

Making the CAPS fit: An exploration of the reading development  
strategies of three Intermediate Phase language educators in a rural  
KwaZulu-Natal school.

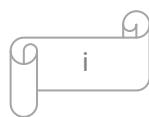
A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the  
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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to explore the reading life histories of three Intermediate Phase (IP) language educators, and how their histories influence their teaching, as part of a larger University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) reading project. Using the life history research approach, the manner in which the participants learnt to read at home before starting school, in Primary and High School and how they were trained to teach reading was examined. By observing their lessons and interviewing them, the effects that their experiences have had on their current teaching methods and their readiness to implement the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in their phase in 2013, was explored. Research has shown that the literacy levels in South Africa (SA) are reason for great concern. There seems to be an overemphasis on decoding skills with limited exposure to all aspects of comprehension in the lower grades. Thus SA learners struggle to cope as they go on to higher grades where they are expected to read for meaning and read to learn. These problems may be associated with the inadequate training and limited knowledge of teaching reading of many SA educators. Educators who participated in this study seem to define reading as primarily decoding text to speech and view comprehension as a separate entity. In addition to this they do not have a full understanding of the complexities of the comprehension process. By exploring the participants' experiences of learning to read, their training in teaching reading, and current classroom practices, the effects of the former two were visible on the latter. This study contributes to the larger research project as the participants' misconceptions and preconceptions created by their own mediocre schooling, substandard and outdated training and inadequate continuous development, were analysed so these could be addressed in workshops designed by the UKZN reading project team.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*This thesis is dedicated to Azra (24.03.12 - 29.03.12). You went too soon.*

I owe a debt of gratitude to the following persons, without whom I may not have been able to complete this thesis:

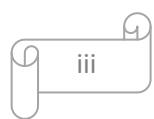
- Sandra Land for her patience, perseverance and tireless supervision and monitoring of my work.
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- Mitasha and Rakesh who I met through UKZN and who have always been eager to assist.
- My dear friend Ronell for always having a cup of tea ready.

## **DECLARATION**

I, Nazarana Mather, declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any degree at any university.

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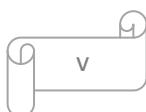
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	i
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	ii
<b>DECLARATION.....</b>	iii
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	iv
<b>LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES.....</b>	vii
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS.....</b>	viii
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Focus and Purpose of the Study	1
1.3 Justification	2
1.3.1 <i>Social Justification</i>	2
1.3.2 <i>Practical Justification</i>	3
1.3.3 <i>Personal Justification</i>	3
1.4 Theoretical Framework	4
1.5 Key Research Questions	5
1.6 Research Design and Methodology	5
1.7 Outline of thesis	6
<b>CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Research Style	8
2.3 Research Paradigm	9
2.4 Research Approach	9
2.5 Data Collection Methods	11
2.5.1 <i>Interviews</i>	11
2.5.2 <i>Observations</i>	13
2.6 Piloting of the data collection instruments	14
2.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation	15
2.8 Sample	16
2.9 Reliability and Validity	17
2.10 Limitations of the study	18

2.11 Ethical Considerations	19
2.12 Summary	20
<b>CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF LITERATURE</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1 Introduction	21
3.2 What is reading?	21
3.3 Reading in the First Additional Language	22
3.4 Bottom-up models of reading	25
3.4.1 <i>Applications of bottom-up models</i>	27
3.4.2 <i>Critiques of bottom-up models</i>	29
3.5 Top-down models of reading	30
3.5.1 <i>Applications of top-down models</i>	32
3.5.2 <i>Critiques of top-down models</i>	33
3.6 Interactive models of reading	34
3.6.1 <i>Rumelhart's Interactive Model</i>	35
3.6.2 <i>Stanovich's Interactive-Compensatory Model</i>	35
3.6.3 <i>Anderson and Pearson's Schema-Theoretic View</i>	36
3.6.4 <i>Mathewson's Model of Attitude Motivation</i>	37
3.6.5 <i>Perfetti, Landi and Oakhill's Interactive Activation Model of Reading</i>	38
3.6.6 <i>Applications of Interactive Models</i>	44
3.6.7 <i>Teaching reading for meaning to ESL learners in the SA context: a discussion of CAPS</i>	46
3.7 Teaching reading teachers	49
3.7.1 <i>Educators' experiences and beliefs about learning and teaching reading</i>	50
3.7.2 <i>Educators' training of teaching learners how to read</i>	52
3.8 Conclusion	55
<b>CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY</b>	<b>56</b>
4.1 Introduction	56
4.2 Njabulo Maduna: Grade 4	56
4.3 Pearl Khumalo: Grade 5	62
4.4 Andile Nzimande: Grade 6	69
4.5 Summary	74



<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS</b>	<b>76</b>
5.1 Introduction	76
5.2 Established understanding of what constitutes competent reading	76
5.3 Decoding versus comprehending	78
5.4 Choice of texts	83
5.4.1 <i>Genre</i>	83
5.4.2 <i>Learner interest</i>	84
5.4.3 <i>Appropriate and relevant</i>	86
5.5 Usefulness of workshops	89
5.6 Willingness to improve	91
5.7 Teachers' experiences (schooling and training), beliefs and Knowledge	94
5.8 Embracing change	100
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION</b>	<b>106</b>
6.1 Introduction	106
6.2 Preconceptions, Misconceptions and Classroom Practice	106
6.3 Barriers to change	110
6.4 Recommendations: Making the CAPS fit	112
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1: <i>UKZN Ethical Clearance Certificate</i>	115
Appendix 2: <i>DoE permission to conduct research</i>	116
Appendix 3: <i>Informed Consent Documentation</i>	117
Appendix 4: <i>Semi Structured Interview Questions</i>	118
Appendix 5: <i>Observation Schedule</i>	121
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>126</b>

# **LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES**

## **FIGURES**

Figure 1: An Interactive Activation Model of Reading (Perfetti, Landi & Oakhill, 2005)	39
Figure 2: Breakdown of time spent during classroom observations	77
Figure 3: Questions asked during classroom observations	81
Figure 4: Managing sustained change	104

## **TABLES**

Table 1: How the participants fare in terms of what effective reading teachers do	74
Table 2: Levels of questions	80

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

### **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DoBE	Department of Basic Education
ESL	English Second Language
FAL	First Additional Language
FP	Foundation Phase
HL	Home Language
IP	Intermediate Phase
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal, one of South Africa's 9 provinces
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching (medium of instruction)
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SA	South Africa
SMT	School Management Team
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Introduction to the study**

This study explored three Intermediate Phase educators' experiences of learning and teaching reading. This chapter highlights the purpose and rationale of this study, theoretical framework, research questions, research method and the structure of the study.

### **1.2. Focus and Purpose of Study**

This study forms part of the second phase of a broader action research project that focuses on literacy from the foundation phase to adult basic education training (ABET) in English as well as IsiZulu. The purpose of the project is to promote a reading culture amongst educators, learners and all stakeholders in the learning community of a school located on the rural outskirts of a large city in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).

