

CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PERCEPTIONS OF GRADE 7
LEARNERS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A GUIDED READING
PROGRAMME**

**A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Masters in Education**

Presented to the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that an *investigation into the perception of Grade 7 learners of the effectiveness of a guided reading programme* is my own work and that it has not been submitted for any degree in any other university.

Signed:

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Date:.....

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ABSTRACT

Reading is a critical tool for the mastery of all learning areas and is one of the best predictors of long term learning achievement. Reading must be considered a priority area in efforts to improve the quality of basic education, particularly for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Many learners in South Africa come from a largely oral culture in which reading of books is not common and many come from disadvantaged communities that cannot afford to buy books.

The provincial and national systemic evaluation results (2003, 2005) for reading showed that at least 40% of Grade 3 and 6 learners were reading below grade level. In January 2005, in the present study, 50 % of the Grade 7 learners were reading below Grade 7 level. Many learners were discouraged because they could not master the reading tasks set to them. Others responded to the task with boredom and disdain. The learners who could read seem to be the only ones who were enthusiastic about starting and completing the reading tasks. By the end of the year, after using a guided reading programme, all students had developed a love for reading and many were reading on Grade 7 level.

The present empirical study is grounded in the social constructivist framework, originating from the works of Piaget (1978), Vygostky (1929) and Cambourne (2004). Their foundational principals together with the learning outcomes specified in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002) formed the basis of this literacy study.

A questionnaire was administered to forty-four learners at the end of a complete year where I had used the guided reading programme. The questionnaire consisted of ten closed questions and six open-ended questions. The results were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The results of this study showed that the learners responded positively to reading in groups, that learners developed an interest in reading, that they acquired reading skills that they needed to become independent readers, all of which ultimately improved their self esteem and self confidence.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
Asymp. Sig	Significance level of the test
df	degrees of freedom
DoE	Department of Education
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
No.	Number
OBE	Outcomes-based Education
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TV	Television
US	United States
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

Many children in South Africa come from a largely oral culture in which reading of books is not common and many come from developing communities that cannot afford to buy books. Together, these factors predict that children will not get off to a good start with literacy development. The South African National Systemic Evaluation results (2001, 2003) show that 54 % of Grades 3 and 6 learners were not reading on grade level.

The present study was conducted in 2005 as a strategy to improve the literacy rates in one Grade 7 class in a developing school in the Western Cape. This study is an investigation into the perceptions of reading in a Grade 7 class consisting of forty-four learners. These learners were part of a guided reading programme for one school calendar year. The learners were asked to reflect on the effectiveness of the programme as an intervention to improve their reading ability. As part of their responses they were asked to evaluate the programme and to say whether the programme was beneficial to them or not. They expressed what they liked about the programme, whether their reading improved and what they found challenging about the programme.

This chapter discusses the origin and the background, importance, context, approach, purpose and goals of the research project. It introduces the research question to be answered, clarification of terms, the significance, limitations and assumptions of the proposed study.

1.1 ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

By 1994, the year of South Africa's first democratic election, the education system was divisive, unequal and fragmented. There were eighteen different education departments (Weldon, 2005: 4) based mainly on race and ethnicity. This education system prepared

children in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in the social, economic and political life under the apartheid system (Prinsloo & Hanks, 2002: 21).

Since 1994, the restructuring of the education and training system has been one of the top priorities of the education authorities. The challenges that faced South Africa's first democratically elected government led by the African National Congress (ANC), at the dawning of a democratic society were to create an educational and training system that would ensure that the human resources and potential in our society were developed to the full. It was the challenge posed by the vision of the Freedom Charter that was adopted at the Congress of the people (1955) "*to open the doors of learning and culture to all*".

The vision of the new government from 1994 was therefore articulated in the new constitution (1996), the White Paper on Education and Training (1995), and the South African Schools Act (1996), which created a single, national non-discriminatory school system. It aimed to provide education of a high quality, to lay a strong foundation for developing peoples' talents and capabilities. It hoped to democratically transform society into combating racism, sexism and all forms of discrimination and intolerance. An education system that would eradicate poverty and improve the economic well-being of society. This system would ensure the protection of our diverse cultures and languages and uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators.

In 1996 Minister Bengu (Minister of Education) announced the launch of curriculum 2005 that marked a departure from content-based teaching and learning to Outcomes-based Education (OBE). OBE is characterised as a learner-centred approach, in which the emphasis is not what the teacher wants to achieve, but rather on what the learner should know, recognizing and building on their knowledge and experience and responding to their needs (Botha, 2002: 361-371).

This meant that curriculum development processes and delivery of learning content that was knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, should take account of the general

characteristics of different groups of learners. Different learning styles and rates of learning needed to be acknowledged and accommodated in the learning situation. Gultig et al. (2004:4) maintained that “learner-centredness should begin by providing learners with positive learning experiences, by affirming their worth and demonstrating respect for their various languages, cultures and personal circumstances, this is a prerequisite for all forms of learning and development”. This rationale was captured in the overview document of the (RNCS) Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002:1) which was a policy document that provided the framework for South Africa’s adoption of an outcomes-based curriculum that was written by South Africans.

The curriculum aims to develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa. It seeks to create lifelong learners who are confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled. Learners must develop the ability to work co-operatively as well as independently. Learners must be encouraged to reflect on their own progress and develop skills and strategies that would improve their learning performance when necessary.

The kind of teacher that is envisaged to teach within this new system, are teachers that are qualified, competent, dedicated and caring. Teachers who could be mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, leaders administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and learning area/phase specialist (RNCS, 2002: 3).

Teachers play a central role in the process of improving learner performance. The teacher had to become the facilitator of learning and had to take into account the diversity of personalities in the classroom and the different styles of learning among learners. Each learner must be treated as an individual within the collective of the classroom to achieve the learning outcomes as prescribed by the RNCS policy document.

This RNCS curriculum (2002: 8) aims to develop the full potential of each learner. It seeks to create lifelong learners who are confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled, who have the ability to participate in society as critical and active citizens.

1.2 IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Literacy development had always been a central concern of schooling. So important was learning to read that Boyer (1995: 69) contended that the success of a primary school is judged by its learners' proficiency to read. He suggested that speaking and listening came first but reading was the top priority in primary school education.

South Africa is one of the countries that conduct national and provincial reading assessments (systemic evaluation) to determine the levels at which the learners are performing. Given stark realities of unequal education provision and huge differences in learner achievement according to race, socio-economic status and geographic locations, the country has embarked on a transitional process to equalise educational provisioning and to eradicate educational inequalities (National Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation Report, 2005).

In an open letter from the National Department of Education to all primary school principals Tyobeka (2006) wrote:

Reading is a foundational skill that all children need if they are to succeed in life. Sadly all our assessments of how well our children read reveal that a shockingly high number cannot read at the appropriate grade and age level. Many cannot simply read at all.

Pandor (2004) commented that there have been a number of studies both nationally and provincially, all of which point to unacceptable low levels of literacy amongst our learners. Table 1.1 below highlights the continued low literacy rates internationally, nationally and in the Western Cape from 2000 to 2007.

Table 1.1 An overview of literacy tests conducted internationally, nationally and in the Western Cape from 2000 to 2007

YEAR	DEPARTMENT	STUDY/TESTS	GRADE	RESULTS
2000	Western Cape Education Department	Western Cape Education Department's Monitoring Learning Achievement Project	Grade 4	60, 6% of all Grade 4 learners in the Western Cape obtained 50% in reading and writing literacy tasks.
2001	National Department of Education	National Systemic Evaluation	Grade 3	54% of Grade 3 learners were able to work on Grade 3 literacy level.
2002	Western Cape Education Department	Systemic Evaluation	Grade 3	43% of Grade 3 learners achieved 50% on their literacy tasks. This report also stated that the average level of the parent's education in the Western Cape lay between Grades 9 and 10.
2003	National Department of Education	National Systemic Evaluation	Grade 6	The report highlighted the inadequate language skills of learners throughout the country. The national average scores achieved in the random 5% sample were: literacy, 54%; listening comprehension, 68%; reading and writing, 39%. Learners generally performed poorly in tasks that required them to write their own responses.
2004	Western Cape Education Department	Systemic Evaluation	Grade 3	39.5 % of Grade 3 learners were able to work on Grade 3 literacy level.
2005	National Department of Education	National Systemic Evaluation	Grade 6	42,1 % of all Grade 6 learners are working and achieving on grade literacy level.
2006	Western Cape	Systemic	Grade 3	The report showed that

YEAR	DEPARTMENT	STUDY/TESTS	GRADE	RESULTS
	Education Department	Evaluation		literacy had improved from 39.5 % in 2004 to 47, 7 %. There was still more than half of Grade 3 learners who were not able to read on Grade 3 literacy level.
2007	International study	International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)	Grades 4 and 5	The (PIRLS) Report summarised the findings from South Africa's participation in the PIRLS study. The study assessed the reading skills of Grades 4 and 5 learners. A total of 40 countries and 45 education departments participated. South Africa achieved the lowest score of all 45 education systems.

In 2006 the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) developed a ten-year literacy and numeracy strategy (2006 - 2016) in response to the low literacy rates in the WCED. The literacy aspect of this strategy has eight domains for intervention:

1. **a pre-school programme** which will include the developing and printing of a manual for parents on the development of emergent literacy skills,
2. **teacher development** intended to improve the competency of teachers and teacher assistants to ensure the successful teaching of language and reading;
3. **changes to classroom practice** that will focus on classroom practice and the way teaching and learning happens in the classroom. Teachers will receive the necessary support to address the critical aspects of class teaching;
4. **learning and teaching support material** must be selected in conjunction with the teachers' strategy and methodology for teaching literacy in the classroom. Reading material must be at an appropriate level for each individual learner in the class;

5. **research, monitoring and support** will encourage the establishment of monitoring and support committees at the school, district and provincial level;
6. **co-ordination and sustainability** provided by a provincial task team will be appointed to manage the roll out of the strategy. All stakeholders will be accountable to report on the support of the policy at their different levels.
7. **family and community literacy** personnel will be trained so that the whole community is involved in encouraging reading; and
8. **advocacy** will be done by means of the print and radio media to create an awareness of the literacy strategy and to promote reading in our communities.

1.3 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The school that was used for this study is located in a low-income area in Mitchell's Plain on the Cape Flats. The language of these learners was complex - forty of them came from a background where parents spoke predominantly a dialect of Afrikaans and English commonly found in this area. Four learners were from IsiXhosa first language homes where they spoke a mixture of IsiXhosa, Afrikaans and English.

Sixty percent of the learners were bussed to school from surrounding informal settlements. The rest of the learners lived nearby and could walk to school.

This school falls within quintile 3 as described in Appendix 1 on page 92, which is regarded as a developing school. The learners at the school are fed daily by the Provincial Feeding Scheme which is a Department of Education (DoE) initiative that supports the learning programme in the school.

Since I was the class teacher this meant that I taught all the learning areas in the same class. This gave me a good indication of how the learners were coping with the volume of reading materials presented to them every day for seven hours.

Despite the many reading levels in the class, there were other socio-economic issues that impeded my task as a reading teacher. The lack of reading materials in the classroom created a challenge for me to enhance and encourage reading. There were no intervention programmes at the school for the Grade 7 learners, neither was there support within the school structure from the district offices of the WCED. Intervention was the sole responsibility of the language teachers. In my case, as the class as well as the language teacher, it was my responsibility to do the intervention. Since there were four different reading levels in the class, I decided to teach reading to the learners by dividing the class into four groups with each group consisting of same-ability learners and doing a variety of different reading skills.

1.4 THE APPROACH TO THE STUDY

As mentioned earlier, the national and provincial systemic evaluations conducted between 2000 and 2006 indicated that learners in general, were reading well below grade level. These tests were carried out amongst Foundation Phase (Grade 3) and Intermediate Phase (Grade 6) learners. Traditionally, teaching reading skills, assessing the reading levels of learners and having intervention programmes has always been part of the teaching and learning programme in the Foundation Phase. Other than the Concentrated Language Programme (Condy2000), which was introduced to only some developing schools in the Western Cape, the WCED has not offered any intervention programmes to assist teachers in the teaching of reading in primary classrooms.

From 2003 - 2005 the WCED supplied Grades 1 to 6 classrooms with 100 storybooks. Prior to 2006, the WCED had not supplied the Senior Phase (Grades 7 - 9) with any reading support material particularly the Grade 7 classes that form part of the primary school structure.

At the Senior Phase level, the WCED had the perception that when learners entered Grade 7, they already had 6 years of schooling and therefore they should be able to read on grade level. No documented studies have been conducted either by the DoE or by

WCED to assess the reading levels and reading skills of learners in Grade 7. However, teachers in the Senior Phase are confronted with learners who do not read on grade level; instead they were reading two to three levels below their grade, as experienced by myself in this study.

To achieve the six learning outcomes for Home Languages as set out by the RNCS (2002) it is necessary for all the learners to read on grade level. The guided reading programme was developed to assist learners to improve their reading so that they were able to achieve the prescribed outcomes and become independent readers.

In November 2005, learners were invited to evaluate the effectiveness of this reading intervention programme by reflecting on the various aspects and to say whether their reading abilities had improved or not. Firstly learners were asked to reflect on how they felt about reading in the classroom before the programme began and then at the end of the year. This reflection was done by means of a questionnaire with open and closed questions.

1.5 PUROSE AND GOAL OF THE STUDY

In most discussions about the nature of an effective ‘reading classroom’ the teacher usually assumes a leadership role, and determines what is taught and how it is taught. The educational roles, tasks and goals of any literacy teacher includes the provision of an environment in which the learners can develop the competencies necessary for effective basic literacy, as well as teachers’ classroom development of functional literacy practices (Condy, 2006: 13).

The purpose of this study is therefore to share one teacher’s experiences on how developing an intervention programme, tailored to the needs of her learners, assisted her learners. Allington & McGill-Frazen (2003) argue that what is needed is supplemental, high quality instruction to accelerate reading development of learners reading below grade level. Low achieving readers need more time than they typically

receive to engage in actual reading and to participate in reading lessons focussing on connected texts.

Therefore the chief purpose of this research is to gather feedback data from the learners who were part of the guided reading programme; to have the data analysed and to evaluate the reading programme and to see how it benefited the learners.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION

The key question in this study is as follows:

What are the perceptions of Grade 7 learners of the effectiveness of a guided reading programme?

In an attempt to do so, this investigation will seek answers to four sub-questions:

- How did the learners receive help from their teacher or peers when reading in their groups?
- Since using the guided reading programme, how have the learners' reading abilities improved?
- Before the learners started with the reading programme, how did the learners feel about reading aloud in their groups?
- How did the reading programme promote an interest in reading for the learners?

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

1.7.1 Reading literacy

Mullis et al. (2006: 36) in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) defined reading literacy as:

the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers in school and everyday life, and for enjoyment.

Flanagan (2003: 3) defined reading as not just being able to identify the words or make the sounds. Reading is about being able to understand the text, the story, the article or whatever else it is that the learners are reading, as a whole. Reading is about being able to critically understand what has been written. So reading for meaning must come right from the start of learning to read, as it is essential to the reading process.

1.7.2 Phases of schooling in the South African context

The Foundation Phase consists of Grades R, 1, 2 and 3. The Intermediate Phase consists of Grades 4, 5 and 6 and the Senior Phase consists of Grades 7, 8 and 9.

1.7.3 A guided reading programme

The guided reading programme aims to personalise reading instruction where the teacher learns to know the reading level of each individual learner in the class. The various aspects of the programme will be defined under the following three headings, baseline assessment, guided reading programme and learning outcomes:

Baseline assessment: I graded the learners' reading ability by doing a baseline assessment (Appendix 2 on page 93). Based on the results of the baseline assessment, the learners were placed in same-ability groups as described in Table 1.2. When I gave each reading group a number, I started at number 2. There were two reasons for doing

this. Firstly I wanted to develop the self-esteem of the learners and secondly, there was no-one in the class that had no skills at all!

Table 1.2 Rubric used to grade learners

GROUP	NO OF LEARNERS	DESCRIPTION	READING ABILITY
2	2	Struggling reader (read on Foundation Phase level).	Cannot read 90% of the words. Can recognize a few single sounds but can't read three-letter words.
3	19	Average reader (reads below Grade 7 level Learners are reading on Grades 5/6 level)	Can read 60% of the words, can sound the basic phonic words when the words are unknown.
4	11	Good reader (reads on Grade 7 level).	Reads 80% of the words on Grade 7 level with/without comprehension and expression.
5	12	Excellent reader (reads above Grade 7 level).	Reads with 95 - 100% fluency with comprehension and expression above grade level. Is able to read different genres independently.

The reading materials that were used in the programme, were also graded from easy-to-read texts to more challenging texts. Learners were given the opportunity to read material that was targeted at their personal level of reading. As the learners' reading improved they progressed to reading texts that were more challenging.

