa, and now have to learn English and Afrikaans. So they never passed their medium of instruction".

The fact that learners speak different languages and come from various cultures seems to cause ambiguous feelings in many teachers. Certain teachers feel that the prescribed material is outdated and cause learners to struggle to identify with the content of the material. The excitement of certain teachers, about the OBE and Curriculum 2005 ideas, may be appreciated. Other teachers, however, reveal their anxiety. The teachers that feel positive, believe that the OBE and Curriculum 2005

ideas will allow teachers to be innovative. As stated by one teacher:

"..you are creating your own material..".

This teacher elaborated on the issue of outdated material:

"..our reading series is so outdated, and to buy new ones is terribly expensive..".

"..our classes have become multi-cultural, so there are now white children, coloured children, black children, Muslim children, Hindu children... in one class and Boet and Saartjie unfortunately is just not the thing anymore. In that sense, I'm very excited about Curriculum 2005, because it seems that this has now the answer".

4.8.2.4 Training

Training refers to the training that the teacher received at College or University, but also as a teacher concerning OBE and Curriculum 2005. The Grade Three teacher expressed her concerns about the lack of necessary training.

"..Many teachers are not trained or don't know what's it about and again they try something new but they don't know enough and they haven't got the support so they leave and go back to the old way, and I found that in a certain way is terribly dangerous..".

This teacher, although, she gave credit to her training at the College, feels that colleges, in general have not kept abreast with the various developments of education on the grassroots level. Her disappointment was captured in the following words:

"..in the past 10 years, there have been many new methods introduced to

134

teachers, but not truly followed up or introduced properly enough, or it was not controlled..".

The Grade One teacher seems to underscore the sentiment of the Grade Three teacher.

"They did the correct methods in most cases, but they didn't know why they did it, there was no scientific reason to them doing anything...". "..so teachers who were trained, their methods were okay, just a lot of them weren't told at the time why they use their methods and so a lot of them just dropped the cumbersome parts...".

"They dropped certain things along the way and if they've been told why they were doing certain methods, they might not have dropped certain things, like taking the child from the concrete to the abstract...".

The Grade Two teacher summarises her frustrations about the training, or rather the lack of sufficient training of teachers:

"..the College didn't give us a lot of information about real problems and how to solve it...so I think that is definitely to my mind a big gap in our education as teachers..".

4.8.2.5 Assessment of reading problems

In contrast to the findings on the questionnaire, teachers seem to feel incompetent and inadequate about their training and their teaching approaches. They also feel

powerless when it gets to the causes, identification and rectifying of reading problems. Asked, what teachers seem to experience as the most prominent causes of reading problems, they responded with various, yet significant views.

The Grade Three expressed herself in the following manner:

"..lack of stimulation, the way parents talk to a child... they cannot speak properly themselves..".

She emphasised her viewpoint at a later stage again:

"..it starts at home, with their stimulation, it starts in the pre-primary year and of course the Grade One teacher is the most important one...".

The Grade One teacher also supports the idea that the home conditions are reasons that learners experience reading problems. She is, however, also of the opinion that the teachers, depending in which residential area they teach, are the main causes of reading problems. She feels that teachers are not motivated enough:

"..depending in the area you teach, a lot of the teachers I think can take the blame for what is happening...".

The Grade Two teacher adds another dimension concerning the causes of reading problems:

"..another interesting factor, I've read about, is that all the different types of food, these junk food actually that people eat... can also cause a lot of minor dysfunctions in the brain. And I think that is also a cause.".

It is quite clear, although teachers feel that they lack sufficient training, that they know when something is not all right with a learner about reading. Teachers had various responses regarding their knowledge of the assessment of reading problems. The Grade Two teacher responded in the following manner suggesting that she had difficulty in assessing reading problems: **"..yes, ever so often you know..".**

The Grade One teacher was adamant that the teachers did not know how to assess reading problems: **"..I don't think so..."**. If teachers struggle to assess reading problems correctly, then chances are that they will not know how to rectify a reading problem. Teachers will instinctively know that something is wrong, but could not identify it. The three teachers overwhelmingly felt that teachers did not any how to assess reading problems. The Grade One teacher was of the opinion: **"..no, I think 99% of them don't know what to do. They rant and rave about it, call in the parents and tell the parents that the child has a problem..".**

"... the teachers cannot assess, they will tell you the child can't remember things, and that will be part of the problem why the child cannot read..".

The Grade Three teacher feels that teachers lack empowerment and that they do not try hard enough.

"..my colleagues will crucify me for this, but teachers tend to refer children too quickly... they haven't tried enough on their own with that child.. I mean why not, you make it someone's else's problem, you just pass the buck..".

4.8.2.6 Support

It is evident from the data that teachers are in desperate need for support to combat reading problems. Teachers seem to suggest that they would feel supported if they have more knowledge . **"I think the more knowledgeable the teachers will become, the less your problems will be. "**

Asked how the teachers can become more knowledgeable, the Grade Two teacher responded: **"..I think you must have more like practical sessions.. where you can have a knowledgeable person coming in... or go for extra courses..".**

In addition, this teacher emphasised the support of parents.

"..very handy you know, if parents are better educated as far as stimulating their children, and spending more time with them, reading to them.. that will definitely help...".

The Grade Two teacher felt she gets enough support from parents and private occupational therapists and psychologists. She maintains, however, that the primary responsibility is with the teacher.

"They must not take over, they should not be expected to take over the responsibilities of the teacher.".

When asked whether enough support was received form the auxiliary services of the Education Department, she was not positive and enthusiastic anymore.

" No, no not at all. Not at all.".

The Grade One teacher was of the opinion that teachers do not have any excuse for not being supported.

"I think teachers, it's not like they aren't equipped, because they can actually get advice. There's a lot of people who can give advice and a lot of teachers do remedial at the primary level at school."

The same teachers are also of the opinion that: **"..teachers aren't prepared to work a bit harder..".**

The following represents an example of answers in the in-depth interviews used when conducting data analysis:

TABLE 4.4 Interviews with three Junior Primary teachers: example of data analysis

Grade One teacher:	
"..because you find that when teachers teach,	
they teach a phonics lesson like totally separate	Teaching reading approach
from the reading lesson.."	
"..OBE, what its intending to do, mean like equips	Curr.2005/OBE
the child, its like a survival kit, its a good thing"	
"..so teachers who were trained, their methods	
were okay.."	Training
".. no, I think 99% of them don't know what to do.."	Assessment
Grade Two teacher:	
"They must not take over, they should not be expected	
to take over the responsibilities of the teacher".	Support
".. the Colleges didn't give us a lot of information	
about real problems and how to solve it.."	Training
Grade Three teacher:	
"..your role or your job here, is much more,	
far much more than just teaching.."	Time
"..now the rest of the words... would come from	
incidental learning..."	Teaching reading approach

The issues identified by the teachers on the questionnaire and by the in-depth interviews, were processed into themes.

Formal

Code-oriented

Text-oriented

Assessment

Teaching reading approach

Time

Informal

Concern

Curriculum 2005/ ← Reading skills

Culture and language

OBE

Rectification

Intrinsic

Pre-teacher

Financial

Causes

Training

Support ⟶ Teachers

Extrinsic

As teacher

Parental
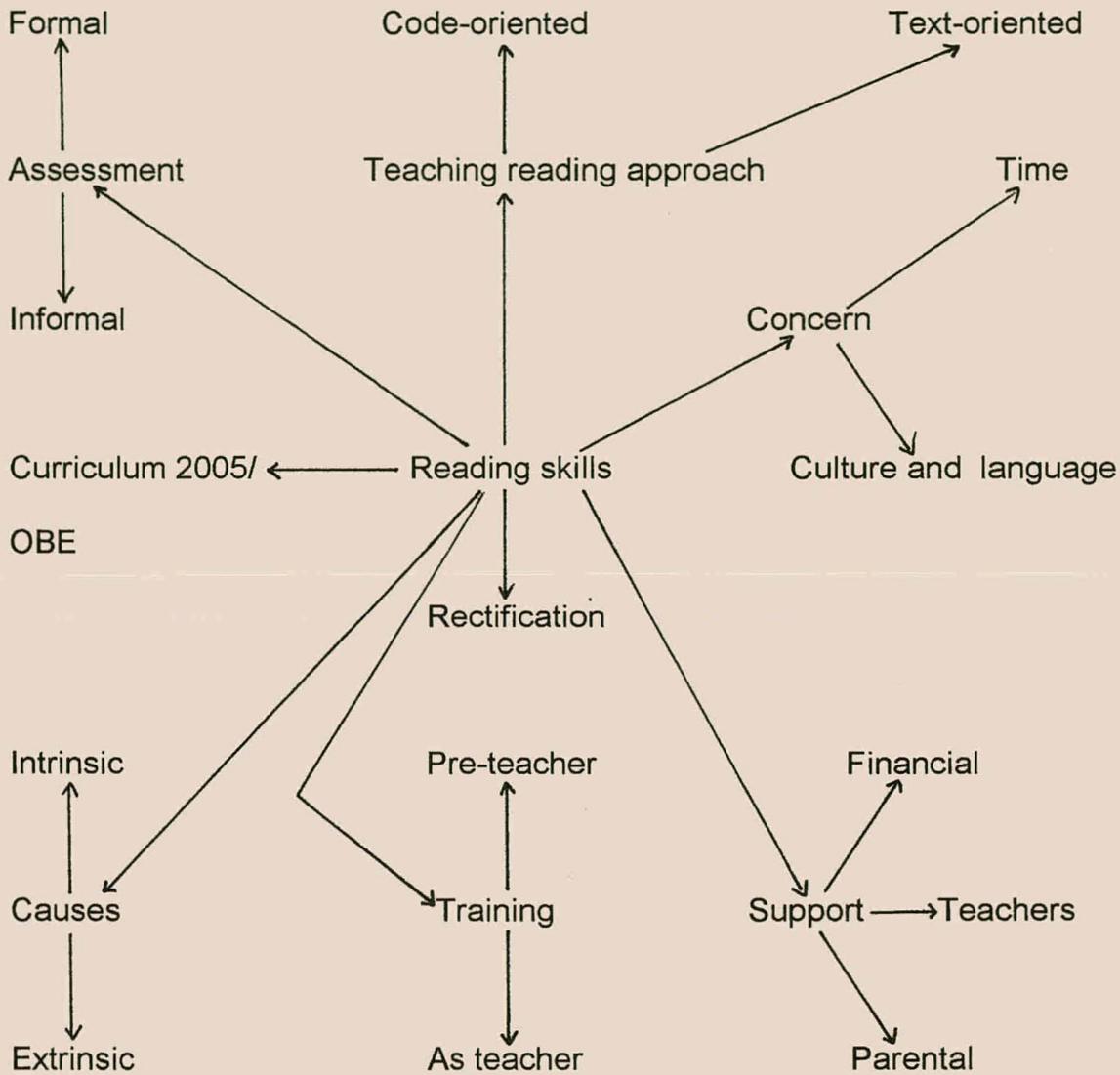
FIGURE 4.4 A concept map of the data themes derived from the questionnaire and the in-depth interviews

4.9 CONSOLIDATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The researcher's primary position in the final analysis of the questionnaire's data has

been that teaching reading approaches must be examined as a possible factor to the

manifestations of reading problems. The researcher studied one aspect of reading teaching approaches, specifically referring to teachers' beliefs. In reading a document such as the researcher's, one may assume that the problem of reading problems are embedded only in teachers' methodological orientation and beliefs concerning their reading approaches. Although this seems like a seductive way of defining the problem, one must question whether the problem is not currently also embedded in prescribed reductionistic approaches of teaching reading itself.