In the first phase of this project, which was conducted in 2011, it was found that educators place emphasis on decoding skills when teaching reading and not on reading for understanding. This finding arose from research conducted in the Grade 4 class at the school (Nehal, unpublished thesis) and during a subsequent workshop the educators articulated learning how to teach reading for understanding as a goal. Thus it was recommended that the educators' capacity for teaching reading, especially reading with good understanding, be built. The purpose of this study was to explore the Intermediate Phase educators' experiences and perceptions of how they learnt to read and how they were trained to teach learners to read and relate this to their current practice. Thus this research will contribute to the greater project as it will provide insight into these educators' specific challenges and needs which could then be further catered for and give formative feedback to the reading project.

### **1.3. Justification**

According to Clandinin and Huber (in press, p.8) it is vital to justify the research in three different ways. Thus my reason for conducting this research is explained under the following headings: social justification, practical justification and personal justification.

#### **1.3.1. Social Justification**

Literacy education in South Africa (SA) is still in crisis. SA children are performing poorly against their African counterparts in international tests. For example, according to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2006), South African Grade 4 and 5 learners achieved the lowest mean performance scores in comparison with 39 other participating countries (Long and Zimmerman, 2008). In addition to this, the report on the Annual National Assessments (2011) states that the average percentage attained for literacy in KZN was 39% and 29% in Grade 3 and 6 respectively. Thus an obvious choice of research area in attempting to discover causes for this dismal state of affairs is to find out what is happening in terms of learning and teaching every day in the classrooms of our schools. A practical entry point for this is the teaching practices of our teachers, particularly those directly related to reading development of our school children.

My research seeks to make a contribution to our understanding of how the participants' beliefs and experiences (how they learnt to read and were trained to teach reading) may have shaped their classroom practice and prepared them to implement CAPS in 2013. Graves (2000) contends that teachers' beliefs are based on their learning experiences, working experiences and places of employment, and their ongoing professional development. Additionally Richardson (1996) states that the three types of experiences are personal experience, experience with schooling, and instruction and experience with formal knowledge. These experiences influence the development of beliefs about and knowledge of teaching so researching teachers' experiences and beliefs is important to gain insight into the instructional judgements teachers make in their classrooms (Richardson, 1996). Researching the participants' experiences may help to clarify the choices they make in the classroom

and could contribute to future planning of reading development workshops for educators which could result in more effective training of educators. If educators receive adequate training in the teaching of reading, based on their specific needs and challenges, their classroom practice could improve and as a consequence possibly so would the academic performance of their learners.

### **1.3.2. Practical Justification**

In the course of this research into the participants' past and current experiences and practices in relation to reading, they will be asked to reflect on, and describe in detail, their first experiences of learning reading, their school experiences and their professional training, and their perception of its usefulness to them as reading educators. They will also reflect on their current teaching practices which will help to identify their strengths as well as the challenges and barriers they still encounter when teaching reading. Equipped with this knowledge they could participate in training and development that could cater for those specific needs. Ideally, they would then, not only be able to more effectively teach reading to their learners, but also assist other educators at the school to improve their teaching practices.

### **1.3.3. Personal Justification**

As a language educator, it is my hope that through the reflections of these educators, I will better understand my own practice and identify areas where I could possibly improve. Additionally my understanding of the complexities of the reading process will be extended. Moreover, some educators at the school where I teach also experience difficulty when teaching reading for meaning and writing for different purposes. Some do not even attempt to engage their learners in such tasks. When these learners enter the higher grades and cannot comprehend simple texts or have little exposure to various genres, the educators teaching in these grades find this frustrating. By reflecting on these educators' experiences, perceptions and challenges, I would be able to possibly gain understanding that could be useful in supporting those educators at the school where I teach.

#### **1.4. Theoretical framework**

This study adopted the interactive approach to reading. As this approach sought to resolve the historical conflict between the top-down and bottom-up approaches to reading, it was selected to analyse the data collected.

According to Verbeek (2010) bottom-up models emphasise decoding whilst top-down models focus on meaning. Transcending the conflict between the adherents of the ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ models was the advent of the balanced or interactive approach which views reading as process that involves an array of lower- level rapid, automatic identification skills as well as an array of higher level comprehension skills (Grabe, 2000). Emphasis is placed on what is in the text as well as what the reader brings to it using both their top-down and bottom-up skills (Carell, Devine & Eskey, 1988). Long and Zimmerman (2008) state that this approach is advocated as the most powerful explanation of reading comprehension because it views reading as a process that incorporates multiple knowledge sources. Also, the reader uses decoding strategies and his personal frame of reference when faced with difficulties in reading and understanding a text (Long & Zimmerman, 2008). Thus, within the interactionist paradigm reading involves using information about sounds and their representations as well as contextual and semantic information (Verbeek, 2010). However, these bottom-up and top-down skills can only be developed through extensive reading. Therefore it is advocated that educators should select, edit or create texts based on the learners’ experiences, and that will stimulate interest in reading. Moreover, the educator must expose their learners to useful reading strategies that will assist those learners to cope with a range of texts (Carell et al, 1988).

The following suggestions of classroom implications and applications of the interactive approach are made (Carell et al, 1998). Firstly, learners can be assisted to develop their bottom-up skills by developing their vocabulary and grammatical skills. This means that the educator must include instruction on cohesive devices of the language and their function across sentences and paragraphs as well as preteaching vocabulary and background knowledge concurrently. Secondly their top-down processing skills can be developed by building background knowledge which will

help the learners to predict which prior, existing knowledge to access. Further to this activating background knowledge using text-mapping strategies and developing predictive skills, gives the reader a purpose for reading. Thus when observing the participants' lessons, my observation schedule referred to the above-mentioned categories in order to determine whether these are being used as the educators work to develop their learners' reading skills. Moreover, when analyzing the transcriptions from the interviews, I was interested to see whether the participants were taught to read and were trained to teach reading in the above-mentioned manner.

### **1.5. Key Research Questions**

1. What were the participants' experiences of learning to read at home, in primary school and in high school?
2. What pre-service and in-service training of teaching reading did they receive?
3. How have the experiences and training of these educators shaped their teaching of reading?
4. What challenges and barriers do these educators encounter when developing their learners' reading skills?
5. How have these experiences prepared the participants to implement CAPS in the IP in 2013?

### **1.6. Research Design and Methodology**

This study was conducted within the interpretivist paradigm using a qualitative research design. Working within this paradigm enabled me to understand the participants' experiences in relation to reading and how they made sense of them. Using this approach allowed me to get a rich, in-depth understanding of the experiences of these Intermediate Phase educators, in particular, how they learnt reading, how they were taught to teach reading and the methods they use when developing their learners' reading skills.

The two methods of data collection that I used were interviewing and observation. Three educators were used: one Grade 4, one Grade 5 and one Grade 6. Each participant was interviewed twice and one reading lesson was observed.