Guided reading programme:

Fountas & Pinnel (1996:189 -193) state that guided reading is a teaching approach that is designed to help individual learners to process a variety of challenging texts with understanding and eventually with fluency. Guided reading occurs in a small group setting. Learners are grouped with learners who are similar in ability, needs and strengths. Instruction is finely tuned to the needs of the particular group thus giving learners the opportunity to read at their personal level of development.

According to Tyner (2004:7), by differentiating the stages of reading instruction through small flexible groups, the diverse needs of each group are met. Good reading instruction includes a combination of strategies to teach learners to read.

This study used the rationale as outlined by Millward (2007) for guided reading. He states that reading in groups allows learners to:

- discuss and explore text meanings with their peers;
- develops learner's listening, speaking and reading skills;
- practice reading aloud to the group and to the teacher;
- develop reading skills through practice; and
- develop the ability to co-operate and work together in a group.

1.7.4 Learning outcomes

The six learning outcomes for the English Home language learning area in the RNCS (2002: 6-7) Grades R to 9 policy documents are described below. A central principle of the Languages learning area Statement is the integration of the six outcomes in teaching and assessment.

Learning Outcome 1: Listening

The learner will be able to listen for information and enjoyment and respond critically in a wide range of situations;

Learning Outcome 2: Speaking

The learner will be able to communicate confidently and effectively in a spoken language in a wide range of situations;

Learning Outcome 3: Reading and viewing

The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment and respond critically to the effective, cultural and emotional values in the text;

Learning Outcome 4: Writing

The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.

Learning Outcome 5: Thinking and reasoning

The learner will be able to use language to think and reason as well as to access, process and use information for learning; and

Learning Outcome 6:

The learner will be able to know and be able to use sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts.

1.7.5 Outcomes-based Education

(OBE) Outcomes-based Education forms the foundation of the curriculum in South Africa. It strives to enable all learners to achieve their maximum ability. It does this by setting the outcomes to be achieved at the end of the process. The outcomes encourage a learner-centred and activity-based approach to education (RNCS, 2002:1).

OBE, according to van der Hoorst & McDonald (2005), is based on the following underlying beliefs:

- all individual learners must be allowed to learn to their full potential;
- every success that a learner experiences builds his or her self-esteem and this is motivation for further success. Positive and ongoing assessment is therefore essential; and
- the learning environment is responsible for creating and controlling the conditions under which learners can succeed.

1.7.6 Genre

The word “genre” originated from the French (and originally Latin) that means ‘kind’ or ‘class’. A genre is a category of artistic composition marked by a distinctive style, form or content (Picket, 2003).

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

The assumption is that when learners arrive in the Senior Phase they should be reading fluently on grade level. In reality this is not the case, as one can see by the discussion in Table 1.1. Therefore it is to be understood that there would be learners in Grade 7 who were struggling to read on grade level.

In a Grade 7 class, the teaching of basic reading skills is not part of their work plan. Reading in Grade 7 takes the form of literature studies; where the class is expected to read and critique novels that are written for that specific grade.

The present study evolved out of the concerns for my class where there were more learners reading below Grade 7 level, with few learners reading on Grade 7 level and even fewer reading above grade level. The learners in this study were last taught basic reading skills in Grade 3 when they were taught how to read in groups. In Grades 4 - 6 they did not read in groups and only had one reading period for the week as stipulated on the class timetable. This reading period took the form of whole-class reading when the entire class read from the same book. Individual learners were asked to read a few sentences aloud while the rest of the class was expected to follow the text and read silently to themselves.

When these learners arrived in Grade 7, I was concerned that not all the learners could read the novel that was selected for the class. I then decided to work with the learners on their individual reading levels. Since I am a trained Foundation Phase teacher I developed and implemented the guided reading programme specifically for this Grade 7 class.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

This study is limited to one Grade 7 class from one school in the Western Cape. The programme that was implemented was designed for this classroom because I was the class teacher and taught all the Grade 7 learning areas to the same class. This study was

not extended to other classes in the school since there was only one English Grade 7 class. The study was based on a small sample and it was tightly controlled for dimensions relevant to the research intervention model used. This ensured greater explanatory power than could be revealed by a larger sample, although the later would have been useful for generalisability. The view that research which is not based on large quantitative sample surveys, is insufficiently generalisable to be of value in the creation of organisational knowledge for academic purposes should be challenged (Chetty, 2007: 103).

1.10 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The study makes the reasonable assumption that most of the learners coming to Grade 7 could not read at the appropriate grade level. It assumed that most of these learners needed extra basic reading skills to be able to interact and answer questions on their textbooks at grade level.

It was assumed that there were sufficient reading books at different reading levels for the learners. The study also assumed that many of the learners did not come from literate backgrounds where families read on a regular basis.

The study assumed that the learner's participated voluntarily with goodwill during the reading lessons.

1.11 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter, the research problem has been formulated, and its settings, origin and background, importance, context, approach and purpose stated. The key terms have been clarified; significance for conducting the study, limitations and assumptions of the research has been given.

Chapter 2 presents the relevant literature review with regards to language theories, the approaches to reading, the guided reading programme and the reading practitioners.

Chapter 3 outlines the action research approach used, a questionnaire was used. A questionnaire was used as the instrument of measurement, design and implementation of the research process. The sample size was forty-four Grade 7 learners in one class in the Western Cape.

Chapter 4 presents the results and systematically discusses the findings of the four research questions.

Chapter 5 discusses the results, draws conclusions, makes recommendations and discusses the limitations.

CHAPTER 2

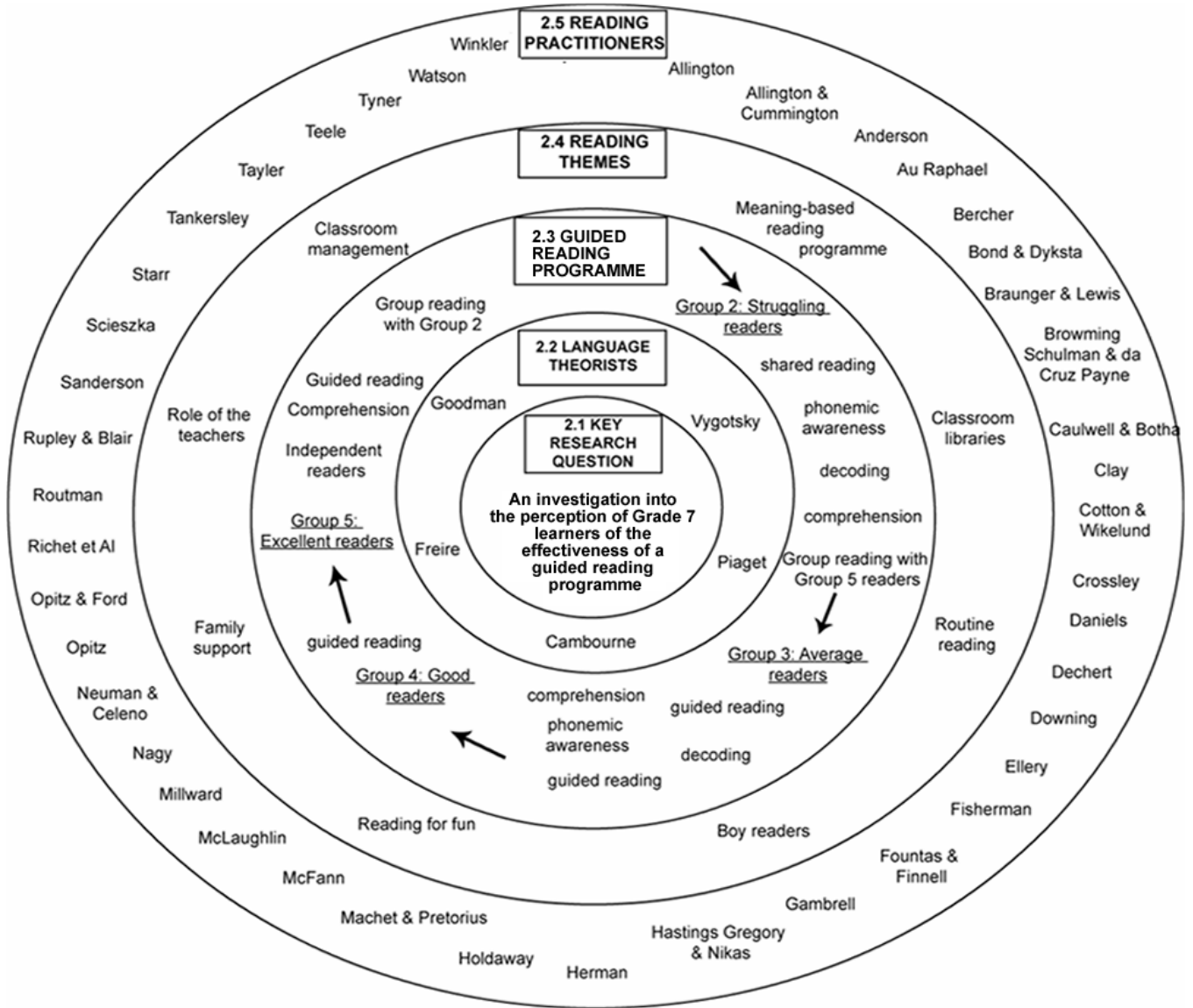
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to review published literature on the pedagogy of reading, it explores the threads of reading skills and the different methodologies used to teach reading. This chapter further defines the ideal classroom structure that learners need in order to learn to read in groups.

The model presented in Figure 2.1 on page 19 adapted from Condy (2006: 32) summarises the theoretical frameworks used to clarify the processes that are expected to result in learners being able to read in groups using a guided reading system.

Figure 2.1: An overview of the component of the investigation and its conceptual framework



2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Educational constructivism can be divided into personal and social constructivism. In personal constructivism it is the individual learner constructing cognitive and memory structures. Social constructivism involves a group of learners constructing cognitive and memory structures (Scheepers, 2000:3).

Constructivists like Cambourne (1995), Piaget (1978), and Vygotsky (1978) viewed learning as an active process in which learners construct knowledge as they try to comprehend their world through language development. The literature review was underpinned by the above theorists within the following key themes of this study: 1) language 2) critical literacy 3) social learning 4) active learning and 5) constructivism.

2.2.1 Language

Goodman (2005: 6) stated that language should be whole, meaningful and relevant to the learners. The teacher should encourage the learners to talk about the issues that they need to understand, to show the learners that it's permissible to ask questions and to listen to answers, and then react and ask more questions. It is recommended (Goodman, 2005: 9) that teachers invite their learners to write what happens to them, so they can come to grips with their experiences and share them with others. According to the South African Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) policy (2002:10) the Languages Curriculum recognised that learners begin to develop language knowledge from the moment they are exposed to reading and writing at home, in the environment around them and during their pre-school years. It is necessary to make the classroom an environment that encourages learners to become skilled readers and writers.

The learners should be encouraged to read for information, to cope with print that surrounds them everywhere and to enjoy a good story. Goodman (2005:6) argued that Whole Language programmes get it all together: the language, the culture, the community, the learner and the teacher. Shor & Pari (1999:1) agree that literacy is understood as a social action through language that develops the learner inside a larger culture, while critical literacy is understood as “learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one’s experience as historically constructed within specific power relations”.

2.2.2 Critical literacy

Critical literacy is a means of empowering unempowered populations. Freire (1972: 55) defines critical literacy as “education as the practice of freedom as opposed to education as the practice of dominion”. Freire (1972:31) believed that the approach to critical literacy emphasized aspects like *dialogue* which encouraged people to work with each other in a cooperative way that would include respect and *praxis* which is an informed action that can be seen as enhancing the community so that learning and social change can take place within the community. Critical literacy encouraged readers to make meaning of texts and it encouraged learners to understand how texts can influence their manner of thinking. Anderson & Irvine (in Shor & Pari, 1999: 1) confirmed the view that critical literacy is understood as “learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one’s experience as historically constructed within specific power relations”.

Shor & Pari (1999: 1) viewed critical literacy as words rethinking worlds, self dissenting in society where literacy connects the personal with the political, and the economical with the pedagogical for rethinking our lives for promoting equality in a place of inequality. Under apartheid, Prinsloo & Janks (2002: 21) concluded that the education system prepared learners differently for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economical and political life. The curriculum under apartheid played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality. The constitution of South Africa, (Act No 108 of 1996) provided the bases for curriculum transformation and development. The aims of the constitution are: “To heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights” (Act 108 of 1996: 1). According to Ciardello (2004:143) the recognition of social barriers and borders of separation is a major critical literacy practice. Barriers and borders establish boundaries and foster exclusion as the learners in this sample have experienced. It is through crossing these borders of separation that learners can regain their sense of self worth as a learner and a reader. Ciardello (2004: 138) stated that critical literacy practices are literacy activities that help enlighten the learner about the multiple meanings of the text.

According to the RNCS policy document (2002: 8-9) language is an important tool for achieving human rights and social justices. In this curriculum a balanced approach to literacy development has been used. It involves reading and writing and it gives attention to the learning of phonics. Learners should become confident speakers, who have critical tools to read their world and the written texts and rewrite them in ways that expand possibilities in relation to human rights, environmental justice and social learning.

2.2.3 Social learning

Social learning focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. It considers that people learn from each other (Ormrod, 1999). According to Wadsworth (1989: 156) Piaget's theory on how knowledge is acquired is that children construct knowledge from their actions on the environment. Learners' through their social interactions also construct knowledge. For Dewey (in Shor and Par, 1999: 9) language is used as a social activity where theory and experience meet for the discovery of meaning and purpose.

Piaget (in Wadsworth, 1989: 153) believes that learners who achieve certain knowledge through free investigation and spontaneous effort will later be able to retain it; they will have acquired a methodology for life. Learners however can be expected to differ in their histories of maturation, experiences, social experiences and social interaction. The learner's history of social interactions contributes to individual differences. Cambourne (2004: 25) argues that the primary mechanism available for the learners to develop their individual understandings and knowledge is through social interactions. In the classroom the use of collaborative groups is one of the most potent forms of this mechanism because such groups provide the medium for learners to interact with other learners, testing their own understanding through listening to and reflecting on about the understandings of others (Fisher & Williams, 2006: 10).

Taking the human social context into consideration, Vygotsky (in Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000: 194) highlights the significance of this element in teaching and learning when he used the term '*zone of proximal development*'. He defined it as the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level

of potential development as determined through problem solving under the teacher or in collaboration with more capable peers. Teachers should assist learners not to become passive recipients of knowledge but to make meaning of the actual learning material by actively participating in the learning processes. Constructivist theories emphasize the activities of both learners and teachers in the classroom as they construct and reconstruct knowledge (Cambourne, 2004: 25).

Vygotsky (in Dixon-Krauss, 1996: 20) maintains that in school instruction, the role of the teacher is to mediate shared meanings between learner and text. The teacher does not simply pass text meaning onto the learners instead the teacher provides support for the learners within the zone of proximal development as they collectively build bridges of understandings through social interaction. While the teacher is interacting with the learners, the teacher continually analyses what strategies the learners are using to solve problems and to construct meaning. Cambourne (in Braunger & Lewis, 2006: 72) describes engagement in the reading task as key to successfully learning to read and develop as a reader. There are four essential elements of engagement in learning: learners must see themselves as potential ‘doers’ as must those around them; learners must see learning as personally meaningful; learners perceive learning as a low risk and learners must have an opportunity to bond with other ‘doers’. The knowledge and understanding learners construct in any instructional setting are critically dependent on the learners’ degree of engagement with the demonstrations of literacy. Pang & Sablan (in Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000: 229) noted that Vygotsky states that teachers with high efficacy believed that all learners can be motivated and that it was their responsibility to explore with learners the tasks that will hold their attention in the active learning process.

2.2.4 Active learning

Active learning according to Zuckerman (2003: 177) is the term that refers to a diverse set of educational practices that are consistent with the constructivist theories. There are many different theoretical approaches within constructivism like Cambourne, Piaget and Vygotsky respectively. Yet they share the same basic assumption about learning, namely that it is constructed by learners in the course of both individually-motivated and

socially-motivated activities. Meyers & Jones (1993: xii) agree that it is in the classroom where active learning strategies are used, teaching and learning are more collaborative. The teacher ceases to be the centre of attention and traditionally passive learners are encouraged to participate in the learning process.

Cambourne (2004: 25) concluded that potential learners must first engage with the demonstrations that immersion provides. Engagement incorporates a range of different behaviours which include overtones of attention to see if the learners are free from anxiety and if they know that there is a purpose to their learning. Engagement also depends on active participation and if they know they are capable of achieving the outcomes. Learners can only actively participate if they are willing to try. Learning is unlikely if learners do not attend to demonstrations in which they are immersed. Sheehy (2002: 278) questions the literacy routines in the classrooms where learners are reluctant to participate in the learning process and states that we need to look at classroom literacy practices so that learners can participate in the literacy activity. To encourage the learners to socially participate in the classroom, teachers should engage with the concept learning as a form of social constructivism.