Radical changes and paradigm shifts are taking place in the education department, but questions can be asked whether the teachers have made their paradigm mind shifts. Perhaps the feeble attempts to explore the various beliefs of teachers represent the uncertainty in the Education Department, but perhaps teachers reactions to their teaching reading approaches are realistic adjustments to the truth of these old traditional outdated teaching approaches.

4.9.1 Questionnaire

To summarise, the following assumptions based on the questionnaire, can be derived from the responses stipulated by teachers about beliefs towards their teaching reading approaches.

- The teachers refer constantly to 'child' and 'pupil' in their responses, instead of saying 'learner'. They are unaware of the fact that their terminology is not politically correct.

- Teachers knowledge about their teaching reading approaches seems to differ from their feelings about their teaching approaches. Many teachers seem to dislike their teaching approach, but for one or the other reason continues to teach it. One can argue that teachers seem to teach according to the skills-based and curriculum based approaches instead of assessing the learners content comprehension.

- Although many teachers felt that their teaching approaches are not suitable for all learners, they did not elaborate sufficiently enough on why it is they are negative, which seems to underline their confusion as so what they are supposed to do.

- None of the teachers referred to Curriculum 2005 or OBE and how their teaching approach must incorporate in the new approach.

- Certain teachers are positive and innovative, despite the big classes and the multicultural classes.

- Teachers are in desperate need of training and support to be able to teach more effectively.

4.9.2 In-depth interviews

The purpose of the in-depth interviews were (a) to elaborate on the themes derived from the eighteen questionnaires and (b) to see if different themes would emerge from the three in-depth interviews. In essence, the themes in the in-depth interviews did not differ from the ones that emerged from the questionnaires. The difference however, is that the answers derived from the in-depth interviews, was more detailed and the teachers were allowed to express themselves more freely.

143

The following assumptions, based on the themes as derived from the in-depth interviews, can be made:

- Teachers aren't congruent about their teaching approaches. Certain teachers are coping with their code-oriented approaches, while others try new teaching approaches, because they are critical about the phonics and look-and-say approach. The approaches being used by teachers are the breakthrough to literacy, whole language-approach and the phonics approach. Teachers are not aware of the critical literacy approach to assist learners in their reading skills.

- The curriculum 2005 and OBE ideas are causing ambiguous feelings by teachers. Some teachers welcome the ideas as the answer to the big classes, language difficulties, outdated material and lack of time to teach. Others, on the other hand, feel very scared, because they lack training and they do not know how to implement it. Yet others feel that OBE and Curriculum 2005, are no different from what was done all the time, it was just given a new name. Certain teachers are also of the opinion, that OBE and Curriculum 2005 might even be a factor to reading problems and illiteracy, because learners are not allowed to repeat anymore.

- Teachers seem to have real concerns concerning teaching learners to read. First, they feel that lack of time is a major factor causing teachers not to teach effectively. Certain teachers have to steal time from other subjects. Others feel that with the introduction of OBE and Curriculum 2005, will sort out the time problem. Another concern for teachers was the mixed languages, different cultures and outdated material. OBE and Curriculum 2005 was again hailed as an answer to these

problems by certain teachers.

- Certain teachers felt that their training at college was acceptable, but that they lack practical skills about reading problems. Others felt that their training was to theoretical and it did not keep abreast with the changes in education. Most teachers also felt left in the dark with the training of the OBE and Curriculum 2005. Lack of training causes them to be frightened.

- Most teachers are capable enough to observe that a learner has a reading problem, and most of them believe the major factor to reading problems is the lack of stimulation at home. Some teachers felt that the reading approach in itself and the attitude of the teacher as a factor, cannot be ruled out. Teachers shared the view that teachers do not know how to rectify reading problems. Certain teachers felt that teachers do not do enough to address the problem and that they refer to quickly.

- Teachers opinions differed pertaining to support of teachers. Certain teachers felt that they do not get any support from the auxiliary services of the Education Department. Other teachers felt that there is enough support out there; teachers must just make use of it.

4.10 DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.10.1 Introduction

The data presented in the field study will be discussed. Other important aspects such as the impact of culture, curriculum, time and money, and how it influences the

learners reading skills, are also considered.

4.10.2 Teaching reading approach

Teaching reading to learners is considered a very complex and unique experience and teachers should therefore not only utilise one approach of teaching reading (Crawford, 1995:71-83). Donald et al., (1997:61) are also of the opinion that teachers have the responsibility to match instructional materials and approaches to the needs of individual learners.

The results indicate that, although teachers make use of various teaching approaches, 80% of teachers in the sample use direct systematic instructional approaches such as the phonics approach (as discussed in Chapter Two). These approaches, are considered reductionistic and skills-based (Crawford, 1995:71-84; Foorman, 1995: 376-392; Spiegel, 1992:38-43). The assumption that can be derived from the data analysis, is that teachers methodological orientation towards teaching reading, is the "bottom-up" approach, where the units are taught before whole sentences.

What also became apparent in the results, is that about 80% of the teachers in the sample use of a prescribed curriculum. The prescribed curriculum is predominantly teacher-centered and not learner-centered. Teachers make use of different book series prescribed by the Western Cape Education Department.

Not all teachers, however, find themselves stuck in the direct systematic instructional approaches. Certain teachers, although they focus mainly on a direct systematic approach, are quite aware of the whole-language approach. Some of them are experimenting with the idea as it is expected to function within the OBE and Curriculum 2005 concept (NCESS/NCSNET, 1998:54). The same teachers, however, did complain and expressed their scepticism about whether OBE and Curriculum 2005 will be practical. About 90% of teachers in the sample complained that their training in OBE was insufficient. Many felt that they should have been trained properly before the launching and implementation of the new curriculum. Teachers' emotions towards their teaching approaches ranged from positive to negative.

4.10.3 Concerns

Teachers are the main mediators in the reading process in the classroom, and their concerns regarding reading are extremely important. Teachers have always had debates about what to teach, how to teach and which approaches to use (Adams, 1990:290-292; West, 1992: 4-5).

4.10.3.1 Outdated material

Information derived from the data analysis reveal that teachers are concerned about outdated material being used and that it could be culturally biased. Although about 60% of the teachers in the sample expressed their concern about this issue, they just 'blindly' followed the prescribed curriculum. Though they sometimes know that their

material is outdated, they are waiting for officials from the Western Cape Education Department to come up with new reading material to use in their classrooms.

Teachers complain that the learners cannot read because the reductionistic approaches are not always very effective. About 25% of the teachers in the sample are willing to 'step' outside their comfort zone. Once again the impression is given that some teachers, are lacking innovative and creative skills to 'develop' their own creative material.

None of the teachers ever heard of the term critical literacy.

4.10.3.2 Time

Many teachers feel that the time factor is a major concern. Too little time is allocated to teach learners to read, which also create the situation that the teacher has too little time to make allowance for the learner who is experiencing problems. The Outcomes Based Education approach as detailed in the NCESS/NCSNET report (1998:54-62), will also allow the teacher to manage or use her time more effectively concerning reading. Reading lessons can actually be maintained the whole day, without letting the teacher and the learner feel entrapped within an allocated time period. Once again, however, teachers have indicated that they have had too little training to implement Outcomes Based Education effectively.

4.10.4 Causes of reading problems

The analysis of the data reveal that most teachers in the sample are aware of reading problems. Many can pinpoint the lack of stimulation and involvement of the parents at home as major contributors to reading problems. What became clear was that, even though many teachers felt dissatisfied with their teaching approaches, none of them 'blamed' their own teaching approaches as a possible cause of reading problems. It was so much easier to externalise the blame to the parents.

In addition, very few teachers have the knowledge of how intrinsic factors contribute to reading problems as well as how intrinsic and extrinsic factors interact. Teachers feel they are trained to do a specific 'job', and that is all they are doing. They are not being paid to attend in-service workshops or to do further research themselves. But, then again, in all fairness to the teachers, they do have little time, due to extra murial activities, and besides they are the lowest paid professionals in South Africa.

4.10.5 Assessment of reading problems

Most teachers worldwide have until recently tended to use the norm-referenced- based assessment approach, where learners are assessed on their skills attained against a set of norms (Peverly & Kitzen, 1998:29-42). The perception is that South African teachers are following the same trend (NCESS/NCSNET, 1998:83-85). There has however been a movement toward continuous assessment within classrooms. The goal is the identification of instructional alternatives that create enhanced reading

performance. The teacher uses the learner's strengths (knowledge and skills) to lead the learner to integrate new information as well as new strategies into his/her reading repertoire (Walker, 1996:11).

About 80% of South African teachers in the sample, either use norm-referenced-based assessments, or uses informal reading assessment strategies like observation and curriculum-based assessment. The fact of the matter is though, that South African teachers are still focusing on what the learner cannot do, in other words, his/her weaknesses. They seem to feel comfortable in using the diagnostic and standardised tests to assess the learner, because it helps them to identify whether the learner has a reading problem.

The tragedy is that the majority of learners that are being identified as having a reading problem, are the black and the coloured learners. They are assessed against a set of norms that is 'white flavoured'. It does not take into account their historical and socio-political contexts. It is no wonder it is not difficult at all for teachers to identify reading problems. However, Outcomes Based Education and Curriculum 2005, because of the emphasises on content and skill, will require that teachers look at learners strengths as opposed to their weaknesses.

4.10.6 Rectifying of reading problems

Data derived from the questionnaires and in-depth interviews seem to reveal that the

majority of the teachers do not know how to rectify reading problems. Some of them felt that it was beyond their scope to rectify reading problems. Others felt that they do not have the necessary skills and tools to rectify reading problems.

4.10.7 Training

The data analysis reveal that most teachers in the sample use outdated teaching approaches, because they are not up to date regarding new developments. They tend to continue using the approaches in which they were initially trained. Besides the lack of adequate in-service training, they also acknowledge that they did not get any further in-depth training in Outcomes Based Education and Curriculum 2005.

Training should be a lifelong learning process (NCSNET/NCESS,1998:54-57). Information is dynamic in nature, and when knowledge changes approaches to handle or control that knowledge, must be able to evolve with it. If approaches do not evolve with time, the approach can become stagnated. The tragedy in South Africa is that teachers have for a long time clung to the old reductionistic approaches of teaching. Many teachers were trained many years ago. They, however, still use their same old approaches. Very few teachers go for additional training; that is why so many of them will not know what new approaches are available.

4.10.8 Support

4.10.8.1 Teacher support

Teachers function like islands. Many of them lack support, especially from the officials of the Western Cape Education Department. On the other hand, many teachers are too proud to say that they do not know what to do. Many feel that other teachers are going to think that they are poor teachers and they feel it is going to be a reflection on them and their teaching approach.

4.10.8.2 Financial support

It became evident in the data that the teachers in the sample are in desperate need of financial support for resources. Teachers feel that without money access to well-developed teaching aids and other learning materials, are impeded.

4.10.8.3 Parental support

Teachers in the sample declared that they are burdened and overloaded with work and full classes. Teachers are dependent on the emotional and academic support of parents to help the learner develop and learn optimally. Teachers stressed the importance of the stimulation and encouragement that parents can give to their children at home. A learner with a positive self-image and a well-developed language background has a good chance of doing well at school.

4.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the research findings were presented, analysed, discussed and interpreted. Connections between central themes were indicated, allowing the reader a holistic view of the importance of the research findings. The data revealed that, although South Africa's educational system is currently in a transitional phase and teachers are required to assess learners on their critical outcomes, teachers still focus on the old traditional, deductive teaching approaches and assessment techniques. The findings will now be used towards the development of guidelines for an in-service training programme for the Junior Primary teacher to assess readers' skills.