### **1.7. Outline of thesis:**

#### **1.7.1. Chapter Two: Methodology**

In this chapter the methodological framework within which the research was conducted is explained. The research style selected, the paradigm and type of approach used is discussed. Further to this data collection methods and techniques, sampling, piloting of the data collection instruments, analysis and interpretation of the data, validity and reliability, ethical considerations and the limitations of the study are outlined.

#### **1.7.2. Chapter Three: Literature Review**

This chapter provides a review of the literature that has informed my thinking about investigating the participants' past and current reading experiences. Definitions of reading, reading in the First Additional language, the progress from bottom-up to top-down to interactive models of reading and the current state of teaching reading in SA are discussed. A discussion of CAPS and teachers' beliefs, experiences and training is also included.

#### **1.7.3. Chapter Four: Findings of the study**

This chapter focuses on the responses of the participants during the interview process as well as the observation data collected. The experiences of the three participants with regard to their experiences of learning and teaching reading are presented in the context of their past and current experiences relating to reading and the teaching of reading.

#### **1.7.4. Chapter Five: Discussion of the findings**

The major themes and trends that emerged from the experiences of the participants with regards to how they learnt to read, how they learnt to teach reading and how these may influence the methods they select when developing their learners' reading

skills, their readiness to implement CAPS and the barriers they face when teaching reading are analysed and discussed in this chapter. These main themes are examined together with the key questions, the literature review and theoretical framework.

#### **1.7.5. Conclusion**

In this last chapter, conclusions that are drawn from the findings are presented. Included in this chapter are recommendations for areas of further research and to assist in phase three and four of the larger study.

# **CHAPTER 2**

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, the process involved in conducting the study will be discussed. The purpose of this research was to investigate how three Intermediate Phase educators learnt to read, first at home, then in Primary School and lastly High School, and the manner in which these educators were taught to teach reading, and how all these influences shape their teaching of reading. The challenges and barriers they face when teaching reading was also explored. Investigating these aspects of the participants' lives will contribute to the larger UKZN reading research project as it will provide insight into the participants' teaching practices which could be used to plan teacher development workshops in the next phase. The study was a qualitative study which was conducted under the interpretivist paradigm. To gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' past and current reading experiences, interviews and observations were the data collection methods that were used.

### **2.2. Research Style**

Qualitative data are textual or verbal data and are collected when depth is required (Christiansen, Bertram and Land, 2010). As I was interested in collecting in-depth, rich data that would provide me with an understanding of the participants' experiences with learning and teaching reading, the qualitative research design was most appropriate.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p.15) qualitative research assumes multiple realities are socially constructed through individual and collective perceptions of the same situation. It is also concerned with understanding a social phenomenon from the participants' perspectives. For this research style, data is collected in the form of words and the study provides a narrative, detailed description, analysis and interpretation of phenomena (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001, p.41). Verbal descriptions to portray the richness and complexity of events that occur in natural settings from the participants' perspectives are provided.

Thus I used in- depth interviews and asked open- ended questions. This allowed my participants to share their experiences of learning and teaching reading as well as other related aspects of their lives and situations. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) state that within a qualitative study, the researcher employs a number of methods to collect data to increase the credibility of the findings. In keeping with this view, I also observed the participants' teaching reading to their learners. This enabled to me to gain a better understanding of the issue being research from another perspective, to document the methods that they used and compare those methods to the ones that they were taught.

### **2.3. Research Paradigm**

In relation to this qualitative design, the interpretivist approach is appropriate as it attempts to understand human and social reality. Within the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher is concerned with describing how people make meaning of their worlds and their particular actions rather than aiming to predict what people will do (Christiansen et al, 2010).

Thus, "the purpose is to develop a greater understanding of how people make sense of contexts in which they live and work." (Christiansen et al, 2010, p.23). In addition, interpretivists focus on observing people's behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions, and trying to understand how people make sense of the contexts in which they live and work.

Hence, the interpretivist approach suits this research as it allowed me to gain insight and a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and their reasons for choosing certain classroom practices.

### **2.4. Research Approach**

This research specifically explored these educators' experiences and perceptions of learning and teaching reading with a view to discovering how these may have influenced their classroom practices. The methodology used draws on narrative as a

source of information. Clandinin (2007) defines narrative inquiry as the study of experience as a story. "It is a way of thinking about, and studying, experience. Narrative inquirers think narratively about experience throughout inquiry," (Clandinin & Huber, in press, p.1). According to Clandinin and Huber (in press) narrative inquiry shapes new theoretical understandings of people's experiences and also highlights ethical matters. Most narrative inquiries commence with the participants telling their stories by responding to semi structured interview questions or engaging in conversation or dialogue or telling stories based on artefacts like photographs (Clandinin & Huber, in press, p.5).

Moen (2006) states that there are three basic claims of narrative research. Firstly, human beings organise their experiences of the world into narratives. Secondly, stories that are told depend on the individual's past and present experiences. Lastly, there is a multivoicedness that occurs in narratives. Additionally Clandinin (2007) explains that narrative inquiry has three commonplaces. The first is temporality which means that events and people have a past, present and future (Moen, 2006), so narrative inquirers must attend to the temporality of their own and participants' lives, as well as to the temporality of places, things and events (Clandinin & Huber, in press). Second is sociality which refers to both a person's context as well as the relationship between the interviewer and participant (Moen, 2006). Narrative inquirers focus on personal and social conditions simultaneously and cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship (Clandinin & Huber, in press). Third is place; which is the sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place (Moen, 2006). According to Clandinin and Huber (in press, p.4), people's identities are related to their experiences in places or a particular place and the stories that are told about those experiences.

Narrative inquiry has significant implications for teacher education and hence educational transformation as it could assist in theorising teacher education as a space to continue the conversation and engage pre service teachers in inquiries to keep working at composing stories to live by (Clandinin, 2007). In addition to this, Clandinin (2007) asserts that it is important to consider the comfort that teachers

derive from research on stories of teachers to improve their self worth as well create a positive identity. These stories can yield insights into school landscapes, which could inform curriculum decisions and subsequently transform education (Clandinin, 2007).

## **2.5. Data Collection Methods**

To collect rich, in-depth data for this research the participants were interviewed and their lessons were observed.

### **2.5.1 Interviews**

A structured interview is an oral, in- person administration of a set of questions prepared in advance from which the participant may select a response from alternatives provided by the researcher (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001, p. 40). On the other hand, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), semi structured interviews enable the researcher to clarify topics as well as ask the participant to provide further detail, extend to or elaborate on their responses thus inviting in-depth, full and honest answers. As I was interested in exploring an aspect of my participants' lives in detail I used semi- structured interviews.

Christiansen et al (2010) provide the following advantages of interviews. Firstly the researcher is present with the respondent so questions can be clarified. Secondly, the researcher can probe and ask further questions to obtain more detail if the response given was insufficient or suggests that the research participant could give extra information relevant to the study. Lastly it is easier for a participant to talk to an interviewer rather than write long responses in a questionnaire which means that more detailed and descriptive data is usually collected.