2.2.5 Constructivism

Cambourne (2004: 25) maintains that:

There is nothing so, practical as a good theory and there is nothing so theoretically interesting as good practice.

Constructivism, according to Cambourne (2004: 25) is a set of core assumptions about learners and their learning process. He expresses them as three separate but overlapping propositions:

- a) what is learned cannot be separated from the context in which it is learned;
- b) the purposes and goals that the learner brings to the learning situation are central to what is learned; and
- c) knowledge and meaning are socially constructed through the process of negotiation, evaluation and transformation.

These three core propositions will be discussed in more detail below:

a. What is learned cannot be separated from the context in which it is learned.

Cambourne (2004: 25) explains that we cannot talk about what is learned separately to how it is learned - a variety of experiences all lead to the same understanding. When reading is taught, the ends of the reading instruction are very much determined by the methods used to teach it. The experiences and contexts in which learning to read is embedded will be critical to each learner's understanding of, and ability to use reading. For example, if learners are taught that there is only one 'correct' interpretation of, or a 'correct' response to a text, these learners will become readers who more readily accept and comply with seemingly 'authoritative' or 'persuasive' reading texts than readers who are prepared to critique, contest, or question such texts.

Cambourne (20004: 27) declared that it could also mean that learners who are in classrooms where the emphasis is on oral reading, fluency and expression, will understand and use reading quite differently from those who are taught to read in ways that emphasize the construction of meaning from texts.

b. The purposes and goals that the learner brings to the learning situation are central to what is learned

Piaget (in Ginsburg and Opper, 1988: 236) continually stressed the learner's contribution to the developmental or learning process. It is the learner who tries to solve the problem using already available structures and it is the learner who feels a subjective lack of certainty about his or her solution. The learners do not simply react to external events, but takes an active part in their own development or learning.

Vygotsky (in Zuckerman, 2003: 196) maintains that it is the learner who sets the goals, searches for the means and methods to achieve them, and engages in self control and self evaluation of the achievements that results. At the very onset of formal education, it is the

teacher who structures the conditions for the child's actions and also designs situations that elicit the learner's thinking and reasoning skills. Later on, the learners themselves will change the conditions to suit the learning activity and seek new ways of interacting with the learning material. A learner who recognizes the limits of his/her capabilities will ask the teacher for assistance and together they will work at the task.

c. Knowledge and meaning are socially constructed through the process of negotiation, evaluation and transformation

Cambourne (2004: 25) notes that theoretical assumptions that underpin constructivism happens when teachers assist learners not to become passive recipients of knowledge but to make meaning of their actual learning material by actively participating in their learning processes. Constructivist theories emphasize the activities of both learners and teachers in the classroom as they construct and reconstruct knowledge. Cambourne (2004: 25) argued that the primary mechanism available for the learners to develop their individual understandings and knowledge is through social interactions. In the classroom the use of collaborative groups is one the most potent forms of this mechanism because such groups provide the medium for learners to interact with other learners, testing their own understanding through listening to and reflecting about the understandings of others.

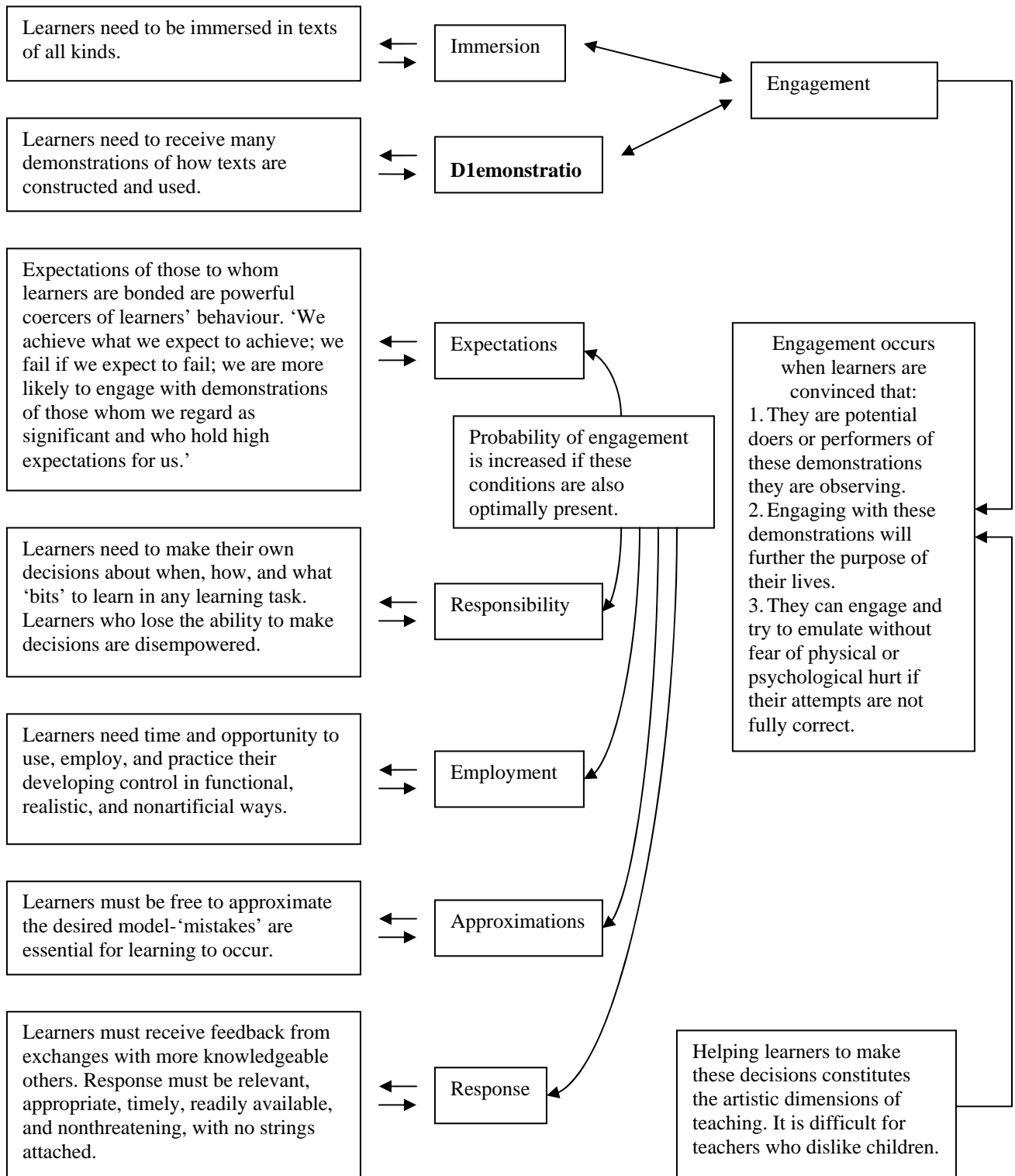
Vygotsky (in Dixon-Kraus, 1996: 20) states that in school instruction, the role of the teacher is to mediate shared meanings between learner and text. The teacher does not simply pass text meaning onto the learner instead the teacher provides learning support for the learners within the zone of proximal development as they collectively build bridges of understandings through social interaction. While the teacher is interacting with the learners, the teacher continually analyses what strategies the learners are using to solve problems and construct meaning.

Cambourne's (1988: 33) conditions for learning is an important task for teachers is creating conditions under which literacy learning activities makes sense for the learners. Cambourne (1988, 1995) developed a schematic representation of his theory as it applies

to literacy learning. This representation is presented in Figure 2.2 on page 28. He conveys the meaning that the notion that ‘conditions for learning’ are particular states of being such as doing, behaving and creating. Inclusive are a set of conditions that co-occur and both affect and are affected by each other, together allowing language to be learned.

According to Cambourne (1988,1995) conditions for learning are favourable when the teacher looks at the ‘principles of engagement’ that may be formulated as follows: learners are more likely to engage deeply with demonstrations if they believe that they are capable of ultimately learning or doing whatever is being demonstrated; if they believe that whatever is being demonstrated has some potential value, purpose and use for them; if they are free from anxiety and if the demonstrations are given by someone they respect, trust, admire and would like to emulate.

Figure 2.2: A schematic representation of Cambourne’s (1988: 33) model of learning as it applies to literacy learning



2.3 APPROACHES TO TEACHING READING

A number of approaches were used in this guided reading programme to teach reading, often in one combination or another because learners use multiple and various approaches when learning to reading.

2.3.1 Guided reading programme

According to the WCED Reading Programme (2006: 8-9) at the start of the Guided Reading Programme the teacher grades the entire class into same ability reading groups by letting the learners read from a text that is specifically targeted for any relevant grade. The learners are then divided into reading groups according to Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Guided reading programme

Group	Description	Approaches taught in each group
2	Struggling reader	Shared reading with teacher, group reading with group 5 learners, phonemic awareness, decoding and comprehension
3	Average reader	Guided reading, phonemic awareness, decoding and comprehension
4	Good reader	Guided reading, comprehension
5	Excellent reader	Guided reading, independent readers. comprehension, group reading with group 2 learners

In a guided reading programme learners have an opportunity to share like reading experiences in their groups on their personal level of development in a non-threatening way. The teacher is right there with the learners, teaching them the necessary reading skills specific to the needs of each group (WCED Reading Programme 2006: 8 - 9). In the following discussion I will be referring to various sub-skills found in a guided reading programme: phonemic awareness, decoding and comprehension, shared reading, guided reading, group reading and independent reading.

2.3.2 Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the first thread in the tapestry of reading according to Tankersley (2003: 5) who postulates that instruction in phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate phonemes in spoken syllables and words. One of the major components that determine a learner's readiness to learn to read is his or her understanding of how sounds work together. Learners learn that individual words are made up of phonemes that help to distinguish words from each other. According to the National Reading Panel Report (2000) the level of phonemic awareness that learners possess, when first beginning reading instruction, and their knowledge of letters are the best two predictors of how well they will learn to read during their first two years of formal reading instruction.

2.3.3 Decoding and comprehension

Caulwell & Botha (2005: 29) saw reading as comprising of two activities: decoding and comprehension. Decoding can be viewed as word recognition and knowledge of phonics, referred to as grapho-phonetic knowledge. However, decoding using grapho-phonetic knowledge without understanding is not reading in any meaningful sense of the term. Understanding the message or comprehension of the message is vital. Therefore decoding and comprehension, according to Machet & Pretorius (2003: 8) are equally important in the reading process and need to be focused on from the beginning. To ensure this, the learner's syntactic, semantic and grapho-phonetic knowledge needs to be built up systematically and the easiest way to do this is through stories and books. Richek et al. (2002) stated that reading is not a natural process. It takes several years and learners must persevere over a long period of time. Therefore there is no single method of teaching learners to read.

2.3.4 Shared reading

Holdaway (1997) described shared reading as: "the teacher reads and shares a book which is appealing to struggling learners". (Routman, 2003) explained that the teacher and the learners read the text together, the teacher taking the lead and the learners following along and actively participating. This strategy involves many repeated readings of large texts, stories and poems. The title, cover of the book, and the illustrations are

shared and discussed with the learners before they read the book themselves. Using this methodology the learners acquire the skills of interpreting, making predictions and sequencing letters and words. The learners are encouraged to 'echo-read' certain parts of the book, before they were able to read on their own and placed in same ability reading groups (Botha, 2001).

2.3.5 Guided reading

Guided reading is viewed by Browning Schulman & da Cruz Payne (2000: 12) as a structured, practical way of matching reading instruction to the diverse individual readers in the classroom. Caulwell & Botha (2005: 16) indicated that during guided reading, the teacher works with a small group of same-ability learners in order to develop specific reading skills. The reading skills developed will be dictated by the needs of that particular group.

Opitz & Ford (2001: 6) believed that guided reading afforded learners more opportunities to interact with each other and the teacher. As a result of this interaction, students were more likely to understand both the text and its meaning to engage in a discussion. The teacher, according to Teele (2004: 24) scaffolds the vocabulary and the content of the text so that students can understand what they are reading.

One of the main goals of providing learners with different guided reading experiences was to show them that reading can be enjoyable and something they want to do on their own. Opitz & Ford (2001: 9) agreed that we not only teach learners to read, but to be readers. As they have success with specific texts, learners most often want to repeat the experience, which provide meaningful, purposeful practice that lead to a favourable view of reading. Tyner (2004: 65), who wrote on traditional reading instruction, often discouraged guided contextual reading until students had mastered basic alphabet and phonemic awareness skills. It was therefore important that teachers included these skills in carefully structured reading lessons for emergent readers.

2.3.6 Group reading

Group reading, is described by Millward (2007: 2) as a way of developing and improving learners' reading skills by giving them supported practice in reading. This support is given to the learners by their peers and by the teacher.

According to Caulwell & Botha (2005: 11) group reading is a classroom reading strategy that allows learners to enjoy a more intimate contact with books while relying on peer support within a small group. During group reading, the learners work in small mixed ability groups to read books together. Individual learners take turns to read from their book. After reading, the group completed a structured activity based on the book they have read. This involved discussing the book, answering oral questions and doing some written work related to the book. By doing group work, learners have the opportunity to work together in a co-operative way. Tyner (2004: 65) implied that when doing group reading the teacher can easily assess and assist learners in acquiring the skills needed to improve reading.

2.3.7 Independent reading

Clay (1979) described independent readers as learners who pursue a larger amount of reading activity, pushing boundaries of their own skills as they try more and more material of increasing difficulty. One way to describe this independence is that the learner has learnt how to work out new words for themselves. They need less sharing and less guiding, although both types of teaching interaction are still appropriate for texts which are beyond their present level. Tyner (2004: 103) confirmed that independent readers read with speed, accuracy and proper expression. They read independently from a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes. They can quickly skim the text to retrieve information and they are able to draw conclusions in an effort to understand the text.

Hastings Gregory & Nikas (2005: 81) declared that independent reading helps learners develop a sense of efficacy and nurtures a desire for reading.

2.4 LITERACY THEMES THAT HAVE ARISEN FROM THIS RESEARCH

This section introduces the forth ring of the framework circle – the literacy themes that have emerged from the research are: a meaning based guided reading programme, classroom libraries, routine reading, gender and reading, reading for fun, family support, the role of the teacher and classroom management. The educational reading practitioners and proponents that have been referred to in this current debate are listed alphabetically in the fifth ring depicted in Figure 2.1 on page 19.

2.4.1 The importance of a meaning-based guided reading programme in the classroom.

A comprehensive reading programme, according to Teele (2004) must be meaning-based and provide ways for students to become engaged in the complete process of reading and writing. Readers need to have skills presented to them through different methods in order for them to understand what they are learning. In order to assist all learners in learning to read, a multifaceted, integrated approach would more effectively facilitate this process. Neuman & Celeno (in Teele, 2004) confirmed that learners who were exposed to printed materials read more and are willing to try to read more challenging work. They are able to identify words faster, which increases their vocabulary development and develops both fluency and comprehension skills more easily.

Winkler (1998: 91) extended Teele's (2004) theory by suggesting that the class teacher set up a meaning-based graded reading programme by dividing the class into reading groups according to their reading levels. Learners can read with meaning on their personal levels of development. Beginner readers read aloud and the more advanced readers had times when they read aloud and when they read silently. Each reading session ended with a short written activity based on the reading material they have read. Learners can apply to change groups when they feel that they have mastered reading at the level of the group they have been placed in. The teacher teaches different reading skills (Tyner, 2004: 33 - 34) to different groups depending on the need of each group. In

this way all the learners are reading with meaning and comprehension on their levels. The teacher can also decide to move a learner to another group.

2.4.2 Classroom libraries

The availability of reading materials greatly impacts learner's literacy development. Routman (2003: 64) found that large classroom libraries generally support the most effective reading programmes. Schools with low-income families have far fewer books available for students, and classroom libraries can replace public libraries. Learners read more when they have easy access to books, and well-designed, organised, ample libraries provide the easiest access for students. If students are to choose to read and develop positive attitudes about reading, they must have easy access to engaging reading material of all genres.

Routman (2003: 64) stated that providing interesting books for learners is a powerful incentive for reading, perhaps the most powerful incentive possible. Classroom libraries are a literacy necessity; they are integral to successful teaching and learning and must become a top priority if our learners are to become thriving, engaged readers. As Routman (2003: 64) notes, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of classroom libraries. Learners that love to read, almost always have access to books at home. Since many students today do not have that access, it is paramount that all learners be provided with books in the classroom.

Fisherman (in Machet & Pretorius, 2003: 7) declared that:

By the time learners start school they have already been 'reading' the world for six or seven years.