CHAPTER FIVE

DEVELOPMENT OF A FRAMEWORK FOR AN IN-SERVICE

TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR JUNIOR PRIMARY TEACHERS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In a discussion on the changing process in education, Donald, et al. (1997:17) and Bothma (1997:48) argue that in order to bring about change, what people believe about what they are involved in, what they think and why they think it and what they do, how they do it, and why they do it, need to be examined. In the development of a framework for an in-service training programme for Junior Primary teachers in assessing learners reading skills, cognisance will be taken of the fact that the participants in this study seem to focus on traditional deductive approaches to teaching reading and assessing reading skills.

This chapter will therefore focus on the development of a framework as well as guidelines for the development of an in-service training programme for Junior Primary teachers. The programme will be based on a holistic approach to teaching reading where meaning will not be derived from the text alone, but also from the transaction between the reader and the text within a social context as defined in Chapter One. The holistic approach to teaching reading will incorporate ecosystemic principles, a whole-language approach, deductive teaching approaches as well as responsive assessment principles. The researcher will attempt to design a possible lesson where the use of a

holistic approach is illustrated.

5.2 RATIONALE FOR A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO TEACHING READING

While reductionism initially served our physical scientific community well, it has disjointed the social sciences and particulary education (Poplin, 1988:398). Perhaps reading has been one area hardest hit by reductionism. The rationale for a holistic approach based on the ecosystemic framework, as discussed throughout this study, is not to discard all the principles of the reductionistic approach, but rather to minimise reductionism, measurement and behaviouristic instructional methodology and to turn towards a non-reductionistic approach to reading, teaching reading and assessing reading. The point of departure in the development of an in-service training programme will be what teachers already know about teaching reading and to incorporate their existing skills and knowledge into a holistic framework.

The holistic approach to teaching reading within the South African context combined with responsive assessment, as discussed in Chapter Three, is based on the premise that more learners could be reached by teachers if they acknowledge learners backgrounds and experiences and see teacher and learner as partners in the reading process. Teaching, according to the holistic approach, capitalises on learners strengths and abilities, rather than concentrating on learners deficits. According to Zucker (1993:660-670), learners are treated as competent rather than as deficient, as readers and writers, rather than as learners who have not yet learned the prerequisite skills.

155

In addition, the South African education system and the teachers teaching approaches cannot continue to ignore readers' historical socio-political background contexts. The learner is a sub-system embedded within a family and school system which is embedded within his local and larger community system, as illustrated in the following figure (5.1).
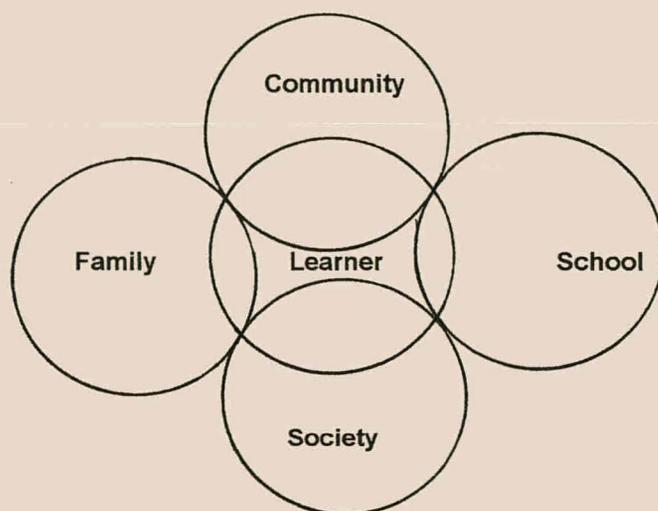
FIGURE 5.1 The following represents a depiction of how the learner is a sub-system of other systems.

According to this approach, the fundamental basis for teaching and assessing reading, emphasises the integration of content curriculum areas as well as reading skills, like the accuracy of reading, rate of coding and comprehension as well as the related language processes.

5.3 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOLISTIC READING APPROACH

The holistic approach to teaching reading, for it to be effective and applicable should adhere to the following characteristics:

- It should be able to have internal consistency by being able to illustrate both successful and unsuccessful literacy learning;

- The approach should have ecosystemic validity, because it should acknowledge the learner within his sociopolitical context;

- The approach must be applicable in practice, because it will serve as the foundation for the design of instructional structures, processes and activities;

- Whatever is taught and learnt through literacy in the classroom, should be transferable to the real world;

- The approach should be compatible with the majority of learners allowing them to acquire literacy skills.

In addition, the researcher is of the opinion that the holistic approach to teaching reading should incorporate the following three vital components.

5.3.1 Teaching reading as fact

Teaching reading as fact assumes that teaching and learning are objective processes involving the breakdown of knowledge into logical components that are then transmitted to the learner (Altwerger & Floris, 1994:2-6). This assumption is based on the premise that certain learners struggle to decode letters and words. It is thus imperative that the

teacher present the learner with certain decoding and word-attacking skills to promote effective reading. As discussed in Chapter One and Two, the reductionistic teaching approaches is predominantly skills-based, because the teacher applies direct instruction techniques, from the unit to the whole, to teach the learner to read. It can also be called the transmission model of learning because it is based on the assumption that meaning is directly transmitted from the author to the reader. The learner is viewed as passive, whose primary objective is to extract the author's intended meaning, rather than as an active maker of meaning. Learners are expected to decode the message presented implicitly or explicitly by the text without reference to their own experiences, the cultural milieu in which the text was written, or presumed intentions of the author (Heald-Taylor, 1996:456-464).

5.3.2 Teaching reading as activity

Teaching reading as activity corresponds with the concept of the ecosystemic approach. The learner is observed as more than a passive receiver of knowledge. Learners construct their own meaning through interaction with the content of the language in a stimulating environment. The learner gains meaning through the guidance of the teacher or through a transaction between the learner and the text. In contrast to the teaching reading as fact approach, learners construct knowledge and meaning as they gradually differentiate and integrate life experiences (McCarthey & Raphael, 1992:11).

5.3.3 Teaching reading as inquiry

Teaching reading as inquiry is based on the principles of inductive learning, reflective thinking and literature response. Teachers and learners are viewed as active creators of knowledge in the teaching reading as inquiry approach as knowledge is constructed through social interactions with others in dynamic learning environments (McCarthey & Rapheal, 1992:12-14). Advocates of this approach suggest that language learning is both personal and social and is driven by the learner's need to make sense of the world. The critical literacy component incorporated into the teaching reading as inquiry, is that knowledge is viewed more as process than content. It is rooted in personal socio-political meaning that cannot be separated from the learning environment. Meaning is derived in multidimensional ways through interacting with the text, discussion with others, and in personal reflection. An important feature of this approach is the acceptance of diverse learner interpretations.

5.3.4 Conclusion

The holistic approach to teaching reading, even though it emphasises the teaching of reading as inquiry more implicitly, cannot ignore the teaching of reading as fact and the teaching of reading as activity explicitly. All learners do not necessarily learn to read in the same manner. The teacher must thus be accommodating to various learners' reading needs. The holistic methodological approach, in the researcher's opinion, is based on these three teaching of reading principles.

5.4 CONDITIONS OF READING

Conditions of reading can both affect and be affected by each other in a cyclical manner. Demonstrated in the following section is an explanation of the conditions of reading and relevant terminologies. A model of conditions of reading (Figure 5.2), and a model of classroom literacy learning (Figure 5.3), are presented.

5.4.1 Conditions of reading within the family

The learner is primarily an individual sub-system of the family system where he should actively be involved with his environment that he happens to find himself in. Learners who are exposed to conducive oral language and reading material within the family have an advantage above learners who are deprived of such priviledges. Effective and continual exposure to oral language by parents can be considered as a prerequisite for a learner to be able to read successfully. When the learner is exposed to literacy, as discussed in Chapter One, he can make sense of social events, because language and literacy are culturally specific.

5.4.2 Conditions of reading within the classroom

The teacher and the learner are sub-systems of the school system. Although the teacher is the secondary educator, it is important that the learner be continually and effectively exposed to oral language and print. Both the teacher and the learner must be active collaborators in the reading process. The classroom must be of such a nature that learners would be stimulated and enriched by reading material. Learners must, in

addition, be able to have the liberty to write and read about their own life experiences within their own socio-political contexts.

5.4.3 Conditions of reading within the community

The community encapsulates the school, family and individual learner as systems within a broader system. All these systems are interdependent on one another and affect each other in a cyclical manner. Communities with the necessary infrastructures like libraries and community centres, have the advantage that learners can be exposed to a print-rich environment. A literate community will promote and enhance literacy programmes at schools, which in turn may stimulate families to read more.

5.4.4 Relevant requirements for conditions of reading

5.4.4.1 Active involvement

The holistic approach values active involvement in meaningful reading of both the teacher and the reader. **This model is neither learner-centered, nor teacher-centered, but rather teacher-learner-centered.** The teacher and the learner will be actively collaborating with each other. Teachers will permit learners to actively explore reading material. The rule of thumb is for both the teacher and the learner to approach the literature context with open minds. Active involvement means that both teacher and learner will have to ask critical questions, true to the nature of the critical literacy approach. The story of the "Three little pigs" can be used as an example. The following questions were adapted from the work by Simpson (1996: 118-126):

161

Where do you think the author might have got the ideas for this book?

What message does the author want you get from the story?

Why did the three little pigs have to leave home?

Where was the father of the three little pigs?

What haven't you been told that you would like to know?

If you had to tell or write the story, how would you have told it differently?

5.4.4.2 Demonstration of the holistic approach

The teacher when using the holistic teaching approach, will focus on the language processes, because it is considered as a prerequisite to learning how to read. This approach will allow both the teacher and the learner to facilitate the learning process by addressing the learners strengths more effectively. The underlying rationale of the holistic approach allows the teacher to emphasise a developmental approach that enables a more individualised format to ensure that the learner will meet with success (Smith-Burke, Deegan, & Jagger, 1991:58-68).

The holistic teaching reading approach moves away from the emphasis of the reductionistic and fragmented skills toward a more meaningful, integrated approach to learning subject material. Teachers using the holistic teaching reading approach also permits multisensory language learning experiences that are meaningful, varied, and fun. Instruction within the holistic approach is of a complimentary nature, in that various professionals, like the speech and language teachers, the mainstream and learning

162

support (previously called remedial teachers, can all organised their activities under one thematic umbrella (Zucker, 1993:660-669).

5.4.4.3 Outcomes based expectations

The teacher and the reader must know that he/she will not be assessed on what he/she cannot do, or read, but rather on what he/she can do, or read. The emphasis is thus not on the skills only, but on the content of the reading material as well. Both the teacher and learner must emphasise and concentrate equally on listening comprehension and reading comprehension. Learners must not only be able to understand what is conveyed to them orally, but must also be able to understand the written text. The learner must be able to write what he/she thinks and experiences, and be able to read with understanding what he/she wrote. Learners are thus not given outcomes that are "too difficult" or that they might fail. Learners need to experience success rather than failure. Life skills should be included, so that learners can apply it in their daily lives. The example of the story of the "Three little pigs", can suffice as a lesson for learners to be careful to strangers, or to equip them with knowledge about worldly aspects to protect them from intruders in their lives.