I interviewed three Intermediate Phase educators: one who taught Grade 4, one Grade 5 and the other Grade 6. The interviews were approximately an hour long and were conducted on two separate occasions at a time and venue selected by the participants as I wanted to ensure that the participants were comfortable and at ease

so that they would be open to sharing details of their lives. The interviews focused was on their first experiences with reading, how they were taught reading in primary and high school, how they were taught to teach reading, how they teach reading and the challenges they face when teaching their learners how to read.

Whilst conducting the interview, I had to ensure that my full attention was given to the participant so that I could ask for detailed explanations or clarity if the participant's responses were vague. Moreover, I had to ensure that if a participant provided the answer to a question which was further down in the interview schedule as part of a response to an earlier question, I did not ask that question as the participant might get frustrated at having to repeat what was already said. To ensure that I was able to do this and to keep the conversation between myself and the participant flowing, I used a tape recorder instead of taking detailed notes. This also ensured that valuable information was not overlooked or forgotten as note taking requires summarising, and leaves the researcher at risk of not capturing all relevant information. Using a tape recorder also saved time as the participant did not have to wait for me to finish writing down the response before moving on to the next question. Although video recording would have provided more detail in terms of body language and facial expressions, the tape recorder was less intrusive so the participants were more relaxed and secure during the interview process than would have been if they been video recorded.

These interviews further allowed the participants to reflect on their teaching of reading and the challenges and barriers they encounter when teaching reading. Therefore they could possibly have identified their strengths and areas that still need development which could help them become better reading educators. Additionally, the interviews allowed me to interact with the participants on a one on one basis in a conversational, personal manner. Thus I was able to elicit detailed information about the participants' experiences of reading. However, Christiansen et al (2010) caution that interviews result in self-reported data which needs to be verified with observations in case the participant gives information that is not an accurate representation.

### **2.5.2. Observations**

Christiansen et al (2010) state that observation means that the researcher goes into a school or classroom and examines what is actually taking place there. An advantage of observation is that it is a powerful method for gaining insight into situations (Christiansen et al, 2010). Moreover, the researcher can see what is actually happening in the classroom and does not have to rely on the opinions of others. In this instance, observing the participants' lessons enabled me to see how they actually teach reading rather than solely hearing their perceptions of they teach reading.

A distinction between unstructured and structured observation is drawn by Christiansen et al (2010). Firstly, unstructured observation means that the researcher focuses on one or two aspects to observe and makes notes on those particular aspects during which other issues may arise that the researcher may wish to pursue. Particular categories and checklists on a schedule are not used. Instead the researcher writes a free description of what is observed and as it is not possible for one person to notice everything, unstructured observation works best when there are a few people collecting data.

Secondly, a structured observation is when the researcher directly observes some phenomenon and then systematically records what is being observed (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). This works best when the researcher has a very clear idea of what she is looking for and will use a structured observation schedule with observation categories which are worked out in advance (Christiansen et al, 2010).

For the purpose of this research, structured observation was used. My reason for observing the participants' lessons was to observe the methods they employed in the classroom to teach reading. I wanted to investigate whether the educators were dedicating their lessons to the teaching of decoding or whether they were also teaching comprehension skills and if so, how they went about teaching comprehension. I also wanted to ensure that the methods I observed in the classroom were consistent with the methods the educators suggested during the

interviews. Thus I had a clear idea of what I was looking for so using a structured observation schedule worked best wherein I also left blank spaces to make notes about aspects that I did not include but observed, or to elaborate on those that I included. In this way I was able to observe all aspects of the interaction relevant to the development of reading, but not aspects extraneous to that.

I observed one lesson per educator and had to ensure that it was a lesson where the educator was teaching reading and not some other language lesson. The lesson observations were conducted before the interviews so that the participants would not be aware of the specific details of what I would be looking for. This was to decrease the possibility of them displaying the Hawthorne effect. Christiansen et al (2010) explain that the Hawthorne effect is when the participant behaves in a manner or provides responses to appear more positive.

In addition to a structured observation schedule, a tape recorder was used to ensure that information was not lost or omitted. It also allowed me to go back and review my findings with my peer reviewer. Again, the use of a video recorder may have offered certain advantages but the tape recorder, being more compact, was less obtrusive and invasive so the educator and learners were more likely to behave naturally and give me an accurate picture of the regular occurrences of their reading lessons.

## **2.6. Piloting of the data collection instruments**

The data collection instruments were tested on two IP educators; one who teaches Grade 4 and 6 and another who teaches Grade 5. Piloting the tools was extremely helpful as it provided insight into the strengths and shortcomings of the instruments that I had designed. Firstly, I found that my observation was not as well organised as it could be so I found myself turning pages to look for aspects that I was observing. Secondly, I did not include a space to fill in the title and author/ creator of the text that the educator was using, information that would be crucial when the data is being analysed. Thirdly it was found that these educators were familiar with the CAPS document and were using aspects from the document so I decided to include

a section in my observation schedule to cover which aspects of CAPS my participants were already using in their classrooms to determine how familiar they are with the document and their readiness for implementation in 2013. Fourthly I was concerned that the educators would be busy with the decoding part of the reading process explained in Chapter 3 (3.6.2.) and maybe the next day they would plan to do comprehension activities but upon carefully analysing this section of the CAPS document, I realised that even whilst just decoding the text the educator needs to engage the learners in comprehension activities by first activating background knowledge and then stopping whilst reading to develop vocabulary, discuss language concepts like adjectives and make predictions, inferences etc. Thus they should not only decode for the entire lesson. Further to this I realised that this schedule should be completed in pencil because as the lesson progressed, the educators' methods and strategies changed. Additionally piloting my instruments enabled me to determine whether my interview questions would elicit responses relevant to my research. Lastly I was able to calculate approximately how long the interviews would take so that arrangements could be made to spend a specific length of time with my participants so as not to cause an unnecessary disruption to their lives.

## **2.7. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The next step after collecting data is data analysis. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) explain that qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising the data into categories and then identifying patterns in the categories. Moreover Christiansen et al (2010) state that inductive reasoning starts with raw data collected within which patterns and regularities are sought, as a basis to formulating some tentative hypotheses to explore. Finally, general conclusions and theories may be drawn.

The data that I had to analyse were the tape recordings from the observations and interviews as well as the structured observation schedule. In order to reduce the data, I listened to the tape recordings of the interviews and lesson observations

several times before I began the transcribing process. I looked at these transcriptions together with my observation schedule and interview notes. A list of codes which was generated from the data collected and the key research questions was used to categorise the data into themes. The themes were further broken down to simplify the data. From this I was able to elaborate on the findings, make recommendations and draw conclusions.

## **2.8. Sample**

Sampling involves choosing people, settings events or behaviour which best suit the purpose of the research (Christiansen et al, 2010). As this study forms part of a larger action research study that is being conducted the school was already selected. The school is situated on the rural outskirts of a large city in KZN. Although the area is impoverished, the school is thriving in terms of resources as it has proper classrooms and lavatories, photocopiers and computers. Being a primary school there are Grades 1-7 but ABET classes are also taught in the afternoons. There is a strong emphasis on teacher development so time is allocated every Thursday afternoon from 1:00pm to 2:30pm for this purpose. All the educators and learners are IsiZulu home language speakers. At this school IsiZulu is offered at Home Language level and English at First Additional Language level. The language of learning and teaching is IsiZulu from Grade 1-3 and English from Grades 4-7.

