

TITLE

**Senior primary school educators' experiences of teaching functional and creative writing-
A case study of a school in KwaZulu Natal**

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Education studies at the University of KwaZulu Natal in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Education (Curriculum Studies).

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ABSTRACT

The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, has stated that “the Annual National Assessment (ANA) results for 2011 are an indication that the education sector needs to focus even more on its core functions of quality learning and teaching”. ANA is the standardized national assessments for Languages and Mathematics in the intermediate phase (Grades 4-6) and in Literacy and Numeracy for the foundation phase (Grades One to Three). The Grade Six national average in Languages was 28%. Of these grade six learners, only 30% achieved above 35%. The Minister attributed these results to “an under-emphasis on the development of the basic skills for reading and writing”. In the school studied in this dissertation, the average percentage achievement in the ANA for learners from Grade Three to Grade Six was between 18% and 23% for languages. This data revealed that learners lacked basic writing skills.

This dissertation explores and describes the experiences of three educators when teaching functional and creative writing. Data was collected through in-depth interviews. The three educators teach English at the school. The school is situated in a low socio-economic area of Cato Manor, near Durban.

The findings indicate the need for educators to be specialists in the field of Languages and Mathematics in order to improve experiences of teaching and learning. Secondly, lack of sufficient resources, such as lack of the workbooks introduced by the Department of Education, hinder the teaching and learning process. Sustainability of professional development and teambuilding exercises leads to effective teaching and learning. Dewey (1933) revealed that reflection on experience leads to learning. Whole school reflective practice will improve experiences of the teaching and learning of creative and functional writing.

There is a close link between challenges and experiences. The researcher in this study is working from the perspective that all teachers have positive and negative experiences. On the other hand not all teachers face challenges when teaching functional and creative writing.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated firstly to my grandmothers, Mary Coles and Pauline Ogle, who have always put Our Lord Jesus Christ first and to my parents Ivan and Catherine Ogle and my mother-in-law Elizabeth Pillay, for their love and prayers.

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I thank God for providing me with the strength and many angels including family and friends who assisted and motivated me to complete my study. I wish to express great appreciation to the following family members, friends and colleagues who lifted my wavering spirits and encouraged me to accomplish this feat.

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My sincere appreciation is also extended to the participants. God bless you.

My husband Lou, thank-you for carrying the load and bailing me out of trouble, you are the best. To my brother Ivor, sister Lioba and aunts you are stars. I would not have coped without your love support and assistance. My niece Lioma who provided a constant supply of inspirational messages and upliftment, may God grant you all your hearts desires. You are one in a million. Most importantly, to my children Aloysia and Tristan, I love you for taking care of yourselves and for the patience, support and many hours spent teaching me to use a computer and retrieving information that I had lost.

To my friends who lifted my spirits when I was low, especially Krish, Safura and Naomi, God gave me the best.

DECLARATION

I, Vanessa Delphine Pillay, declare that

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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List of Abbreviations

AC	Abstract conceptualization
AE	Active experimentation
ANA	Annual National Assessment
BA	Baseline Assessment
CA	Continuous Assessment
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CE	Concrete experience
C2005	Curriculum 2005
DAS	Development Appraisal System
D.O.E	Department of Education

DSG	Development Support Group
ELT	experiential learning theory
FA	Formative Assessment
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
RO	Reflective observation
WSD	Whole school development
WSE	Whole school evaluation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1.Introduction

Teaching is the most important avenue for advancing the learning and accomplishments of learners. Educational innovation, according to James and Pollard (2006), requires educators to reflect on their beliefs, accept that they have to develop new skills and adopt new forms of teaching and learning in order to promote the learning and achievement of learners. In 2009 the Minister of Basic Education appointed a task team to evaluate the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grade R-9 and to identify challenges and experiences that impact negatively on the quality of teaching and learning (Curriculum News, 2011). Based on the recommendations of the task team, the Minister of Education made a decision to reduce the learning areas and to give priority to the teaching of English as First Additional Language together with the Mother Tongue Language; this should be implemented from Grade One. Most importantly there would be regular systemic assessment of Mathematics, Home Language and English First Additional Language in Grades Three, Six and Nine. For the past two years all learners from Grades Three to Six have been completing an Annual National Assessment (ANA) in the learning areas of Mathematics and English. The results for 2011 at the institution that will be studied as well as those for the country have been disappointing. As the learning-area chairperson of the Languages Committee and English Home Language educator to Grade Six learners at the school to be studied, the researcher wanted to explore senior primary educators' experiences during the teaching of functional and creative writing.

1.2.The topic and critical questions

The study addresses the experiences of senior primary school educators in teaching functional and creative writing. It does so through a case study set in a primary school in KwaZulu Natal.

Critical questions

1. What are the experiences of educators when teaching functional and creative writing?

The findings of this research will assist the researcher to identify common experiences. This study will lead to teacher reflection and staff development activities during the Languages Committee meetings and workshops.

2. What are the challenges that educators who teach functional and creative writing face?

Identifying the challenges of educators who teach functional and creative writing will result in better planning and identifying ways to improve experiences for the success of the teaching and learning of writing.

1.3. Background to the study

The school is situated approximately ten kilometres from the city of Durban. It is also situated next to the township of Chesterville. Many learners do not attend the local schools in Chesterville but prefer to study at this school because the language of teaching and learning is English. Learners are thus taught English as Home Language in spite of the fact that the majority of learners speak isiZulu or isiXhosa at home. Parents prefer to send their learners to the school in order to provide better opportunities for their children. The community has been plagued by years of land claims, land grabs and housing problems. Many of the learners attending the school live in informal settlements. Learners have inherited problems because of the inequalities of apartheid and the limited socio-economic opportunities of their parents (Ramamurthi, 1994). Learners struggle to cope with English and functional and creative writing that forms part of this learning area.

1.4. Purpose of the study

With the advent of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) and the NCS, it has been observed that learners experienced difficulty in expressing themselves in written tasks (2011, ANA results). At a recent senior primary phase meeting at the school being used for the study, the results of the ANA were discussed. ANA is a departmental assessment tool used to measure the success of the NCS and the performance of learners in Mathematics and Language and Literacy. The average percentage achievement for learners from Grade Three to Six was between 18% and 23% at the school. This data revealed that learners lack basic writing skills. The rationale for exploring experiences of educators' teaching of writing is, firstly, based on the experiences of the researcher who is an educator of languages. The researcher aspires to find an intervention for the

poor language results at the school. The researcher has established that grade six learners listen to stories in the English lesson. Learners also respond if asked to copy from a text or the chalkboard. Learners, however, find it difficult to brainstorm, use a mind-map or write creatively or for functional purposes. Secondly, educators still encounter difficulties teaching learners whose home language is isiZulu or isiXhosa but in a context where the medium of teaching and learning is English. Thirdly, the study aims to determine some of the challenges encountered by educators when teaching writing. Writing is the ability to compose information in the form of narratives, descriptions or expository and argumentative writing. Myles (2002) suggests that writing skills are not obtained through nature but must be taught or gained through culture. The researcher seeks to gather information through the experiences and reflection of colleagues. The findings and recommendations will benefit the English committee in identifying strategies to improve the ANA results in languages at the school. Working as a team and discussing experiences empowers educators and leads to professional development which is requirement of the integrated quality management system in South African schools.

Naledi Pandor, the previous Minister of Education introduced the “Milestones and the Foundations for Learning” policy document (Government Gazette No. 30880, 2008) to improve learner performance in reading, writing and numeracy in all South African schools. Upon review of a task team set up by the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, it is clear that there are still problems in attaining appropriate literacy levels (Curriculum News, 2011). This is evident at the school; upon scrutiny of the ANA answer booklets at the school, it was established that over 50% of the learners did not attempt the writing questions e.g. letter, invitation or paragraph writing.

1.5 The Methodology

The methodology chosen for this research was a case study. A case study focuses on how the participants view the world and construct meaning as a result of their experiences (Creswell, 2009). This qualitative method of research falls within an interpretive paradigm. As Neuman (2000) explains, if the interpretive paradigm ensures that participants understand why they are being studied and the researcher is allowed to enter deeply into the participants’ experiences, then the theory will be valid. As a qualitative researcher, one holds the belief that the world is made up of people with their own assumptions, intentions, attitudes, beliefs and values and that

the way of knowing reality is by exploring the experiences of others (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p.55). Interpretivism concentrates on participants' subjective experiences; since experiences are socially constructed, the researcher explores experiences of educators in their social context, typically the classroom (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

The experiences of educators who teach functional and creative writing were explored through the medium of open-ended in-depth interviews. The researcher explored the views, ideas, beliefs and attitudes about the teaching of functional and creative writing through interviews which constituted an ongoing conversation with the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The interviews were spread over three sessions within two months. In order for the study to be authentic, three participants were interviewed because these are the educators who teach Languages in the senior primary phase at this institution (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

1.6 Chapter delineation

CHAPTER ONE introduces the research study which explores the experiences of educators teaching functional and creative writing in a primary school. The critical questions are presented. The rationale of the study is given and the methodology that was used for the research is discussed.

CHAPTER TWO is based on the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework which frames this study. This chapter includes the educators' guidelines as given in the NCS and Assessment Policy documents. The challenges that educators face in the teaching and learning process are examined. Thirdly, teaching English to learners whose home language is not English is reviewed. Fourthly, the constant changing of the curriculum is discussed. Fifthly the value of writing and the methods of teaching writing are reviewed. The concepts framing this study include reflective practice, teacher reasoning and reflection. These concepts are drawn from the tradition of experiential learning theory.

CHAPTER THREE contains the research design and methodology used in the study. This was a case study using a qualitative approach through an interpretive paradigm. The context of the study is explained. The selection of participants and the data production and collection are explained. The data method for data analysis is given. Trustworthiness and ethical issues are discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR presents the data analysis. Descriptions of the participants are provided. The context, which is the school and the community, are presented. The experiences of the participants before and after introduction to the study and the reflections of the teaching and learning process during the study are provided. Suggestions for overcoming challenges are included.

CHAPTER FIVE details the summary of the findings. Recommendations are also given.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an introduction to the study. The topic is the experiences of educators who teach functional and creative writing. Critical questions include the experiences of educators and the challenges that are faced when teaching functional and creative writing. The purpose of the study is for the members of the language committee to use the findings and recommendations for reflective practice and professional development. The methodology that was used is a case study. The second chapter will review literature related to the experiences of educators during the teaching and learning of Language, particularly functional and creative writing.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

This study explores the experiences that educators of English encounter during the teaching of writing, and identifies some of the successes and challenges that the teachers face during the teaching and learning process. As James and Pollard (2006) point out, without teaching the learning and success of learners will not be boosted. The study will examine what the national policy, which is the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), stipulates regarding the teaching and assessment of English. Secondly, the challenges that educators face in the teaching and learning process are examined. Thirdly an exploration of the value of teaching writing is undertaken. Finally some methods of teaching writing are examined. The researcher could not find a suitable theoretical framework that can clearly or adequately examine educators' experiences in the teaching and learning of creative and functional writing. The study will be guided by the concepts of reflection and reflective practice which are located within the convention of experiential learning theory.

2.2. The educators' guidelines in the National Curriculum Statement and Assessment policy

Educators are guided by a curriculum statement, which forms the framework for teaching and learning experiences. Curriculum is the term often used to describe the learning or academic course or series of studies to be completed by learners (Graham-Jolly, 2000). Smith (2000) suggests that a useful definition of curriculum is that given by John Kerr (quoted in Kelly, 1983, p.10), "All learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually or inside or outside the school". Nixon (1999) is of the opinion that there should be heightened consciousness of gender, political, racial and personal issues in order to be sensitive to the needs of the learners. Teachers are called upon to be reflective practitioners, use their experiences and consider what is relevant for the learners. This study is based on the definition of John Kerr and not on one of the definitions critiqued by Marsh (2009, p.7), which is that of "all the planned learning's for which the school is responsible." Marsh (2009) argues that this definition does not address the unplanned curriculum. The curriculum should allow for all

that learners see, listen to, hear, feel and write which is planned or unplanned, including the hidden curriculum.

The Languages NCS policy document includes an Overview (2002) which requires the educators to use an additive or incremental approach to multilingualism. All learners are required to learn their home language and at least one additional official language. The expectation is that learners become competent in their additional language, while their home language is maintained and developed (NCS-Overview, 2002, p.20). The six outcomes for the languages learning area include listening, speaking, reading and viewing, writing, thinking and reasoning and language structure. It is prescribed (NCS-Overview, 2002) that the learning outcomes and the knowledge of sounds, words and grammar be integrated in teaching assessment. The NCS Policy Document (2002) advises educators that when learners enter a school where the language of learning and teaching is an additional language, teachers should provide special assistance to enable extra learning of the additional language. It states that languages are essential for personal, communicative, educational aesthetic, cultural and political reasons.

The NCS policy (2002) advises that the purpose of assessment is to get information about the progress of the learner and for the strengthening of the teaching practice. Since learners learn in different ways and at different paces, assessment should preferably be continuous. The Policy: Assessment and Qualification for the General Education and Training Band, advocates continuous assessment (CASS). CASS is made up of informal and formal assessment. Informal assessment is a daily assessment which is not for formal recording. Examples of formal assessments include projects, oral presentation, demonstrations, performances, tests, examinations, practical demonstrations and so forth. The Assessment Policy document (2007) advises educators to reflect on the learning process and follow up with interventions where necessary (p.21). Reflection on how learners perform leads to adjustment of teaching and assessment which in turn leads to successful experiences of the teaching and learning process. Reflection is relaxed and meditative, reflective practice on the other hand is more difficult and requires educators to discover a vast amount of consciousness about their teaching thus providing a chance for professional growth and development. The Assessment Policy document (2007) states that assessment should achieve one of the following purposes:

Identify the needs of the learners, enable teachers to reflect on their practice, provide information or data to a variety of stakeholders and demonstrate the effectiveness of the curriculum or teaching strategy (p, 1). To determine the effectiveness of the educators teaching strategies the department of education also introduced an appraisal system called the integrated quality management system.

In the past the appraisal system in South African schools was in the form of inspection. Jansen (2000) explains that inspection was intended to punish teachers because there was no trust that they were executing the task of teaching and learning appropriately. The inspection system was looked at as a way to get non-performing teachers to improve or get out of the system (CCEAM, 2008). After 1994 the Department of Education removed the system of inspection and introduced a Developmental Appraisal System (DAS) which was linked to Whole School Development (WSD) and then this would lead to Whole School Evaluation (WSE). Bisschoff and Mathye (2009) explain that this appraisal system emerged into performance measurement, which resulted in the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) which is for developmental purposes. IQMS thus serves the purpose of accountability and also provides support. Daniels (2007) suggests that there will be implementation problems because IQMS is linked to salary and grade progression. Bisschoff and Mathye (2009) found that educators felt that this could lead to cheating because teachers are appraised by a Development Support Group (DSG) which is made up of a peer and the head of department. The role of the DSG is to mentor and support the teacher. Foskett and Lumby (2003) state that it is dangerous to assume that IQMS will improve experiences of teaching. This is because motivation and education are private and exclusive to each educator. Bisschoff and Mathye (2009) suggest that appraisal and reflection guide accomplishments and steer one on a course for development. This leads to increase in knowledge skills and attitudes and if IQMS is implemented correctly it would lead to lifelong learning of the teacher and success in teaching and learning (Bisschoff and Mathye, 2009). The correct implementation of IQMS is likely to assist educators in developing appropriate strategies for the teaching of creative and functional writing.