5.4.4.4 Co-responsibility

Teaching reading approaches with the reductionistic-oriented perspective as point of departure, place a lot of emphasis on responsibility on the teacher to ensure what the learner reads, where , when and how the learner reads. The holistic approach, in

contrast, emphasise that the learner choose what, when, where and how he will read. The researcher is of the opinion that both the teacher and learner within the holistic approach needs to have co-responsibility. Both needs to collaborate with each other consistently. No one will feel dominated or isolated in the process. Critical literacy questions can be asked by either the teacher or the learner. For example, the teacher might ask a question like, "If you lived in China or Iran, would the idea of the pigs in the story still work? In contrast, the learner might ask a question, "Why did the author use pigs and a wolf and not people?.

5.4.4.5 Application

This condition refers to the opportunities for use and exercises that are provided by the teacher and the readers themselves. Readers needs to be allowed both time and opportunity to apply their immature, developing reading skills. A reader should not be penalised or embarrassed if he/she struggles to read, but should rather be encouraged by both his/her teacher and co-learners to keep on trying. A climate of encouragement should be cultivated by the teacher and learners. Consequently the opportunity granted for the reader to apply his/her new learned skills, will enable him/her to gain increasing control of the conventional forms of reading toward which he/she is working. The more the reader uses his/her reading skills, the more confident and fluent he/she will be able to read and converse with the content of the text. Besides reading skills, the teacher must create a warm atmosphere to allow learners to feel comfortable and to ask as many questions as possible.

5.4.4.6 Inquiry/Guess

Learners must have the freedom to make mistakes in their exploration with the reading material and their critical questions. Readers learn through exploring with the reading material. Every reading and question-asking situation is a learning experience. When learners guess, they are actually attempting to emulate what is being demonstrated. The teachers' role is to enthusiastically and warmly receive these 'mistakes' and perceive it as a learning process. If the learner does not feel embarrassed or anxious, he/she will be willing and confident to 'guess' and inquire more. Incidental learning can take place.

The teacher and the reader will not have to worry about these unconventional forms becoming permanent fixtures in the learner's repertiore, because the learner's immature reading and question-asking skills will eventually make way for the more conventional reading and question-asking skills.

5.4.4.7 Feedback/response

When the learner seizes the initiative to explore, demonstrate, apply, accept responsibility, and guess, it is of imperative significance that the teachers and the co-learners correct the learner in a loving, warm and meaningful manner. The initiative to create the culture of encouragement, learning and warmness towards co-learners, is unfortunately initially the responsibility of the teacher, till the learners can do it by themselves. For example, when the learner reads "tat pen is mine" for "that pen is

mine", the teacher and co-learners needs to correct the learner and still retain his/her dignity. The same principle is applicable when learners asks critical questions. The atmosphere must be created in the classroom so that all learners can understand and appreciate that there are no wrong or right questions. All questions are valid and needs valid answers. These type of exhanges will serve the purpose of sharing information about the language in general, and the reading text, in particular and the degree of control the learner has over it at any one time.

The teacher and co-learners is supplying the learner with the missing bits as he/she guesses. The responsibility is ultimately that of the learner as to whether he/she wants to accept the correction of the teacher and or co-learners. The feedback/response condition of this model must be viewed as a synergistic relationship, where none of the other conditions should be viewed as individually capable and independent. All the conditions should be viewed as interdependent, but that the feedback/response should be the driving "force" for each condition.

5.4.4.8 Commitment of teacher and learner

The condition of commitment of the teacher and learner should also be viewed as influential in all the other conditions. **This approach is both teacher- and learner-centered.**

The following represents an example of a model of conditions of reading:

166

Readers and teachers
need to be actively
involved in text of ⟵————— Active involvement
all kinds

Readers needs to receive   Holistic approach
many lesson demonstrations ⟵——   demonstration
on how words are constructed
and used

Outcomes-based expectations
based on what the reader   ⟵——— Outcomes based   Commitment of
can do as opposed to what   expectations   ⟵ teacher & learner
cannot do
Emphasis on skills & content

Readers and teachers need to
make decisions together about ⟵——— Co-responsibility
what, how and when to read

Readers need time and
opportunity to apply and   ⟵———— Application
practice new reading
skills

Readers must be free to ⟵———— Guess/enquiry
explore & make mistakes
in reading

Readers can get feedback
from teacher and other   Feedback/
learners. Response must be ⟵———   response
relevant and appropriate

**FIGURE 5.2   Model of conditions of reading**

The following represents an example of a model of classroom literacy

learning:

Code-oriented skills-based

Responsive assessment ←——→ Learner-teacher

Text-oriented Whole language-based
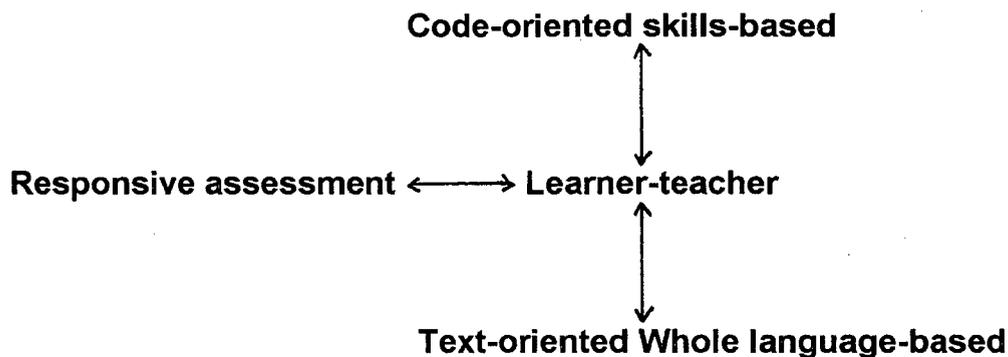
FIGURE 5.3 Model of classroom literacy learning, after Cambourne (1995:182-190)

5.5 ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The following quotation refers adequately to the role of the teacher:

> **"If the teacher accepts the children's social experiences as significant and allows them to use their own ways of contextualising issues or readings, she or he can take advantage of their language and experiences in order to build upon their already established repertoire of literate thinking"** (Roller & Beed, 1994:513).

5.5.1 Focus on the whole-language approach within a holistic approach

It is of utmost importance that the teacher demonstrates the whole act of reading as an example of mediated learning. It will extend the learner's current level of growth to a more advanced, but reachable level of development. As the teacher sets the example

by reading with enthusiasm and creating an appreciation for the printed language, learners will experience reading as an enjoyable event and perceive it is a major part of the curriculum (Spiegal, 1992:38-43).

The whole act of reading is based on the seven conditions as described by Cambourne (1995: 182-190) as presented in Figure 5.3:

- Both the teacher and the reader need to be actively involved in a print-rich environment, where the the walls, for example, are covered with signs and posters;

- The readers need to receive many lesson demonstrations including modelling by both their peers and the teacher. Sing-along books are very popular to use in the classroom;

- The whole act of reading must have a outcomes-based expectancy, where the learner are shown what he/she can do as opposed to what he/she cannot do;

- Within the whole act of reading both the teacher and the learner need to make decisions together about what, how and when to read. The learner develops a sense of ownership of the reading process;

- Readers need time and opportunity to apply and practice their new reading skills;

- Within the whole act of reading, readers must be allowed to explore and feel safe to make mistakes in reading. Their successes must continuously be rewarded;

- Readers must be able to receive feedback from both their teacher and peers (Zucker, 1993:662).

As teachers focus on the whole act of reading, they engage learners in a discussion about both the content of the story and the strategies they use to construct meaning. The learner thus learns to shift between reader-based knowledge and the text and how the strategies of reading will influence reading efficiency when problems in text interpretation arise. These demonstrations and strategies should be viewed as comprehensive, but it is not intended for use in a linear progression. The strength of the whole act of reading, lies in it's flexibility for supporting "teachable moments" during natural classroom involvement.

5.5.2 Emphasise success

As the teacher progresses in the progress of teaching reading and explains the meaningfulness of literature, she/he must ask fewer questions. She/he must rather support learners to clarify and articulate questions that mattered to them, so that they would become less dependent upon the teacher. It is thus very important that the teacher creates a series of consistently successful reading events. To ensure success, the teacher can choose material that contains familiar concepts so that learners can easily and readily apply their prior knowledge to predict, monitor, and elaborate their understanding.

5.5.3 Encourage active reading

Learners will use trial-and error by selecting clues from the story to confirm their guesses and then validate this knowledge with what they already know. The teacher

encourages the learner to actively explore the text in order to construct meaning as they read. The learners, through active reading, extend ideas, revise misconceptions, develop opinions, and prove beliefs. Thus "what a reader reads may mean more to the reader than it did to the author" (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984:122). Active reading, according to Goldenberg (1993:316-326), is reading by creating instructional conversations and focussing on constructing ideas rather than giving right or wrong answers. Active reading should also be viewed where both the teacher and the learner are active collaborators in the reading process.

5.5.4 Build independence

Teachers need to encourage and promote an atmosphere of responsibility and independence for learners in order to enable them to become independent readers. Learners needs to think about their thinking. By becoming less dependent on the teacher, the learner will be able to think more critically. Learners, when they can read independently, can actively choose alternate strategies when reading does not make sense. When learners can read independently, their chances to experience success are so much greater.

5.5.5 Sensitive to individual differences

Learners in a classroom with diverse learners from diverse backgrounds, bring their own experiences and knowledge from their various social contexts. Learners from a same culture or social experience, may present impulsive tendencies, others might be

extremely verbal, still others might be distractible. The secret is for the teacher to reduce stress by acknowledging and accepting differences and by placing emphasis on learners' strengths. Being sensitive to the individual differences will demand that the teacher assesses on a continuous basis what the learners already know, as well as the way the learner learned what they already know so that new information can be presented using the learners strengths.

5.5.6 Foster a reality-based approach

Whatever the teacher teaches will be to the advantage of the learner if he/she can apply it to his/her real life circumstances. The effective teacher creates a relaxed environment where learners can take risks and correct mistakes as they experiment with new ideas. The teacher needs to expect that all learners will grow and learn from their mistakes. A reality-based approach to instruction is thus just that it makes reading a real and personal event for the learner.

5.6 READING ASSESSMENT

5.6.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Three, an answer to the current fragmented approach to assessing reading can be responsive assessment. Responsive assessment needs to be responsive to the changes in teaching reading approaches and should take the developments in literacy into account. Responsive assessment thus does not only lead to new approaches, but place a new emphasis on the role of the reader. In responsive

assessment emphasis is switched to the classroom and to curriculum-focused assessment practices. Responsive assessment has the advantage above the traditional diagnostic tests, in that it can be of value to the teacher, and it can be of direct value to the reader (Harrison & Salinger, 1998:10). Effective responsive assessment have to be underscored by the following principles:

- It must be authentic, continuous, multi-dimensional, varied and balanced;

- It must be accurate, objective, valid, bias free, sensitive to gender, race, cultural background and abilities;

- Progression should be linked to the achievement of the specific outcomes, timeously and meaningfully;

- Assessment should always be made explicit and the evidence of the progress in achieving outcomes shall be used to identify areas where learners need support and remedial intervention.

Norm-referenced measurement of reading by psychologists and other professionals have made many teachers feel de-skilled in the area of reading assessment. Responsive assessment in contrast, calls for increased emphasis on continuous teacher assessment, portfolio assessment, self- and peer assessment. Continuous diagnostic assessment allows the teacher to collect a sample of reading behaviour prior to instruction. During continuous assessment, the teacher monitors the effects of her/his instruction by comparing unaided reading performance and mediated reading behaviour. With the guided or mediated reading, the teacher for example can

constantly ask what will make this a successful reading event for the learners. As she/he teaches the planned lesson, she/he encourages the learners to read actively by focussing their attention on constructing meaning with text. She/he can probe with leading questions: "What did the author mean when she/he said that? Does that (the answer) make sense in relation to the other ideas presented in the story?" (Walker, 1996:57-58). The responsibility of responsive assessment is thus shared between the teacher and the reader.