In qualitative research, the researcher is not as much concerned by representativeness as by selecting cases that are information rich. The sample selected for this study is not representative of the total population of language educators as qualitative research is more about gaining insight into particular people's lives and experiences and not about making generalisations that hold true for the whole population. There are a number of sampling methods, the two main methods being random sampling and purposive sampling. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) state that purposive sampling has the following strengths. It is less costly and time consuming and assures high participation rate as well as receipt of required information. The participants for this research were purposively selected

which means they were selected in a deliberate way with a specific purpose in mind (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001).

This research sought to gain insight into the experiences of learning and teaching reading of Intermediate Phase language educators and as there is only one educator who teaches language in Grade 4, one in Grade 5 and one in Grade 6 at the school, they were selected. Research conducted in the Grade 4 class in the first phase of the larger project found that this educator focused on decoding and little emphasis was placed on the acquisition of comprehension skills (Nehal, unpublished thesis). To expand on that finding, this study explored the same Grade 4 educator's experiences of learning and teaching reading in greater detail, as well as the other two Intermediate Phase educators. Exploring past and current experiences related to reading of the Grade 4, 5 and 6 educators provided insight into these educators' reading teaching practices when teaching reading to their learners so development workshops could be planned in the larger UKZN reading research project to accommodate their specific needs.

## **2.9. Reliability and Validity**

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) state that validity refers to the degree to which the explanations of the phenomena match the realities of the world. In qualitative data validity may be addressed through depth, richness, honesty and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the objectivity of the researcher (Cohen et al, 2000). The data in the interpretivist paradigm is influenced by the theoretical frameworks, the bias of the researcher and the subjectivity of the participants (Christiansen et al, 2010).

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001) the validity of a qualitative study can be enhanced by using multimethod strategies which allow triangulation in data collection, mechanically recorded data, which includes the use of tape recorders, photographs or videotapes and participant and peer review.

It must be noted that the stories told and hence the narratives constructed were subjective as they were from the perspective of the participants. Thus, to ensure trustworthiness as far as possible the interviews were tape recorded and the data collected and findings were reviewed by a peer. The findings were also discussed with the research participants to ensure that data reflected what they had intended to say, or that they could give information that facilitated correct interpretation.

There is always the problem of the participants displaying the Hawthorne effect. Thus the data will be carefully analysed to ensure that there were no contradictions or inconsistencies and more than one method was used to collect data (triangulation). In addition to the semi- structured interviews, I used structured observations and interviewed the participants twice so that I could elicit information that was omitted in the first interview. It is important to point out that, as only one school is used in this research, the results are not meant to be generalised. They reflect these particular teachers' experiences of reading from early childhood, primary school, high school, tertiary education and professional training to their effects that these may have had on their current classroom practices, and how equipped they are to implement CAPS in the IP in 2013. However, by providing thick descriptions of the context, validity is enhanced and findings could possibly apply to similar contexts.

## **2.10. Limitations of the study**

Being a language teacher myself, I had to be aware of the preconceptions I may have of other language educators. Although we can never be totally free of bias, I went into the interviews and observations with an open mind and tried not to allow my experiences to influence the situation or cause me to behave in a manner that may have been viewed as condescending. I expected differences between my understanding of reading and views of how reading should be taught, and the understanding and views of the participants, and guarded against allowing my views and experiences to influence the situation.

Another limitation is that there is always the problem of the participants displaying the Hawthorne effect. Whilst this is an unavoidable limitation of the project, it is also useful as it may have the effect of stimulating the educators' self awareness as a reading educator, and could increase the likelihood of the enhancement of their skills as an educator.

A further limitation could be the issue of power relations. Christiansen et al (2010) state that because interviewing is a social, interpersonal encounter, power relations can influence the process of the interview so the researcher needs to be aware of how her position may influence the type of information that the participant provides. In order to minimise this effect as far as possible I had a meeting with all the participants before beginning the data collection process wherein I explained that although I was working towards completing a thesis, my primary role was that of a fellow educator who was trying to improve her own classroom practice by reflecting on the classroom practices of other educators.

Finally, I did not expect there to be language barrier as the participants were English teachers. Thus I was of the opinion that their use of the language would be good and that if I used an interpreter, the participants might have been offended. However, there were several instances when they did not understand my questions so I had to rephrase these questions which meant that the interviews took longer than I had anticipated. In addition to this, analysing the data was also time-consuming as they did not express themselves clearly at times. I did not use an interpreter because I was afraid of losing valuable information in translation but perhaps had I made use of one their responses may have been clearer and richer as they would have been communicating in their Home Language so they might have been a bit more confident and comfortable when responding.

## **2.11. Ethical Considerations**

At an official level, permission was sought from the Department of Education and I complied with the ethical procedures of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The following ethical principles were followed whilst conducting this research. Consent

was sought from the educators. Also, the participants were assured that all data collected will be kept confidential and that they will remain anonymous, when this research is published. Thus all names were changed and pseudonyms were used. Finally, the participants were informed and understood fully that the purpose of the research was to gain insight into their experiences and perceptions of learning and teaching reading and not to diminish their confidence. As a result care was taken to ensure that throughout this project emphasis was placed on building the educators' confidence so that they were comfortable to openly speak about themselves, rather than demoralizing them. Thus this research was beneficial to them and in no way caused harm.

## **2.12. Summary**

In this chapter the research methodology and design used to conduct this study was discussed. The study was qualitative and framed within the interpretivist approach. A structured observation schedule and semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data and the data analysis process was discussed. The manner in which validity and reliability of the study was enhanced, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study were also outlined in this chapter. In the next chapter a review of the literature that has informed my thinking about investigating my participants' past and current reading experiences will be explored.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This research seeks to illuminate how the three Intermediate Phase (IP) participants were taught how to read, how they were trained to teach reading and how they teach reading. Thus, in this chapter, literature that has informed my thinking about investigating the participants' life histories is reviewed. It deals with: definitions of reading, differences between Home Language (HL) and First Additional Language (FAL) reading, the progress from emphasis on bottom-up models of reading to emphasis on top-down and finally interactive models of reading and the current state of teaching reading in South Africa (SA). Included in this review is an explanation of how teachers' beliefs and experiences may influence their classroom practices and a discussion of teachers' training in SA is also provided.

#### **3.2. What is reading?**

An argument put forward by Grabe (2009) is that there is no single notion of reading. Grabe (2009, p.14) rejects simple statements that attempt to define reading because, if one considers the different purposes for reading and the varying processes that are used by fluent readers, no single statement would be able to encapsulate the intricacy of reading. Thus, the following processes are provided as an explanation of what skilled readers do when they read, what processes skilled readers use and how descriptions of these processes work interactively to provide a general idea of reading (Grabe, 2009, pp.14-16).