The National Curriculum Statement policy document (2002) expects that teachers will fulfill the seven roles outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators. The seven roles include being mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of learning programmes, leaders, administrators

and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and Learning Area or Phase specialists. The role of assessment is a significant role for teachers. Assessment, as defined in the NCS (2002, p134) policy document, is “a continued planned process of gathering information on learner performance, measured against assessment standards”. Educators are required to assess learners for the purpose of noting if there is growth and improvement in learning and to assess whether the teaching strategy is appropriate for the learner.

The Department of Education, through the NCS policy document (2002), advocates that various forms of assessment be used in the classroom. These include continuous assessment (CA), baseline assessment (BA), formative assessment (FA) and summative assessment (SA). Each term is clearly defined in the NCS policy document (2002, p.134). CA is an assessment model that encourages integration of assessment into teaching and the development of learners through ongoing feedback. BA is the initial assessment used to find out what learners already know. FA is a form of assessment that assesses learner progress during the learning process in order to provide feedback that will strengthen learning. SA is regular reports of a learner’s progress at the end of the term or year. There are gaps, however, between the curriculum that is designed and planned and what takes place when the curriculum is being implemented in the classroom (De Klerk, 2002). These gaps may lead to challenges for the educator.

2.3. The challenges an educator faces when teaching functional and creative writing

There are many challenges that teachers face in the classroom and at school. These challenges could be endless like analysing what is required as stipulated in the curriculum or learners struggling to cope in the classroom. O’Conner and Geiger (2009) mention problems of learners struggling with tasks because of the language barrier, learners who have low self esteem, and insufficient time to cope with the various challenges and the teaching and learning process. The challenges that will be examined in the study are linked to improving literacy levels so that learners can contribute to a literate South African community and communicate fluently in English.

2.3.1. The changing, clarifying or refining of the curriculum

The first challenge is the changing, clarifying or refining of the curriculum. Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was approved by the democratic government in 1997 for implementation in 1998 (Prinsloo and Janks, 2002). Prinsloo and Janks (2002) explain that the curriculum was reviewed in 1998 with the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) being published in 1992. Upon further review the curriculum was called the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). Teachers, researchers, academics and even some parents were alarmed and dismayed when the democratic government introduced a revised curriculum to replace the traditional curriculum used under the apartheid government. Change was necessary for political reasons but many people do not take kindly to change especially if there is insufficient thought in implementation and training. Jansen (1999) was one of the academics who had the sternest critique of the changes; he gave reasons as to why the Outcomes Based Approach (OBE) of the curriculum would fail. Jansen (1999) demonstrated that the Spadian model of OBE was invented by William Spady to cater for technical education in the United States of America. South African educators were to use this model for their (more academic) classrooms. Jansen (1998) also alleges that there was insufficient time and preparation given for teachers to familiarize themselves with the curriculum. Another issue was the new vocabulary which some teachers found overwhelming. Teachers' excessive workload and lack of leadership from senior management has resulted in demoralized teachers. Educationists, such as Apple (1979), Smyth, Dow, Hattam, Reid and Shacklock (2000) and Tromon (2000) suggest that teaching and learning have a declining influence on the curriculum. Administrative and organizational duties make the workload of teachers difficult. The administrative activities like recordkeeping of the teacher are demanding and sometimes impossible because disadvantaged schools lack the many resources that advantaged schools have. Many schools still do not have the basic technology like computers. This results in the majority of learners who attend disadvantaged schools being deprived of the opportunities being given to those learners who have a multitude of resources at their schools. Chisholm (2004) explains that in government schools where the learners cannot afford the school fees it is difficult with insufficient resources to be productive and make a difference in the learning and teaching process.

Teachers have had to cope with terms for the curriculum like C2005, the RNCS and the NCS. Hawkey (2010) highlighted in a Sunday Times newspaper that a new curriculum, Schooling 2025 or the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (“Caps”) would be introduced in 2012. In a recent Daily News article, Maluleka (2011) reported that our education curriculum is going back to basics. The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, has accepted the concerns raised by Jansen (1998) and appointed a review committee in 2009. Beginning with the foundation phase, the curriculum will be more convenient and easier to understand, the administration will be less and teachers will have more time for teaching. In theory the Minister of Basic Education has put changes in place, but what happens in practice is another matter. The practical issues become a challenge to teachers if the curriculum is not taken seriously at all levels. According to Grundy (1987,p115) “the curriculum is not simply a set of plans to be implemented, but rather is an active process in which planning, acting and evaluating are all reciprocally integrated into the process.”Educators look forward to a stimulating curriculum with fewer projects, one file for preparation and planning and one set of guidelines. The challenges will be manageable if all educators know their roles and functions and work together as a team especially to improve the literacy and numeracy levels of the learners.

2.3.2. Teaching English to learners where the home language is not English

The second challenge is with regard to teaching English to learners whose home language is not English. Teachers need to find strategies and methods to assist learners in an English class if English is not their home language. Teachers struggle to communicate with learners and learners struggle to understand the teachers. These are experiences which educators have to deal with in order to improve teaching and learning. The KwaZulu Natal Education Department recently sent out KZN Circular No.31 of 2011 to all schools in the province as a reminder of the education policy that should be undertaken in all schools. In terms of the Language in Education Policy (1997) and the National Curriculum Statement for the General Education and Training (G.E.T.) band (2002) in conjunction with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) all learners from Grade one to Grade three must be offered one official language at home language and a second official language as first additional language. The dilemma now lies in who decides on which home language to consider. Many learners attend schools where the language of teaching and learning is not their first language (Pans ALB, 2000). Most schools will

consider the home language of the teachers and how the school was classified under the apartheid system. The schools that were governed under the House of Representatives, House of Assembly and House of Delegates will therefore use English as the home language and the language of teaching and learning, in spite of the fact that over 80% of the learners per class speak IsiZulu at home. O’Conner and Geiger (2009) confirm that there is sometimes a mismatch between the educator and the learners. In Grades Four to Eight the Language in Education Policy (1997) stipulates that a third language may be offered to the learners as Second Additional Language. Teachers in schools where the language of instruction is English have to take cognizance of the needs of English second language learners because parents in the township prefer sending their children to schools where English is the medium of instruction. Many parents and guardians are of the opinion that English as the language of teaching and learning will provide better opportunities and experiences than the language they themselves used in education (Radebe, 2004 and Bosman & Van der Merwe, 2000).

Teachers are alarmed when learners come into the classroom and cannot read or spell. The beginning of the year is where educators should complete baseline and formative assessments to gather at what literacy stage our learners are at. Teachers can use the formative assessment at the beginning of the year to tap into the creative potential of each learner and work towards getting them to be functional and creative writers. Teachers are called upon to find creative ways of teaching English because in most cases these learners are studying English as the home language, and Afrikaans as first additional language. IsiZulu which is rightfully their home language is being taught as the second additional language. What policy expects to be happening in the classroom and what school management decides should be practiced (first, second or third language) are two different matters (de Klerk, 2002).

The most positive experience is when a learner begins the year uncertain and immature when attempting language activities and with progress achieved through modeling and framing, the teacher observes the maturity of the writing ability of the learner. Another positive experience is noting the effort put in by learners who lack basic phonics and spelling skills and who bloom if given the appropriate experience. Bloch (2009) writes that one of the more pressing issues affecting education is poor subject knowledge and teaching practices of the teacher. The most pleasant experience is witnessing a learner who had not spoken or written many words in six

months suddenly take part in class discussions and peer group discussions. Harris, Graham, Mason and Friedlander (2008) and Graves, Gershen and Haager (2004) contend that teachers who value writing are positive and have a classroom which encourages writing skills. Harris et al. (2008) and Graves et al. (2004) add that teachers who keep up to date with the current trends in writing and provide sufficient time for writing lessons improve the language proficiency of learners. Successful writing classes are based on the teacher's belief in writing. If a teacher lacks sufficient writing skills of poetry, plays, letters and essays for example, Harris et al. (2008) and Graves et al. (2004) maintain, it is highly unlikely that effective teaching and learning will take place.

In South Africa, learners from township areas travel to city schools in search of better education. Learners who are hungry and tired after travelling long distances to school struggle academically and learning is interrupted (Stoffels, 2004). These learners generally also do not speak English well. Snyder Ohta and Nakaone (2004) found that a considerable number of teachers cannot cope and do not have the knowledge or experience and time to assist and encourage learners who have limited English proficiency. Santangelo and Olinghouse (2009) support the claim that some educators are not capable of assisting learners to attain the crucial knowledge and skills necessary to write suitable narrative, expository and persuasive compositions. Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold (2003) allege that teaching practices in South Africa are flawed and that the objectives of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) are not accomplished. The various experiences in the classroom make it difficult or impossible to achieve all the outcomes. Disruptions to the classroom timetable, when teachers are absent or speakers visit the school, add to experiences of trying to get learners to achieve all the necessary skills. Christie (2001) argues against the statements that teachers cannot cope and points out that those teachers can achieve despite problems. The problems are not only classroom based but include issues of social inequalities and learners' social backgrounds. Christie (2001) suggests that schools in different socio-economic contexts will have learners who perform differently. Children are different and come from different backgrounds, in the same way that teachers are different and have different frames of reference. Teachers can find ways to deal with issues of being overwhelmed by using peers to assist learners who are struggling. Cameron and Besser (2004) explain how first language learners have learnt the basic and traditional skills of writing by the age of nine years. Buddy teaching could help second language English speakers. Children exposed to television, computer

games and story books as well as magazines have a mature way of expressing themselves and can construct essays with a wider vocabulary than learners who do not have these resources at home (Michaels and Collins, 1984). Teachers could tap into the skills of the learners with exposure to various media and written text to buddy with those who do not have this exposure.

Noting that learners are affected by societal problems makes it difficult to stick rigidly to the curriculum. Dealing with hungry or sleepy learners or learners who suddenly burst into tears disturbs the flow of learning (Pluddemann, Mati and Mahlahela - Thusi, 2000). Learners who are neglected or exposed to other forms of abuse cannot concentrate or complete activities. Sometimes it is difficult for the learner to express themselves if their home language is isiZulu or isiXhosa. This leads to discipline problems (Du Plessis and Naude, 2003). Probyn (2006) found that the language of learning and teaching may affect the learner who does not use this language at home to such an extent that there may be barriers to the learner succeeding. Joshua (2007) reinforces the idea that learners who do not have the opportunity to speak English outside the classroom struggle to concentrate and cope with the tasks given. Dowber and Jordaan (1999) agree that learners with language barriers struggle with classroom activities and suggest that learners who are not coping in their studies have low self esteem and confidence and this affects their functioning in all learning areas. Teachers need to get support from home in order to deal with issues of fatigue and discipline (Du Plessis and Naude, 2003).

Tobbell (2000) looks at learning through a Freirean lens and explains that the social level of the learners has an impact on the learning of the learners which may also provide a challenge for the teacher. When exploring experiences of educators teaching functional and creative writing it may be difficult to concentrate on only the curriculum that is taught in the classroom. Teachers may use the same curriculum guidelines but teaching methods may differ. Educators also differ in how the control, of the state or managers, on the curriculum and classroom instruction has an effect on them (Stevenson and Baker, 1991).

2.3.3. Power and Control impacting on teachers experiences

Another challenge is that of power and control. Demoralised educators, those struggling to understand the changing nature of the curriculum and those who do not have sufficient support for growth and development from education officials and managers could find it difficult to teach

with confidence. Autocratic managers yield power and control in ways that may not benefit the school, educators, learners or the education system. School managers should be providing the professional leadership of the curriculum (Cross, 2002). At certain schools teachers are rotated annually and teach different learning areas and different grades each year. For seasoned teachers this does not necessarily have to be a challenge. As a result of years of teaching experience and having taught a number of learning areas and also being placed in schools according to the qualification (e.g. foundation phase, intermediate phase or senior phase) these teachers may cope with the challenge. Other educators may not have taught for many years or cannot cope with rotation of learning area or grade. This has a negative impact on the teaching of functional and creative writing. Hall (2004) encourages critical thinking in order to be aware of harsh controls.

Over the years, however, teachers are placed according to the needs of schools and also as a result of redeployment and redistribution. Teachers are placed in a situation that they are not suitably qualified to teach in. Van der Rheede (2005) explains that principals have an important role to play in facilitating participation and encouraging empowerment of educators. Teachers are put under pressure and may not perform to their full potential. Teachers may have trained in Sports Science and maybe Technology but when at school they are placed to teach English. Some teachers have more passion for one learning area and not another. Managers who realize the value of allowing teachers to teach the learning areas they have a passion for find that teachers will teach to their optimum level and produce good results whereas teachers who are teaching just because they are placed in that learning area may find this role challenging. This is explained by Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold (2003) who state that educators and principals are expected to achieve standards for which they are not equipped. The political nature of teachers work or the idea that superiors must yield power over sub-ordinates results in a need to control teachers. Various stakeholders (parents, employers, corporate world) require differing outcomes from the education system. Smyth et al. (2000, p.39-46), describes six ways of control over teachers. This can also be regarded as a means of holding teachers accountable for learners learning:

1. Regulated market control-this control is achieved by noting the number of matriculated learners who enter the job market. Teachers are held accountable if learners do not pass the

senior certificate well. Also it is expected of learners to communicate in writing at an optimum level.

2. Technical control-the prescribed curriculum or NCS is used to control teachers. Teacher's experiences in the classroom depend on how they interact with the policy document. An assumption that what is in the policy document will be adhered to (Marsh, 2009 p.7).

3. Bureaucratic control- Autocratic and hierarchical power whereby political figures wanting to impress the global markets expect remarkable achievement based on the planned curriculum.

4. Corporate control-where teaching is only to prepare for the world of work and not in the creative fields. This teaching and learning process is affected negatively if the only purpose of the curriculum is to prepare learners for the corporate world. The teaching of functional and creative writing prepares one to study further or to be creative.

5. Ideological control-a belief that a good teacher teaches only in a specific way and that any other way will not achieve required outcomes. Leaders and managers may be taken aback when educators try innovative ways to enhance learning.

6. Disciplinary power- managers use this kind of power to observe from above criticizing and expecting strict code of following timetable, or dress code as determined from their perspective. These kinds of challenges prevent teachers from completing the task of teaching as they have to cope with external influences of power and control which detracts from the task of teaching and learning. Ball (2006, p.144) expressed this sentiment appropriately by asking "who is it that determines what is to count as a valuable, effective or satisfactory performance and what measures or indicators are considered valid?" Dealing with the various issues of power and control are experiences which educators face that detract from the task at hand, which is the teaching of functional and creative writing. State control may impact negatively on the implementation of the curriculum (Stevenson and Baker, 1991).

2.4. The value of writing

Teaching of English, especially to learners whose home language is not English, demands influential teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Brauer (2002) explains that, in Germany, writing was regarded as a skill that could not be taught. The suggestion was that

creative writing e.g. poetry, songs, narratives and reflective writing can't be taught but that expository writing (a statement, account or explanation) can be taught. In the early twentieth century there were thus still debates considering the art of writing or writing as an art. As knowledge quickly improved and evolved, academics realized there was a requirement for writing in a multitude of functions. It was then noted that writing skills are necessary in order to accomplish knowledge management, for lifelong learning and to point oneself in the path to academic fulfillment. Graham and Perin (2007) concur that writing leads to success when studying further. Thereafter, as it is in the present, writing skills can be regarded as an effective learning tool. Cameron and Besser (2004, p.20) declare "that writing is the key skill for social interaction and for formal education."