Clay (1989: 15) maintains that when learners enter schools they have a private frame of reference which stems from their past experiences. Before learners enter school, they can be found composing their own stories stimulated by looking at pictures and reading words that they see and hear in television advertisements and in the printed media. When they enter a print-rich classroom they continue to develop their 'reading' using the materials in the classroom as they used their resources in their homes.

According to Starr (2006) a classroom library tells learners that the teacher values and encourages independent reading. Classroom libraries provide students with immediate access to books; they can provide teachers with the opportunity to put the right book in learners' hands at a moment's notice. Allington & Cunningham (in Routman, 2003) agree that learners who have ready access to books in their classrooms have better attitudes about reading, reading achievement, and comprehension than their peers with less access to books in the classroom. Moreover, learners are likely to spend more time reading when they are in classrooms with adequate classroom libraries. The classroom library should be organized in an accessible way so that learners know where to find and return the reading material with which they work (Hastings Gregory & Nikas, 2005: 40).

2.4.3 Routine reading in a reading programme

Learners work best in literacy classrooms where routines and expectations are clearly and consistently communicated, the learners know exactly what to do and when to do it. Fountas & Pinnell (in Hastings Gregory & Nikas, 2005: 37) posited that:

Every moment invested in teaching routines will save hours of instructional time later. A very practical and meaningful tool for all the learners is a daily schedule to help them manage their day (Downing, 2005: 77).

They know exactly when their reading programme will take place. Teachers who are serious about their commitment to developing a literacy classroom must commit themselves to practice a daily schedule that devotes a substantial portion of the day to comprehensive literacy (Nagy, Anderson & Herman, 1987).

Hastings Gregory & Nikas (2005: 37) insists that routines foster self-directed, independent work habits for reading, writing and talking about text and expand learners' learning opportunities. Routines should be taught systematically and time should be provided for learners to practice the routines. They also suggest that teachers rotate groups of learners with whom they meet on a daily basis and provide more frequent small group instruction for struggling learners.

The teacher has to be organised and used to working with routines to do group reading. She would need to know who is in the group, the reading level of each group, the group's prior knowledge and what they need to learn if she is doing group reading regularly (Browning Schulman & da Crux Payne, 2000: 161).

Reading daily, in a routine fashion, has other benefits, such as it helps to increase learners' vocabulary knowledge. Nagy, Anderson & Herman (1987) confirmed that reading is a strategy that fosters vocabulary development and that learners should read at least twenty minutes daily to increase their vocabulary.

2.4.4 Gender and reading

The disparity between boys and girls as readers seems to be a worldwide phenomenon. McFann (2007: 1) stated that according to the Progress in the International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS) in all the forty or more participating countries, Grade 4 girls scored higher than the Grade 4 boy. Similar findings were found in the US National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores as well as in New Zealand, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (McFann, 2007: 1).

Scieszka (2005) believes that boys are slower to develop than girls biologically and therefore often struggle with reading and writing skills. He maintained that:

Literacy statistics show that we are not giving boys what they need to be successful readers. Boys need our help. And the greatest challenge to boys' literacy is probably getting people to understand that boys do need help.

Sanderson (2007: 10) explained why boys are seen as reluctant readers. The increasing difference in the quantity of reading done by boys and girls can significantly impact on the educational levels of both groups. Boys who are more than several years behind at school, and who are uninterested and reluctant readers, are labeled by school counselors or psychologists as having a 'learning difficulty', a 'learning disability', 'dyslexia' or 'attention deficit disorder'. Yet, outside school, boys have a great many other interests than books to compete with, such as sport practices and events, computers, videos, TV, bike riding, skateboarding and just playing around outside. Involvement in organised

sport (Sanderson, 2007: 4) can become an obstacle to school success for boys. Many parents see sport as the pathway to achieving male identity and self-worth. Some parents identify their son's sporting prowess and success as the sole source of his self-esteem. Reading is not seen in the same light.

Teachers need to expand their understanding around boys' resistance to reading, and wanting instead to do other things. Sanderson (2007: 4) found that by exploring boys' gendered notions about the act of reading; we can support boys to become readers. A concern is that many boys perceive reading as both passive and feminine, and are therefore alienated from what reading is about.

2.4.5 Reading for fun

Teachers can add enjoyment to the reading process by using different tones and inflection, adding funny sound effects, making use of rhythm and acting out scenes (Downing, 2005:84). Gambrell & Mozzoni (in Downing, 2005: 84) stated that literacy is a social act.

Daniels (2002: 25) writes that '*fun*' is the factor that most effectively keeps learners engaged in complex learning tasks outside school. It is no surprise then that when teachers who implement group reading in a '*fun*' way in their classrooms are recreating for their learners the kind of close playful interaction that scaffolds learning so productively elsewhere outside the classroom. These teachers develop their classrooms as a kind of analogous family. When fun is unleashed in the classroom, learners become engaged in the task of learning to reading.

2.4.6 Family support

The role of the family is important in the learner's reading. Taylor (in Braunger & Lewis, 2006: 33) maintains that parents play a significant role in the development of their children's literacy. The time parents give to reading with their child, accomplishes several goals: Firstly, one of the most important things we know about learners and reading is that those learners who read the most tend to be the best readers (Allington,

1977). Secondly, reading with your child will allow him/her to practice reading strategies and skills learned at school. Thirdly and most important of all, however, is the message parents send to their learners through their actions and that is, when learners see that reading is important to their parents, they see the importance of reading in everyday life. Parents should read to, read with, and listen to learners read in many ways to promote growth in reading. Key to success is that time spent together reading should be enjoyable, relaxed and rewarding. Dechert (2007) suggested that to instill a love of reading that will last a lifetime, parents should have their child sit next to them or on their lap and share books. In today's schools teachers go to great lengths to find ways to help improve their learners' reading ability, but Becher (1985) indicated that parental involvement is an important factor in a learner's success in reading. The greater amount of parental involvement at home, the greater amount of success in a learner's reading ability.

The earlier in a learner's educational process parental involvement begins, the more powerful the effects will be. The home and family play a critical role in determining learners' school success, and it appears that the earlier this influence is 'harnessed,' the greater the likelihood of higher learner achievement. Early childhood education programmes with strong parental components have amply demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach. Cotton & Wikelund, (2007) insist that programmes which involve parents in reading with their learners, supporting their work on homework assignments, or tutoring them using materials and instructions provided by teachers, show particularly impressive results. Clearly, parental involvement is effective in fostering achievement and affective gains at all levels, and schools are encouraged to engage and maintain this involvement throughout the middle school and secondary years.

2.4.7 The role of the teacher

The teacher's role in the literacy process is to create experiences and environments that introduces, nurtures or extends learners' literacy abilities to engage with the text. Literacy is the basis for all content area learning. If learners cannot read and write proficiently, their resulting inability to acquire necessary information in other areas become a deficit for learning.

Hastings Gregory & Nikas (2005: 71) indicated that as teachers, we are responsible for what our learners learn and know; we make the difference in what they learn and how they learn. Teachers work hard at planning and delivering instruction. Intuitively teachers know that not all instructional strategies are equal, and we engage with strategies and practices that will help accomplish what we so diligently strive to achieve and that is instruction that will lead to learning. Au & Raphael (in McLaughlin, 2003: 5) agree that this requires that teachers engage in explicit instruction, modeling, scaffolding, facilitating and participating to develop lifelong readers. It is vital for teachers to show students (Nagy, Anderson & Herman, 1987) how to apply these reading skills strategically to acquire meaning from the text and how these strategies fit into the bigger picture of reading. Bond & Dyksta (1997) agree that effective and powerful instruction from knowledgeable teachers is the key to successful reading.

2.4.8 Classroom management

Exemplary literacy classrooms are warm and inviting places that nurture a learning community and a sense of belonging among students. The arrangement of furniture, materials and a classroom library supports the management of whole class, small group and independent work. How the classroom space is organized impacts on how quickly and quietly students accomplish their work and how the teacher manages the learning of all the learners in her class (Hastings Gregory & Nikas, 2005: 40).

Browning Shulman & da Cruz Paune (2000: 54) agree that good management begins with a thoughtful room arrangement and a careful selection of materials. The way in which the furniture and reading resources are organised will support the learning that takes place in the classroom.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, which have critically informed and guided the current research. The four theoretical components,

which contextualized the central research question of this thesis were: the language theorists, the guided reading programme, the reading themes and the reading practitioners.

The next chapter discusses the research methodology for this research project.

CHAPTER 3

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology used in this study. It introduces the research question, research design, and the choice of the main instrument used to generate data. The aim of this study was to explore the Grade 7 learners' perceptions of a guided reading programme.

3.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The key focus question asks:

“What are the perceptions of Grade 7 learners of the effectiveness of a guided reading programme?”

The investigation seeks to answer four sub-questions:

- How did the learners receive help from their teacher or peers when reading in their groups?
- Since using the guided reading programme, how have the learners' reading abilities improved?
- Before the learners started with the reading programme, how did the learners feel about reading aloud in their groups?
- How did the reading programme promote an interest in reading for the learners?

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This section introduces and discusses the ethnographic research approach used in this study. Henning (2007: 82) stated that ethnography stems from social participation and is

known as participatory observation. This study's approach is grounded in action research, critical theory and observations.

3.2.1 Action Research

In 2005 an action research approach was used by me to improve the reading levels of a Grade 7 class where many of the learners were reading below Grade 7 level.

Lewin (in Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000: 221) remarked that research which produced nothing but books are inadequate. Action research is a powerful tool for change and improvement at the local level. According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000: 226) action research may be used in almost any setting where a problem involving people, tasks or where some change of features results in a more desirable outcome.

Kemmis & McTaggart (in Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000: 229) suggest that action research has key principles of which I have selected five which pertain to my study and they are:

- Action research is an approach to improving education by changing it and learning from the consequences of the changes;
- Action research is participatory research, through which people work towards the improvement of their own practices;
- Action research is collaborative, it involves those responsible for action in improving it;
- Action research is a systematic learning process in which people act deliberately, though remaining open to surprises and responsive opportunities; and
- Action research is a political process because it involves making changes that will affect others.

This study was about bringing change in the classroom. The learners wanted to improve their reading ability so they participated in a programme that would bring about the changes in their learning patterns. It was a new experience for the learners to be taught

actual reading skills in the Senior Phase in the primary school. They were beginning to take responsibility to improve their reading skills by participating individually and in groups in the reading programme.

The assumption is that all the skills needed to learn to read can be taught in the Foundation Phase. The period of three years is assumed sufficient.

3.2.2 Questionnaires

The instrument I chose to conduct the research was a questionnaire (see Appendix 3 on page 94). The questionnaire was written in one language, namely English since it was the language of instruction at this classroom. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000: 252) explained that surveys, include the questionnaire, which is an instrument specifically designed to gather information that will be useful for analysis. Although the term questionnaire suggests a collection of questions, an examination of the questionnaire that was used in this study consisted of both statements and questions. It consisted of ten closed questions and six open-ended questions, both sections covered the following themes: fear of reading in various situations, same ability groupings, levels of reading materials, developing an interest in reading and reader self-concept.

In using questions, researchers have two options:

They can ask **open-ended questions**, in which case the respondents are asked to provide their own answers to the question (Babbie, 2005: 254). In the open-ended question I asked straight forward questions that were related to every learner's reading experience of the guided reading programme, whether the programme impacted their reading ability and their views on reading. I encouraged the learners to elaborate on their answers by providing ruled lines below the questions for them to write thus giving them an indication of the length of their answers. The open-ended questions allowed the respondents to freely express their views and experiences

In the case of **closed questions** the respondents are asked to select an answer from among a list provided by the researcher (Babbi, 2005: 254). In this study a 4 point Likert scale was used for the closed questions where a set of statements were presented to each of which the learners had to respond in terms of one of the following categories: “rarely”, “sometimes”, “often”, “always”. Each of the categories was allocated weightings of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. I used this form of questioning because the learners in this study had used it before in the class as a form of assessment.

The learners completed the questionnaire under the guidance of the deputy principal and this provided a climate where they could respond truthfully and express themselves freely. The learners were given enough time to complete the questionnaire. There was a hundred percent response rate for the questionnaires with both sections of the questions completed by the learners. Three students needed a scribe due to their inability to read and respond to the questionnaire with confidence. The scribes were learners in Grade 8 who were friends of the three learners. This assistance was given in the presence of the deputy principal.

The questionnaire was developed according to the process of the reading programme which the learners could easily relate to. Therefore it was simple for them to complete without any anxiety.

After the piloting of the questionnaire, both the open-ended and closed questionnaires were re-worded. There was no evidence of ambiguously worded or vague items, leading questions, nor negatively phrased questions. The questionnaire did not elicit private information from the learners. It was simply laid out thus encouraging all learners to respond and complete the questionnaire. It was two pages in length using both front and back with a size 14 font.

3.2.2.1 Advantages of using the questionnaires in the current investigation

According to Babbie (2005: 252) the survey approach is an excellent vehicle for measuring attitudes. I felt a questionnaire was the most effective research tool to measure how learners felt about having developed both their self-esteem and their reading skills. Wolf (1988: 480) advocated that a questionnaire usually allows participants time to give their own honest and undisturbed feedback. Learners were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, which they all did. There was a one hundred percent return of all questionnaires that was fully completed.

3.2.3 Classroom observations

During the year I observed how the learners' attitudes, physical stature and self confidence develop and grew. Each learner was given a check list that was pasted at the back of their literature books. The headings of the page were: date, title, level of book, I liked the book and I did not like the book. This gave learners the opportunity to record how many books they have read on the different levels and to critique how they felt about each book that was read. This gave me an indication of the books that were enjoyed and the books that were not popular. The frequency of the dates on the checklist gave me an indication of how often the learners read, whether they liked what they were reading and how the level of difficulty increased.

I observed using the checklist that the learners who needed extra support developed a love of reading and how this impacted on their improved self-esteem.

3.2.4 Thoroughness in approach

The concepts of reliability and validity according to (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000: 105) are multi-faceted; there are many different types of reliability and validity. Reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, in this case a questionnaire, applied repeatedly to the same object, yields the same results each time. The reliability of this study could be tested by using any form of data collection as long as it addressed the

same questions focusing on the learners' perception of the programme. All the learners completed the questionnaire in the same venue at the same time.

Leedy & Ormrod (2005: 184) stated that the disadvantages of using a questionnaire may be a low return rate, that the respondents reading and writing skills may hamper the interpretation of the questions that may lead to distortions, and that the forms may not be fully completed.

To prevent misinterpretation of the questions, the deputy principal was asked to read through the questions and explain each question to the learners prior to them completing the questionnaire.

3.3 METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This research design used in this study to gather and analyses information in order to arrive at a solution. The approach was both quantitative and qualitative using both open-ended and closed questions in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was piloted the previous year. It was given to Grade 7 learners that were not part of this sample but they were part of a guided reading programme. After the necessary changes were made, the questionnaire was given to the current learners to complete in November 2005.

3.3.1 Sample of this study

There were forty-four Grade 7 learners in the class who were part of the reading programme. An equal number of boys to girls, aged between twelve and fourteen years participated in this study. All the learners resided in Mitchell's Plain on the Cape Flats. This is a sub-economic area that consists of both formal housing and informal settlements.

Figure 3.1 and 3.2 show the number of boys and girls in the sample, their ages and their reading groups.