1. Reading is a *rapid and efficient process* because when we read, we simultaneously coordinate rapid and automatic word recognition, syntactic parsing, meaning formation, text-comprehension building, inferencing, critical thinking and connections to prior knowledge. All these cognitive processes happen in sync and without any real effort.
2. Reading is most importantly a *comprehending process* because when we read, our intention is to understand what the writer intended to convey in the text.

3. Reading is an *interactive process*. The first reason for this has been discussed in 1. above. The second reason is that reading is an interaction between author, who wants the reader to understand in certain ways and the reader, who constructs meaning of the text by considering the author's intention and activating their own background knowledge.
4. Reading is a *strategic process* since the skills and processes used in reading require the reader to predict text information, select important information, organise and mentally summarise that information, monitor comprehension, mend comprehension breakdowns and match comprehension output to reader goals.
5. Reading is a *flexible and purposeful process* because when reading, the reader process or interest shifts or comprehension is impeded. As a result the reader adjusts reading processes and goals accordingly.
6. Reading is continuously an *evaluative process* as we evaluate our reading. Moreover, we also evaluate the text to determine whether we like what the author is saying, whether we find the text interesting and whether we want to continue reading that text. Thus, this evaluation of the text requires a strong set of inferencing skills and activation of background knowledge because our attitudes and emotional responses are brought to the fore.
7. These ongoing evaluations, with almost any text one reads, make reading a *learning process* as we make decisions about how to respond to the text.
8. Reading is a *linguistic process*. The processing of linguistic information which includes making graphemic-phonemic connections is central to reading comprehension. If we are given a text in a foreign language, we will be unable to decode the text so no amount of prior knowledge on the topic will enable us to read that text.

### **3.3. Reading in the First Additional Language.**

First Additional Language (FAL) is the term used in the SA national policy documents for the second language that learners learn, usually at school. Home Language (HL) is the first language, usually acquired at home, and taught and assessed at a higher level at school than FAL. The labels Home Language and First

Additional Language refer to the proficiency levels at which the language is offered at school and not the native (Home) or acquired (as in the additional languages) language (Department of Basic Education (DoBE), 2011, p.8). The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), is the new policy document which is to be implemented in the IP in 2013. According to this document:

"The First Additional Language level assumes that learners do not necessarily have any knowledge of the language when they arrive at school... In the Intermediate and Senior Phases, learners continue to strengthen their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. At this stage the majority of children are learning through the medium of their First Additional Language, English, and should be getting more exposure to it. Greater emphasis is therefore placed on using the First Additional Language for the purposes of thinking and reasoning...They also engage more with literary texts and begin to develop aesthetic and imaginative ability in their Additional Language.

By the time learners enter Senior Phase, they should be reasonably proficient in their First Additional Language with regard to both interpersonal and cognitive academic skills... The challenge in the Intermediate Phase, therefore, is to provide support for these learners at the same time as providing a curriculum that enables learners to meet the standards required in further grades... Listening, speaking and language usage skills will be further developed and refined in the Intermediate Phase developing the learners' reading and writing skills."

(DoBE, 2011, pp. 8-9)

The level at which each language is taught is dependent on the individual school's language policy. For example, a school may offer English as the HL and medium of instruction from Grade 1-7 and learners may choose between IsiZulu and Afrikaans as their FAL. Other schools teach IsiZulu as HL from Grade 1-3 and then switch to English as HL from Grades 4-7. However, the reality is that many learners in SA schools learn English at HL level and the language that they speak at home at FAL

level. Whatever the policy may be, the bottom line is that these learners are learning reading in an additional language. At the school where this research is being conducted, IsiZulu is taught at HL level whilst English is taught at FAL level. Reading in an additional language is different and has different challenges than reading in one's Home Language. The differences between reading in one's Home language and an additional language include the following:

**Linguistic and processing differences:**

1. Differing amounts of lexical, grammatical and discourse knowledge at initial stages of HL and FAL reading.
2. Greater metalinguistic (used to describe language and its component parts) and metacognitive awareness (the process of consciously thinking about one's thought processes, learning or reading while actually being engaged in thinking, learning or reading) in FAL settings.
3. Varying linguistic differences across any two languages.
4. Varying FAL proficiencies as a foundation for FAL reading.
5. Varying language transfer influences.
6. Interacting influence of working with two languages.

**Developmental and educational differences:**

1. Differing levels of HL reading abilities.
2. Differing motivations for reading in the FAL.
3. Differing amounts of exposure to FAL reading (In the SA context this would be different as English is the FAL for many learners and there is more exposure to English than their native languages).
4. Differing kinds of texts in FAL contexts.
5. Differing language resources for FAL readers.

**Socio-cultural and institutional differences:**

1. Different socio-cultural backgrounds of FAL readers.
2. Differing ways of organising discourse and texts.
3. Differing expectations of FAL educational institutions.

(Grabe, 2009, pp.130-140)

These differences must be borne in mind when teaching reading in a language that is not the learners' HL. Grabe (2009) states that teaching of reading in FAL must be explicit and is both essential and significant, FAL learners must be engaged in some form of extensive reading and HL reading skills must be used to support FAL reading development. If one considers the language policy of some SA schools, it is apparent that this would be problematic as many learners are taught reading in a language that is not their HL. For instance, a school that has a learner population where the vast majority are IsiZulu HL speakers but the school's language policy is English HL and IsiZulu FAL; most learners may not know the grammar, vocabulary or correct pronunciation of the language that they are learning to read. They would also not be using reading skills learnt in their HL to support their reading in their FAL. The implementation of the new policy document, CAPS, might go some way towards providing a solution to this problem as this policy document promotes additive bilingualism; learners learn both languages and thus learn to read in both languages from Grade 1 simultaneously. CAPS further promotes the teaching of reading using the interactive approach which is a balance between bottom-up and top-down approaches. These will now be further discussed.

### **3.4. Bottom-up models of reading**

Early work in second language reading assumed a bottom-up view of reading. According to Verbeek (2010, p.15) reading is understood, by supporters of this approach, as a perceptual process in which readers translate written letters into sounds, which are thought to be interpreted by the brain as oral language. The bottom-up approach stipulated that the meaning of any text must be decoded by the reader and that learners are reading when they can sound out the words (Carell, Devine & Eskey, 1988). Verbeek (2010, p.16) states that the term bottom-up is used because such models work from the smallest unit of print, the letters, and build up to words, sentences, paragraphs and whole texts. This approach continues to be supported by many SA Foundation Phase educators who believe that a good reader is one who can read with fluency and expression and pronounces the words correctly (Pretorius, 2002). Thus reading deficiencies are viewed as problems with decoding text to speech.

Flesch (1955) advocated this bottom-up approach when he challenged the whole word methods of teaching reading as they did not emphasise the teaching of phonics whereby learners should be taught letter-by-letter and sound-by-sound and once they acquired that knowledge, they would be considered able to read (Verbeek, 2010, p.16). Moreover, before 1970, reading in a second language was viewed primarily as an addition to oral language skills (Carell et al, 1988). From this structural linguistic perspective reading is seen as an oral function whereby written representations of sounds are turned into spoken words.