Writing allows us to express our thoughts, emotions and feelings. We can write down what we have learnt. We can examine the definition of concepts and demonstrate this enlightenment in our assessments and tests. In writing complicated feelings and ideas are turned into words, sentences, paragraphs and phrases. The work becomes available for a certain purpose and a certain audience. Rose (1998) suggests that teachers begin the lesson by preparing students for the topic. In this stage the learners are listening and speaking. During the discussion phase the teacher corrects faults in the verbal discussion and grammar used. The teacher serves as a model and speaks and acts so that the learners can learn from this experience. Learners are encouraged to prepare, identify, highlight important information and take notes. Researching involves reading so in this phase another skill is taught. Writing is valuable because it cannot be completed without listening, speaking, reading, highlighting, taking notes, building a vocabulary, rewriting accompanied by scaffolding from the teacher and finally completing text according to the genre which was specified.

Through the communication of writing learners can express themselves without the fear of peers criticizing their efforts. Writing, however, is the least understood skill by learners. Jibowo (2010) highlights the point that writing is the fundamental of language skills which will establish whether the learners will manage all written assessments in their schooling. Functional and creative writing are a requirement of the Revised National Curriculum (RNC) and are assessed in the Annual National Assessment for Grades four to six literacy assessments in South Africa.

Writing skills are useful. Cele (2001) and Vermeulen (2001) explain that English is the dominant language of communication and they hold the view that English proficiency is not only necessary for university courses but for learners to one day hold their own in corporate employment or to fit in internationally.

Bayat (2002), states that writing is a social activity. Learners must discover the general rules that form the various types of writing in order to be successful and competent. Bayat (2002) believes that besides knowledge of the basic grammar, vocabulary and basic sentence construction skills learners should have an understanding of words used to decipher the communication. Good writing will be a result of a primary grasp of the practical rules of language or of showing a relationship between words. Teachers who realize the value of teaching writing according to Bruning and Horn (2000, p.30) are ‘those who teach for intellectual and social development and for cognitive stimulation and growth, for self expression and social affiliation.’”

2.5. Methods of teaching writing skills

In order to grasp the various skills necessary for creative and functional writing, educators should be aware of methods or approaches of teaching writing skills. The National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-9 Policy document (Department of Education, 2002) provides specific focus on the kinds of knowledge and skills to be taught. Teachers of language should be aware of the central principle in Languages teaching of integration of aspects. Functional and creative writing target the major learning outcome four (writing), learning outcome five (thinking and reasoning) and learning outcome six (language structure and use). This should be undertaken while supporting learning outcome one (listening), learning outcome two (speaking) and learning outcome three (reading and viewing). Possible assessment tasks for functional writing include writing letters, advertisements, diary entries, agendas and minutes, reports, posters, e-mails, curriculum vitae, jingles and slogans. Possible assessment tasks for creative writing include longer pieces in the form of narrative, descriptive writing, discursive writing, expository or argumentative writing and reflective writing. Shorter pieces could be in the form of poetry, paragraphs dialogues, plays and songs. Teachers have a multitude of examples to choose from in order to encourage writing skills.

Bayat (2002) suggests that writing is a public exercise and that learners will only be able to write effectively and appropriately if they know the general rules. She (Bayat, 2002) argues that the Process writing approach is inadequate as it does not cater for the needs of all learners who have different cultural backgrounds. This approach is advocated in Curriculum 2005 (C2005). Hayes and Flower (1980) and Brauer (2002), however are of the opinion that the Process writing approach has great potential for the teaching of writing skills. This study will touch on the Cognitive approach, the Genre approach and the Process writing approach

2.5.1. The Cognitive Strategy Approach

This approach is based on taking into account ‘what’ is taught to the learner and ‘how’ the learner is taught. A cognitive strategy requires the teacher to nudge the learner to use their mind to consider the task at hand and attempt to complete the task. Cognitive strategies are called ‘procedural facilitators’ by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) and ‘scaffolds’ by Palinscar and Brown (1984). Another term used in relation to cognitive strategy is metacognition which is required for learners to think about what they are doing in order to learn effectively. The teacher has a vital role to play in connecting the learner to the task that needs to be done and how it should be done. Harris, Graham, Mason and Friedlander (2008) suggest teaching clearly by modeling, encouraging learners to think aloud, coaching and giving direct instruction and scaffolding. Modeling can be defined as giving examples of writing tasks so that learners can work towards writing in the same manner. It is the educators’ duty to guide learners to research ideas, use technology and then put ideas into writing. A strategy is a method of achieving an objective. Cognitive strategy is a mental method of achieving the goal. Thinking and problem-solving are examples of Cognitive strategy. Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) established various methods of understanding cognitive tasks. Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) explain language strategies as the action of using language to identify a sound (phonics), letter or word so that the sentence, text or instruction is clearly understood. In this way a learner can understand the verbal instruction or discourse and will thus be able to complete an activity in oral or written form.

2.5.2. The Genre Approach

Genre theory involves teaching writing skills using general rules of writing. Genre is making use of language in society and through a cultural background. Genres are organized and arranged

writing processes. Teachers assume that the generic conventions are taught to the learners in the foundation phase and that they do not need to teach basic rules to the learners. Bayat (2002) stresses that this may only be the case for mother tongue learners. Learners whose mother tongue is not English, only experience this literacy when they are at a school where English is the language of instruction. Literacy according to Cope and Kalatzsis (2000) is the production, understanding and application of texts in a culturally acceptable manner. Bayat (2002) believes that although activities in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction are important, there is much more necessary for teaching writing skills. Learners are also required to choose words carefully and have an understanding of functional grammar. Functional grammar can be defined as using words, phrases and clauses appropriately to compose a piece of writing. Functional grammar, according to Bayat (2002) also involves considering the use of texts and deciding what language to use depending on their function and the people the text is meant for. Teaching, using the genre approach involves teaching learners by expressing clearly what the text will achieve, showing the relationship between the learner and the audience for whom he/she is writing and the function of the language in the communication of the text.

2.5.3. The Process Writing Approach

This approach is the one that will be of particular importance since this is the approach teachers are using in South African schools and is a requirement of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). Santangelo and Olinghouse (2009) suggest that educators of language should use the Process writing approach and the Cognitive approach. The Process writing approach involves providing learners with frequent occasions for writing, including planning, drafting, revising and editing. The NCS and foundations for learning guidelines put emphasis on peers (learners) input during the planning and drafting stage of functional and creative writing. Morris (2009), Jennrick (2007), Jibowo (2010) and Duruamaku-Dim (2006) recommend using the stages of pre-writing, composition, revision and final draft as the strategies for teaching learners how to write. This is the strategy alluded to in the Process writing approach. Berninger, Vaughan, Abbott, Begay, Coleman, Curtin, Hawkins and Graham (2002) agree with Hayes and Flower (1980) that learners may have difficulty expressing themselves in writing because they cannot plan appropriately, generate texts, edit the texts and rewrite the text.

The teacher is required to be an example and model the scaffolding of the processes of planning, drafting, revising and editing. Englert, Raphael, Anderson, Anthony and Stevens (1991) and Harris and Graham (1996, 1999) inform us that specific teacher modelling of the scaffolding of the processes mentioned could improve the learners written work by accelerating meta cognitive knowledge and techniques of the various processes. Scaffolding as explained by Ninio and Bruner (1978) is support that allows the learner to perform difficult skills and as they turn into capable individuals the scaffolding is slowly removed. Scaffolding as referred to by Harris, Graham, Mason and Friedlander (2008) involves providing suggestions, modelling how these suggestions can be used, encouraging thinking aloud and guiding learners to complete the written task. Scaffolding comprises of a series of frameworks and support structures by the teacher to assist the learner to achieve skills. The concept of scaffolding was introduced by Vygotsky and expresses that as learners gain knowledge and skills they become less dependent on the teacher and diminished support is required from the teacher (Harris et.al. 2008). A teacher could use the process writing approach in the following manner. The learners could be guided to write persuasive essays in their creative writing lessons. The first stage is the planning stage and learners would be encouraged to express their opinions and take a position on an assigned topic. The next stage would be a lesson to encourage learners to generate their essay by taking sides in a mock argument, supporting the side they have chosen, and also being able to provide reasons or evidence for being in that position and opposing the other side, while giving reasons for the counter position. The third stage is a lesson on reviewing and revising the persuasive essay by evaluating the position taken together with supporting arguments and having reached a comfortable conclusion. At each stage the teacher serves as a model and support structure in the scaffolding from the planning to the final draft of the essay. Scaffolding according to Florio-Ruane and Lensmire (1989) supports the growth and progress of learners.

There are numerous methods and techniques of teaching functional and creative writing skills so that learners can succeed in their learning outcomes. Teachers are required to reflect on their practice and on the learners' development in language and literacy and cater for the diverse needs of the learners in the classroom. This could be a daunting and intimidating task or it could be a challenging but also exciting experience.

2.6. Providing learning experiences

Teachers' experiences will be exciting and varied if they provide learners with various examples of functional and creative writing. It is important to provide a variety of functional writing tasks e.g. letter writing, advertisements, diary and journal writing, reports, posters, email writing (if learners have access to computers), postcards and guidance in filling in forms. Wallace, Stariba and Walberg (2004) suggest providing sufficient time to language lessons, giving homework and more opportunities to practice language. They (Wallace, Stariba and Walberg, 2004) also suggest providing a variety of lessons and allowing learners to write about their own experiences and feelings. Creative writing is just as important and learners should be given opportunities to write poems, paragraphs, dialogues, descriptive essays, narratives and arguments, etc. Learning and teaching experiences will be successful if teachers give clear guidelines on how much the learners must write, how much time they are given to write, how writing will be marked and whether dictionaries can be used or not. Pierce and O'Malley (1992) suggest using holistic scoring when assessing writing, giving clear instructions and constantly reminding learners of the process of planning, organizing and revising written texts. The teacher could make the classroom a creative centre by providing experiences in the classroom. Where possible the radio or magazines as well as extra reading material could be obtained to assist with improving teaching and learning. To improve in writing, learners can be given activities which expose them to an assortment of types of writing. Teachers must use their experience to research and find ways to expose learners how language can be used to create genre using format, style, voice, purpose and stance (Cameron and Besser, 2004). If learners are not exposed to newspaper articles they will find an assessment on writing a letter to the newspaper difficult in that they have not had exposure to this genre. External assessments may require a learner to draft a radio interview; if they have never listened to the radio the learner will be overwhelmed. Cameron and Besser (2004) explain that genre knowledge involves teaching the learners about style, format, voice and purpose or stance.

Format involves showing learners how to organize their writing. When writing a letter the learner must know the format for a friendly or a formal letter. The learner must know where to put the address and what to write in the opening and salutation as well as the ending. The learner should be able to begin a story or fairy tale with 'Once there was' or 'Once upon a time.' The

teacher should inform learners that different genre make use of different formats, paragraphs, graphs, points and diagrams. Style requires knowing when to be formal and when to be casual and also knowing which words, vocabulary and sentences to use. Voice means knowing when to be stern, shy, enthusiastic, serious or cheerful. The purpose requires learners to know what they are writing and why they are writing the text. A stance would be the position they take or the viewpoint they have on an issue. Providing learners with the opportunities to find these aspects in their writing will make the experience of teaching easier and will encourage learners to use the skills they have learnt. Providing a variety of experiences will give learners opportunities to see in which type of genre they are most comfortable and help them to find ways of coping in the areas where they lack certain skills.

This literature review has explored the National Curriculum Statement and Assessment policy, the challenges facing teachers, the value of writing and methods of teaching creative and functional writing. The literature review has also briefly addressed some aspects of reflection, reflective practice and professional development. Experiences of educators teaching English language and methods of teaching writing skills are discussed. The next section discloses and distinguishes the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. This study is guided by the experiential learning theory and the conceptual framework of reflection and reasoning and reflective practice.

2.7. Theoretical and conceptual framework

2.7.1. Introduction

This study will be based on the concepts of *reflective practice as well as teacher reasoning and reflection*. Reflective practice is placed in the legacy of *experiential learning*. As Lee (2009) points out, with a clear idea of the various circumstances that promote or inhibit classroom experiences, teaching and learning can be improved. Being accountable and willing to reflect on the teaching and learning situation lead to change for the better. Adler (2002) and Southwood (2002) acknowledge that educators must be developed and assisted in order to keep abreast of current trends in education. Lee (2009) suggests that teaches' interventions that will lead to change should also include the other stakeholders including parents, learners and management. The educator must reason and reflect in order to examine experiences, note those which hinder

teaching and learning and look to experiences that improve teaching and learning in order to facilitate intervention for effective learning.

This study is located in a framework of *experiential learning theory*. Henning (2005) explains that a theoretical framework places research in the area or field where the researcher is engaged. This enables one to hypothesize about one's research. A theoretical framework is like a looking glass or lens through which the world can be observed. It also contributes to the familiarization of the research, expressing the position that the researcher adopts in the research. Henning, Gravett and Van Rensburg (2005) consider a conceptual framework to be a joining of the critical ideas of the study. In the following paragraph the concepts of reflective practice, reasoning and reflection will be elaborated.

2.7.2. Reflective Practice

This study is based on the reflection and reasoning and reflective practice of educators with the view that these practices provide teaching and learning experiences. Whereas reflection is done in isolation in a casual and meditative way, reflective practice requires more and must be understood to be a self awareness of the way in which the educator experiences the teaching and learning process. Schon (1983) explained reflective practice as being professional practice where the educator has a function which is two-fold. The educator, during the teaching and learning process, firstly evaluates the experience (self evaluation) and secondly serves as a critic of that lesson (the impact of teaching on learners). Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) state that understanding one's behaviour through reflective practice leads to opportunities for professional development. Schon (1983) explained that "professional knowledge is grounded in professional experience" (p.2). As educators experience teaching and learning, professional growth occurs.