Figure 3.1: The boys in the sample

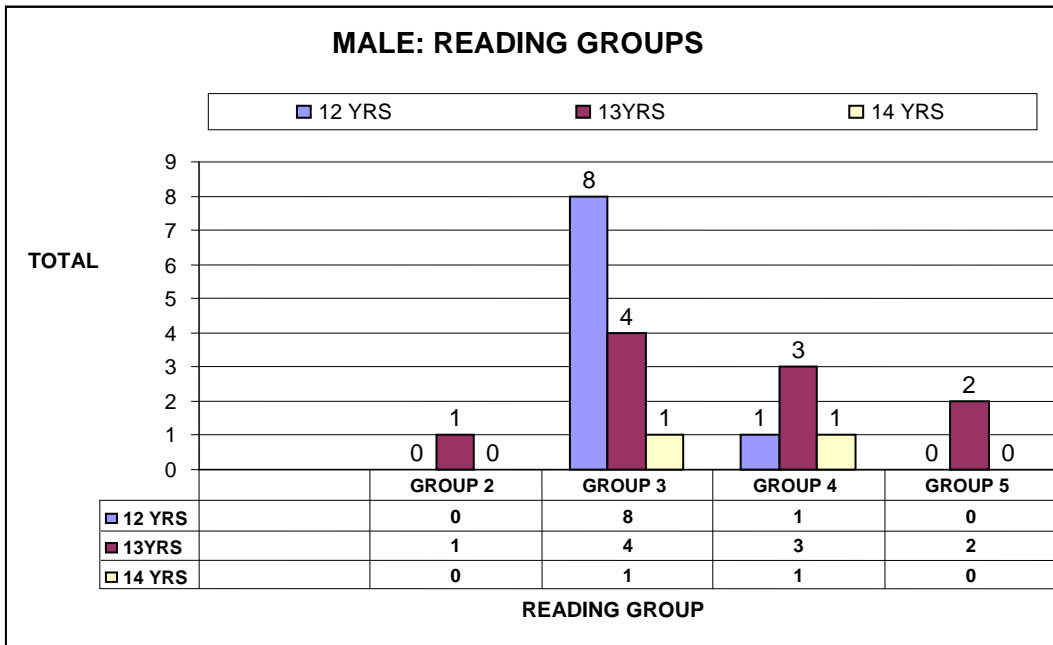
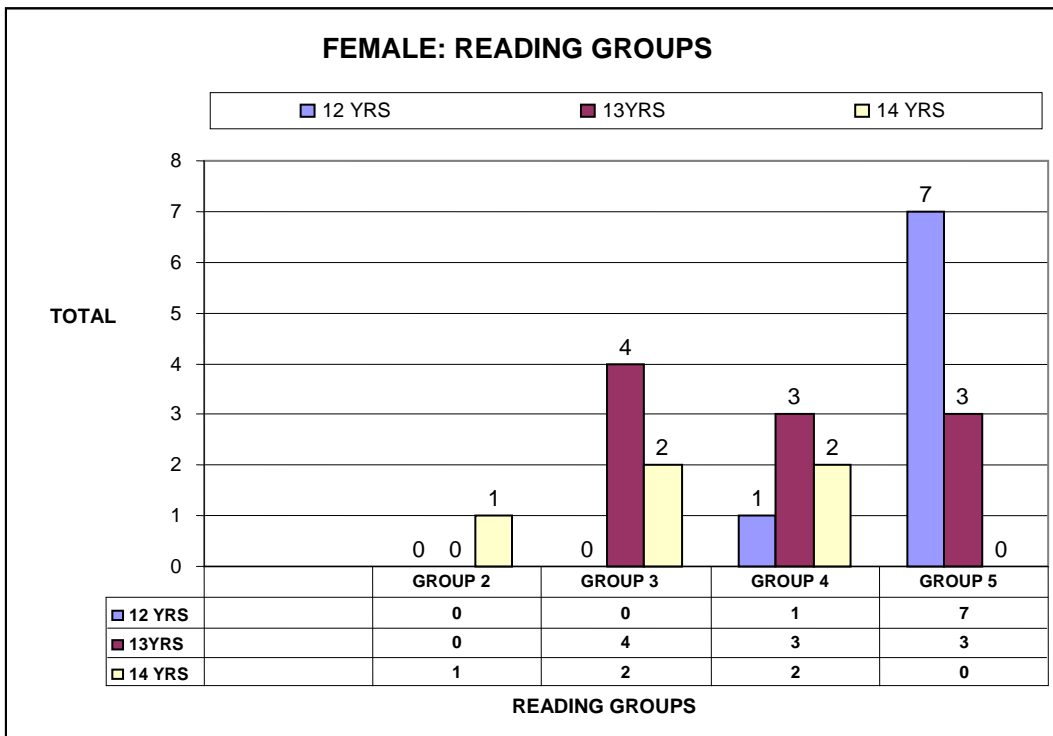


Figure 3.2: The girls in the sample



3.4 DATA ANALYSIS OF THIS STUDY

Data collected from the research questionnaire was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data collected from the ten closed questions was analyzed by means of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), basic statistics and graphs. This was done using graphs and chi squares. The responses in the open-ended questions were categorized and interpreted manually and the themes were linked to the theoretical framework presented in the literature review.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mouton (2001: 238) stated that the ethic of science concerns what is wrong and what is right in the conduct of research. Because scientific research is a form of human conduct, it follows that such conduct has to conform to general norms and values. In this research the information provided by the learners was on the basis of mutual trust, it was therefore essential that the rights, interests and sensitivities of the learners be protected.

The parents were assured that the learners' rights to privacy, to anonymity and to confidentiality would be respected. Permission from the parents of the learners was asked both at an information meeting and in the form of a letter as can be seen in Appendix 4 on page 97. They were informed that the learner's participation was voluntary.

The names of the respondents have not been used for confidentiality reasons; instead each respondent was given a number.

The principal of the school was informed about the nature of the research and his permission was sought. In October 2005 I was granted permission from the WCED to conduct the study in my classroom. A copy of the letter was given to the principal and is included as Appendix 5 on page 98.

3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the rationale for, and the implementation of the main research design including the research questions, approach, methodology, sample, and analysis have been discussed as well as the literature used to support the selected methodology. The results and analysis of this investigation follow in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

4 RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the questionnaire data (open-ended and closed questions) is presented in a tabulated form with an analytic discussion on the emerging trends.

The primary aim of this research project was to establish the learners' perception of a graded reading intervention programme that was introduced to a Grade 7 class. The critical questions were intended to establish how senior phase learners felt about reading in same-ability groups, the extent to which they received adequate help in their groups, how their attitudes towards reading changed and finally whether the programme was beneficial to the learners.

4.2 BACKGROUND TO THE ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

At the beginning of the 2005, during a baseline assessment, of a class of forty-four Grade 7 learners, 57% of them indicated that they perceived they were neither confident to read aloud in front of their peers nor had an interest in reading. This information was obtained from a questionnaire that was completed by a Grade 7 class in a Western Cape primary school. The analysis found that the learners had a low reader self-concept. To address the low reader self-concept problem, the guided reading programme was developed in 2005.

In Grade 7 the learners were expected to read one literature book that the school selected from a prescribed list of books issued by the WCED. During the baseline assessment study these learners had to read one page aloud from the prescribed book supplied by the regional education department. The majority of the learners were unable to read from the literature book because they were self-conscious about their reading ability and were reluctant to read aloud. I explained to the learners in the class that every learner had some reading and word recognition skills - it needed to be unlocked. To boost the learners' self

esteem I then decided to start the numbering of the groups from 2 and not 1 because 1 meant that the learners had no skills all and I wanted all the learners to feel confident in their ability to learn to read.

Table 4.1 was developed as a guide to grade the learners into same ability groups. Once the base-line assessment had been completed the learners were placed in four groups as shown in the table below. A description of the group's reading abilities, are provided in the final column.

Table 4.1 Rubric used to grade learners

Group	No of learners	Description	Reading ability
2	2	Struggling reader (read on Foundation Phase level).	Cannot read 90% of the words. Can recognize a few single sounds but can't read three-letter words.
3	19	Average reader (reads below Grade 7 level) Learners are reading on grade 5-6 level	Can read 60% of the words, can sound the basic phonic words when the words are unknown.
4	11	Good reader (read on Grade 7 level).	Reads 80% of the words on Grade 7 level with/without comprehension and expression.
5	12	Excellent reader (read above Grade 7 level).	Reads 95% - 100% fluently with comprehension and expression above grade level. Is able to read different genres independently.

4.3 FINDINGS: ANSWERS TO THE FOUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As presented in chapter 1, the key focus question over-arching the current research investigation was as follows:

What were the perceptions of Grade 7 learners of the effectiveness of a guided reading programme?

The answer to this question would be shown by progressively answering the following four sub-questions:

- How did the learners receive help from their teacher or peers when reading in their group?
- Since using the guided reading programme, how have the learners' reading abilities improved?
- Before the learners started with the reading programme, how did the learners feel about reading aloud in their groups?
- How did the reading programme promote an interest in reading for the learners?

At the end of the reading programme the learners were asked to evaluate the reading programme. They were asked to assess whether they had benefited from the programme as individuals working within a group and if they received the necessary help to improve their reading skills.

The learners were asked how they benefited from the programme and whether they receive help from their teacher or peers. They responded by highlighting the aspects of the programme they felt had a positive impact on improving their reading ability. Table 4.2 below describes the learners' perceptions of the reading programme

Table 4.2 Perceptions of the benefits of the guided reading programme by the 44 learners in the class at the end of the year

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
4.2.1. I receive help when struggle to read from friends or my teacher.	1	13	10	20
4.2.2. My reading has improved considerably.	0	6	18	20
4.2.3. I am not afraid to read aloud in front of others.	3	6	19	16
4.2.4. I developed an interest in reading.	0	8	20	16

These four statements will form the sub-questions to the main research question and each one will be discussed in more detail below.

4.3.1 How did the learners receive help from their teacher or peers when reading in their groups?

In a comparison of findings between the two questions ‘*I receive help when I struggle to read from my friends or my teacher*’ and ‘*I am not afraid to read aloud in front of others.*’ 97, 7% of the learners reported that the programme, had affected them positively.

‘*My reading has improved considerably*’ and ‘*I developed an interest in reading*’ In both of these questions, the respondents showed that the programme had inspired progress, in their reading ability. All the learners (100%) revealed that they had gained reading skills by using this programme.

Figure 4.1 I receive help when I struggle to read from friends or my teacher

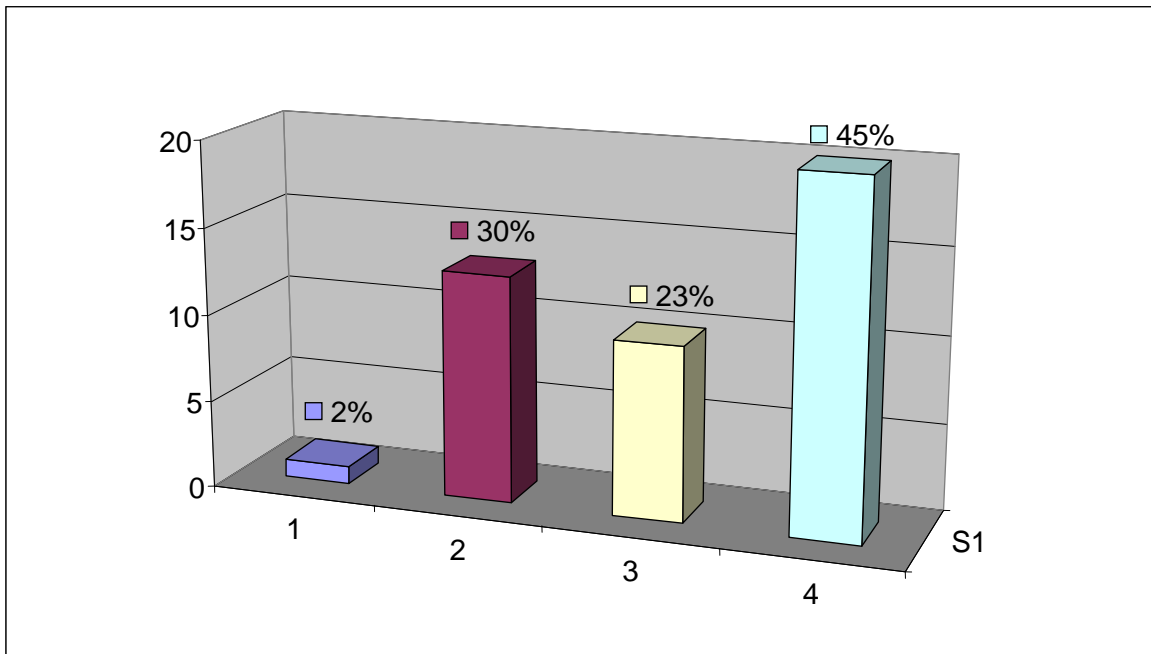


Figure 4.1 describes the learners’ perceptions of the reading programme and the help they received from each other in their reading groups as well as from the teacher. Thirty (68%) of the forty-four learners (in groups 2, 3 and 4) responded that they ‘often’ and

'always' received help from either their friends or their teacher when they were struggling. This meant that help was immediately available when individual learners were experiencing difficulty with reading.

Thirteen (30%) of the forty-four learners (in groups 4 and 5) felt that they received help 'sometimes'. This could mean that these learners were reading on grade level or above grade level and did not need much help with their reading. These learners were excellent, independent readers in groups 4 and 5, and did not need much help on a regular basis because they had the necessary reading skills to help themselves. However, when they needed help, for fluency or comprehension, either their peers or the teacher gave it to them immediately.

Learners in all the groups had experience with reading unfamiliar words. Unfamiliar words in this programme were defined as words that the learners had either not seen before in written form, which meant they may have been unable to pronounce the word/s, or did not know the meaning of the word/s. The learners wrote the unfamiliar words on separate pieces of paper and once they had completed reading silently, the group members collectively assisted each other. They helped each other by decoding or pronouncing the word/s or encouraged each other to use dictionaries to understand the meanings of the word/s. If, however, as a last resort, no one in the group was able to assist with understanding the meaning of the word/s, or those particular words were not in the dictionary, then they would call the teacher who would explain the meanings of the words.

The opportunities created by reading aloud, and listening to others read, were to help the learners build self-confidence to read and to share reading experiences with the group. When a learner struggled to read certain words aloud in the text, the learners in the group, or the teacher would help that learner decode the word, pronounce the word and understand the meaning of the word so that the learners could read the text with comprehension.

In the open-ended question, ‘*I feel comfortable reading in my group*’ and ‘*what I like about the programme*’, the learners commented as outlined in Table 4.3:

Table 4.3 Qualitative responses to the open-ended questions

Qualitative responses	No. of responses
We always read in our group and it is fun	34
We always listen and help each other	25
It was fun discussing unfamiliar words in the group	23
I love the number of books and dictionaries in the class room	16
I am not scared of reading anymore	9
I can ask for help	6
My group inspired me to read	5
My friends don't make fun when I make mistakes	5
My spelling has improved	4
I become excited when I read	2
Everyone is happy in the group	2
We do not disturb each other when we read silently	2

The above responses 25/44 (56, 8%) showed that it was important for the learners that they listened to one-another while reading aloud and be part of the discussion on the book. This resulted in the learners being able to understand the reading problems that their peers in their group were experiencing. Working in groups was beneficial to them because they received help from their peers when they were discussing unfamiliar words, which was regarded as a fun thing to do. Learning the unfamiliar words helped the learners build up a vocabulary that assisted them to read fluently and to read with expression and comprehension.

34/44 (77%) of the learners also indicated that reading in groups was fun and that when they struggled with new words or made mistakes while reading no one made fun of them. This encouraged the learners to improve their self-confidence as readers and to ask for help either from the teacher or from their peers when they needed it. They did not see asking for help as a weakness but rather they enjoyed the challenge of improving their own, and each others' reading skills and this process was greatly valued by all the learners.

Having a large variety of books and the fact that they were easily available assisted the learners when they worked in groups to find the meanings of new words and in new contexts and this also increased their vocabulary and improved their spelling. 23/44 (52%) of the learners' learned how to use dictionaries and they enjoyed looking for new words and were keen to share the spelling and meanings of those words with their peers.

4.3.2 Since using the guided reading programme, how have the learners reading abilities improved?

The reading programme consisted of 45 graded readers. Each group started at a reading level that was applicable to their reading ability. Table 4.4 below shows the levels of the books and at what level the groups entered the programme.

Table 4.4 The grading of the reading books and the groups at the start of the reading programme

Group	READ's definition of book	Grade levels	Number of books in pack in <i>January</i>	Number of books group had read by <i>November</i>
Preparation: Group 2 was exposed to a phonic programme before reading				
2	Big Books: Visual reading for phonic and sight words.	Grades 1 - 3	5	Still reading through the 5 books in this group.
3	Consolidation pack: For basic reading with comprehension focusing on phonic blends and pattern reading.	Grades 4 - 6	18	Completed all 18 books in Group 3 as well as Group 4's 14 books.
4	Fluency pack: Independent reading on grade level-extending and	Grade 7	14	Completed all 14 books in Group 4 as well as Group 5's 8 books.

Group	READ's definition of book	Grade levels	Number of books in pack in January	Number of books group had read by November
	practicing different reading skills.			
5	Read for tomorrow pack: Independent readers who can read text accurately, smoothly, with expression and comprehension.	Grade 7 and above	8	Completed the 8 books and continued reading fiction and non fiction books independently. Books were taken from the classroom library.