5.6.2 Portfolio assessment

Portfolio assessment focuses on achievement in reading in terms of pre-determined outcomes. The teacher and her/his learners select artifacts to illustrate how literacy is progressing in the classroom. These artifacts are organised into a portfolio. Attached to each piece is a reflective statement of what the artifact shows about literacy development. The portfolios provide an assessment of learners' literacy over time and from multiple contexts, allowing the teacher and learners to evaluate growth. Portfolios, then, record the dynamic reading process that is embedded in instruction. Portfolios also become a tool for communicating with parents and teachers as well as putting the assessment in the hands of the learner (Walker, 1996:121-134).

5.6.3 Self -and peer-assessment

Should the teacher use diagnostic assessment, it should only be regarded as an element of **formative assessment.** The value of **self-assessment** and **peer-**

assessment cannot be underestimated by the teacher. The teacher can use checklists or observation sheets, journals or the cumulative records of the learners. Self- and peer-assessment should be approached in terms of all possible dimensions, and recording and reporting should be done accordingly. **Self- and peer-assessment** direct learners attention to the use of various strategies and to the effect the implementation has on their reading. It also helps learners draw relationships among their strategy use, skill knowledge, and personal effort. Constructing a chart can provide an avenue for the learners and teacher to discuss the strategies that the learners are using and how the strategies or skills will enhance active reading.

An example of a possible chart:

TABLE 5.1 Chart for self- and peer-assessment

How I (peer) read today	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Fluently in phrases					
Mostly in phrases				*	*
Sometimes word by word		*	*		
Mostly word by word	*				

Portfolios, checklists, observation sheets, journals or cumulative records of learners should accompany them throughout their educational career, and should reflect on both academic achievement and the holistic development of the learner.

5.6.4 Other responsive assessment strategies

The following represent other responsive assessment strategies that can be used by the teacher:

- Start small and try out various assessment activities at a time;

- Expect to take more time in the beginning. As the process becomes more familiar and comfortable, it will become quicker and easier;

- Endeavour to make changes to the old method of assessing. Plan the new assessment activities so that it reflects these changes, because it is an essential part of the teaching and learning process;

- Share ideas and experiences with fellow teachers, compliment and encourage each other;

- Do continual research on how to improve assessment activities;

- Keep the learners informed about all the assessment activities and what it is that is being assessed;

- Trial and error is all part of the learning process - be willing to take risks and learn from mistakes;

- Experiment with peer- and self-assessment. When learners are involved in the administering of assessments, they become accountable to themselves and each other;

- Evaluation is imperative in assessment. Reflect and evaluate the activities, by asking the following questions:

- What worked?

- What needs to be changed?

- What can be done differently?

- How did the learners respond?

- Did learners learn from the response?

5.6.5 Conclusion

The teacher will be able to accommodate learners who are experiencing diverse reading problems when she uses the responsive assessment principles. The teacher will be able to accomplish it, because the assessment will emphasise the performance of the learner, thereby assessing not only what the learner knows, but also what the learner can do. The teacher, by using the portfolios, checklists and journals, will be able to determine what the needs of every learners are, because these techniques will reflect realistic situations of the learner.

Responsive assessment is considered as compatible to various teaching approaches (Harrison & Salinger, 1998:11). Responsive assessment should not only draw from a range of approaches, but the assessments should be negotiated with the learners. In order for responsive assessment to be effective, it has to be context sensitive.

Responsive assessment moves away from the objective traditional, multiple-choice comprehension tests, to a more polysemic model of meaning. The challenge is to seek ways in which to position subjectivity as valuable rather than as an irritant. Responsive

assessment has a goal to treat the process as a product, and the challenge is to explore new ways of capturing the reader's interactions and processes, and of retaining them as products (Harrison & Salinger, 1998:14).

Responsive assessment can be considered as a dynamic model of the reader as meaning-maker, since it presents the reader as taking a dominant role in the construction of meaning, rather than as a passive receiver of a message transmitted by the author.

5.7 IMPLEMENTING THE PRINCIPLES OF THE HOLISTIC READING APPROACH AND ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

5.7.1 Example of a lesson

The framework of the programme, based on the model of conditions of reading and the model of classroom literacy learning, is for the Junior Primary phase. Bolded words are to indicate how the presented models may be implemented.

The teacher and the learners need to consult with each other **(co-responsibility)** about what book/s they are going to read. Assuming that both the learners and the teacher agreed that the book by Van Gools (1993:7-11), "Three little pigs" must be read, then the principle of **teacher-learner-centredness** will be applied. In congruence with the principles of co-responsibility and teacher-learner centeredness, they can decide who and when the book is going to be read.

As an example, the following extracts from the book of Van Gool can be read by the teacher:

> "Mother and father pig lived happily on their country farm with their three little sons. There was always much work to be done, but there were many hands to help, and the pig family raised all the food they needed.
>
> One morning, while father hoed the garden and mother fed the chickens, the three little pigs decided they were grown up enough to leave home to seek their fortunes.
>
> "There's a big, beautiful world out there, " exclaimed the middle pig, pointing to the door. "I'm going to be rich," mused the youngest pig, chewing a piece of straw.
>
> "Stop dreaming and finish packing!" said the oldest pig. "We must get going soon." As the three little pigs prepared to leave, their parents offered advice. "Always stay together," said mother pig, "and be careful with your money." "Beware of the wolf!" added father pig sternly. "He is fierce and clever, and likes nothing better than pig for breakfast." The oldest pig listened carefully. "Don't worry," he said. "We'll be fine. When we're settled you can come to visit." The younger pigs danced and giggled, chattering about their grand adventure.

The fact that the learners had a choice in the book that had to be read, chances are they will be **actively involved** in the text. While the teacher was reading the book, she

was implementing the **ecosystemic, content-based** approach, and **demonstrated** in her lesson how words are constructed and used. If, after the teacher has read the story, and a learner wants to know what the word "mused" means, the teacher can in the true spirit of the **holistic teaching approach,** ask the class if they know what the meaning of the word is, or she/he can ask them to ask their parents to help them find the meaning in the dictionary if they do not know to use a dictionary, and come and explain it the following day.

The story is read in its whole social context, so that the learners can "live, experience and **explore**" with the characters in the story. Learners have the opportunity to explain and express their own ideas from their **own experiential and socio-political** backgrounds as supported by the **critical literacy philosophy.** The teacher or the learners can ask critical questions about the text and story, for example, "Where did this story happen"?, "Why did the pigs have to go away?. Why couldn't they stay in their own town?" etc. It will be more advantageous, if the learners themselves generate these type of questions.

As the learners **explore, inquire and guess**, and is encouraged by the teacher that there are no wrong or right answers, they will feel acknowledged, motivated and dignified. This will allow them the liberty to want to explore more. They can be encouraged to tell their own stories or to create and make up stories.

As the need arises, the teacher can also implement and **demonstrate** the **reductionistic-oriented principle**, where the learners are shown how letter sounds can make up words. An example could be illustrated on the board, by using the word "raised". The teacher can break up the word in smaller units, and explian it according to the sounding system, e.g. "r"(sound), "ai" (the second vowel keeps quiet, but let the first vowel say its long name sound), "s"(sound), and "ed" explaining that the "d" is added to the "e", because it is past tense. In line with the perspective of the reductionistic-oriented methodology, learners can be asked, as part of the lesson, **to compare** (words in terms of sound), **to sequence** (structure a logical story, words - beginning, middle and end letter sounds), and **to classify** (words by type and function).

At the completion of the paragraphs, the teacher have a variety of options to explore, depending upon the "mood and atmosphere" in the classroom. She/he can ask learners to **describe** and **discuss** what happened in the story, explain it in their own words, **predict** what they think is going to happen, and describe feelings and thought patterns of the characters. In addition, the teacher might want to explore how the learners, in what they've learnt from the story, will **apply** the "message" of the story in the real world at home or outside the school context. During the literacy lesson, the teacher concentrates on **what the learner can do, as opposed to what he cannot do,** in congruence with the **outcomes-based concepts.** This applies to both the reductionistic-oriented and the holistic approaches.

Even though the teacher concentrates on the performance indicators of the learners, she/he must negotiate clearly with the readers in deciding what evidence of their response to reading is to be recorded (**response assessment**). It is not just important for the teacher to evaluate the performance of the learners, but it is equally important for the learners to have some sort of **feedback** from the teacher and/or co-learners, as to how they are doing. Evaluation should not be utilised as a means of determining the faults of the learner or to decide who is going to pass or fail, but rather as a means to an end, where both the teacher and the learners can progress optimally (**authenticity of tasks**).

5.7.2 Examples of responsive assessment

The teacher can utilise the following activities on a **continuous basis** to give **feedback/response** to the learners. The following activities, although not accepted as complete, can be utilised as **responsive assessments:**

- Oral presentations (retell the story about the three little pigs in your own words and from your own socio-political perspective). Allows learners to tell what they know. Assesses both the work completed and the ability to communicate what has been learnt;

- Practical activities (draw and colour in the story, cut out pictures to illustrate the story, or write the story in your own words). Clearly demonstrates how well learners understand certain specific concepts and how they translate these into practical implementation;

- Comprehension exercises (written story, retelling the story, or applying the message

  in contexts out of school);

- Participation in cultural activities, groups and practical demonstrations;

- Self-assessment and peer-assessment (Learners are asked to assess themselves against the given outcomes, e.g. "My essay was good because...."). The advantage of the self-assessment is that learners begin to recognise the limitations of their work, are involved in the process, understands it and are more likely to learn from it;

- Peer-assessment (Learners give their own opinion of their group's performance compared to the out-comes they should have received). The advantage of peer assessment is that learners are involved in the assessment process and not threatened by it. They are more likely to learn from the process.

5.8 CONCLUSION

The development of an in-service training programme is not to replace the existing training of Junior Primary teachers, but rather to refine it by implementing the holistic teaching reading approach combined with the responsive assessment principles to complement and enhance teachers teaching reading approaches.

In order for the development of an in-service training programme to be successful, all significant role-players (Junior Primary Subject Advisors, Circuit Managers , School

Principles, Multi-disciplinary team at the School Clinic) in the Western Cape Education Department, need to be introduced and trained in the concepts and philosophy of the holistic teaching approach combined with the responsive assessment principles. Once the significant role-players understand the importance of the holistic teaching approach, the multi-disciplinary team of the School clinic can train the Junior Primary teachers at various schools. The key facilitator/s in this multi-disciplinary team will be the people responsible for learning support services for learners with special education needs (LSEN).

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this research was on teachers beliefs about teaching reading and the specific teaching reading approach and assessment strategies currently implemented in schools, as well as on the development of a framework for an in-service training programme in teaching reading and the assessment of learners skills in reading that will promote effective and efficient instruction.

6.2 SUMMARY

In **Chapter Two** cognisance was taken of the fact that teaching reading is a very complex and unique activity. It was argued that not one teaching reading approach could be considered superior, because learners are unique. It is of the utmost importance that teachers realise that readers may find themselves in different developmental stages pertaining to reading and should therefore match their instructional materials and approaches accordingly. In Chapter Two, it also became apparent that a combination of teaching approaches could be effective.