After the 1970's two bottom-up models of the reading process were introduced and these remain popular even today. The first is One Second of Reading by Gough (1972). This model described reading as a sequential or serial mental process. It is an information-processing approach that describes a linear, additive process which is begun when letters are visually recognised by their features (Verbeek, 2010, p.16), and continued as readers translate the parts of written language into speech sounds, then piece these individual sounds together to form individual words and then piece together the words to arrive at the author's meaning (Gough, 1972).

The second model was by LaBerge and Samuels (1974), A Theory of Automatic Information Processing. Two concepts, 'automaticity' and 'attention' were introduced to try and explain the difficulties that beginning readers encounter in understanding what they read (Verbeek, 2010, p.17). According to LaBerge and Samuels (1974) beginning readers are unable to decode and comprehend at the same time but fluent readers are those who have achieved automaticity in decoding so can then focus their attention on the meaning on the text. Thus the term automaticity implies that readers have the limited ability to shift attention between decoding and comprehending but through repetition and practice there will be less focus on decoding and improved comprehension will occur.

Phonological and phonemic awareness will now be discussed as they form part of bottom-up processes of reading and are also components of the interactive

approach. According to Verbeek (2010, p.17) phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words and falls under the category of phonological awareness. Grabe (2009) states that for the large majority of words that are processed while reading, phonological activation of the form plays a major role and that phonological processing skills are essential early predictors of later reading development. It is thus a key aspect of word recognition for all learners and among all languages. In addition to this, Grabe (2009) contends that phonological processing in the L1 influences word reading in the L2 so once an alphabetic system is learnt it does not have to be relearned while learning to read in an additional language, provided of course that this additional language uses the same alphabet or writing system. This has implications for this study (which focuses on how isiZulu learners learn to read in English) as the learners will be taught the alphabetic system in English when they are learning reading and then use this alphabetic system to read in IsiZulu. However, although both languages use the same letters of the alphabet, not all letters have the same sound in IsiZulu as English. For example in IsiZulu, the letters x, c and q are pronounced by clicking the tongue in different ways and on different parts of the mouth to create the proper sound. Therefore there will be interference from the learners' HL when they are learning to read in English so they will have to be taught the differences between the English and IsiZulu phonics or systems of sound-letter representation.

### **3.4.1. Applications of bottom-up models**

In the SA context, it is the belief of many educators that learners must first be able to identify the letters of the alphabet and then recognise words before these educators begin teaching comprehension skills (Verbeek, 2010). The following teaching approaches have been summarised by Verbeek (2010, pp.18-20). During the classroom observations that will be conducted to collect data for this research, I will be interested to see if these participants rely on these approaches when teaching their learners how to read.

First "Basal reading programmes" will be explained. These were a set of readers which supposedly were designed according to the learners' interests and

developmental capabilities. These readers had short sentences and controlled vocabulary by letter-sound correlation and frequency of use. In many KZN schools a series called “Kathy and Mark” is used to teach learners how to read in the Foundation Phase (FP). These readers are rather dull and tedious and provide limited opportunity for comprehension activities and critical thinking. Moreover they have little relevance to the learners’ contexts and experiences so could not be considered interesting to those learners. An example of this is on page 16 of the book:

“Look, Kathy.  
Look.  
Here is Socks.  
The squirrels go.  
Go, squirrels, go.  
Come here, Socks.”

(O’ Donnell, 1975, p.16)

Here, learners will have to rely on the picture of a squirrel provided and the teacher will have to explain what a squirrel is because the learners might not know what this type of animal is. Moreover for IsiZulu learners the letter ‘q’ would be confusing as this letter is one of the three clicking consonants of IsiZulu.

Second are bottom-up approaches influenced by linguistic issues which focus on teaching regularly-spelled words (often called ‘breakthrough words’ in the SA context) and word groups (known as ‘word families’ in the SA context) (Bloomfield, 1942). An alternative was provided by Fries (1963) which stressed the habitual learning of word patterns and contrasting spellings (e.g. man-mane; mat-mate).

Third is the “Mastery Learning Movement” which led to the development of single-component and criterion referenced skills tests. The teacher would use basal readers and skills-based worksheets to assess the component skills of phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and study skills.

Last is the “look-say” method. Words are memorised based on their overall shape at a glance, a vocabulary of 50 to 100 words, and other words are gradually acquired through seeing them repeatedly in a story (Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky & Seidenberg, 2002). This can be seen in the example provided on page 28 from Kathy and Mark; “Look, Kathy. Look.” (O’ Donnell, 1975, p.16). The “look-say” method also involves analytical phonics (Verbeek, 2010). Learning phonics involves learning to pronounce the sounds made by printed letters. Although the teaching of phonics has been much disputed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Verbeek (2010, p.67) states that because effective reading teachers teach using a variety of techniques and methods, they should also teach analytic and synthetic phonics in an explicit manner, using meaningful texts. Rayner et al (2002, p.89) assert, “Teaching that makes the rules of phonics clear will ultimately be more successful than teaching that does not.” Further to this, according to Rayner et al (2002, p.91), learners who are directly taught phonics become better at reading, spelling and comprehension so reading must be grounded in a solid understanding of the connections between letters and sounds.

In SA teaching phonics would be especially important because many languages are spoken throughout the country, and although these languages use the Roman alphabet, there is a variation in the way they use the letters of this alphabet. However emphasising phonics is not sufficient. Learners need to be equipped with skills that would enable them to comprehend the text at both superficial and deeper cognitive levels.

### **3.4.2. Critiques of bottom-up models**

The bottom-up approach continues to be supported by many FP educators who believe that a good reader is one who can read with fluency and expression and pronounces the words correctly (Pretorius, 2002). However, when these learners enter the IP they often battle with the content as they have not acquired the necessary comprehension skills. Good readers, rather, are those who are able to read at the independent level, which means that they should read with 98% decoding accuracy as well as have at least a 95% level of comprehension; and can

independently access information and effectively learn from texts appropriate to the recommended level (Pretorius, 2002).

Bottom-up theories of reading were recognized as inadequate and fell out of favour when it was realized that they did not take into account that the reader brings their own experiences and predictions about a text (Carell et al, 1988). Moreover, although the bottom-up approach provides a good account of the decoding, there is definitely more to reading than decoding. Whilst decoding is a necessary skill for reading, it is not sufficient (Pretorius, 2002). Learners who are able to decode might be only 'barking at the print' which means that they are able to read with fluency and correct pronunciation, but have no idea what they are reading (Pretorius, 2002). In other words they are learning to read aloud but are unable to read to learn (Pretorius, 2002). Readers ought to also use their background experiences and knowledge when reading a text in order to understand the message that the writer is conveying. Thus it can be said that the purpose of reading is comprehension.