Figure 4.2 My reading has improved

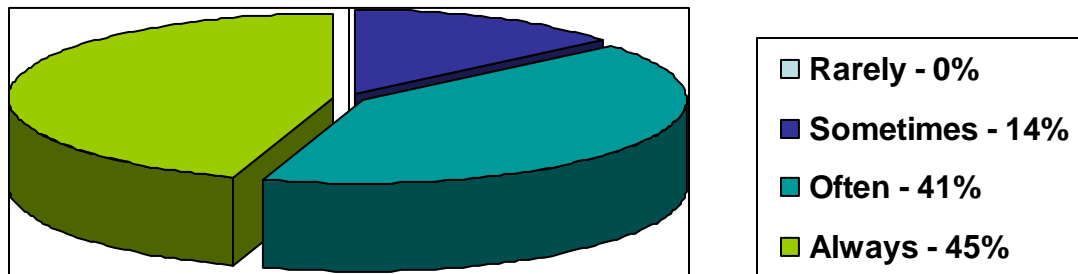


Figure 4.2 shows how learners responded when asked whether their reading had improved by the end of the programme. 86 % of them responded that their reading had improved 'often' or 'always'. This percentage of learners was the readers in Group 3 and Group 4 whose reading level at the beginning of the programme was below or on Grade 7 level. These learners collectively had read forty books as they progressed through the programme.

The learners in Group 2 had progressed from the basic phonic programme where they were learning single sounds (phonemic awareness) and phonic blends (letter knowledge)

to reading the big books that were storybooks that consolidated the phonic single sounds and blends. Respondent 4 said the following:

I never used to touch a book but with this reading programme I started to read more and more.

The learners in Group 3 had started the programme at the consolidation pack and read all the books in the pack as well as all the books in the fluency pack. Their reading had improved and the evidence for this is that they started out reading on Grade 4 level (decoding) and progressed to reading books on Grade 7 level by the end of the programme.

The learners in Group 4 had started the programme at the fluency pack and read all the books in the pack as well as all the books in the *Read for tomorrow* pack. At the start of the programme they were reading on Grade 7 level and have progressed to reading books above Grade 7 level. Respondent 30 said the following:

It is not easy to ignore the reading. I can't stop reading now.

The learners in Group 5 had started the programme as independent readers. These learners were able to read fluently above grade level with expression and comprehension. Their reading had improved because they were exposed to different genres. In non-fiction these learners were able to identify key elements of the story, make predictions and were able to identify how the characters developed. In non-fiction they were able to distinguish between fact and opinion, understand statistics and data and understand what propaganda is. Respondent 8 said the following:

When I see something to read I go for it and I like when I see a newspaper or anything to read I read it. I just like reading plays so much. When I have nothing to do I read plays.

Responding to the open question: '*I now like reading more than before*' seventeen of the learners felt, that because of the reading programme there were lots of books available to

them in the classroom that had not been there before. They were now reading regularly in their groups and this exposed them to the different genres. Examples of the different genre were: *fiction* like fairy stories, fables folklore, fantasy, science fiction and *non-fiction* like biographies, autobiographies, science, arts, sports and so on. The learners discovered that the content of the books were varied and interesting and this encouraged them to read even more. The more regularly they read the more they improved and developed different reading skills.

14% of the learners responded that their reading had improved only '*sometimes*'. These were the learners from Group 5 who were reading above grade level and who were the independent readers in the class. Significant to note that even though they were the independent readers in the class every learner's reading had improved.

When analyzing the chi-square test results for '*My reading has improved considerably*' with '*I am not afraid to read aloud to others anymore*' it is interesting to notice that at the 0.05 level of significance, there is a significant relationship between not being afraid to read aloud to others and the perception that their reading has improved ($p = 0.021$).

Table 4.5 Chi-square test results for '*My reading has improved considerably*' vs '*I am not afraid to read aloud to others anymore*'

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	14.862	6	0.021

In the table below a larger percentage of the students who chose '*rarely*' or '*sometimes*' for '*I am not afraid to read aloud to others anymore*' also chose '*sometimes*' for '*my reading has improved considerably*', versus the smaller percentage that chose '*often*' or '*always*' for '*I am not afraid to read aloud to others anymore*' and '*sometimes*' for '*my reading has improved considerably*'. 33/44 which is 75% of the students chose '*often*' or '*always*' for both statements.

Table 4.6 Crosstab for ‘My reading has improved considerably’ and ‘I am not afraid to read aloud to others anymore’

Crosstab

			I am not afraid to read aloud to others anymore				Total
			Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
My reading has improved considerably	Sometimes	Count	1	3	1	1	6
		Expected Count	.4	.8	2.6	2.2	6.0
	Often	Count	1	3	10	4	18
		Expected Count	1.2	2.5	7.8	6.5	18.0
	Always	Count	1	0	8	11	20
		Expected Count	1.4	2.7	8.6	7.3	20.0
Total	Count	3	6	19	16	44	
	Expected Count	3.0	6.0	19.0	16.0	44.0	

When the learners were asked in the open questions what they liked about the reading programme, the learners indicated that the different reading strategies within the group reading programme encouraged them to read. The silent reading gave them the confidence to identify unfamiliar words on their own without feeling intimidated by the class. Sharing the unfamiliar words and finding the meanings of these words were fun because the learners felt that by discussing these words they were learning more from each other and were beginning to feel comfortable with one another. Taking turns to read aloud in the group motivated the learners to show each other how well they could read and how much their reading had improved. One learner described the programme as an exciting adventure. Respondent 4 said the following:

I like the reading programme because I could not read and this programme helped me a lot. I could not even read the word, “ask” but I must say the programme helped me a lot.

Thirty-one of the learners indicated that the content of the books available were interesting and this motivated them to read more, which resulted in an improvement in their reading. The books available in the classroom library consisted of different texts both fiction and non-fiction on different reading levels. There were many books of high interest but low level which encouraged the struggling learners to read. Learners indicated that the reading programme itself was interesting because they were reading regularly and they were reading books which progressed from easy reading to more difficult as their reading skills improved. The learners felt that reading in groups were

beneficial to them because they were comfortable reading to one another and they were learning together as well as from each other. Table 4.7 shows how the learners indicated an improvement in their reading levels.

Table 4.7 My reading has improved considerably

Age	12 year-olds		13 year-olds		14 year-olds	
Gender	F	M	F	M	F	M
Rarely	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sometimes	1	1	0	3	1	0
Often	1	3	3	6	3	2
Always	6	3	6	3	2	0
TOTAL	8	7	9	12	6	2

Table 4.7 above shows that both boys and girls have indicated that their reading had improved considerably. There is no real difference to indicate that one group had improved more significantly than the other. Every group was progressing at the pace that was comfortable for them.

Forty-one learners indicated that because they were feeling confident about their reading ability, they started reading at home either on their own or with family members. They were reading a variety of materials such as books, magazines, newspapers and comics. Respondent 17 said the following:

I love reading myths, monster books and comics. Comics are my favourite because it has action in it. Believe me you can actually learn something from a comic.

4.3.3 Before the learners started with the reading programme, how did the learners feel about reading aloud in their groups?

At the end of the programme learners were comfortable in their groups and were not afraid to read aloud in front of their peers as shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 I am comfortable reading in my group

THEMES		NUMBER OF RESPONSES	GENDER		AGE				GROUP CODES				
			Male	Female	11	12	13	14	1	2	3	4	5
1	No	4	2	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	0
2	Yes	40	19	21	0	13	20	7	0	6	16	8	10
TOTAL		44	44		44				44				

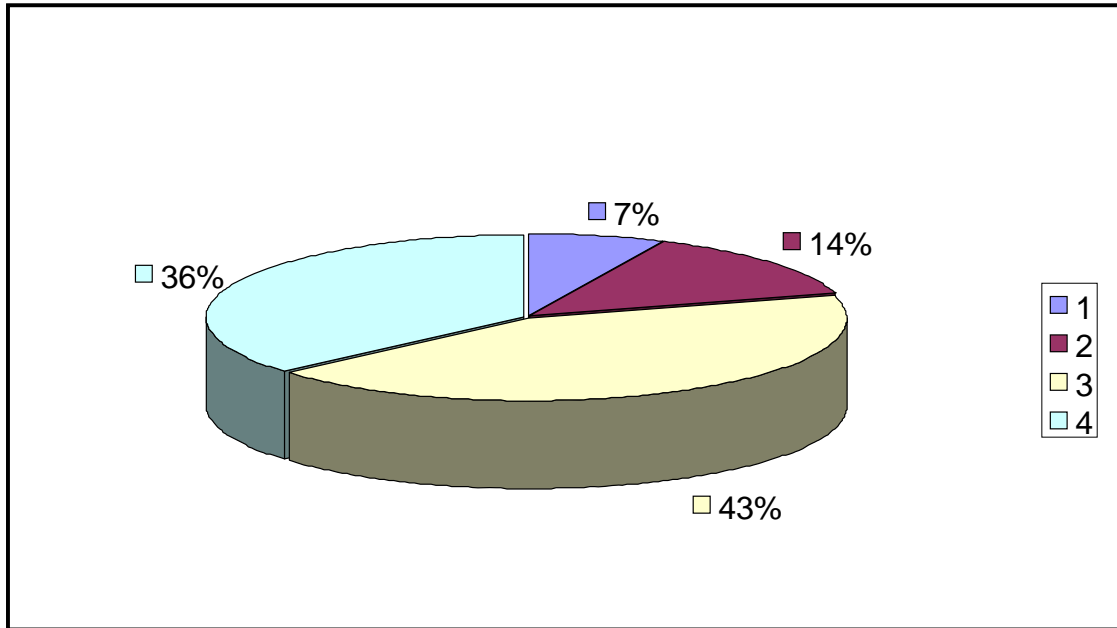
The table above shows that forty of the forty-four learners indicated they were comfortable reading in their groups and accepting help from each other when needed.

The learners felt that they had learned to listen to each other. When one of the learners made a mistake nobody laughed instead they felt they could discuss the unfamiliar words and that it was more fun to learn together. They readily offered assistance in the group when it is needed without feeling that they did not have the skills to assist each other. Respondent 24 said:

I like it when they help me in my group. When you don't know how to spell words then we look in dictionaries for the meanings and we discuss the words.

Significant to note is that the two learners who were in Group 2 were reading on the Foundation Phase level, learning basic phonic words and sight words were also comfortable reading in their group. Although these boys were in Grade 7 and did not have the reading skills to work independently on grade level, they were comfortable to read in front of their classmates. They were not afraid to learn to read in front of others.

The four learners that indicated they were not comfortable reading in their groups were learners who had mastered a variety of reading strategies and did not need assistance with reading. Two of the learners in Group 4 were considered 'independent' readers and did not perhaps enjoy reading in a group. By the end of the year, the two learners in Group 3 were reading on Grade 7 level and had acquired reading skills to read independently. Figure 4.3 shows the percentages as learners indicated that they were not afraid to read aloud in front of other people.

Figure 4.3 I am not afraid to read aloud in front of others

1 = rarely 2 = sometimes 3 = often 4 = always

By the end of the year 7% of the learners said that they '*rarely*' felt afraid to read aloud in front of others. 14% of the learners indicated that they '*sometime*' were not afraid to read aloud in front of others. 43% indicated that they '*often*' did not feel afraid to read in front of others, and 36% said that they '*always*' did not feel afraid to read aloud in front of other learners.

The above percentages showed that learners had lost their fear of reading in front of other learners in the group. When learners realized that they every one in the group was reading on the same level and that everyone needed help they began to rely on each other for support when they struggled to read a new word or when they could not read the text with comprehension. The learners have learned to relate to each other as a unit so they could all progress together with their reading. Respondent 21 said:

I like the way we sit in our groups and read silently looking for unfamiliar words and the dictionaries we must use in order to know

the meanings. Reading aloud is good the people in the groups can help you when you get stuck.

The learners in this class became comfortable with each other in their groups when they realized that they were grouped according to their reading ability and therefore everyone was reading on the same level. They were pleased to see that the books were graded or leveled and that they began reading from books that were easy to read that was of high-interest but low-level books and that the books gradually became more challenging as they acquired or developed readings skills needed to read and understand the books. The learners began to work as a group when they learned a variety of reading strategies and skills like phonemic awareness, decoding, word recognition and vocabulary from each other so that they could read with comprehension and develop into independent readers, which was the purpose of this programme.

When responding to the open question: '*What I like about the programme*', twenty-seven of the respondents said that they liked reading in their groups because it was better to read with the other learners because they learn so much more than when they were reading on their own in the previous grades. They did not know how to read difficult words so they did not understand the text that they were reading. That was the reason they did not like reading because it was too difficult to read without getting help. Respondent 20 said:

When the programme started I was excited to read. Reading is my hobby now because I can read to my sister. It was the first year that I read a lot, in Grade 7A. Last year reading was too difficult to understand and I couldn't read difficult words.

Sixteen respondents said that they liked everything about the reading programme. The reading programme consisted of group-work for the duration of the lesson. This meant that learners were interacting with each other all the time. The format of the programme was a step-by-step routine. Learners knew exactly what to do in the programme. Respondent 41 said:

I like that we sat in groups and read together. We would look for unfamiliar words and discuss them. It was most exciting when we shared our thoughts about the book when we finished reading it. Everything was so organized and had its place and time.

The learners that participated in this programme had a few things in common. They all came from the same socio-economic background and they had the same reading experiences. Being placed in the same ability reading groups did not create an issue for the learners. In the groups they continued as they would in their community, to learn from each other and depend on one another.

4.3.4 How did the reading programme promote an interest in reading for the learners?

With the improvement of the learners' reading ability, the learners' reading self-esteem improved. Simultaneously they began to enjoy reading for pleasure and developed an interest in reading as shown in Figure 4.4 below.

Figure 4.4 I developed an interest in reading

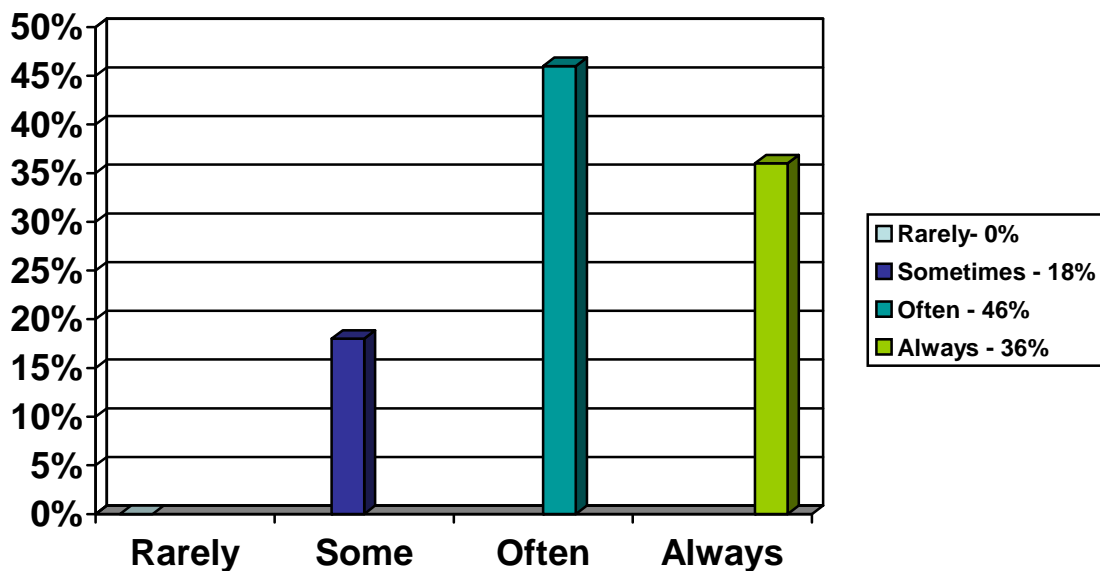


Figure 4.4 shows the result of Question 9 of the closed question: '*I developed an interest in reading*'. At the end of the programme 72% of the respondents said that they '*often*'

and ‘*always*’ developed an interest in reading. 18% of the respondents said that they ‘*sometimes*’ developed an interest in reading. None of the respondents said they did not develop an interest in reading. By the end of the year, all 44 learners stated that they liked reading more than before because their reading had improved.

When responding to this question, three themes emerged which may be classified as **the availability and interest level of books in the classroom library, family involvement, and the reading programme**. These will now be discussed in more detail.

4.3.5 Availability and interest level of books in the classroom library

Respondent 23 replied to the following question ‘*I started reading on my own at school*’:

I started reading on my own at school because I saw shelves full of books. I took one and read the book, it was interesting, I had to read more.

Twelve learners shared that they liked reading more than before because of the availability of the books in the classroom in the form of a classroom library and also because of the attitude of the teacher who fostered a love for reading. I wanted learners to have the experience of reading for pleasure, enjoyment, entertainment, knowledge and information therefore I ensured that there were books in my classroom of different genres to cater for the interests of every learner.

Eight learners responded by saying that they developed an interest in reading because they found the content of the books very interesting. The classroom library had many books of different genres both fiction and non-fiction. At the beginning of the programme I had a discussion with the class on the kinds of books that they would like to have in the classroom. I tried to get as many books as possible on topics that the boys told me they were interested in. I discovered that boys preferred to read books about sport and science, as did the girls.