In **Chapter Three** the causes of reading problems were discussed in detail. Intrinsic and extrinsic causes of reading problems have to be seen in ecosystemic interaction if teachers are to understand and address issues related to the teaching of reading and

185

assessment of reading skills. Assessment practices in South Africa, it was discovered, are still predominantly norm and criterion-based. A possible alternative to the current fragmented assessment in South Africa, is responsive assessment.

In **Chapter Four** the beliefs of teachers about their teaching reading and assessment approaches were qualitatively investigated by means of questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The results were presented. The research findings were discussed and interpreted. Connections between central themes were indicated, allowing the reader a holistic view of the importance of the research findings. The research findings were used in the development of a framework for an in-service training programme for Junior Primary teachers in order to enable them to teach and assess reading.

Chapter Five focussed on the framework for the development of an in-service training programme for Junior Primary teachers. The theoretical background as discussed in Chapters Two and Three and findings in Chapter Four contributed to the development of a framework for the in-service training programme.

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research was of a qualitative nature, studying a particular phenomenon at six primary schools in suburbs in the Bellville area. Black schools were not part of this study due to language constraints. In terms of validity, the study is only valid in terms of the areas and theoretical framework in which it falls. This investigation will have to

be put into practice at other schools in different areas and research conducted to test its transferability. However, no two schools or areas are the same which renders the concept of replication problematic. In addition, this study was completed during the implementation of Curriculum 2005 in the Foundation Phase. Teachers felt insecure and anxious regarding the implementation of Curriculum 2005.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study will now be discussed in terms of the main themes.

6.4.1 Teaching reading approaches

Many teachers underscored the reductionistic-oriented approaches as important, but realised that it had limitations when used separately from the meaning in text-oriented approaches.

Numerous teachers are experimenting with the principles of holistic (combination of reductionistic and meaning in text-oriented) approaches to reading within an ecosystemic framework. The implemention of for example, a whole-language approach by the teachers, however, are not true to the principles of this approach, because even though teachers proclaim to practice it, they still initiate reading materials and assess learners according to prescribed skills and norms. Teachers need to familiarise themselves with the concept and philosophy of truly holistic approaches. Teachers will also have to take cognisance of the fact that every learner's socio-political experience

187

and environment is playing a role in the understanding of what they are reading. When teachers incorporate critical literacy aspects in their teaching reading approaches, less rigid norms based criteria may be utilised to assess the learner; content can be emphasised, and less learners will "present" reading problems. In addition, numerous learners will not be labelled by teachers as experiencing reading problems, because no rigid prescribed norms will be utilised.

In the final analysis, it became clear that teachers should not disregard the training they had regarding the teaching of reading, but should rather combine it with the meaning in text-oriented approaches. This will allow teachers to miss the trap of reductionism on the one hand or over emphasis the meaning in text only, on the other hand.

6.4.2 Assessment

The focus of assessment should be on the progress learners make towards the achievement of the predetermined outcomes regarding reading. Cumulative evidence of learner achievement should be recorded on a continuous basis within a responsive assessment framework. Evidence should also include information on the holistic development of learners, and portfolios, for example, should demonstrate how learners are able to integrate knowledge and reading skills.

6.4.3 The role of the teacher

The teacher's role should not be that of sole initiator, but rather of participator and collaborator. The teacher has the responsibility to create a positive learning atmosphere for learners to want to like reading and explore the literature, and secondly, she/he needs to feel comfortable with having a variety of multi-racial and multi-cultural learners in her/his class. If she/he does not feel comfortable, it will be extremely difficult for both her/him and the learners to explore, experience and accept the socio-political experiences and contexts of various learners in her/his class. The holistic reading approach (reductionistic combined with meaning in text) demands that both learner and teacher accept responsibility pertaining to when, where, who and how the reading material will be utilised. Co-responsibility also implies that both the learner and the teacher are committed to each other. The learner's role is to be actively involved with the reading text and to present a willingness to be taught by the teacher.

6.4.4 Teacher support group

The research indicated that teachers feel isolated in their teaching profession in that they do not always know whether they are doing the correct thing. It is imperative that teachers need to establish a support group where teachers can feel free to impart knowledge and skills to each other. Teachers need continuous encouragement. Teachers, learners, education department, the family of the learner and the community at large are all inter-dependent. The learner is a sub-system within a school system, of which the teacher is also a sub-system. The school system is part of the education

system, which in return is part of the community. Change in one system necessitates change in another. The systemic approach is cyclical in nature.

6.4.5 Final conclusion

This research has indicated that teachers need to be empowered with innovative and strategic instructional skills to benefit the reader optimally. The implication is that teachers also need to know how and when to assess learners' reading problems, and also have the know-how of what to do when they detect reading problems. In addition, the holistic teaching approach in combination with responsive assessment, should be considered as an alternative to the exclusive use of the reductionistic approaches, as a means to be proactive instead of being reactive to reading problems. In order for teachers to accomplish this challenging task, they will need in-service training in the holistic approach to teaching and assessing reading as well as the support of fellow teachers, the education department and the community at large.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations based on the findings of the analysis of the research are presented.

- It is of utmost importance that **teachers training** are upgraded to keep track of the new and current instructional techniques in their field to address learners reading problems. Efficient **initial** training by Colleges and Universities and continuous further training by the WCED, will empower teachers to assess and rectify learners

reading problems more effectively;

- **Schools** should adapt their teaching methodology to become 'learner ready', instead of expecting the learner to be 'school ready'. Learning to read should be focused from the learner's perspective and not from the teacher's perspective. In addition, the school has the responsibility to be 'reading friendly' in that learners must be exposed to as many literature as possible. It must make allowance for learners with diverse socio-political life experiences and learning needs;

- The **parents** who are the primary educators, have the responsibility to be involved with the learning process of their children. Teachers find it extremely difficult to teach learners to read effectively when the parents are not stimulating and encouraging their children to read at home;

- The **community** at large has a big responsibility to promote literacy for the learners. Libraries must be build and be easily accessible to all learners. Libraries must be more visible and 'mobile' by bringing the literature to the learners, instead of expecting the learners to come to the library;

- The **Western Cape Education Department** has to promote and allow teachers to explore with the holistic teaching reading approach. The old, traditional 'top-down' approach by the officials of the department should be banished and make way for a more conducive learning environment. The WCED has the responsibility to create opportunities for teachers to be trained on a continual basis.

6.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The research conducted here is by no means complete. The study has raised many aspects of the methodological orientation of teachers towards their teaching reading. Research in the future could examine:

- The implementation of an in-service training programme for Junior Primary teachers pertaining to reading;

- The extension of this research to the Senior Primary teacher and the Secondary school teacher;

- The extension of this research to other aspects of the curriculum, such as mathematics;

- The extension of the model to facilitate the inclusion of learners with special education needs.

6.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The qualitative investigation pertaining to the research problem led to the discovery of an alternative approach to dealing with learners experiencing reading problems. The findings of the research challenge the assessment procedures and the instructional techniques used by teachers. The emphasis is on the holistic approach combined with the principles of responsive assessment. This approach is not just curative in nature, but also preventative. The holistic approach emphasises the importance of both the learner and teacher in the reading situation. In addition, it concentrates on what the learner can do, in contrast to what he cannot do. In terms of the current South African

situation, such a holistic approach is necessary to address current reading problems and to reduce the number of reading problems that may be encountered in future.

The purpose of the holistic approach is to change the role of the teacher to a collaborator and not necessarily an initiator. It is of utmost importance that teachers receive the necessary support from the educational department, in terms of finances, and from the parents and colleagues.

REFERENCES

Aaron, P. (1995). Differential diagnosis of reading disabilities. School

Psychology Review, 24,(3),345-360.

Adams, M.J. (1990). Beginning to read. Cambridge,Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Altwerger, B. & Flores, B. (1994). Theme cycles: Creating communities of learners.

Primary Voices, 2, (1), 2-6.

Andrews, S. (1989). Psycholinguistics and reading acquisition: The argument for

decoding. The NSW Journal of Special Education, 10,15-20.

Arnold, M. (1985). Memory and the brain. Hillsdale: Erlbaum.

Baca, L. & Harris, K. (1988). Teaching migrant exceptional children. Teaching

Exceptional Children, 20,32-35.

Barron, M. (1990). "Whole language: Learning the natural way". Holistic Education,

3,3-7.

Barron, I. (1996). Emergent writing and the teacher. Teacher Development,5, 41-48.

Bereiter,C. & Scardamalia,M. (1989). An attainable version of high literacy:

Approaches to teaching higher-order skills in reading and writing.

Curriculum Inquiry,17,1,9-30.

Berg, B.L. (1995). Qualitative research methods for the social sciences. (2nd ed),

Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.

Bickerton, D. (1990). Language and species. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Biegler, E. (1987). Acquired cerebral trauma, neuropsychiatric and

psychoneurological assessment and cognitive retrieving issues. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 20, 579-580.

Bloom, B. (1985). The closing of the American mind. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Booyse, A. (1991) The environmentally deprived child. In J. Kapp (Ed.) Children with problems: An orthopedagogical perspective. Pretoria:Van Schaik Publishers.

Bond, G., Tinker, M., Wasson, B. & Wasson, J. (1984). Reading difficulties: Their diagnosis and correction. Hillsdale: Prentice-Hall, New Jersey.

Booysen, M. (1996). Creating literacy learning opportunities in the classroom. In P. Engelbrecht, S. Kriegler & M. Booysen. Perspectives on learning difficulties: International concerns and South African realities, 405-420. Pretoria: Van Schaik, Academic.

Botha, P. (1991). A Neurological, physiological and genetic orientation. In J. Kapp. (Ed.) Children with problems. An orthopedagogical perspective, 201-255, Pretoria:Van Schaik Publishers.

Brenner, M., Brown, J. & Canter, D. (1987). The Research Interview. Uses and approaches. London: Academic Press.

Brown, A.L., Bransford, J.D., Ferrara, R.A. & Campione, J.C. (1983) Learning, remembering, and understanding. In P.H. Mussen. (Ed.). Handbook of Child Psychology, Vol. (3). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Bryan, J. (1991) Social problems and learning disability. In B. Wong (Ed). Learning about learning disability, 195-231, San Diego: Academic Press.

Bryman, A; & Burgess, R. (1994). Analysing qualitative data. Routledge, London.

Burden, R. (1996). Meaningful questions or meaningful answers. Workable assessment in a changing world. In P. Engelbrecht, S. Kriegler & M. Booysen. Perspectives on learning difficulties: International concerns and South African realities,97-106. Pretoria: Van Schaik, Academic.

Byrne, B. & Fielding-Barnsley, R. (1993). Evaluation of a program to teach phonemic awareness to young children: A 1 year follow-up. Journal of Educational Psychology,85,104-111.

Cambourne, B. (1995). Toward an educationally relevant theory of literacy learning: Twenty years inquiry. The Reading Teacher, 49,3,11:182-190.

Cambourne, B. & Turbill, J. (1990). Assessment in whole language classrooms: Theory into practice. The elementary School Journal, 90,3,337-346.

Chalfant, J. (1989). Diagnostic criteria for entry and exit from services: A rational problem. In L.Silver, The assessment of learning disabilities, 1-26, Boston, College Hill Press.

Chall, J.S. (1989). Learning to read: The great debate twenty years later: A response to Debunking the Great Phonics Myth. Phi Delta Kappa,71,521-538.

Chia, K. (1992). Defining and understanding developmental dyslexia. Education Today, 43,3,12-17.

Cooper, P. (1993). Learning from pupils' perspectives. British Journal of Special Education, 20,4,129-133.

Crawford, P.A. (1995). Early literacy: Emerging perspectives. Journal of Research in

Childhood Education, 10(1), 71-83.