2.7.3. Teacher reasoning and reflection

Johnson (1999) defines teacher reasoning as teachers' knowledge which is constructed experientially. Educators handle the same situation differently because of their context, personal histories and thinking. Educators' experiences will be different depending on their ways of thinking, reasoning in teaching, knowledge and beliefs. Reflection may increase teacher knowledge and development. Teachers are called upon to be reflective practitioners and this is the kind of teacher that is required, according to the NCS (2002). Educators must examine their

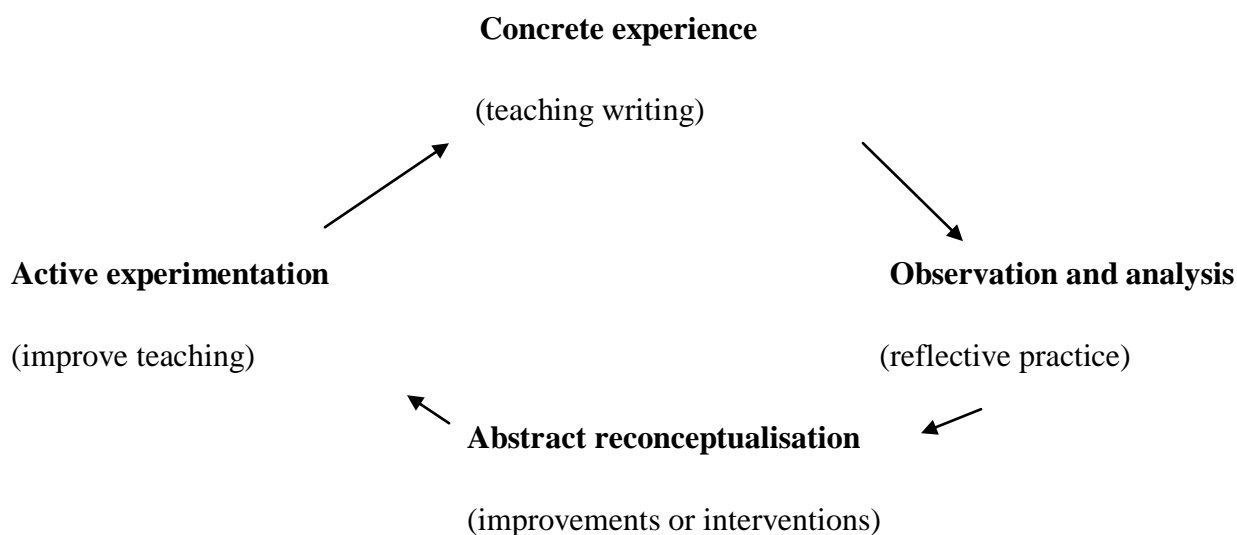
classroom experiences with the view to improving or maintaining the standards that are required for the learning of the South African learner. Experiential learning theorists like Dewey, Lewin and Piaget claim that with experience, effective learning will result in behavioural change.

2.7.4. 2Experiential learning theory

This study will focus on experiential learning theory. To be lifelong learners, constantly accountable and willing to develop in teaching and learning practice, educators should critically reflect on their experiences. Experiential learning directs one to the ways on which one learns from experience. Adult learners formulate experiences so that this will assist their learning (Guy 1999). However, Guy (1999) criticises experiential learning theory for attempting to develop individual knowledge without considering the communal background. Cultures, values and identity are part of communal background which may impact on the way one develops the individual knowledge.

The curriculum in South Africa is constantly in a state of flux and as such by examining their experiences through experiential learning theory educators will be encouraged to embrace development. In the early 1980's Mezirow, Kolb, Freire and others stated that the centre of all learning is situated in the way we approach our experience, specifically our critical reflection on experience. Marsick and Watkins (1990, pp.19-20) point out that the renowned viewpoint on learning from experience in the United States of America is the one of Kolb (1984). These theorists, according to Rogers (1996), speak of learning as a cycle that begins with experience, continues with reflection and later leads to action .This becomes a concrete experience of reflection. Kolb (1984) theorizes that people capture and reconstruct their experiences in a unique manner. Some comprehend through concrete experience (CE), others through abstract conceptualization (AC). Some people reconstruct experiences through reflective observation (RO) and others through active experimentation (AE). Apprehending and transformation of experiences mesh emerging as a cycle of learning styles and experiential learning. An example of experiential learning theory linked to this study would be: Imagine that a learner fails a writing task or assignment (the experience). The parent then confronts the educator and is angry about the result. The teacher considers the incident (reflection) and talks to other teachers who have had confrontations with angry parents (the concrete experience of reflection). After reflection the educator finds ways of dealing with parents and providing intervention strategies

for learners to improve. Experiential learning theory (ELT) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb 1984, p.41). There is much debate and critique of this experiential learning theory, with research by Hickox (1990) showing that 22.2% of theorists and academics did not support the theory. Kolb (1984) explained that the learning styles of his theory were for self assessment exercises and as validation for ELT. ELT will be used in this study because of the emphasis on critical reflection of experiences. Reflection must be linked to action, reflective practice and the teaching and learning process. With regard to this study of experiences of educators teaching functional and creative writing, reflective practice requires the educator to teach and critique the practice. Schon (1987, p. 31) depicts it clearly in the following figure:



Schon (1987) explains this as “a dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skilful” (p.31). Reflection is valuable for effective teaching, according to Korthagen (2001), because educators examine their views, critically analyse these views and rearrange their views. Fulani and Hendricks (2011) state that the principles required for implementing the curriculum are reflection, pacing and curriculum coverage. By reflecting on their experiences while teaching functional and creative writing, educators will develop professionally as there is a link between reflective practice and professional development. This study will note the experiences of educators from the concrete experience of introducing functional or creative topic, through the analysis and observation stage as well as the abstract reconceptualisation stage until the active experimentation stage.

2.8. Conclusion

In this chapter the guidelines of the national English policy were reviewed. The challenges facing teachers were discussed, and thereafter the value of teaching writing was outlined. Methods of teaching functional and creative writing were unpacked. Finally the conceptual framework of reflection, teacher reasoning and reflective practice was discussed. The theoretical framework of experiential learning theory was discussed since reflection and reflective practice are located in this framework.

In chapter three a description of the research design and methodology will be addressed and a data collection plan will be presented.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter a review of relevant literature on the teaching of writing was offered. The conceptual and theoretical framework of this study was also discussed. In this chapter the research design and methodology is addressed. This chapter describes how the data will be generated in order to explore the experiences of teachers when teaching functional and creative writing. Firstly, it begins by discussing a qualitative approach. An exploration of the research design, the context, sampling, data generation, data analysis, limitations about the research design and ethical issues of the study follows.

3.2. The research design

3.2.1. The qualitative approach

This study assumes a qualitative approach in order to produce data to answer the research questions. The objective is to appreciate, clarify and interpret people's experiences. Specifically, this study attempts to explore the experiences of teachers of language who are teaching functional and creative writing. A definition of qualitative research as explained by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) is that it is an undertaking that places or situates the researcher in the world. This is a naturalistic approach involving an interpretation as the researcher observes the people and things in their natural environment. Qualitative research employs a variety of methods to obtain a deep understanding of the experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain that there is a close relationship between the researcher and the participants and the phenomena being researched resulting in a socially constructed understanding of the experience.

This research is positioned in an interpretive paradigm. The study is conducted with teachers at a primary school. The interpretive paradigm is beneficial as it allows investigation into the participants' natural setting by analyzing the milieu in which they create their reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, 2005 & Radnor, 2002). The Minister of Education in South Africa has suggested

that language results are low due to the fact that learners lack basic reading and writing skills. Interpretive research is basically involved with definition and knowledge of the natural setting (Henning, Gravett & Van Rensburg 2005). The school and the community which the school serves provide a background to the experiences that educators have. The community in which the school is located provides the researcher with a deep diagnosis of the social phenomena. The interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to gain greater insight into the teaching and learning of writing. Interpretation, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), is to receive a new perception into a particular experience, obtain different concepts and theories about the experience and unearth problems in that phenomenon.

A researcher using the qualitative approach makes sense of what is being researched in different ways. In this study sense will be made of the experiences of teachers as they occur in the natural setting which is the school (Morse and Richards, 2002). O'Leary (2005) explains that it is difficult to conduct and examine data in a way that will appropriately retain the essence of the data. A qualitative approach makes it possible to explore teachers' experiences and to obtain rich data in their natural environment. Moreover, qualitative research aims to recognize the participants' experiences in their distinctive setting and culture (Henning, 2004). In qualitative research different procedures must be used in order to allow participants to express themselves fully. Since the research involves experiences it is necessary for the voice of the teacher to be heard in order to generate and analyze data (Morse and Richards, 2003). The data will be generated from a qualitative case study.

3.2.2. Case study

The methodology chosen for this research is a case study. A case study focuses on how the participants view the world and construct meaning as a result of their experiences (Creswell, 2009). The study will explore the experiences of educators teaching languages and to determine to what degree reflective practice is used for intervention and to improve teaching. Teaching is a complicated cognitive competence which takes place in a complex, active milieu (Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986; Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich & Anderson, 1988; Spiro, Feltovich, Jacobson & Coulson, 1991). Proficiency in writing (Hayes & Flower, 198) as well as in teaching is reliant on an educator who is versatile in the classroom and at the school (Glaser, 1984; Putman & Borko, 2000; Shulman, 1986, 1987). A case study enables a rich, accurate discourse of the phenomenon

being studied. The researcher in this case study is interested in the rich account of occurrences and combines an explanation of experiences with the assessment of these experiences. A case study examines the origin of an issue and its consequences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The researcher is interested in how often writing skills are taught, which kinds of approaches are used and how teachers deal with issues when they notice lack of improvement in the writing skills. Mishra and Koehler (2006, p.1020) explain that “there are many knowledge systems that are fundamental to teaching, including knowledge of student thinking and learning, and knowledge of subject matter”. A case study enables the researcher to examine people in their context. In this study participants will be interviewed at the school in order for them to reflect on their experiences.

A case study according to Cohen et al. (2007) provides a valuable and detailed account of the case. This exploratory case study will highlight the experiences of educators in the teaching of writing. As a teacher of languages I will be interested in the views, perceptions and experiences of other educators and how they deal with challenges in order to reflect on and improve practice. Case studies can employ both qualitative and quantitative data and use a variety of data collection methods but this research is a qualitative study which will provide rich and detailed data (Cohen et al., 2007). The rich and detailed data will be a description of the experiences of educators teaching writing.

3.3. The Context

This is a deliberate choice of context as the study will be carried out at my institution which is a primary school in Cato Manor, Durban. This school is situated in a low socio-economic community. Many of the learners are from single parent homes, child-headed homes and homes where there are members infected or affected by HIV and AIDS. Many of the learners at the school get a grant. This is a fee paying school but an average of five in a class of thirty five pay school fees. The five in a class, who pay school fees and a few other learners, tend to be the ones who do homework and complete research and projects. In most cases informal assessment tasks are school based in order to get all learners to complete tasks and obtain an assessment mark. For reasons of anonymity the researcher will call the school Klesper Primary. Taking into account accessibility, cost and time factors the researcher has chosen to research the school at which she is employed. This will also obviate the need to take leave to interview teachers at other schools.

Colleagues will be interviewed during breaks, during non-teaching periods or after school. The school has a learner population of 738 learners with 86% in each class speaking IsiZulu or IsiXhosa at home. As colleagues we are constantly discussing experiences we have while teaching English second language learners. For this reason it is appropriate to use this institution for the research.

3.4. Selection of participants

Sampling in qualitative research is flexible. This study will use purposive sampling. Leedy and Ormrod (2005), Maykut and Morehouse (1996) and Cohen et al, (2007) define purposive sampling as choosing people or participants for a particular and specific purpose. The three educators of language in the senior primary phase will be requested to be the participants. These three are the educators who teach Grade Four, Five, and Seven. The researcher in this study is the Grade Six educator. Purposive sampling is also called theoretical sampling by Mason (2002), a choice of participants who will have bearing on the research questions, the theoretical and analytical framework and the argument to be addressed.

Gaining access to the school and teachers has to be dealt with in a sensitive manner. Being a colleague at the school makes these even more necessary. At this school gaining access was a sensitive issue even though fifty percent of the colleagues and the researcher have been teaching at the school for over fifteen years. It is a sensitive issue when one wants to research the teaching of another. Senior management expresses interest in the professional development of staff and encourages teachers to keep up to date with current trends. There was a necessary protocol involved in informing the management of the school and the chairperson of the governing body. The request to do research at the school had to start with the head of department since she is involved in all learning area committee meetings and was eager for research which would provide findings for a way forward in addressing the poor ANA results. The researcher spoke to the deputy principal and finally to the principal and the chairperson of the governing body regarding her intention to use the school as a research site. After showing evidence of having applied for ethical clearance with the university and the Department of Education the researcher spoke to the participants. Teachers were willing to participate. After this consultation the researcher was then able to collect data. As Murray and Beglar (2009) point out, no study is perfect. Further limitations have been identified by the researcher after reflecting on the study.

Researching at a site where one is employed is sensitive and leads to high expectations. When these expectations are not met, this can lead to demotivation and it is difficult for the researcher to remain objective. The researcher is of the view that the study would have improved if completed at a site where the researcher is not familiar with the context and the participants. Using a site where the researcher is neutral and does not know the participants or the context would lead to greater triangulation and a clear understanding of the experiences of the participants. At this site the researcher was convinced that responses to interview questions were guarded and to the point. The researcher could sense that the participants did not want to over express themselves. Participants responded more positively than was expected due to the poor ANA results and that the school had just been placed as an “ICU” school that required greater intervention in order to improve teaching and learning so that learners’ assessment would improve. Government Notice 306 (2008) expects every learner in Grades Three, Six and Nine to perform at an acceptable level in languages and mathematics by 2014. The provincial education officials held meetings (during this study) with the school management teams in the district in which this school is located as a result of the poor ANA results. Principals were told that because learners in their schools were performing badly intensive intervention programmes were required to get learners performing at optimum level. The researcher was pleased that the participants were willing to reflect on their experiences.

3.5.1. Data production and collection

As distinct from a survey or historical research a case study can be undertaken using any or a multitude of data collection methods (Neuman, 2006). By using a variety of methods of data collection triangulation is achieved (Creswell, 1998). A true reflection of events or experiences is achieved. At this site school policy dictates that two level one teachers cannot be in the same classroom at one time. There is lack of trust and the management at this school is of the opinion that two level one educators in the same room will not be together for developmental or educational purposes and believe that teaching and learning will not occur if not supervised by a manager. This impacted negatively on the study as effective triangulation could not occur if observation of lessons did not take place. As a result of logistical issues, lack of time because IQMS was in progress at the school and there were preparations for a readathon program the researcher could not observe lessons taught by the participants. ‘Field notes’ were taken during

the data collection period in order to keep track of factors that may adversely influence the fieldwork (Mouton, 2001, p.107). Field notes in this research were limited to jotting down comments. Colleagues willingly gave input when they learned about the topic being researched.

Data was produced and collected through the medium of interviews. The interviews were also recorded and notes taken. An interview is a conversation between the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative interview was used to study experiences of the educators through their eyes. The data collection instrument was an in-depth interview using open-ended questions (Yin, 2003). In-depth interviews enable the researcher to get the complete opinion of the participant. To check that the interpretation is correct the researcher discusses the interpretations that are developed with the participants to determine if they are a true reflection of the participants experiences (Ezzy, 2002). Open-ended and probing questions give participants a chance to respond in their own words, rather than for them to answer from the researchers set of responses. The use of open-ended questioning is appropriate in this study because of the cordial relationship I have with my colleagues and the fact that colleagues are always willing to reflect and discuss issues which will lead to the improvement of teaching and development of educators. In-depth interviews set the stage for participants to express their ideas, views, experiences, conceptions and perceptions, as explained by Lofland and Lofland (1984). This study aims to obtain the true feelings and experiences of the participants during the teaching of languages.

Introductory interviews were concluded at the beginning of August in order to explain the research topic and to encourage participants to reflect on their experiences during the teaching of functional and creative writing. (See interview schedule, Appendix.D). This was also to discuss the concrete experience as indicated in the framework (Schon, 1987). Teachers gave tentative dates of when they would undertake their writing lesson within the following two weeks. A day before the lesson a second interview was undertaken to discuss the pre-lesson or framing and scaffolding taught in order to prepare learners for the lesson which would lead to the final interview. This interview was to discuss reflective practice by means of observation and analysis of their lessons. The pre-lesson would occur a week before learners would complete the writing activity. A final interview was conducted to ascertain if any experiences had changed as a result of reflection and teacher reasoning. The final interview was to determine the experiences of

abstract reconceptualisation and active experimentation (Schon, 1987). In total, the participants were interviewed three times during the months of August and September. Interviews were used to determine teachers' feelings and experiences about the teaching and learning of writing (Van Manen, 1994).