At the beginning of the year I realized that one of the ways to encourage struggling learners to read was to have books readily available in the classroom for them to read or to look at whenever they felt inclined to do so. My classroom library, therefore, consisted of two sections. One section was specifically used for the reading programme. These books were graded in such a way that it followed a definite list and they were graded from very easy to more challenging books. These books were only used for the reading programme, which occurred at the end of the day. The second section consisted of a variety of books on different levels and of different texts. All these books were available to the learners throughout the day. They could go to this section of the classroom library whenever they wanted, to take out books to read for pleasure, enjoyment and to extend their general knowledge.

Senior (2005) explained that teachers needed to encouraged the learners' to see reading as an experience that would accompany them throughout their and to do this the teacher needed to support the learners' in choosing books from the classroom library that would develop their reading skills.

All the learners were encouraged to keep a book under their desk every day. The reason for this was that whenever they had an opportunity to read they had a book easily at hand.

4.3.6 Family involvement

Eight learners responded that reading at home to their family members helped them in developing an interest in reading. It was important to them that they read to their family members either at home or at the public library. Four learners mentioned their 'moms' as the person they read to. I found that the learners whose families took an interest in their reading development were the learners that were more motivated to improve their reading.

Respondent 2: I always liked reading more than before. It was always my mommy and I reading but sometimes my mommy would be too busy to read.

Respondent 11: I started reading at home. I like to read romance stories from the library. Some afternoons I like to sit in the library with my mother.

Respondent 21: Yes I have started reading at home. I read newspapers, magazines and storybooks. I feel happy because my reading has improved. My mom guides me at home when I read.

Respondent 22: I like reading with my mother some nights and other nights I read alone.

Parental involvement, as the above quotes reflected, boosted the learners' interest in wanting to improve their reading ability. Cotton & Wikelund (2007) stated that parental involvement in children's learning were positively related to achievement the more intensively parents were involved in their children's learning the more beneficial the achievement effects were. This holds true for all types of parental involvement in children's learning and for all types and ages of learners. Programmes, which involved parents in reading with their children, showed impressively how the reading levels of their children improved.

4.3.7 The reading programme

Sixteen of the learners responded by saying that it was because of the reading programme that they developed an interest in reading. The reading programme allowed the learners to read in their groups for the minimum time of half-an-hour every day. I found that the more the learners spent actively reading books of a variety of texts, the more their interest in books developed. Learners also discovered that they developed an interest in certain topics and authors. They realized that they often found the answers to their questions in books. Respondent 26 said:

I understand the meaning of reading that's where the answers to life lay and without reading you can't go far in life. Reading is like a precious thing to me.

Table 4.9 below shows how the reading programme helped the learners develop an interest in reading. Interesting to note was that the majority of learners stated that they learned the importance of reading and how learning to read had improved their spelling. Respondent 26 said:

I like reading more and more because reading is good it improved my spelling.

How learners process words and other texts features are integrally related to their comprehension and understanding of the text. Learners must understand the concepts of letters, words and sentences. They are asked to research the meaning of unfamiliar words and to read the words thus focusing on the spelling of the words. Table 4.9 indicated the benefits of the programme as perceived by the learners.

Table 4.9 The perceived benefits of the reading programme

The reading programme	No. of learners
1. I learned the importance of reading	7
2. I have acquired knowledge	3
3. The programmed improved my spelling	3
4. I never touched a book before the programme	1
5. Now I can't stop reading	1
6. I read in my free time at school	1

The following four questions were asked to ascertain what the learners perceptions of the reading programme were, **I have started reading on my own at home, I have started reading on my own at school, I like reading now more than before and the role of the teacher.** I will discuss the outcome of each of these questions.

Table 4.10 I have started reading on my own at home

Themes		No. of Responses	GENDER		AGE				GROUP CODES				
			M	F	11	12	13	14	1	2	3	4	5
1	No	3	3	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	0
2	Yes	41	18	23	0	14	19	8	0	5	16	8	12

It was interesting to note that the three learners who responded that they had not started reading on their own at home are boys - one is twelve years old and two are thirteen years old. When the programme was introduced it was a challenge for the three older boys to take an interest in reading. Two of these boys were from Group 3 and one was from Group 2. They had accepted that they were not reading on grade level and that they had not been able to improve their reading skills. From the profile of the respondents we

know that Group 2 learners had been struggling to read and that reading independently was a challenge till the end of the year.

Forty-one of the learners responded positively that they had started reading on their own at home which confirmed that they had developed an interest in reading and had become independent readers. When asked if they had started reading at home respondent 25 said:

Yes, I have started reading at home the reason why I started reading was because I never took a book and read on my own. Now that I am in Grade 7A I realize there is so much to learn about reading and you can discover a lot of things just by reading.

Table 4.11 I have started reading on my own at school

Themes		No. of Responses	GENDER		AGE				GROUP CODES				
			M	F	11	12	13	14	1	2	3	4	5
1	No	5	3	2	0	1	3	1	0	3	1	0	1
2	Yes	39	18	21	0	14	18	7	0	3	17	8	11

Thirty-nine of the learners responded that they read dependently at school during the school day when they have completed their school work and are waiting for the next lesson to begin. They also read when the teacher left the class. Respondent 21 said:

Yes, I have started reading on my own at school, I read when my teacher is teaching, only sometimes.

Learners also read after school while they are waiting for their transport.

Respondent 13 said:

I have started reading on my own because if I am bored or waiting for a taxi or something I will take out a book and read it.

The three boys who responded that they had not started reading on their own at school were aged between twelve and thirteen years and were in Group 2. This group's reading level was on Foundation Phase level, which meant that they continued to need help from either their peers or the teacher.

According to Scieszka (2005) there is much concern about boys' reading skills and their desire to read. Statistics worldwide on 'boys as reluctant readers' showed that as a group, boys tend to score lower in all grades on standardised reading and writing than girls and are more likely to be placed in remedial classes.

Scieszka (2005) stated that:

Literacy statistics show that we are not giving boys what they need to be successful readers, Boys need our help. And the greatest challenge to boys' literacy is probably getting people to understand that boys do need help.

The two girls that responded that they had not started reading on their own at school are both thirteen years old. One learner was in Group 3 which is the average reading group. The other girl was in Group 5, which means that she was an excellent reader but had not started reading on her own at school.

Table 4.12 I like reading now more than before

Themes		No. of Responses	GENDER		AGE				GROUP CODES				
			M	F	11	12	13	14	1	2	3	4	5
1	No	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0
2	Yes	42	19	23	0	15	19	8	0	4	18	8	12

Forty-two of the learners responded that they like reading now more than before the programme which again confirms that they had taken an interest in reading. These learners were exposed to a variety of books and reading material all day. The classroom had become a print-rich environment with posters, slogans and a word wall. On their desks they had lists of words and phonic charts to help them throughout the day. All these activities were completed in a fun way that encouraged the learners to read more than before.

When the learners had developed the skills to read independently they found that they could read whatever they chose to read without the fear of not understanding what they were reading. They were free from reading anxiety. They knew that they were capable of

reading for understanding and pleasure and that the skills the teacher had taught them had a purpose. Respondent 43 said:

Yes, I do like reading at home and in the class and I like to read when I am waiting on my parents. I like reading exciting books, love novels and children's books. The reading programme has helped me a lot to read.

Again, the two boys that responded in the negative were in Group 2 and were struggling to read even on Foundation Phase level. It was difficult for them to read because they couldn't read independently. They will always need help with the most basic skills like phonemic awareness, letter-sound identification, decoding and structural analysis. Respondent 44 said:

No, I can't read on my own at school, there must be someone with me when I read because I can't read on my own. It is too difficult to read.

4.3.8 The role of the teacher in the reading programme

From the open-ended questions 41 learners responded that they received help from their peers and their teacher. My task was to build up the learners self-esteem so that they would want to improve their reading ability. I fostered a love for reading by making suitable resources available to the learners and by empowering the learners to learn to read by teaching reading skills according to the need of the groups. Respondent 36 said:

I like reading more than before because I never liked reading books. When I got to Mrs Kohler's class she introduced books to me and told me how far a book's knowledge can take you and now I love books more.

It is the knowledge of the teacher that makes a difference in learners' success. A knowledgeable teacher is aware of what is working well and what each student needs to be successful and he or she knows the importance of every learner having successful literacy experiences (McLaughlin 2003: 5).

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented and analysed both the qualitative and quantitative data from the open- and close-ended questions from the questionnaire. The main findings can be summarised as follows:

The availability of books in the classroom in the form of a classroom library, the attitude of the teacher who fostered a love for reading and the reading skills the teacher had taught the learners had an overall positive impact on improving the learners reading levels.

Help for all the learners were immediately available from either the group members or the teacher in both group-reading and reading-aloud. This help improved the learners' general self-esteem and their reading confidence while they worked together in groups. They became more compassionate and tolerant of each others reading problems. It was significant to note that the boys' (in the weaker group) self-confidence in their reading abilities grew while reading aloud to others. Learners indicated that reading in groups was enjoyable where no-one made fun of them.

Regular reading in their groups exposed the learners to more interesting material ranging in degrees of difficulty at their own pace. Learning the unfamiliar words helped the learners build up a vocabulary that assisted them to read more assertively in the different genres. They developed an interest in reading and began to enjoy reading for pleasure and to acquire general knowledge.

Many learners started reading on their own either at school or at home or with family members. They knew that they were capable of reading with understanding and that they were free from reading anxiety.

CHAPTER 5

5 DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions of Grade 7 learners on the effectiveness of a guided reading programme.

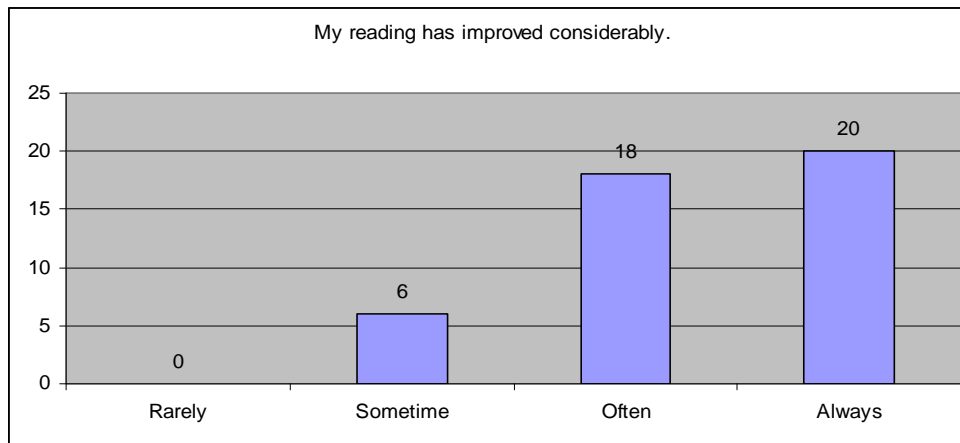
This chapter will also posit recommendations and conclusions that have emerged from the studies for Grade 7 teachers in the guided reading programme.

5.2 DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter the significant findings of this research were presented. This chapter will discuss other insights that have emerged from the study namely: reading in groups, learning the meanings of unfamiliar words, reading from easy to more challenging books, independent reading, and what the learners liked about the reading programme. Each insight will be further reviewed in relation to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2. Finally I will analyse how the guided reading programme and the RNCS learning outcomes correlate with each other.

5.2.1 Reading in groups

Figure 5.1 below describes how thirty-eight of the forty-four learners felt that the guided reading programme had assisted them to improve their reading skills during the year. It is significant to note that no learners felt that their reading had not improved during the year.

Figure 5.1 Reading in groups has improved learners reading abilities considerably

The guided reading programme is grounded in a social constructivist framework. In social constructivist classrooms, teachers and learners are encouraged to assist learners not to become passive recipients of knowledge but to make meaning of the learning material. The learners constantly construct and reconstruct knowledge. They do their own research and try to solve their own problems by constructing knowledge by themselves or with peers. In the guided reading programme the learners were encouraged to express their thoughts by using quality language: to ask questions, argue and to speak their minds on all issues that emanate from the text.

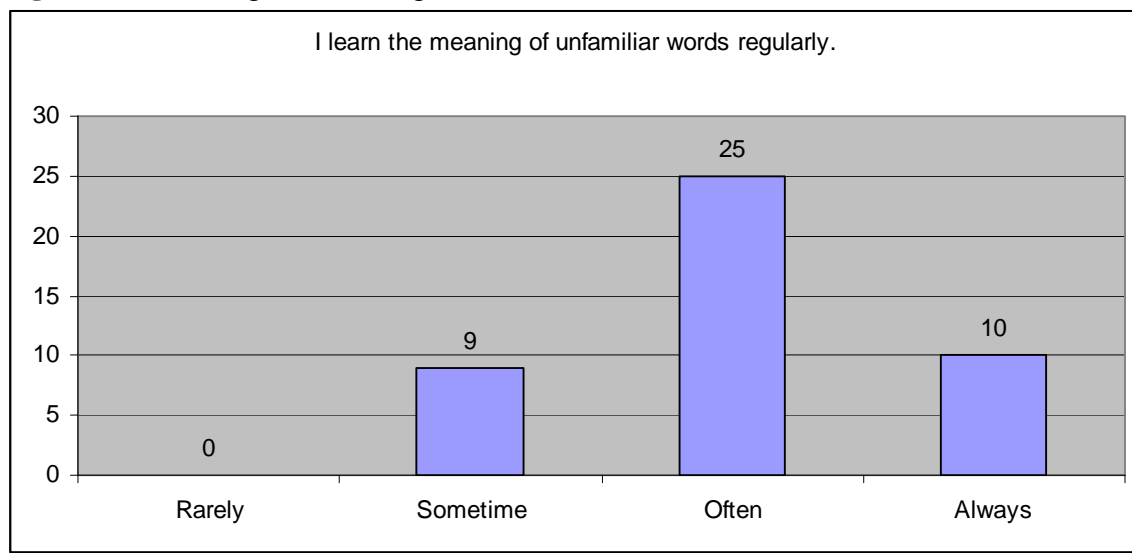
Cambourne (2004:25) stated that for learners to engage in their reading they needed to be become actively involved in the learning process. These principles of engagement were encouraged daily as part of the guided reading programme.

Dewey (in Shor and Pari, 1991:9) maintained that language use is a social activity where theory and experience meet for the discovery of meaning and purpose. Critical literacy can be thought of as a social practice where it involves questioning received knowledge and immediate experiences. The guided reading programme required the groups of learners to become involved in critical discourses around meanings of their texts.

5.2.2 Learning the meanings of unfamiliar words

Figure 5.2 below reveals that all 44 learners had learned unfamiliar words while they were part of the guided reading programme.

Figure 5.2 Learning the meanings of unfamiliar words



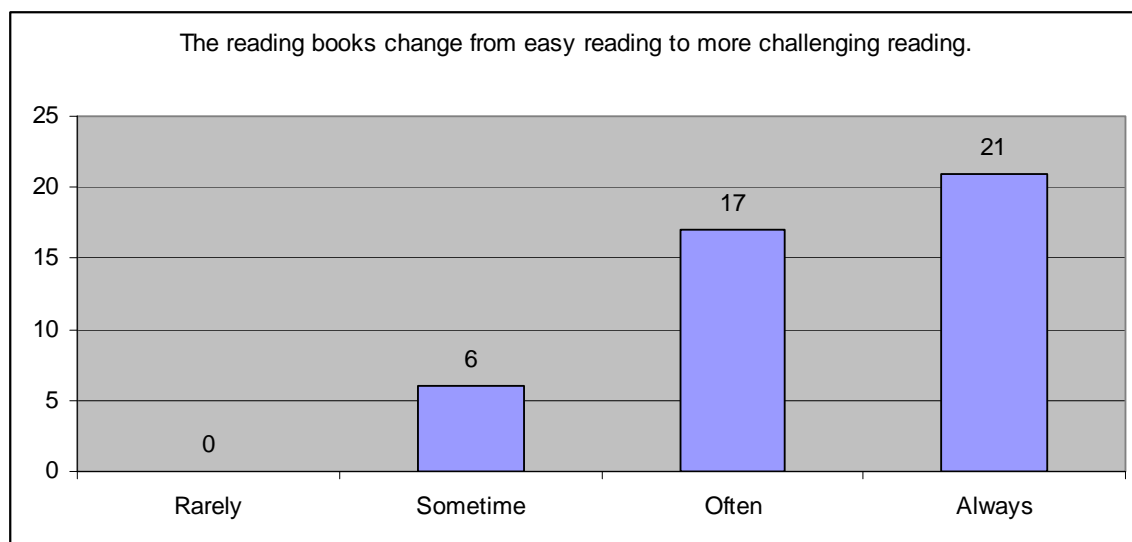
For learners to make meaning of texts, Freire (1972: 31) suggests that critical literacy encourages readers and learners to understand how texts can influence their manner of thinking. Working with unfamiliar words was a large part of the guided reading programme which assisted the learners in developing a deeper understanding of their texts. It is evident that this part of the programme was seen as necessary by the learners themselves.