Creswell, J.W. (1994). Research design. Qualitative and quantitative approaches. California: Sage Publications.

Cunningham, A. (1990). Explicit versus implicit instruction in phonemic awareness. Journal of Experimental Child Psychology,50,429-444.

Dechant,E. (1993). Whole language reading: A comprehensive teaching guide. Lancaster: Technomic Publishing, Pennsylvania.

De Boer, G.A. (1980). Op weg naar kind-volgend onderwijs. In J. Kapp (Ed.). Children with problems: An orthopedagogical perspective,29, Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Delpit, L.D. (1991). A conversation with Lisa Delpit. Language Arts,68, 541-547.

Denzin, N.K. (1989). Interpretative interactionism. London: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Handbook of qualitative research. London: Sage Publisher.

Derbyshire,E. (1991). Learning disabilities. In J. Kapp.(Ed.). Children with problems: An orthopedagogical perspective, 185-197, Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers. Department of Education: Assessment policy in the general education and training band,12,1998:6-7. Pretoria:Government Printers.

Doctor, E., Dear, K. & Makgamatha, M. (1996). Multilingual assessment of children's literacy. In P. Engelbrecht, S. Kriegler & M. Booysen. (Ed.). Perspectives on learning difficulties: International concerns and South African realities, 364-372, Pretoria:Van Schaik, Academic.

Donald, D., Lazarus, S. & Lolwana, P. (1997). Educational psychology in social context: Challenges of development, social issues and special needs in Southern Africa, Cape Town:Oxford University Press.

du Toit, L. (1991). Orthopedagogical aid. In J. Kapp. (Ed.). Children with problems: An orthopedagogical perspective, 49-77, Pretoria:Van Schaik Publishers

Duffy, G. & Roehler, L. (1987). Teaching reading skills as strategies. The Reading Teacher,40, 414-418.

Ehri, L. (1987). Learning to read and spell words. Journal of Reading Behaviour, 19,5-31.

Engelbrecht, P. (1990). Die bruikbaarheid van metakognisie in pedoterapie. Ongepubliseerde Ph.D.(Psig)-proefskrif. Pretoria:Universiteit van Pretoria.

Engelbrecht, P., Kriegler,S., & Booysen,M. (1996). Perspectives on learning difficulties: International concerns and South African realities, Pretoria:J.L. van Schaik, Academic.

Engelbrecht, P, (1996). Cognitive control therapy for South African children with learning disabilities. In P.Engelbrecht, S. Kriegler & M. Booysen (Ed.). Perspectives on learning difficulties: International concerns and South African realities, 199-205, Pretoria:Van Schaik, Academic.

Engelbrecht, P. (1997). Identification and assessment in South Africa: A research report, May 1997. Discussion Document: NCSNET/NCESS. Department of Educational Psychology and Specialised Education: University of Stellenbosch.

Englert, C. & Palincsar, A. (1991). Reconsidering instructional research in literacy from

a sociocultural perspective. <u>Learning Disabilities Research and</u>
<u>Practice,6,</u>225-229.

Foorman, B.R., Francis, D. & Novy, D. (1991). How letter-sound instruction
mediates progress in first-grade reading and spelling. <u>Journal of Educational</u>
<u>Psychology, 83,</u> 456-469.

Foorman, B.R. (1995). The relevance of a connectist model of reading for "The great
debate". <u>Educational Psychology Review,6,</u>25-47.

Gaddes, W. (1985). <u>Learning disabilities and brain function: A</u>
<u>neurological approach,</u> (2nd ed.). New York: Springer.

Garner,P. (1995). Sense or nonsense? Dilemmas in the SEN Code of Practice, <u>Support</u>
<u>for Learning, 10,</u>(1),3-7.

Gee, J.P (1987). <u>What is literacy?</u> Paper presented at the Marlman Foundation
conference on familiies and literacy, Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard Graduate
School of Education.

Gipe, J.P. (1995). <u>Corrective reading techniques for the classroom teacher.</u> (3rd ed.),
Scottsdale, AZ: Gorsuch Scarisbrick.

Gipps, C.; Gross,H. & Goldstein,H (1987). <u>Warnock's eighteen percent</u>. London:
The Falmer Press.

Giroux,H. (1993). Literacy and the politics of difference. In C. Lankshear & P. McLaren.
(Eds.). <u>Critical literacy:Politics, praxis and the Postmodern.</u> 367-377,
Albany,NY: State University of New York.

Goldenberg, C. (1993). Instructional conversations: Promoting comprehension

through discussion. The Reading Teacher, 46,316-326.

Goodman, K.S. (1986) What's whole in whole language? Portsmouth:

NH:Heinemann.

Goodman, K.S. (1989). Whole-language research: Foundations and development.

Elementary School Journal, 90,11,207-220

Goswami, U. (1990). A Special link between rhyming skills and the use of

orthographic analogues by beginning readers. Journal of Child

Psychology and Psychiatry, 31,301-311.

Goswami, U. & Bryant, P. (1990). Phonological skills and learning to read. London:

Lawrence Erlbaum associates.

Gough, P. & Juel, C. (1991). The first stages of word recognition in

learning to read. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum associates, New Jersey.

Grovè, M. & Hauptfleisch, H.M. (1982). Remedial Education in the primary

school. Pretoria: Haum Educational Publishers.

Hallahan, B. & Kauffman,J.1986. Exceptional children: Introduction to special

education, (3rd ed.)., London: Prentice Hall.

Hamel, J., Dufour, S & Fortin, D. (1993). Case study methods: Qualitative

research methods, 32. California: Sage Publications.

Hammill, D. & Bartel, N. (1990). Teaching students with learning and behaviour

problems, Cambridge: Allyn and Bacon, MA.

Harrison, C. & Salinger, T. (1998). Assessing reading theory and practice:

Introducing perspectives on reading assessment, London: Routledge.

Harste, J.C., Woodward,V.A., & Burke, C.L. (1984). Language stories and literacy lessons. Portsmouht,NH:Heinemann.

Haywood, C., Brown, A. & Wingenfeld, S. (1990). Dynamic approaches to psychoeducational assessment. School Psychology Review, 19,4,411-422.

Heald-Taylor, B. (1996). Three paradigms for literatutre instruction in Grades 3 to 6, The Reader Teacher,49(6),456-464.

Heshusius, L. (1991). Curriculum-based assessment and direct instruction: Critical reflections on fundamental assumptions. Exceptional Children, 2, 315-326.

Heymsfeld, C. (1989). Filling the hole in whole language. Educational Leadership,46, 65-68.

Hoover, W.A. & Gough, P.B. (1990). The simple view of reading. Reading and Writing: Interdisciplinary Journal,2,127-160.

Human Sciences Research Council (1981). Investigation into Education. Report of the main commmitee: Provision of education in the RSA. Pretoria: HSRC.

Hynd, G. (1992). Neurological aspects of dyslexia: Comments on the balance model. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 25, 110-113.

Jansen,P. (1996). Assessing the causes of learning disability: An neuropsychological perspective. In P. Engelbrecht, S. Kriegler & M. Booysen, (Eds.). Perspectives on learning difficulties:International concerns and South African realities, 144-153, Pretoria:Van Schaik, Academic.

Jarvis, P. (1995). Adult and continuing education: Theory and Practice, 2nd ed., New

York.

Jones, H.E. (1993). Social studies and whole language: A new team to cheer?
International Journal of Social Education, 8(2), 73-80.

Jorgensen, D.L. (1989). Participant observation: A methodology for human
studies. London: Sage Publications.

Krefting, L. (1991). Rigour in qualitative research: The assessment of
trustworthiness. American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 45(3), 214-222.

Kriegler, S.M. (1988). 'n Disharmoniese onderwysdinamiek-perspektief op
leesprobleme. Ongepubliseerde Ph.D proefskrif. Pretoria: Universiteit van
Pretoria.

Kriegler, S.M. (1989). Educational psychology in South Africa: A future
perspective, School Psychology International, 10,3, 217:224.

Kriegler, S., Ramarumo, M., van der Ryst, M., Van Niekerk, K. & Winer, Y. (1994).
Supporting emergent literacy in print bereft rural communities, School
Psychology International, 15, 23-37.

Kvale, S (1992). Psychology and postmodernism. Sage Publishers: London.

Lancaster, M.M. (1988). Leesonderwys in die junior primêre fase. Ongepubliseerde
D.Ed.-Proefskrif. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria.

Lankshear, C. (1994). Literacy and empowerment: Discourse, power, critque. New
Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 29(1), 59-72.

Law, M. & Kratochwill, T.R. (1993). Paired reading: An evaluation of a parent tutorial
program, School Psychology International,14(2), 119-148.

Lerner, J. (1988). Learning disabiliites: Theories, diagnosis and teaching strategies, (4th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Lerner, J. (1989) Educational intervention in learning disabilities. Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 28,3,326-331.

Lerner, J. (1993). Learning disabilities: Theories, diagnosis and teaching strategies, (6th ed.), Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Luke , A. (1988). The non-neutrality of literacy: A critical introduction. Australian Journal of Reading, 11,79-83.

Luke, A. (1993). The social construction of literacy in the primary school. Melbourne: McMillan.

Luke, A., O'Brien, J. & Comber, B. (1994). Making community texts objects of study. Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, 17(2), 139-149.

Mac An Ghaill, M. (1992). Teachers' work: Curriculum restructuring, culture, power and comprehensive schooling, British Journal of the Sociology of Education, 13,2,177-199.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (1989). Designing qualitative research. London: Sage Publications.

Maykut, P. & Morehouse, R (1994) Beginning qualitative research: A philosophic and practical guide. London: The Falmer Press.

McCarthey, S.J. & Raphael, T.E. (1992). Alternative research perspectives. In J.W. Irwin & M. Doyle (Eds.). Reading and writing connections: Learning from

203

research, Newark,DE: <u>International Reading Association</u>.

McGill-Franzen, A. (1993). <u>Shaping the preschool agenda: Early literacy, public policy, and professional beliefs.</u> Albany,NY: Suny Press.

McKinney, J.; Hocutt,A. (1988). The need for policy analysis in evaluating the regular education initiative, <u>Journal of Learning Disabilities,21</u>,1,12-19.

McNutt, G. (1986). The status of learning disabilities in the States: A consensus or controversy?. <u>Journal of Learning Disabilities, 19</u>, 12-16.

Meadows,S. (1993). <u>The child as thinker: The development and acquisition of cognition in childhood.</u> London:Routledge.

Mercer, C.D. (1983). <u>Students with learning disabilities.</u> (3rd ed.). Columbus, Ohio: Merrill.

Mercer, C.D. & Mercer, A.R. (1998). <u>Teaching students with learning problems.</u> New Jersey:Prentice-Hall.

Merriam, S.B. (1991). <u>Case study research in education: A qualitative approach.</u> San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Miles, B.M. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). <u>Qualitative data analysis.</u> (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Montheith, J. (1996). A self-regulated learning perspective on pupils wih learning disabilities. In P. Engelbrecht, S. Kriegler & M. Booysen (Eds.). <u>Perspectives on learning difficulties: International concerns and South African realities,</u> 207-221, Pretoria: Van Schaik, Academic.

Morrow, L.M. (1993). <u>Literacy development in early years: Helping children read and</u>

write (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Morse, J.M. (1994). Qualitative reseacrh methods. London: Sage Publications.

Mosenthal, P.B. (1989). The whole language approach: Teachers between a rock
and a hard place. The Reading Teacher,42, 628-629.

Mosse, H. (1982). The complete handbook of children's reading
disorders: A critical evaluation of their clinical, educational and social
dimensions (Vol.1.). New York: Human Sciences Press.