3.5.2. Data analysis

Data analysis includes organizing and making sense of data. Data is obtained from the participants. To make meaning of the data in this study, discourse analysis was utilized in this study. Henning (2004) explain that discourse analysis and content analysis have similarities and differences. Finding the meaning of data in both forms of analysis requires examining data and looking for appropriate themes through the medium of coding and categorizing. Rossman and Rallis, 1998, p.171) define coding "as the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information." With discourse analysis, however, the researcher looks for evidence to an assortment of meaning. Henning (2004, p.117) suggests "searching for a frame within which to place the actions, including the language actions or speech acts". Henning (2004) advises reading data recordings or field notes to, first, look for evidence of the language that the participants were using to make sense of their truth. The author (Henning, 2004) suggests reviewing data this time to highlight words or terms that clarify the conversation. Henning (2004, p.120) argues that even though authors may suggest that discourse analysis is not accurate the systemizing process has a basic structure. As a novice researcher I followed the suggestion of Henning (2004, p.121) and began by reading the field notes, identified the organization of markers or codes and finally composed the categories which will lead to my findings. While analyzing the discourse, consideration was made of the pattern of language and other data, e.g. the context of the participants, their conceptions, values and beliefs. Analysis addressed the experiences of educators. The analysis is presented as a narrative report with contextual descriptions and direct quotations from research participants (Yin, 2003). The data obtained via interviews was audio taped while important points were recorded in writing. Data was analyzed to assess whether teachers use their experiences to reflect on their teaching and professional development. Kolb (1984) expresses that learning incorporates all our stages in life; from this perspective the researcher has analysed the data. The researcher considered whether in the natural setting at school and in the classroom teachers are learning from the

experiences. Mishra and Koehler (2006) point out that the teachers must have content knowledge (CK) of the learning area. Teachers in this study should have knowledge of the facts, rules, theories and procedures of teaching language. This requires attention to the representation and formulation of concepts, pedagogical techniques knowledge of what makes concepts difficult or easy to learn, knowledge of students' prior knowledge and theories of epistemology". The data collected and analyzed should reveal the knowledge teachers have of teaching languages, the methods they use to teach languages and knowledge of students including prior knowledge and misconceptions.

3.5.3. Design limitations

A criticism of the case study methodology is that this research is incapable of providing a generalisation. This is a small-scale, in-depth study of educators' experiences in teaching writing at my institution. Writing down the answers of the interview would have been time consuming, which is why it was necessary to ask for permission to record the interview. The interview requires immediate notes and reflection thereafter so as to identify gaps when analyzing data.

3.5.4. Trustworthiness of the research

Trustworthiness was by honesty, mutual respect and objectivity, which are of paramount importance to the research (Maistry, 2008). In my study I used interviews and audio recording in order to contribute to the dependability of the research. Validity was ensured by reducing bias through identifying gaps in the interview via the recording and notes taken while interviewing.

3.5.5. Ethical issues

Ethical requirements were met by providing letters to the participants, the principal and the school governing body. I provided evidence of the letter sent to the Department of Education seeking permission to conduct the research. These letters advised the stakeholders about the confidentiality of the research and the anonymity of participants and the school. The participants were informed that the participation is voluntary. Interviews were conducted during break, nonteaching periods or after school so as not to intrude on teaching time. The following, from Vithal and Janssen (1997, pp.22-23), is a data collection table used to develop a data collection plan.

Questions for developing a data collection Plan	A data collection plan Critical Question .1.	A data collection plan Critical Question .2.
Why is the data being collected?	To understand experiences that teachers encounter when teaching writing	To determine challenges of teachers who teach functional and creative writing
What is the research strategy?	Interviews will be conducted to collect the required data	Interviews will be conducted to collect data
Who or (what) will be the sources of data?	The language teachers will be interviewed	The language teachers will be interviewed
How many of the data sources will be Assessed?	Three teachers of language at the school will be interviewed	Three teachers of language will be interviewed
Where is the data to be collected?	The three teachers will be interviewed at a primary school in Cato Manor	The three teachers will be interviewed at school
How often will data be collected?	The teachers will be interviewed on one occasion before collection of data for question two.	The teachers will be interviewed twice, once before and once after a writing lesson
How will the data be collected?	The data will be collected using open-ended interviews, recorded with an audio recorder	Data will be collected using open-ended interviews
Justify this plan for data collection. (Why is this the best way of collecting data for this critical research?)	The interviews will provide first hand experiences of the teachers and rich, descriptive data to understand participants' construction of knowledge and social reality. The three teachers are teachers of language at my school.	The interviews will be used to collect data on the challenges of teaching writing. This detailed account will be to explore contextual factors (challenges) which are relevant to the study. The lessons will not be observed

		because the researcher does not have leave available and internal policy at this school does not permit two level one teachers to be in one class at the same time.
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Vithal and Jansen (1997)

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter deliberated on the research methodology chosen by the researcher. The chapter began with a definition of the qualitative approach to research within an interpretive paradigm. A discussion on using a case study followed. The context of the study was given as well as the strategy for the selection of the participants was discussed. The data production and collection plan together with data analysis were included. Finally the design limitations including trustworthiness and ethical issues were mentioned. In the next chapter the data which was collected will be demonstrated and analyzed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter a data and collection plan, using a case study in an interpretive paradigm, was outlined. The aim of the study was to explore the experiences that educators' of language have when teaching functional and creative writing. The data presented in this study is developed from a case study of three educators of language at a primary school. It is necessary to add that the researcher is also a teacher of languages and the chairperson of the languages committee at the school. The researcher, therefore, has an understanding of the school environment, how the curriculum is implemented and the internal school policies. In this chapter information gathered from the in-depth interviews is presented. The chapter is organized in the following manner:

A description of the three participants is given (pseudonyms provided for confidentiality reasons). Secondly, the history and context of the school community is provided. Thirdly, the educators' experiences when teaching functional and creative writing is explained. The experiences after reflecting on their practice is cited and finally the educators' opinions on the NCS, teacher appraisal, professional development, the hidden curriculum and ways of improving literacy levels at the school are mentioned.

This study explores and describes the experiences of educators teaching functional and creative writing in the intermediate phase at the school. The study also explores the challenges faced which have an impact on the teaching of functional and creative writing.

4.2. A description of the three participants

Mrs. Cook is 55 years old. She was born in Overport. She is kind caring and always willing to share resources. She has been teaching for twenty two years as a full time teacher. She has broken service because of having to resign when her children were born. She has thirty years teaching experience. She has an Honours Degree with English as her major. Mrs. Cook teaches English Home language to grade four classes. She enjoys teaching English.

Mr. Young is 25 years old. He was born in Durban. He is reserved and prefers teaching technology rather than teaching languages. He has been teaching for three years. He has a Postgraduate degree which does not include English as a major. He is the teacher of language to the grade five classes.

Mrs. Van Skoen is 50 years old. She was born in Durban. She has been teaching for twenty-nine years. She is religious, a disciplinarian and manages the senior primary department capably in the absence of the senior management team. She also has an Honours Degree with English majors. She enjoys teaching English and Afrikaans.

4.3. The school community

This is a government school which functioned as a House of Delegates school during the apartheid era. Teaching and learning is undertaken through the medium of English. The school is situated in an area that has a rich history of political fights for the land. The land belonged to George Cato who later hired or sold plots to Indian market gardeners. By 1930 the land was also occupied by Africans who built informal settlements along the Umkhumbane River (Moorhouse and Wassermann, 2002). Moorhouse and Wassermann (2002) explain how the area moved from being declared an Indian Area to being a White area, to riots breaking out and finally to informal settlements being established in the early 1990's. This history serves to help educators understand some of the socio-economic factors which spill into the school environment. Teachers classroom are broken into. Classes are burnt and stationery is burnt or stolen. Copper pipes, window hinges, wash hand basins, etc. are stolen. The staffroom lacks appliances, cutlery and crockery as a result of numerous break-ins. The laboratory has been ransacked and media equipment which was housed in the library has been stolen.

The school has an enrolment of 791 learners with twenty-four educators. Five of the educators are the school management team (SMT) made up of two foundation phase heads of department in charge of nine teachers from grade R to grade 3. One head of department is responsible for ten teachers teaching grade four to grade seven (this is known as the senior primary phase because it is made up of the intermediate phase- Grades four to six- and the senior phase, Grade seven). The principal and the deputy principal together with the three heads of department make up the

SMT. The heads of department have the same work load as the level one educators in that they are also class teachers.

There is an authoritarian type of management with separate meetings being held for SMT made up of the heads of department, the deputy principal and the principal. Information from these meetings is cascaded to the level one educator's by means of separate foundation phase and senior primary phase meetings which are held twice a week. Any ideas, concerns, queries are then delivered to the principal and deputy principal via the head of department. A teacher cannot address the principal for personal or academic requests directly but must send this information through the head of department. The educators and SMT meet as a whole team approximately once a term. Interviews were conducted. Interview schedule included as Annexure E.

4.4. Participants positive experiences of teaching functional and creative writing

Mrs. Cook and Mr. Young stated that they teach learning outcome 4 (the teaching of functional and creative writing) once a month. Mr. Young said that teaching of writing was done over three days. Mrs. Van Skoen said she used one theme or topic in a three week cycle and that the writing skills were sometimes taught incidentally. The researcher asked them why they teach this way and the participants responded as follows:

Mrs. Cook: *“I teach according to the milestones and consider the different outcomes of comprehension, grammar and speaking”.*

Mr. Young: *“I follow the textbook and consider the needs of the learners. Some learners complete the activity and others take longer. Not all the learners are at the same level and progress at the same pace”.*

Mrs. Van Skoen: *“It is one of the requirements and is prescribed”.*

The researcher then asked participants to mention some positive experiences encountered when teaching functional and creative writing. Mrs. Cook said that learners were enthusiastic and enjoyed writing if given guidance but that not all learners think creatively. She said that the teacher had to guide the learners as they required a lot of assistance in grade four. She said that learners responded positively if they were told clearly what to do. She said that she began with

vocabulary exercises, provided pictures, used sentence construction and emphasized parts of speech that could be included in the activity.

Mr. Young said that there were not many positive experiences he could think about as this was his first year teaching languages and was getting to grips with the experience himself. He mentioned that many learners found it difficult to express themselves because of the language barrier and the socio-economic background from which the learners came. He believed that family background had a major impact on the learning and progress of learners.

Mrs. Van Skoen said that certain topics touched the lives of learners and that if the theme was on personal experiences than the learners were eager to share their experiences. They enjoyed writing journal entries. Some learners have exciting experiences they want to write about at grade seven. Types of writing she has taught are letters of absence from school, paragraph writing, writing a business letter and design of advertisements. She mentioned that when teaching designing of advertisements their creativity came out. Learners enjoyed doing this type of activity because it involved less words and more design. The responses to the discussion on positive experiences are as follows:

Mrs. Cook: “Learners are enthusiastic during the introductory lesson. They enjoy a discussion. The problem sets in when you ask them to attempt an individual writing task. They do not enjoy writing on their own but will gladly copy the example given by the teacher.”

Mr. Young: “There aren’t any positive experiences when teaching writing. Learners only write with prompting and questioning and the teacher puts the examples on the chalkboard.”

Mrs. Van Skoen: “Sometimes the topic touches the lives of the learner. They enjoy writing a diary entry or designing an advertisement. They need guidance with letter writing and persuasive or argumentative writing.”

The participants said that positive experiences included learners being involved and participating in the topic, giving examples and using every effort to write according to the guidelines given. A discussion on negative experiences was then undertaken.

4.5. Negative experiences and challenges faced by educators teaching writing

On the issue of negative experiences encountered when teaching writing the participants responded as follows:

Mrs. Cook: *“A handful is disruptive and do not listen. They disturb the lesson. I have to consider a form of punishment. I stop the lesson to counsel them and tell them that time wasted is never regained. Corporal punishment is against the law and I do not inflict pain or injury on the learners. Some of the learners respond to the lesson at hand. Learners do not like to think for themselves because they are used to being spoon-fed.”*

Mr. Young: *“There aren’t really any negative experiences but grade five learners only engage in the writing lesson after prompting and questioning. They respond favorably if the topic relates to their own situation and a variety of examples are given. Using posters and pictures enhances the lesson. I use questioning and give many examples. I also rely on peer teaching with those willing to go the extra mile without motivation helping those not willing to put effort into given activities.”*

Mrs. Van Skoen: *“Sometimes learners lack the ideas and vocabulary to write about topics because they do not read widely and cannot express themselves. I provide ideas and a list of vocabulary”.*

An issue which had become common was having learners from other classes and other grades in class when their educator was absent. The participants explained that when teachers are absent due to ill health, attending workshops or union meetings learners were divided amongst the educators at school. This resulted in a disruption to the normal lesson. It was difficult to teach the writing lesson as learners became reserved and would not contribute to the lesson if learners from other classes were seated in their class. It was sometimes difficult to cater for all the learners especially if they were from grade six and seven and the educator was teaching grade four or five learners. One participant said that she kept them occupied by giving them paper to draw or giving them a magazine to read so that they would not disrupt the class being taught. This was a challenge as some older learners enjoyed talking and disrupting lessons. One was thus forced to take time out to counsel these learners. Less time was thus available to teach the creative or functional writing lesson as the educator had planned.

The second participant said that there were not any unexpected circumstances to consider in two of the three classes he taught. There was a problem child in one of the classes who was repeating the grade. He was disruptive and would seek attention on numerous occasions. The participant was aware of the family background and the situation at home and would give him extra attention in order to get him not to disrupt the other learners. Poverty played a role in the issue of his unresponsive and poor performance. His behaviour had a ripple effect on the other learners. He sometimes stole from the other learners and required constant counseling and attention which was sometimes a problem as the participant did not want to appear to be favouring only one learner. This resulted on time being wasted to investigate the learner fighting with peers. The participant said that in this situation learners would be more interested in the fight than in a lesson on writing.

Another challenge was not having workbooks which the other grades had been given. Lack of resources like a radio, tape recorder, posters, computers, televisions and CD players also impacted on the opportunities that could enhance language lessons.

Educators had to constantly come up with innovative ideas of dealing with disruptive learners and the participant mentioned that she would ask questions of the disruptive learner in order to get them to take part in the lesson. At other times learners would be asked to pick up papers off the floor or collect textbooks or distribute books in order to distract them from the poor behaviour. The participant mentioned that these were negative experiences as they disturbed the flow of the lesson, wasted time and disturbed learners who were engrossed in the lesson taking place. Other negative experiences which the participants stressed were lack of readers and print rich materials, lack of security to make sure that resources which they bring to school would still be available for another lesson and the occasions when learners from other classes had to be housed in their classes. On the day of the lesson there were no major challenges reported by the participants.

4.6. The feelings of educators about working with the National Curriculum Statement

The researcher asked the participants to compare the traditional languages curriculum with the NCS languages policy. Participants were also required to comment on the effectiveness on the NCS with regards to improving literacy levels of the school and the country.