Anderson & Irvine (in Shor & Pari, 1999:1) confirmed the view that critical literacy is understood as “learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one’s experience as historically constructed within specific power relations”. In the process of meaning construction and making meaning of their reading, the learners were able to consciously experience the texts and hopefully mirror their own experiences in their reading.

5.2.3 Reading from easy to more challenging books

The study revealed (Figure 5.3) that all the learners that were part of the guided reading programme read books that were levelled and challenging to each learner. As the learners acquired reading skills and their reading levels improved they read more challenging texts.

Figure 5.3: The reading books change from easy reading to more challenging reading

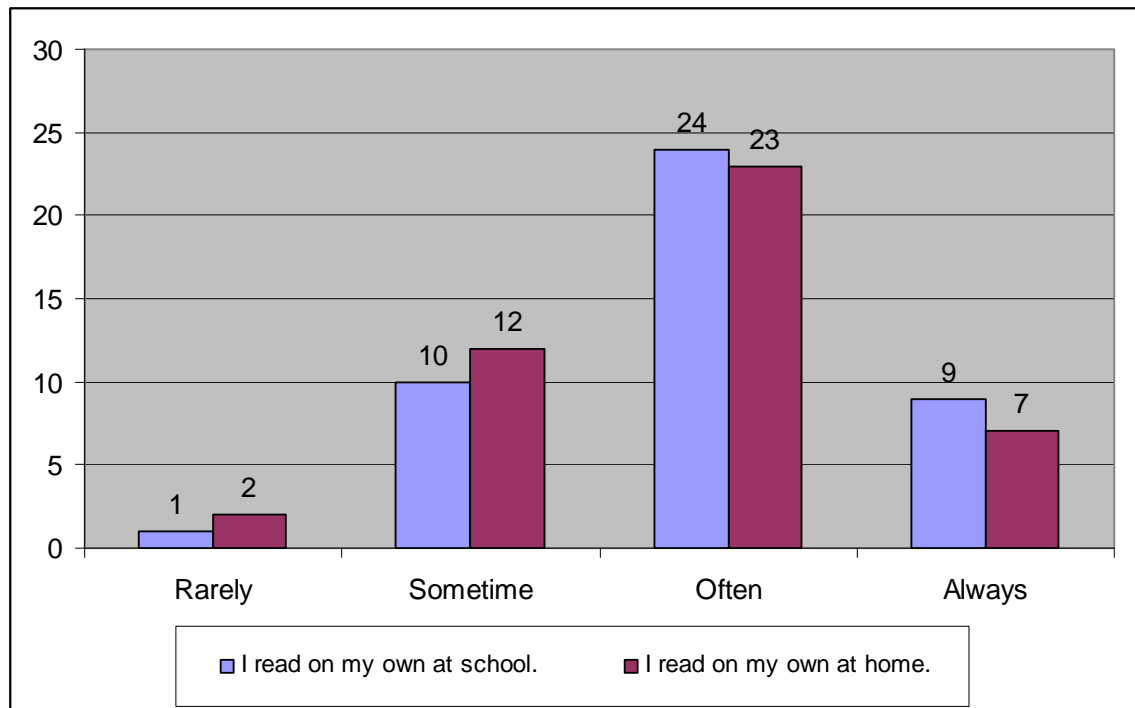


Vygotsky (in Zuckerman, 2003:196) maintain that it is the learner who sets the goals, searches for the means and methods to achieve them, and engages in self control and self evaluation of the achievements that result. The learners decided to move on to read more challenging texts. All the books on the reading programme were leveled. The first books were easy to read pitched at below Grade 7 level and got gradually more challenging. This challenge was accepted by all learners who began motivating each other to complete the programme and in doing that, had read through a variety of texts from different genres.

5.2.4 Independent reading

Figure 5.4 makes a comparison between learners that have started reading on their own at home and reading on their own at school, manifesting in a sense of independent reading abilities. Significant to note is that nearly all the learners had become independent readers reading on their personal level of development.

Figure 5.4 Independent reading at home and at school



Vygotsky (in Zuckerman, 2003:196) maintained that at the beginning of formal education it is the teacher who structures the conditions for learning but later the learners themselves will change the conditions to suit the learning activity and seek new ways of interacting with the learning material. When learners possess the skills to read independently, they select their own reading materials from a variety of genres for a variety of purposes.

5.2.5 What I liked about the reading programme

When asked what the learners liked about the programme these were a few themes that were regularly referred to:

- The learners appreciated the support they received in the guided reading programme from each other and from the teacher. They received support in general reading, in reading unfamiliar words and in spelling difficult words;
- The discussion of books was a special time for the learners as they stated it improved their speech;
- There was a culture within the classroom that encouraged the learners to engage with reading challenges they were comfortable with. They felt they could understand the books and this developed their self confidence and self esteem in reading;
- The learners felt reading was fun and exciting because of the variety and number of books available to them. They loved the range of topics, genres and the colourful pages. One learner said ‘it takes me to a world that doesn’t even exist’. They developed a love for reading;
- Some learners felt the guided reading programme put no ceilings on the books they could select to read. They also mentioned that they could read as much as they wanted to; and
- The learners enjoyed the fact that the guided reading programme was organised and that everything had its time and place.

Correlation between the guided reading programme and the RNCS document

There is a strong overlap between the guided programme and the policy document’s six learning outcomes as discussed in Table 5.1 below. The guided reading programme and the various steps are discussed in Appendix 6 on page 100.

Table 5.1: The links between the guided reading programme and the six learning outcomes of the RNCS policy document

Guided reading programme	RNCS policy document
Discussing unfamiliar words	LO 1: Speaking
Listening to the discussion on unfamiliar words	LO: 2 Listening
Silent reading Reading aloud	LO 3: Reading and viewing
Writing	LO 4: Writing
Selecting the correct reading book Researching unfamiliar words Critiquing their reading book (See Appendix 7 on page 103)	LO 5: Thinking and reasoning
Writing using correct writing language structures such as tense, grammar, sentence construction	LO 6: Language structure and use

Any Grade 7 teacher will be able to use the guided reading programme in their class with confidence knowing that they will be addressing all six learning outcomes. The guided reading programme begins with learners' emergent literacy, and it involves them in reading real books and writing for genuine purposes. It encourages and supports learners to read a wide variety of genres and helps them discover techniques that help them to become independent readers. The guided reading programme develops learners to become confident and independent, literate, compassionate, and who are able to participate in society in meaningful way.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

A standardized literacy baseline assessment should be developed by the National Department of Education, for use by all schools in South Africa. This baseline assessment must be available for all grades and in all languages so that teachers have a learner's reading attainment level for every grade. This would also give all teachers an indication as how to structure personalized reading instruction.

All teachers should teach within a balanced reading approach using shared and guided

reading strategies. Reading instruction practices should give learners the opportunity to practice answering comprehension questions that require of them to focus on and retrieve explicitly stated information, make straightforward inferences, interpret and integrate ideas and information; and examine and evaluate content, language, and textual elements.

Continued professional teacher development in the field of balanced literacy approaches in the Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase would concomitantly assist learners with the further development of their literacy skills in the latter primary grades.

National and provincial education departments should provide further courses to extend teachers' qualifications in both Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase teaching of reading which are recognized for salary purposes. These professional courses on the teaching of reading, should include Foundation and Intermediate Phase teachers, i.e. all primary school teachers should attend regardless of what phase they teach.

Print-rich classrooms or classroom libraries are essential to create a vibrant reading environment that is stocked with a wide variety of leveled texts in different genres in both fiction and non-fiction. Learners must feel comfortable to make use of classroom libraries throughout the day for purposeful reading and writing.

Developing learner's self-esteem is critical. It is recommended that teachers get to know their learners' strengths and challenges early in the year so that the challenges can be developed into strengths. The same principle applies to struggling learners. When these learners are given a fair opportunity to learn to read their self esteem improves and they can develop into independent readers.

Few children are exposed to early reading literacy activities with their families. It is recommended that schools encourage parents to become involved with the literacy activities of their schools. One must not assume that if parents cannot read fluently the learners will not be able to read fluently.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This research was conducted in one classroom with learners that were reading on four different levels. At the beginning of the year the learners were hesitant to read but as the year progressed and the learners settled into a reading routine and began feeling comfortable with each other, their self confidence developed. As the learners' self confidence developed they began competing with each other and this competition developed into a healthy camaraderie spirit. These learners will become life-long readers.

To improve the literacy rates in South Africa, an action plan must be developed by the National DoE, Provincial Education Departments, district offices and schools for all teachers from Grades R to 7 to receive professional development in the teaching of reading. These teachers must be monitored and supported. Every class should have sufficient reading support material and every learner has to be taught to become an independent reader.

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APPENDICES**APPENDIX 1****AN EXPLANATION OF QUINTILE 3**

Description of quintiles used by the DoE in South Africa

Taken from “All schools need decent funding.” (Mail and Guardian 2008: May 9 to 15)

National quintile	Poverty gradient	Exempt from fees	2008 allocation per learner	2009 allocation per learner	2010 allocation per learner
1	30.0%	100%	R775	R807	R855
2	27.5%	100%	R711	R740	R784
3	22.5%	100%	R581	R605	R641
4	15.0%	67%	R388	R404	R428
5	5.0%	22%	R129	R134	R147
Average		89%	R517	R538	R571

APPENDIX 2

BASELINE ASSESSMENT FOR READING

Baseline assessment

Group	No of learners	Description	Reading ability
2	2	Struggling reader (read on Foundation Phase level).	Cannot read 90% of the words. Can recognize a few single sounds but can't read three-letter words.
3	19	Average reader (reads below Grade 7 level) Learners are reading on grade 5-6 level	Can read 60% of the words, can sound the basic phonic words when the words are unknown.
4	11	Good reader (reads on Grade 7 level).	Reads 80% of the words on Grade 7 level with/without comprehension and expression.
5	12	Excellent reader (reads above Grade 7 level).	Reads 95%-100% fluently with comprehension and expression above grade level. Is able to read different genres independently.

APPENDIX 3

LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE

Please tick in the appropriate box.

1. Gender of learner:

Male	
Female	

2. Age of learner:

11	12	13	14	other

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 4 by ticking the appropriate number.

1=rarely

2=sometimes

3=often

4=always

Statement	1	2	3	4
1. Before the reading programme, I was afraid to read aloud in front of other learners.				
2. I am comfortable reading in my group.				
3. I receive help when I struggle to read from friends or my teacher				
4. I learn the meaning of unfamiliar words regularly.				
5. My reading has improved considerably.				
6. The reading books change from easy reading to more challenging reading.				
7. I read on my own at school.				
8. I read on my own at home.				
9. I developed an interest in reading.				
10. I am not afraid to read aloud to others anymore.				

OPEN QUESTIONS

11. What I like about the reading programme

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

12. What I disliked about the reading programme

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

13. I feel comfortable reading in my group. YES/NO

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

14. I have started reading on my own at home. YES/NO

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

15. I have started reading on my own at school. YES/NO

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

16. I now like reading more than before. YES/NO

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

APPENDIX 4

PERMISSION LETTER FROM PARENTS

LETTER TO THE PARENTS

Dear Parents

I am currently studying for my Master’s Degree in Education. One of the requirements of the course is to conduct a research study.

I have chosen to do my research on the Guided Reading Programme for the current Grade 7 learners. Your child has part of the Guided Reading Programme since the beginning of the year. I aim to gather information on how your child perceived the effectiveness of the reading programme and if it has benefited him/her.

Your child will be required to complete a questionnaire at school under supervision. Assistance will be given to your child should it be needed to complete the questionnaire. Participation in the research is voluntary and all information will be treated with confidentiality.

Kind regards

.....

.....

Val Kohler (class teacher)

Date

Please complete the attached form and return it in a sealed envelope to the school.

I,hereby grant permission/do not grant permission for my child..... in Grade 7 (A) to participate in the research study.

Signed.....

Date

APPENDIX 5

LETTER FROM WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (WCED)
GRANTING PERMISSION

Enquiries
IMibuzo
Telefoon
Telephone
IFoni
Faks
Fax
IFeksi
Verwysing
Reference
Isalathiso



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISEbe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Mrs Valerie Kohler
5 St Anthony Road
HEATHFIELD
7945

Dear Mrs V. Kohler

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PERCEPTION OF LEARNERS ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A GRADED GROUP LEARNING PROGRAMME.

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

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **15th November 2005 to 20th November 2005.**
6. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
7. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the Principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
8. Your research will be limited to the following school:.....
9. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Education Research.
10. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

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

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 28th October 2005

MELD ASSEBLIEF VERWYSINGSNOMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE / PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE /
NCEDA UBHALE IINOMBOLO ZESALATHISO KUYO YONKE IMBALELWANO

GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LAER-PARLEMENTSTRAAT, PRIVAATSAK X9114, KAAPSTAD 8000
GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG X9114, CAPE TOWN 8000

WEB: <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>

INBELSENTRUM /CALL CENTRE

INDIENSNEMING- EN SALARISNAVRAE/EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY QUERIES ☎0861 92 33 22
VEILIGE SKOLE/SAFE SCHOOLS ☎ 0800 45 46 47

APPENDIX 6

GUIDED READING PROGRAMME FOR SMALL AND LARGE CLASSES

An eight-step plan is proposed to help find a solution for the class educator who has the responsibility of assisting the learners to overcome their reading problems and to help them become motivated in learning again.

STEP 1: EDUCATOR GRADES LEARNERS

The class educator grades the entire class into reading ability groups by using a standard reader or reading test for the specific grade. The following rubric is a suggested guide that can be used for grading.

Group	DESCRIPTION	Reading ability
2	Struggling	Cannot read many words, lots of pauses and skips words
3	Average reader	Can read words, can sound the words if they don't know it
4	Good reader	Reads fluently with/without expression and comprehension, knows all his words on Grade level
5	Excellent reader	Reads fluently with expression and comprehension above Grade level

STEP 2: EDUCATOR GROUPS READERS (LEARNERS)

The educator divides the learners into ability groups of six. Educators may end up having the following groups e.g.

1 x group 2 = 6 learners

4 x group 3 = 24 learners

3 x group 4 = 18 learners

1 x group 5 = 6 learners

It is suggested that the classroom be divided into a seating arrangement that allows the learners to sit in their groups all day so that a “buddy system” can take place.

One learner from each group of six is chosen as **group leader**. **Monitors** are chosen to take charge of the rotation of books within the reading groups.

STEP 3: BOOKS ARE HANDED OUT

In the reading corner or classroom library the books are set out in such a way that each group knows exactly where their books are. These books are listed on a page (see attached booklist) according to its grading from the lowest to the highest level. There will be six copies of each book so that each learner in the group will be reading from the same reading book. The group leader, hands out the books that are needed for each lesson.

STEP 4: SILENT READING

Silent reading takes place within each group. As soon as the learners receive their individual books they read through the prescribed pages silently by themselves, when they come across an unfamiliar word that they cannot read or do not know the meaning of, they write the word on a given slip of paper.

STEP 5: UNFAMILIAR WORDS

When everybody has finished reading, they show their words to each other in the group. The group then helps one another by telling them the word and explaining the meaning. If nobody in the group can help then the learners are encouraged to use dictionaries. If they are still struggling for whatever reason the educator is called who then explains the unfamiliar word/s and its meanings.

STEP 6: READING IN TURNS

After the words have been discussed, each child takes a turn to read a page or a paragraph (depending on the reading level). The story or prescribed pages are read twice. Meanwhile, the educator goes from group to group to listen to the learners read and to check if they can read with comprehension. This is done, by asking low and high order questions.

STEP 7: READING/WRITTEN ACTIVITY

After the story has been read and the educator is satisfied that they can continue to a new book or to the next prescribed pages, a written activity is done. The activity should include phonic sounds, word building and writing sentences. Reading one story can take one or more lessons depending on the progress of the group.

STEP 8: EVALUATION SHEET

When the learner is done reading their books they complete their booklist by writing in the date and ticking off their thoughts about the book, thus encouraging them to critique.

CONCLUSION

The advantage of this suggested plan is that it can be done everyday in the compulsory reading/literacy half-hour or as part of the schools timetable. Learner's experience personal reading improvement when they progress through the various books on different reading levels. Learners moved from group to group as they improve in their reading. This depends on how motivated the pupils become.

**APPENDIX 7
GUIDED READING**

Grade:

Name:

Year:

	Date	Easy	Challenge	Enjoyed	Did not Enjoy
<i>EMERGENT</i>					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
<i>BEGINNER</i>					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
<i>FLUENT</i>					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
<i>INDEPENDENT</i>					
1					
2					

		Date	Easy	Challenge	Enjoyed	Did not Enjoy
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						