Mouton, J. & Marais, H.C. (1990). Metodologie van die geesteswetenskappe:
Basiese begrippe, Pretoria: RGN

National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the
National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS), 1998. Quality
education for all. Overcoming barriers to learning and development.
National Department of Education, Pretoria: Government Printers.

Newman, J.M. (1985). Whole language theory in use. Portsmouth, NH:
Heinemann.

Newman, J.M. & Church, S.M. (1990). Commentary: Myths of whole language. The
Reading Teacher,44,20-27.

Nicolson, R. & Fawcett, A. (1990). Automaticity: A new framework for
dyslexia research?, Cognition,35, 159-182.

Obrzut, J. & Boliek, C. (1991). Neuropsychological assessment of childhood
learning disability. In H. Swanson (Ed). Handbook on the assessment of
learning disabilities. (121-145). Austin, Texas: Pro-Ed.

O'Connor,R; Notari-Syverson,A; Vadasy,P. (1996). Ladders to Literacy: The Effects of teacher-Led Phonological activities for Kindergarten Children with and without Disabilities, Exceptional Children,63, 1,117-130.

Olge, D. (1990). "Why whole language?" Instructor, 99, 5,46-49.

Ortiz, A. (1997). Learning disabilities occurring concomitantly with language differences. Journal of Learning disabilities, 30,321-332.

Palincsar, A. & Perry, N. (1995). Developmental, cognitive and sociocultural perspectives on assessing and instructing reading. School Psychology Review, 24,(3),331-344.

Pauw, T. (1991). The visually handicapped. In J. Kapp (Ed.). Children with problems: An orthopedagogical perspective., 352-376, Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Peverly, S.T. & Kitzen, K.R. (1998). Curriculum-based assessment of reading skills: Considerations and caveats for school psychologists. Psychology in the schools, 35(1), 29-46.

Poplin, M. (1988). The reductionistic fallacy in learning disabilities: Replicating the past by reducing the present. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 21(7), 389- 400.

Rayner, K. & Pollatsek, J. (1989). The psychology of reading. New York:Englewood Cliffs.

Rieben, L. & Perfetti, C.A. (1991). Learning to read: Basic research and its implications, Hillside:Earlbaum, NJ.

Reid, D. & Hresko, W. (1981). A cognitive approach to learning disabilities. New York

McGraw-Hill.

Reschly, D.J. (1988). Special education reform: School psychology revolution. <u>School Psychology Review, 17</u>(3), 459-475.

Rich, S. (1985). Restoring power to teachers: The impact of "whole language". <u>Language Arts, 62</u>, 717-724.

Richardson, S. (1992). Historical Perspectives on Dyslexia, <u>Journal of Learning Disabilities,25,</u>(1), 40-47.

Richmond, R.C. (1994). The code of practice in schools: Learning from recording of achievement. <u>British Journal of Special Education, 21</u>(4), 157-160.

Ringler, L. & Weber, C. (1984). <u>A language thinking approach to reading.</u> New York: Harcourt, Javanovich.

Robb, L. (1994). <u>Whole language, whole learners: Creating a literature-centered classroom.</u> New York:William Morrow and Company.

Roller, C. & Beed, P. (1994). Sometimes the conversations are grand, and sometimes.... <u>Language Arts,71,</u> 509-515.

Rossouw, M.W. (1991). <u>Die bruikbaarheid van die kognitiewe kontrole toetsbattery en kognitiewe kontroleterapie vir die spesifiek leergestremde junior primêre leerling.</u>Ongepubliseerde MEd.-thesis. Pretoria:Universiteit van Pretoria.

Rupley, W. & Blair, T. (1989). <u>Reading diagnosis and remediation.</u> (3rd. Ed.). Columbus: Merrill Publisher.

Sawyer, D. (1992). Language abilities, reading acquisition, and developmental

dyslexia: A discussion of hypothetical and observed relationships. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 25,(2),82-95.

Schumm, J.S., Vaugh, S., Haager, D. & Klinger, J.K. (1994). Literacy instruction for mainstreamed students: What suggestions are provided in basal reading series? Remedial and Special Education, 15,14-20.

Shannon, P. (1987). Commercial reading materials, a technological ideology, and the deskiling of teachers. The Elementary School Journal, 87, 3, 307-326.

Shannon, P. (1993). Critique of false generosity: A response to Baumann. Reading Research Quarterly, 28,9-13.

Shapiro, E.S. (1990). An integrated model for curriculum-based assessment. School Psychology Review, 19,331-349.

Shinn, M.R., Rosenfield, S. & Knutson, N. (1989). Curriculum-based assessment: A comparison of models. School Psychology Review,18, 299-316.

Siegal, L.S. (1992). An evaluation of the discrepancy definition of dyslexia. Journal of Learning Disabilities,25,(10),618-629.

Silver, L (1987). The "magic cure": A review of the current controversial approaches to treatment of learning disabilities, Journal of Learning Disabilities,20, 498-504.

Simpson, A. (1996). Critical questions: Whose question?. The Reading Teacher, 50(2),10, 118-127.

Slaughter, H. (1988). Indirect and direct teaching in a whole language program. The Reading Teacher,42, 30-34.

Smith, F. (1988). Understanding reading. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum

Associates.

Smith, A. (1991). The chronically ill child. In J. Kapp (Ed.). Children with problems:

An orthopedagogical perspective, 157-181, Pretoria:Van Schaik Publishers.

Smith-Burke, T.M., Deegan, D. & Jagger, A.M. (1991). Whole language: A viable

alternative for special and remedial education? Topics in Language

Disorders, 11(3), 58-68.

Spear-Swerling, L. & Sternberg, R.J. (1994). The road not taken: An integrative

theoretical model of reading disability. Journal of learning disability,

27,(2),91-122. Spiegel, D.L. (1992). Blending whole language and systematic

direct instruction. The Reading Teacher, 46(1),38-43.

Stahl, S. (1992). Saying the "p" word: Guidelines for exemplary phonics instruction. The

Reading Teacher,45,(6)18-625.

Stahl, S.A., Miller, P.D. (1989). Whole language and language experience

approaches for beginning reading: A quantitative research synthesis. Review

of Educational Research, 59, 87-101.

Stanovich, K.E. (1990). Concepts in developmental theories of reading skill:

Cognitive resources, automaticity, and modularity. Developmental

Review,10, 72-100.

Stanovich, K.E. (1994). Constructivism in reading education. The Journal of Special

Education, 28, 259-274.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory

procedures and techniques. Newbury Park, CA:Sage.

Strickland, R., Morrow, L. (1991). Emerging literacy: Young children learn to read and write. Delaware: International Reading Association.

Sulzby, E. (1992). Transitions from emergent to conventional writing. Language Arts, 69, 290-297.

Taylor, D. (1991). Learning denied. Portsmouth, NH:Heinemann.

Thomas, E.J. (1984). Designing interviews for the helping professions. Beverly Hill: Sage Publications.

Torgensen, J.K. (1986). Learning disabilities: It's current state and future prospects. Journal of Learning Disabilities,19 (7),399-407.

Van Gool, J. (1993). The three little pigs. London: Twin Books Ltd.

Vaughn, S., McIntosh, R. & Hogan, A. (1991). Why social skills training does'nt work: An alternative model. In T. Scruggs & B.Wong (Ed.).. Intervention Research in Learning Disabilities, 279-303, New York: Prentice-Hall.

Walczyk, J.J. & Taylor, R.W. (1996). How do the efficiencies of reading subcomponents relate to looking back in text? Journal of Educational Psychology, 88,(3),537-545.

Walker, B.J. (1996). Diagnostic teaching of reading: Techniques for instruction and assessment, (3rd ed), Columbus Ohio: Prentice-Hall.

Watson, D.J. (1989). Defining and describing whole language. The Elementary School Journal, 90(2), 129-141.

Weaver, C. (1988). Reading process and practice from socio-

psycholinguistics to whole language. Portsmouth, Heinemann.

Weaver, C. (1991). Whole language and its potential for developing readers. Topics in Language Disorders, 11(3),28-44.

West, A. (1992). Reading against the text: Developing critical literacy. International Conference: Domains of literacy, Institute of Education.Melbourne.

Wong, B. (1991). On cognitive process-based instruction: An introduction. Journal of Learning Disabilities,25 (3), 150-152.

Wood, F. (1988). Learners at risk. Teaching Exceptional Children, 20,(4),4-9.

Wood, S. & Shears, B. (1986). Teaching children with severe learning disabiliies: A radical reappraisal. London: Croom Helon.

Whitmore, J.R. (1988). Gifted children at risk for learning disabilities. Teaching Exceptional Children,4, 11-14.

Yatvin, J. (1991). Developing a whole language program. Richmond,VA: Merrill Publisher.

Yin, R.K. (1989). Case study research, design and methods. Applied Social Research Methods Series, (Vol 5). (2nd Ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Zola, M. (1989). "The Tao of whole language". Emergency Librarian,2,170-174

Zucker, C. (1993). Using whole langauge with students who have language and learning disabilities. The Reading Teacher, 46(8), 660-670.

<div align="right">**Appendix A**</div>

SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How do you feel about your teaching reading approach that you currently use?
2. What gives you the most pleasure about your teaching reading approach?
3. What are some important concerns about your teaching reading approach that you have?
4. In your opinion, what should a reading approach have to make it an effective teaching approach?
5. In your opinion, what is the most popular teaching reading approach used by teachers? Why?
6. Do you think the Colleges/Universities train prospective teachers sufficiently enough to be able to teach reading effectively? If not, what are your concerns?
7. In your opinion, what can the Colleges/Universities do to minimize reading problems?
8. In your opinion, what is a reading problem?
9. What do you think are the causes of reading problems?
10. In your opinion, what are the most common manifestations of reading problems?
11. What are some reasons why you think learners do not experience reading problems?
12. How do you feel about learners with reading problems in your classroom?
13. Do you know how to identify reading problems? If yes, how do you identify? If no, why are you not able to identify?
14. To what extend do you feel you are prepared to meet the reading needs of learners in your classroom?
15. If not, what are the reasons?
16. What do you need to be able to deal with learners with reading problems?
17. How do you deal with learners who experience reading problems in your classroom?
18. What do you normally do when you are aware that a learner has a reading problem?
19. When do you identify reading problems?
20. To whom do you refer? Why?
21. How do you refer?
22. Do you know how to rectify reading problems within the classroom? If yes, how? If not, what are the reasons?
23. Do you get assistance? If yes, from whom? If no, why not?
24. What type of support would you need if learners with reading problems were placed in your classroom?

24. What type of support would you need if learners with reading problems were placed in your classroom?

25. In your opinion, who should be responsible for placement of learners with reading problems in the classroom?

26. What, in your opinion, would happen if inclusion of learners with specific reading problems were part of your school's program?

27. What would be some barriers to the success of learners with reading problems who were placed in your classroom all day?

28. In your opinion, what would be some of the facilitators to the success of learners with reading problems that were placed in the classroom the entire day?

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your teaching approach? How do you teach reading?
2. The traditional phonics approach has been used for years. How do you feel about it?
3. What do you think is causing reading problems? Please elaborate.
4. Do you find that the time allocated to teach reading is enough?
5. What do you think will help you as a teacher to minimise reading problems?
6. How do you assess to determine whether a learner has a reading problem?
7. How do you feel about your training as a teacher? Please elaborate.
8. What do you know about Outcomes Based Education?
9. Did you receive training in OBE?
10. Do you get support as a teacher? If not, what do you think should take place?