Mrs. Cook felt that with the traditional curriculum more learners grasped concepts and learnt than is the case with outcomes based education. She was of the opinion that standards have dropped drastically. Teachers taught step by step and began at the bottom by teaching phonics, spelling and reading and then moved on to sentences, paragraph writing and finally functional writing. Teaching reading was very important and learners were taught single sounds, then blends, then putting sounds together to pronounce words and make sentences. She believes that if learners can read and write comprehension skills improve and they write freely. Fewer and fewer learners are able to write freely or want to express themselves verbally or in writing. More was achieved in the past than in the present was the view expressed. Educators are sometimes so overwhelmed with issues of record keeping and other administrative tasks that little time is given to baseline assessments and moving from the known to the unknown in teaching and learning. Outcomes Based Education has not had a positive effect on literacy levels.

Mr. Young could not comment on the traditional curriculum and its impact on learners because he has only taught using the NCS and he is new to the teaching profession.

Mrs. Van Skoen expressed that what is required in the Foundations for Learning-guide is not practical in this school. Requirements for each learning outcome and assessment standard in the languages policy is much. She was of the opinion that it was not possible to reach all milestones in the foundations for learning as compared to the requirements of the traditional curriculum. With regards to the effectiveness of the NCS the participant felt this curriculum did not encourage reading widely. Some texts were beyond the levels of the learners because it was evident that when learners entered the intermediate phase they did not have phonetic and phonemic skills and many learners could not read or write sentences appropriate for grade four or five. The two older participants stated that they were looking forward to CAPS with the hope that there would be a move back to basics and the emphasis on reading, writing and arithmetic. The comments were as follows:

Mrs. Cook: “The NCS is not effective enough in comparison to the past system of education. Lots of ground work needs to be done in pre-primary and the foundation phase. What causes the problem? Primary educators don’t give learners proper grounding. Learners are passed onto the next grade with little or no reading skills or writing skills. There are also too many assessments and too little time to teach basic skills.”

Mr. Young: “I cannot comment as I have only taught using the NCS.”

Mrs. Van Skoen: “What is required in the foundations for learning is not practical in this school. The learners progress to the intermediate phase with very little speaking, reading or writing skills. Phonological awareness which is a skill required in the learning of reading and spelling is not taught in the foundation phase resulting in learners who cannot read or write simple sentences. It is difficult to teach learners to write complex sentences and one has to go back to teaching phonics in the intermediate phase. The requirements given for each the learning outcome is too much thereafter and one cannot complete teaching the skills necessary at the level of the intermediate phase.”

4.7. Educators providing learning experiences

Mrs. Cook said she was planning for a creative writing lesson. The learners would be seated in pairs as is usually the case and each learner would be working individually. Mrs. Cook explained that very rarely were group discussions planned for this kind of activity at grade four level because learners needed lots of guidance and were sometimes afraid to express themselves for fear of being teased since the learners could not speak English fluently. Also learners lost interest in group discussion because the same learners would lead the discussion and others in the group would sit quietly and not take part in the activity. For the lesson the chalkboard and the Language workbooks recently provided by the D.O.E would be used. Mrs. Cook was full of praise for the workbooks which she felt were well designed, colourful and highly interactive for use by the learners. On the issue of unexpected circumstances, Mrs. Cook mentioned that the workbooks were on current affairs and folk tales with morals which resulted in opportunities to promote gender equity and “Ubuntu”.

Mr. Young was going to get the grade five learners to write one paragraph for a shorter creative writing activity. The previous topic was on ‘My school’. This time learners would write about ‘My pet’. The participant said he would use pictures and the chalkboard. He would use a mind-map and ask prompting questions on ideas to be included in the paragraph. Learners would be seated in rows with a whole class discussion. Thereafter learners would work individually and write in their personal capacity about their pet.

Grade five learners were not provided with D.O.E. workbooks even though grade four and six learners had these workbooks. Mrs. Van Skoen would be having a functional writing lesson. Resources would include the textbook, study guide and a chart. Learners would be seated in rows as they usually are.

The researcher discussed the importance of reflecting on the lessons and even the behaviour of the learners. The researcher asked for the lessons to be recorded. The researcher explained to the participants that at the final interview there would be questions on experiences that occurred during teaching of creative or functional writing. There would be a discussion on the how the experiences of the teaching and learning were after reflection and changing strategies in order to overcome some of the negative experiences. The participants were asked to consider some suggestions of how functional and creative writing lessons could be taught in order to improve literacy levels at the school and to improve the confidence of learners when expressing themselves in writing.

Educators responded as follows when asked about providing the reflection of the lesson taught after having had two interviews with the researcher. **Mrs. Cook:** *“There was a slight improvement as I began the lesson by reading a story with a good moral lesson. They had to listen attentively because the learners were told they had to mention what they had learnt from the story.”* **Mr. Young:** *“Learners were being prepared to write a paragraph on MY PET and after prompting there was more feedback and better ideas for the mind-map on the board.”* **Mrs. Van Skoen:** *“The experience was different because of our discussion and the fact that the subject advisor had come to the school and provided information which showed me how to address the policy documents and make meaning of them. I realized that there is a vast array of assessments for creative and functional writing. I chose to teach them how to write a business letter because it is practical and this activity would prepare them for their own lives and to apply for jobs when they complete studying. The lessons have become fun and at this latter part of grade seven learners have matured in their thinking and respond more readily.”*

During the two months of research the school management team was asked to attend a meeting held by the minister of education in Kwazulu Natal, Mr.Senzo Mchunu and other departmental officials. A report back of this meeting showed that certain principals had been named and shamed as leading schools that were performing poorly. The phrase used by the head of

department of the senior primary phase was that certain schools were called 'ICU' schools and that this school fell into that category. This meant that the school was critically not performing at the optimum level. This label had been obtained by certain schools because of the poor ANA results. Was this criterion, "poor performance in the Annual National Assessment", sufficient enough to label schools in this manner? This prompted the researcher to ask the participants to give their views on the appraisal system and professional development of teachers. Appraisal and development of educators were also experiences which teachers had to undergo. The final request to the participants was for suggestions of how educators at the school could assist in getting the school out of the 'ICU' situation. It was reported that departmental officials, dealing with ANA, would be visiting the school. Every educator at the school was required to have a library corner. The participants considered this "window dressing." Two educators' who had an additional eighteen learners each, as their teacher had left the school, queried where they were to place the library table. No clear answer was given but it was expected of the educators to add an extra table in classrooms that were already full to capacity.

4.8. Participants as reflective practitioners

Towards the end of the research, the participants were beginning to question, reflect and comment on experiences confidently in the staffroom and in the English committee meetings. The following are inputs provided after reflecting on experiences as well as the teaching and learning process at the institution in general.

4.8.1. The present curriculum

The participants were all of the opinion that the NCS had resulted in stumbling blocks and that literacy and numeracy levels had dropped as a result of the implementation of the new curriculum. Participants expressed the following view. Information was cascaded to those educators who were selected to attend workshops and meetings. They reported back to the staff at a meeting but sometimes the handouts and documents were not available for perusal at the leisure of the colleagues which resulted in valuable information not reaching all staff members. What became apparent was that participants felt that if they taught the same grade and the same learning areas every year the teaching and learning experiences, for themselves and the learners, would have resulted in learners producing better results. This was because they would attend the

meetings and received the information first hand. The participants expressed the view that reflection did not bring about change and improvement in a month or two. As one was learning to master the skills of teaching a certain learning area and noting strategies for improvement one was delegated to teach another learning area the following year at this institution. Mr. Young, for example, was only shown an assessment guideline in August which was given to the school in previous years. The participant only became aware of the document after the senior phase educator of languages, who was also one of the participants, gave her report back on a meeting with the subject advisor. It was expressed that his experiences for this year would have been more enhanced with the use of the guidelines. He said, "If I was aware of these guidelines I would not have stuck so diligently to following only what was given in the textbook. Let's hope I teach technology next year." The participant was hopeful that he would not be teaching languages in the coming year. The two experienced participants felt learners achieved more with the traditional curriculum and are hopeful that with the introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), in 2012 for the foundation phase and 2013 for the intermediate phase, education would be moving back to basics.

4.8.2. Teacher appraisal

Mrs. Cook said the appraisal and I.Q.M.S. was to allow teachers to strengthen their weakness and to develop in all roles of an educator. Mr. Young was of the opinion that a once off visit could not clearly show what kind of educator one was. Secondly he felt that learners of that classroom could be having a good or a bad day and this was not a true reflection of what occurred the whole year. Finally, he also stated that it was natural for a human to want to impress on a certain occasion especially if it meant getting a good score for monetary gain. Mrs. Van Skoen was of a similar view. This participant said that this was not a true reflection of the teacher or the lesson. The participant also felt that this was not for development as one would go out of the way to prepare and shine for that lesson. At this institution, the participant stated, a peer and the H.O.D. visited the class and observed a lesson for about an hour every year. The participant felt that for development purposes, the visits should be ongoing with the principal and the deputy principal spending time in the classroom and providing constructive input. The participant felt that this would lead to less discipline problems by the one or two delinquents in each class.

4.8.3. Professional Development

All three participants felt that professional development should be ongoing and should not only be provided by the department but be from the initiative of the educator. Mrs. Cook said that professional development built confidence. The participant said that there were always new methods and content to be learnt. Technology was always changing and teachers had to keep up to date by reading and researching extensively in order to provide for the bright learners and also give enriching experiences to the rest of the learners.

Mr. Young said that educators needed to be advanced in order to cope with the teaching and learning experiences. The participant was of the opinion that educators must use technology to keep up to date with current trends, attend workshops and read widely.

Mrs. Van Skoen said that professional development must be ongoing. One must not study only for monetary gain. The participant said that with the curriculum constantly changing it was imperative to not only attend workshops but to study further. The participant also spoke extensively on cluster meetings. In 2009 the participant attended grade seven cluster meetings. These meetings were beneficial to the participant and her colleagues because the learners at all the school wrote a standardized paper that had been written in collaboration with all teachers from different schools in the cluster. At these meetings there was a sharing of ideas and learners from the various schools were working at the same level. This was also a platform for educators to grow from the ideas shared at these meetings. In 2010 the participant did not teach grade seven. On querying about the cluster meetings from the colleague teaching grade seven, she was informed that the colleague had not been invited to one cluster meeting. In 2011 the participant is again teaching grade seven and has not been to a cluster meeting. The participant was concerned that good initiatives were introduced and not followed through.

The researcher asked the participants if they had suggestions of how to get the school out of 'ICU' since the department of education officials had commented this as a result of the poor Annual National Assessment performance by the learners at this institution. The participants gave comments, based on their experiences at this institution, of ways of improving the teaching and learning process and how all members of staff could benefit from teamwork and

collaboration using reflective practice in order for development of all staff members. These suggestions will be highlighted in the final chapter on findings and recommendations.

4.9. Conclusions

A description of the participants, their context, their experiences while teaching functional and creative writing and their opinions on professional development and teacher appraisal was provided. The data presented the challenges faced in the quest to improve literacy levels in order to improve the ANA results. The following chapter will provide a summary of findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter reported on the process of collecting and analysing the data. The responses of the participants were arranged into themes which were guided by the research questions. The first critical question is what are the experiences of educators when teaching functional and creative writing? The second question is what are the challenges faced by teachers when teaching functional and creative writing? This chapter sets out the central arguments that have developed in the study. In addition recommendations are developed based on the findings. Areas in which further research can be conducted are identified. The following discussion is based on the findings and recommendations of these findings.

5.2. Summary of findings and recommendations

Effective teaching and learning, according to James and Pollard (2006), require the teachers to scaffold learning by providing intellectual, emotional and social support so that as learners grow and mature and the scaffolds are removed learners are confident in their learning. Language is a learning area that provides an appropriate opportunity to teach by means of scaffolding. This learning area, especially during the teaching of functional and creative writing, provides a variety of opportunities for the active engagement of learners in order to grow intellectually, emotionally and socially. As James and Pollard (2006) explain, in order to promote learning and success of learners during their assessments the following aspects are central: high quality teaching and learning which include, the classroom process followed by the teachers roles, values, knowledge, skills and then teachers professional development, the school structures and cultures and finally national policy (p.5). Further, a change in one aspect has a ripple effect on the other aspects. These five aspects have an impact on the experiences of educators during the teaching and learning experiences.

Firstly, participants mentioned that learners cannot express themselves in writing. A reason for this could be that the medium of the language of instruction at Klesper Primary is English. Many of the learners, however, live in the surrounding informal settlement or come from the township of Chesterville where the home language is either isiZulu or isiXhosa. This could be a challenge for educators because as Mgqwashu (2007) points out the process approach and the OBE principle of integration of learning outcomes as advocated in the NCS may not work for certain cultures like the Zulu or Xhosa because oral stories are of more importance than written language. Oral stories have been retold to children for generations and there are no books in the homes of learners from certain socio-economic backgrounds. There is no print rich material in these homes and learners are encouraged to listen rather than to write. This results in barriers of learning in the classroom. Learners listen to stories at home spoken in isiZulu whereas the language of teaching and learning is English and learners are required to communicate in English. Probyn (2006) reinforces the idea that there is a barrier to the learner's understanding, if the language of learning and teaching is different to the learner's home language. Educators were required to ensure that learners were given more practice in this type of activity, which is functional or creative writing. Participants expressed the view that learners cannot express themselves in written work and only complete activities where they are required to copy tasks given. Results of the ANA at the school for languages were between 18% and 23%. The results of the country according to the minister of education (Curriculum News, 2011) were disappointing. Results of this institution are thus similar to results of learners in the country. Literacy levels are not at an acceptable level (Curriculum News, 2011).

A recommendation that could assist learners to have confidence in writing tasks could be for the educator to model the stages of the writing process by beginning with an example of the writing activity whether it is a functional writing lesson. In this case by reading a letter, diary entry or advertisement to the learners, the educator will be introducing the class to the style and format of functional writing thus modelling this form of writing and by asking questions on this sort of text achieve learning outcomes one and two which is listening and speaking. The educator uses scaffolding and these frameworks of functional texts to support the learner (See example- Annexure E., D.O.E. 2011, Rainbow workbooks pp.81-83). Thereafter guidance of how to plan similar texts with the help of mind-maps is introduced. Guidance of how to draft, revise and edit texts must also be stressed to the learners. Educators using these steps of pre-writing, composing,

revising and editing as advised in the NCS (2002) languages policy documents and the process writing approach will find that learners gain confidence and the will to express themselves. These steps are also recommended by Morris (2009), Jibowo (2009) and Duruamaku-Dim (2006). The intervention of the department of education to provide workbooks is an excellent idea as these books are rich with information and examples of all types of creative and functional writing.

A second finding of this study shows that educators do not integrate the learning outcomes. A statement on the release of the ANA results by the Minister of Basic Education in South Africa (2011) reports that results show that learners struggle with tasks related to writing and language use. The English home language policy document (2002) emphasises that the outcomes of listening, speaking, reading, reasoning and grammar should be integrated when taught or assessed. If learners are being taught story writing, a cycle of lessons should begin with learners listening to a fairytale or folktale. Another story should be used for reading and viewing. Language exercises based on these stories should be undertaken. During this cycle learners attention should be brought to the structures, style and writing of these stories. Finally learners can be encouraged to design and create a new text of the same kind. Participants did not mention integration but seem to teach the learning outcome of writing in isolation from the other five learning outcomes.

A recommendation is for teachers to integrate learning outcomes. Also teachers in the other learning areas could be encouraged to teach language across the curriculum by encouraging learners to write their investigative reports or dialogues of interviews in any learning area in an acceptable manner and make learners aware of the link between the tasks with the writing of English. Language development should be at the forefront of the teaching of educators of all learning areas (Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and Training, 1997). Language is how educators provide teaching and assessment and since learners come from different cultures and backgrounds it should be concentrated on at all times. Sufficient time should be given to teaching and linking all the learning outcomes for language especially reading and writing.

A third finding is that learners enjoy writing if given the opportunity to copy work from a text or what the teacher has written on the chalkboard. A recommendation is for grade four educators to

begin early in the first term encouraging learners to design and use mind-maps for their pre-writing stage. Learners should be assessed to note how well they construct simple and complex sentences and whether they can write simple paragraphs. Beginning with creative writing and then moving onto functional writing will build learners self esteem and soon they could learn to write their own texts instead of copying texts. While teaching functional and creative writing educators should teach and stress the general rules which form the various types of writing (Bayat, 2002). A recommendation for all teachers of English is to use a variety of approaches when teaching functional and creative writing. Using the creative writing approach will encourage learners to note what they see, hear, smell, taste and touch and when in the classroom they can use their imagination of these feelings to express themselves using creative effort and artistic performance (Harper, 2006). However Santangelo and Olinghouse (2009) suggest using both the process writing approach and the cognitive approach. Educators should use the approach that best suits the activity and the group of learners being taught.

A fourth finding is that the curriculum is wide and the milestones are too many. The participants felt that the curriculum did not encourage reading widely. The participants felt that if more effort was put into reading in the foundation phase learners would be able to express themselves more adequately in writing in the intermediate phase. The participants that teach grade four and five teach only creative writing. As a result of not being able to read, participants expressed that learners find it difficult to construct sentences. The languages assessment guidelines (2007, p32) provides a long list of possible types of functional (letters, reports, posters, slogans, jingles, etc) and creative writing tasks that can be taught to achieve learning outcome 4.

A recommendation is to use various methods, strategies and approaches to teach English. The literature reveals that there are various methods, approaches and strategies that can be used for the teaching of English, especially to learners whose home language is not English. Prosser and Trigwell (1999) and Samuelowicz and Bain (2001) stress that the context and the compelling attributes of the teaching and learning process are factors which result in an educator using a certain approach to the teaching of functional and creative writing. Also, depending on the beliefs of the educator, one may embark on the learner-centred approach or the teacher-centred approach, or a combination of the two approaches, to prompt learners to achieve certain outcomes. The literature reviewed also shows that English competency, especially writing, is

necessary for a variety of purposes, including its role as a skill used for social communication and as a way of carrying out assessment in education (Cameron& Besser, 2004). Writing skills are necessary to manage one's knowledge and for lifelong learning. Participants stated that they teach functional or creative writing once a month or in a three week cycle. The NCS Assessment Guidelines (p.32) clearly state that whether teaching learning outcomes one and two or learning outcome three, learning outcomes four to six must be the supporting outcomes. This means that all six learning outcomes should be integrated when taught and assessed. Outcomes should not be taught in isolation but should be referred to if the need arises. It is therefore necessary to refer to functional and creative writing even when one is teaching on listening and speaking or responding to texts. All learning outcomes must be integrated to give learners a full picture of their learning. Educators should be encouraged in their learning area committee meetings to interrogate the assessment guidelines and NCS policy documents to improve their experiences in the teaching and learning process. This will assist in addressing the necessary milestones as required in the policy documents. Foundation phase educators should also be included in learning area meetings in order to understand what is expected of learners in the intermediate phase. Educators in grade four would also be aware of the level at which grade three learners' work and a consensus could be reached on how to improve standards.

A fifth finding was that learners enjoyed writing about topics that touched their lives. In the present study participants reflected on their experiences during the teaching and learning of functional and creative writing. They expressed the view that learners in the Intermediate Phase require a great deal of coaching, need a lot of guiding and are only competent when writing about their own experiences.

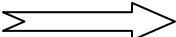
A recommendation was to provide tasks based on what learners are familiar with and then move to the unknown. Educators in this study were asked to reflect on their teaching and also asked to give input on ways of getting the learners to improve in writing tasks. The participants acknowledged that more writing tasks were needed in the teaching and learning process. Participants realized that they should use a variety of examples and not only teach creative writing where learners only wrote paragraphs. Participants reflected that insufficient time was given to teaching functional writing in Grades Three, Four and Five. They said that they would use more examples based on past ANA assessments and they would familiarize learners on how

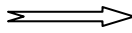
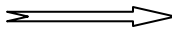
to follow instructions. Also educators participating in the study were of the opinion that at this institution teachers with a passion for languages and those with the appropriate specialization in the field of languages should be the ones teaching English.

A sixth finding of this study was that the school was not performing at an optimum level. Participants felt that this was because of an ineffective management and leadership at the school. Participants also stated that the context or outside classroom activities impacted on their experiences. An example given was that when teachers are absent, either to attend workshops or union meetings or teachers are ill or in hospital, learners are divided and sent into different classrooms. This results in educators having to supervise a variety of grades in a day and also coping with the teaching and learning process of the grade that they are teaching. This impacted negatively on the teaching of language as the educators' attention is not only on the learners of their own class. Time that could have been used teaching a writing lesson is spent on catering for the needs of the learners that are divided into the classroom. This sometimes led to discipline problems. Also, participants felt that teamwork and whole school participation in learning area meetings and workshops were lacking. Participants were of the opinion that if there was a closer working relationship between the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase educators there would be improvement in the teaching and learning of languages at this institution. It was evident that educators work in isolation in that learning area and phase meetings are held separately for foundation and senior primary meetings. Grade three educators will, therefore, not know what assessment standards to prepare the learners for in order for the learners to cope in grade four.

A recommendation is that more interaction between phases, on issues of language teaching, would assist in getting learners to perform at their optimum level with regards to writing for functional or creative purposes. A further recommendation is working as a team to find ways of catering for learners who do not have an educator. Participants mentioned that meetings for intermediate and Foundation Phase educators were always held separately. Scheduled meetings are necessary for teambuilding and to collaborate on how to improve learner performance and the teaching experiences. Meetings could be held for careful interaction of policy documents so that all staff members understand exactly what is required for high quality teaching and learning especially for languages and mathematics. Teambuilding exercises could be in the form of

activities, games or role-play where experiences are discussed and opinions are given on how to work on negative experiences in order to improve teaching and learning. This will lead to a united staff whose goal is improving both teaching and learning experiences of educators and learners alike. Working together and collaborating produces learners who achieve at an outstanding level (Ferguson, 2006). Educators in each grade need to be aware at what level the previous educator worked at in order to determine the assessment standards that have been achieved and also to understand the levels that the learners are at in order to provide appropriate intervention strategies. Also teamwork leads to valuable advice of strategies that work and those that may be problematic for certain learners. Working with today's learners who are so diverse can only lead to positive experiences if groups of teachers work together as a team (Ferguson, 2006).

Most importantly language committee meetings should be based on critical reflection of experiences as emphasised in experiential learning theory. As Schon (1987) explains in order to be more skilful an educator should reflect on the concrete experience (writing lesson), the analysis of the lesson, the intervention that will be initiated for the improvement and the lesson that is undertaken as a result of the intervention (Concrete experience 

Observation analysis  Abstract reconceptualisation 

Active experimentation). The researcher identified that participant's spoke about their concrete experience and observation and analysis but did not bring in the abstract reconceptualisation or observation and analysis. The participants identified, after assessment, that learners cannot write and do not like to write. They did not, however, offer any suggestions of critical reflection. The reflection was based on experiences in the context and less on the teaching of functional and creative writing. The perception that the researcher obtained was that participants did not consider that they could change the situation of the lack of acceptable functional and creative writing skills. The suggestion by the participants was for improved guidelines from the department of education. A call for more resources was suggested.

A recommendation is for reflection of the lesson. Intervention in the form of improving teaching practice by using varied teaching strategies to cater for the needs of all the learners. Followed by cycles of further reflection until all learners achieve basic outcomes.

The final finding was insufficient workbooks available for all learners. The department of education provided ‘Rainbow series workbooks for Language and Mathematics’ (2011) this year as an intervention that would improve the ANA results. The participants and the researcher found these workbooks to be well designed, learner friendly and an appropriate intervention which could improve language and mathematics results. Grade four and six learners each received a workbook for the first term. There were insufficient books in the third and fourth term. The workbooks only arrived in the fourth term. Grade five learners did not benefit from these books and insufficient books were sent to the school for this grade.

The recommendation is that workbooks are available for all learners at the beginning of the year. Educators would not require many resources if all learners had these books as they are interactive, colourful and encourage learners to work independently because they are carefully designed with step-by-step easy to understand instructions and cover the foundations for learning milestones effectively (See examples in Annexure E). The grade six learners even completed homework tasks when asked to do activities from the workbooks. The learners would perform much better in the ANA if every learner had access to these workbooks.

5.3. Suggestions for further research

Educators have a variety of experiences in the teaching and learning of languages. The researcher is of the opinion that constant self evaluation and reflective practice in the form of collaboration, keeping up to date with current information and policy documents leads to professional development and effective teaching and learning. Secondly, more guidance on reflection could be provided in the policy document. If not in the policy document, the department of education should provide a magazine or journal with constant feedback of policy and other educational issues which educators could peruse at their leisure. Finally, if all the learning is based on the way educators acknowledge their experiences (Kolb, 1984) whether it is through concrete experience, or abstract conceptualisation, reflective observation or active experimentation educators could use these experiences for improved teaching and learning of functional and creative writing. This study of the experiences of educators teaching functional and creative writing gave participants an opportunity to reflect on their practice.

The researcher was impressed with the enthusiasm and willingness of the participants to give their views and opinions of the teaching of functional and creative practice. Reflection about the practice has been evident in the staffroom and in the senior primary phase meetings after the study. This has resulted in the building and developing of capacities to think and to have discussions on professional experiences. Reflective practice is an effective technique for learning from experiences in the natural setting, which is the classroom (Ferraro, 2000). There is evidence of adult learning and professional learning in that the researcher has also been in the process of self learning as a result of the experiences during the study. Participants did mention that professional development should be the responsibility of the educator but did not mention that they would be undertaking any professional development outside the school with regard to teaching writing skills to the learners. Deeper research into the reflective practice of educators is required together with positive intervention from the department of education officials which will result in learners achieving the acceptable results expected.

5.4. Conclusion

The purpose of the research was to explore the experiences of educators teaching functional and creative writing. The study explored challenges that educators faced. This study was as a result of the poor ANA results that were achieved by the learners in 2011. The experiences of the educators were explored to assist language committee of this institution to use these findings and recommendations to work towards improving the ANA results. The National Curriculum Statement and the requirements for teaching of language were reviewed. Literature on approaches to teaching creative and functional writing was examined. Literature on the value of teaching writing was reviewed.

This research was a case study using an interpretive approach to interview participants. The study found that educators teach learners who cannot express themselves in writing because of language barriers and the lack of appropriate reading skills. The findings show that experiences of educators are impacted upon because of changes in policy and the context and culture of the school. Lack of resources and departmental workbooks not arriving on time and being available for all learners impacted on the teaching and learning experience. The school was not performing at the optimum level as noted by department officials after examining the ANA results.

The languages committee can use the recommendations given to provide workshops for development of the educators. The educators can use reflective practice to find strategies to improve ANA results in languages. In conclusion, with collaboration, teamwork and constant interrogation of the policy documents, educators can work towards improving the ANA results since participants indicated that learners were enthusiastic and enjoyed writing and were eager to share their experiences if given guidance.

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Appendix. A. (Principal and participants)

**LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH:
PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

12 Kildonan Close
Mayville
4091
30 May 2011

The Principal

Mr.
..... Primary School
..... Rd
Mayville
4091

Dear Sir

Permission to conduct research

I, Mrs. V.D.Pillay, am currently completing my Masters of Education degree at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (Edgewood campus). The research topic: **Senior primary school educators' experiences of teaching functional and creative writing- A case study in a primary school in Kwa-Zulu Natal.** The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of educators when teaching functional and creative writing. Critical reflection is an important aspect of teaching and learning. The study will explore the experiences of the educators of language in order for reflection of the experiences and challenges to result in identifying the value of teaching functional and creative writing.

The study will involve interviews with the three educators who teach English in the senior primary phase. The educators will be interviewed during break or after school hours at the convenience of the interviewee.

I wish to reassure you of the following:-

- No educator will be identifiable in any way from the research results;
- Participation will be voluntary;
- The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants will be respected and ensured;
- The institution will not be identifiable by name in the research results;
- A synopsis of the most important findings and recommendations will be forwarded to your school.

I trust that my request will be favourably considered.

Thanking you

.....

V.D.Pillay

Appendix. B.

**LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH:
PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY**

12 Kildonan Close
Mayville
4091
25 May 2011

The Chairperson
Mr.....
..... Primary School
..... Rd
Mayville
4091

Dear Sir

Permission to conduct research

I, Mrs.V.D.Pillay, am currently completing my Masters of Education degree at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (Edgewood campus). The research topic: **Senior primary school educators' experiences of teaching functional and creative writing- A case study in a primary school in Kwa-Zulu Natal.** The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of educators when teaching functional and creative writing. Critical reflection is an important aspect of teaching and learning. The study will explore the experiences of the educators of language in order for reflection of the experiences and challenges to result in identifying the value of teaching functional and creative writing.

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- No educator will be identifiable in any way from the research results;
- Participation will be voluntary;
- The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants will be respected and ensured;
- The institution will not be identifiable by name in the research results;
- A synopsis of the most important findings and recommendations will be forwarded to your school.

I trust that my request will be favourably considered.

Thanking you

.....

V.D.Pillay

Chairperson:.....

.....

School stamp

Appendix. C.

LETTER OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT

I agree to the researcher, Mrs. V.D.Pillay, interviewing me for the research project. I have a copy of the letter to the principal for permission to conduct the research at the school.

I understand that:

- My participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any time
- As a participant in the research my anonymity will be respected
- All discussions will be treated with the utmost confidentiality

.....
Participants name	Signature	Date

.....
Researchers' signature	

Appendix. D.

Interview questions

Introductory interview (First interview with participants)

1. What year did you qualify as an educator and for how long are you teaching languages?
2. What qualifications do you have to teach languages?
3. How often do you teach LO 4 (learning outcome 4-functional and creative writing)?
4. Explain why you teach this way?
5. Mention the positive experiences that you encounter when teaching functional of creative writing.
6. Do you encounter any negative experiences? If so how do you deal with these?
7. What comments or inputs do you have about the languages curriculum in the foundations for learning? (Compare NCS and the traditional curriculum)
8. How effective do you think the curriculum is with regards to improving literacy levels of the country?
9. Could you reflect on your last writing lesson, consider ways to improve the teaching and learning experience and prepare for another interview so that I may get an idea of how you will plan for the next writing lesson?

Interview before writing lesson (Second interview)

1. Will the lesson be a functional or creative writing lesson?
2. List the resources you will use
3. How will the classroom be arranged in order to make the atmosphere conducive to the teaching of a writing lesson?
4. Have you made provision for unexpected circumstances? What could these be? (Hidden Curriculum) Do you examine texts and topics to check for sexism etc.
5. Could these be regarded as negative challenges? Are there any other negative challenges you would like to bring to my attention since our last interview?

We will reflect on negative experiences or challenges at the final interview and determine if there are ways of overcoming some of the negative experiences in order to improve the teaching and learning experience and literacy levels at the school.

Interview after the writing lesson (Third and final interview)

1. Was the teaching and learning experience the same or different since our two previous interviews and reflection of the teaching of functional and creative writing?
2. Mention the positive experiences.
3. Were there any negative challenges? If so, how did you deal with them?
4. Do you have suggestions of how we can teach functional and creative writing lessons in order to improve the literacy levels at our school and also improve the confidence of learners when expressing themselves in writing?
5. What is your view on the appraisal (I.Q.M.S) in general and how it is undertaken at this institution. Does it I.Q.M.S. benefit the teaching and learning process in anyway? Why/Why not?
6. What are your suggestions for the improvement of the ANA results in Languages?
7. What are your views on professional development and how this could help improve the ANA results?

Thank-you for your time and patience.

Appendix. E. on next pages taken from Department of education workbook grade.6. (2011).

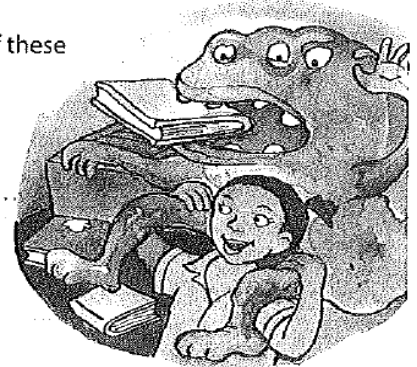


In my diary



Let's write

Write imaginary diary entries to go with each of these pictures. You must imagine you are the person in each of the pictures and say what happened. We have started each diary entry for you.

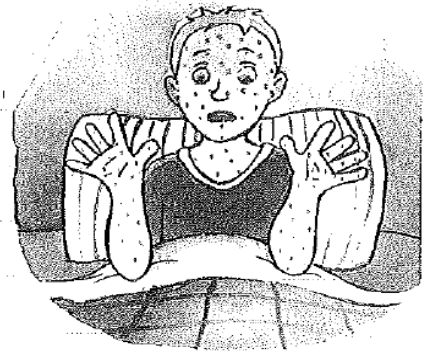


Dear Diary

Today a monster came into the library and began to eat the books. I was very brave and I ...

Dear Diary

I woke up this morning and I was covered in spots. I thought I had chicken pox and so I ...





Dear Diary

Yesterday I visited my cousin. I climbed the peach tree to pick fruit. As I was sitting on the branch I heard a crack ...



Dear Diary

Yesterday I was herding my father's sheep and goats. One goat was missing. I eventually found the goat. It had climbed into a tree ...





Date _____



Term 3 – Week 4

Sipho writes a CV



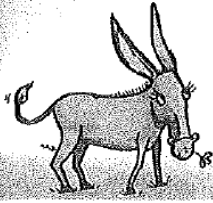
Let's read

Take a look at Sipho's CV.

What is a CV?
 "CV" is short for curriculum vitae, which means your life path.
 People might ask you for a CV when you apply for a job or a place at a school or university. It gives personal information as well as information about your education and work experience. It also says what your hobbies and interests are.

Name	Sipho Dladla
Date of birth	21 March 2002
Address	24 Tambo Road, Green Village, Bluetown 9876
Telephone	010 0000000
School	Greenhill Primary
Grade	Grade 6
Hobbies	Playing soccer for the school team Playing soccer for the community club Reading Swimming Computer games
References: Names of two people who know me	
1	My teacher Mrs A Sibalala Grade 4 teacher Green Village Primary School Tambo Road Tel: 000 123 4567
2	My soccer coach Mr J Smith Bluetown Soccer Club First Avenue Bluetown Tel: 000 765 4321





Let's write

Now that you have read Sipho's CV, answer these questions.

Where does Sipho live?

What is his phone number?

What school does he go to?

What grade is he in?

What are his hobbies?

Which soccer club does Sipho belong to?

Which two people will give Sipho a reference?



Let's write

Write a CV for yourself. Fill in your information in this CV.

CV for _____

Full name	
Date of birth	
Address	
Telephone	
School	
Grade	
Hobbies	
References: Names of two people who know me	
1	
2	



TEACHER'S

Signature: _____

Date: _____



Date _____

Term 3 - Week 4

Write your own story

Plan to write a story or a fairy-tale. First fill in your ideas on this mind map. Then use the mind map in writing your story on the next page.



Who are the characters?

What is the plot?



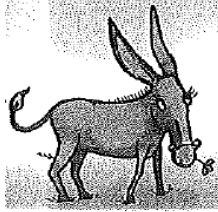
What is the title of your story?

What is the setting?

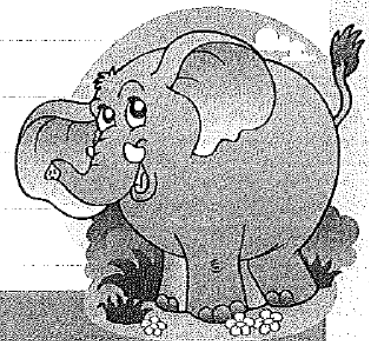
What happens first?

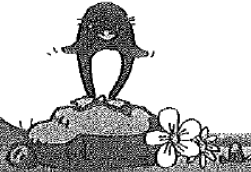
What happens next?

What happens in the end?



A large rectangular area with horizontal dashed lines, intended for writing.





Date _____

Term 3 – Week 5



A holiday letter

Hi Dan

Wow! I was so lucky that I could go to Cape Town with my cousins for the July school holidays. We left on 12 July and arrived the next day. It was fun to be on the train. We slept in a cabin and I had the top bunk!

When we arrived in Cape Town, the first thing I saw was Table Mountain with its covering of frothy white clouds. The mountain was more magnificent than I ever expected it to be.

Look at all the photos I am sending.

On our second day, we went to Robben Island. We travelled to the island by boat. There we saw the cell that Nelson Mandela was in – for 18 years! We saw lots of penguins and rocks on the island.

On the third day we saw the penguins again. This time on a beach called Boulder's Beach. There we also saw some Cape fur seals. There is a project in Cape Town to protect the seals because they are near extinction. The project also cares for the penguins.

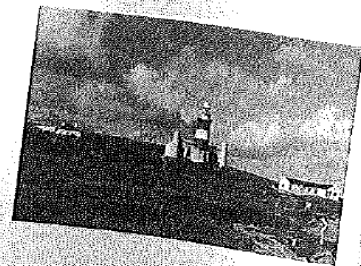
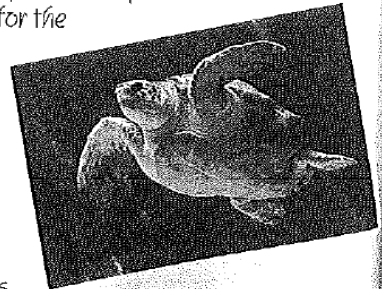
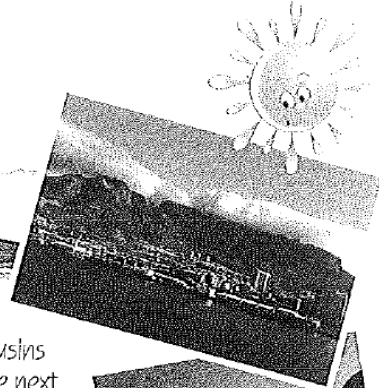
On the fourth day, we stood at the tip of Africa, at Cape Point, where the two oceans meet. This is where the cold water of the Atlantic Ocean meets the warm currents of the Indian Ocean.

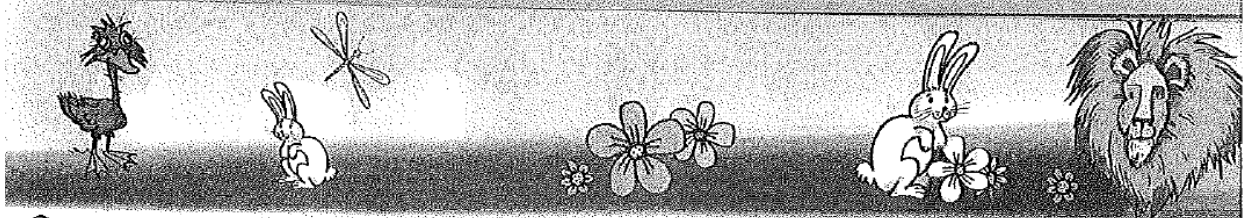
On my fifth day, the last day, we went to see sea creatures in the Two Oceans Aquarium. That was so cool! I have never been so close to a shark before! There was only a pane of glass between us, and they were not shy to show us how many rows of teeth they had. We also saw all kinds of starfish – some had up to fifty arms! If they lose an arm, a new one grows in its place.

Tomorrow we will leave to come home. I can't wait to see you all when we are back at school.

Your friend

Jabu

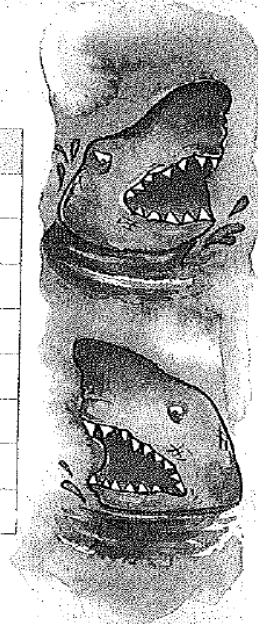




Let's do

Jabu's letter describes seven days. Work out the dates for Jabu's itinerary and fill in what he did on those days.

Date	What he did
12 July	Departed for Cape Town
13 July	
14 July	
15 July	
16 July	
17 July	
18 July	
19 July	



Let's write

Now write answers to these questions.

Copy one sentence from the letter that shows Jabu and Dan are good friends.

Give one example of a sentence that shows that Jabu is writing to someone of the same age.

Give one example of a sentence that shows that Jabu has not been to Cape town before.

The whole letter is written in the past tense, except for two sentences. Write them down here.



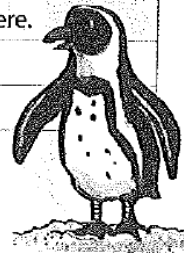
Let's write

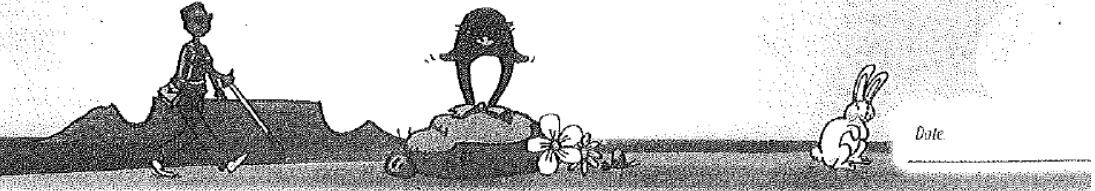
Why does Jabu write this letter to Dan?

- A To tell him about sharks
- B To tell him about his wonderful holiday
- C To tell him that he will be back at school soon
- D To tell him about the train

What does he mean when he says the sharks were not shy to show their rows of teeth?

- A The sharks were friendly.
- B The sharks were entertaining them.
- C The sharks kept opening their mouths.
- D The sharks were eating other fish.





Date _____

Writing a letter



Let's write

Write a letter to your friend. Give your friend news about what you have been doing at home and at school, or about any other interesting activity.

We have given you suggestions for each paragraph. Write your letter in rough first and let your partner check it. Then write it neatly on this page.

Illustrations of a pen, a stamp, and envelopes.

Illustration of a boy sitting at a desk, looking thoughtful with his hand to his chin.

Fill in your address

Date

Dear _____

Begin with greetings.

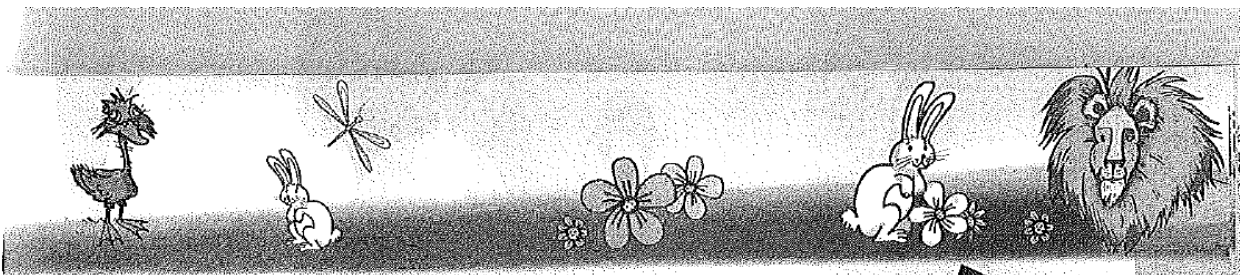
Write about your first item of news.

Write about your second item of news.

End your letter.

Your friend

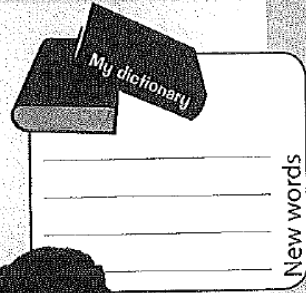
Fill in your name.



Match the words in the yellow column with their synonyms in the blue column. Then break up each word into separate syllables.

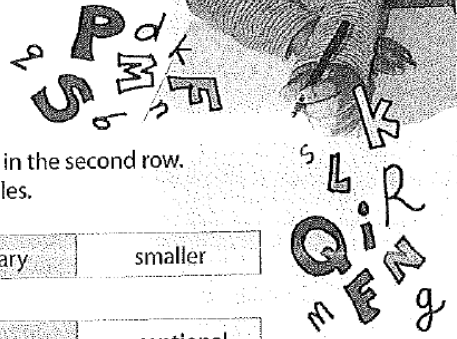
- ex/tinct
- expected
- magnificent
- departed
- creatures

- anticipated
- disappeared
- gone
- animals
- exceptional



Now match these words with their antonyms in the second row. Then break up each word into separate syllables.

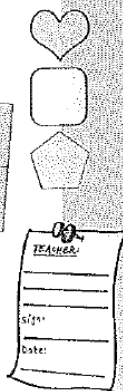
- | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|--------|----------|-------------|
| beautiful | unexpected | happy | ordinary | smaller |
| anticipated | unhappy | bigger | ugly | exceptional |



Form new words by adding the prefixes from the cards. We show you what each prefix means.

un not	re again	mis bad	dis not	over more than too much
-----------	-------------	------------	------------	-------------------------------

common	UNCOMMON	appear	
write		kind	
interpret		grace	
estimate		honest	





UNIVERSITY OF
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4 August 2011

Mrs VD Pillay (200402346)
School of Education Studies
Faculty of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Pillay

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0686/011M

PROJECT TITLE: Senior primary school educators' experiences of teaching functional and creative writing – A case study in a primary school in KwaZulu-Natal

In response to your application dated 2 August 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor: Dr M Combrink
cc. Ms T Mnisi, Faculty Research Office, Edgewood Campus

Crispin Hemson

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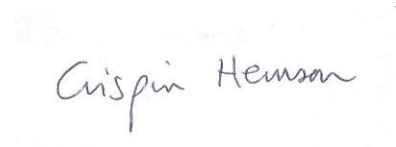
C: 082 926 5333

H: 031 206 1738

8th November 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to record that I have edited the dissertation by Vannessa Pillay, entitled **Senior primary school educators' experiences of teaching functional and creative writing – A case study in a school in KwaZulu Natal.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Crispin Hemson". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Crispin Hemson