### **3.5. Top-down models of reading**

The trend that followed the bottom-up, decoding approach was the top-down approach (Clark and Silberstein, cited in Grabe, 2000) which regarded meaning as the centre of the reading process (Verbeek, 2010, p.20). Top-down methods of reading focus on what the reader brings to the text and proceed from whole to part thus do not see reading as involving the processing of each letter and word. Thus the assumption that decoding precedes comprehension is considered inaccurate. Rather, reading is viewed as a cyclical process, as opposed to being a linear process, and involves the use of visual, perceptual, syntactic and semantic processes which all play a fundamental role in comprehension (Verbeek, 2010, p.20). Gove (1983) identifies the following features of the top-down approach to reading:

- A selection of text can be understood by the reader although each word is not recognised.
- Grammatical cues and meaning ought to be used by the reader to identify unrecognised words.

- The main purpose of reading is comprehension as opposed to the mastery of letters, letter/sound relationships, and words.
- Meaning activities are necessary in teaching rather than the mastery of a series of word-recognition skills.
- The reading of sentences, paragraphs, and whole selections of text should be the educator's focal point.
- The amount and kind of information gained through reading is the principal feature of reading.

According to Brown (1994), Goodman provided a definition of reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game. Grabe (2009) explains that according to this model, a reader generates expectations about the upcoming text, samples minimally from the text as needed, confirms expectancies and generates new predictions. Initially this model gained popularity and was widely accepted but was later criticized because good readers do not necessarily guess what words will appear next, it does not adequately represent the process of fluent reading and does not account for how readers attach meaning to a text (Grabe, 2009).

Thus by the late 1970s, Clark and Silberstein (cited in Grabe, 2000) expanded on Goodman's model and characterized reading as an active process of comprehension where readers construct meaning by bringing information, knowledge, experience, culture and emotion to the printed word in a process which has come to be known as schema theory that highlights the top-down side of the reading process (Brown, 1994). This approach emphasized readers' own experiences and predictions about a text and focused on how learners understand the text from the general to the particular (Brown 1994). Thus reading was not seen as extracting meaning form the text, but rather giving meaning to the text. This theory argued that a high degree of background knowledge could overcome linguistic deficiencies. Additionally Grabe (2000) claimed that a lack of schema activation is one major source of processing difficulty with second language readers and it provides a strong rationale for comprehension and pre-reading strategy training.

Coady (cited in Grabe, 2000) also reinterpreted Goodman's model by attaching three components to the reading process which are process strategies, background knowledge and conceptual abilities. Beginning readers focus on process strategies (word identification) whereas more proficient readers shift attention to more abstract conceptual abilities and make better use of background knowledge (Grabe, 2000).

However, in spite of this development in thinking, Pretorius and Currin (2010) state that when many South African educators teach reading much emphasis is placed on decoding skills which are often taught in a haphazard, decontextualised and superficial manner. Teachers assume that because their learners can decode, they can also comprehend. Therefore little attention is given to reading comprehension, which means that the switch from decoding words from the chalkboard to meaningful reading activities using a variety of texts does not occur easily (Pretorius & Currin, 2010). Also, according to Long and Zimmerman (2008), educators expect their learners to first decode letters and words before any comprehension skills are taught as was found in the school where this research is being conducted (Nehal, unpublished thesis). Another misconception highlighted by Verbeek (2010) is that educators have long assumed that because learners are able to decode, they would automatically develop comprehension skills. In addition to this, Brown (1994) states that educators assume that learners will learn good reading skills by absorption but in reality, there is much to be gained by focusing on these skills. He also explains that learners often develop good memory skills and may thus appear to be reading independently because they remember what was read in the text in a previous lesson, for instance. As in the rest of SA, teachers in the school where this study is being conducted tend to focus more on teaching learners decoding skills using the phonological or bottom-up approach.

### **3.5.1. Applications of top-down models**

Verbeek (2010) states that within this top-down paradigm, reading is primarily a meaning-making activity. Thus teaching should proceed from whole to part so learners should first be introduced to whole sentences and paragraphs (in authentic and meaningful texts), and work their way down to learning about smaller units like words, letters and sounds. The shift from the emphasis on decoding to

comprehension implies that reading should always make sense rather than focusing on reading aloud with accuracy. Therefore learners are encouraged to talk about books in book clubs in school as opposed to answering factual comprehension questions (Verbeek, 2010). The role of the educator, within this child-centred approach, is that of a facilitator of reading who adapts materials and methods based on the specific needs and interests of the learners (Verbeek, 2010).

Furthermore the link between reading and writing is made so learners write for genuine purposes (e.g. job application letters, recipes, instructions etc.). Moreover, genuine literature and a variety of genres must be used to teach learners reading. According to Verbeek (2010) these materials must be set up in a classroom library so that learners can have easy access to them.

In addition to this Eskey and Grabe (1988, p.229-231) provide two teaching strategies which could be combined within a single programme when designing a reading programme structured within the top-down paradigm. Firstly the reading lab approach allows learners to choose their own reading texts from a selection provided by the educator. Thus each learner is able to develop at his or her own rate. Secondly the content-centred approach allows for the educator to provide for interesting and sufficient reading on a particular theme for the whole class to explore.

### **3.5.2. Critiques of top-down models**

Top-down theories of reading were criticized because if learners have no prior knowledge of the topic, they may experience difficulties with reading and may be unable to complete the pre-reading activities designed to activate background knowledge (Grabe, 2000). Additionally, this approach was challenged as it was a model for fluent readers who are able to decode automatically but not for learners who are still developing reading skills as is the case with most second language readers so maybe it has a place as a descriptive model, but not as one to be drawn on in L2 teaching (Eskey, 1988). Further to this the reading lab approach is criticised as it limits group work and does not integrate reading and other parts of the

curriculum, whilst the content-centred approach is challenged because it limits the learners individual choice (Eskey & Grabe, 1988, pp.229-231).

Moreover, if one considers many SA schools, resources (textbooks, computers, photocopiers, books and reading material) and funds are scarce, classrooms are overcrowded and learners do not have access to libraries. This means that educators would have difficulties setting up classroom libraries and learners may not have even read a single book to enable them to participate in book club discussions. Further to this, not all learners come to school with the ability to speak or understand English so they may experience difficulties to communicate their thoughts and ideas during these book club sessions.

### **3.6. Interactive models of reading**

Bottom-up and top-down approaches to teaching were found to be deficient for many reasons, some of which have been discussed in 3.4.2. and 3.5.2. above. However each had significant value in explaining views of how reading takes place. Within this paradigm, Carell et al (1988) assert that rapid and accurate decoding of language is important especially for second language reading and that top-down methods have contributed to understandings of what fluent readers do as well as to the development of methods and materials that we now make use of. Thus the interactive or balanced model of reading gained popularity as it takes into account the strengths from the both the bottom-up and top-down and also avoids the deficiencies of each. An interactive model is an amalgamation of bottom-up and top-down processes and recognises that both have to interact concurrently throughout the reading process.

Two early proponents of this model are Rumelhart and Stanovich (Samuels and Kamil, 1988). In addition to these two models, Anderson and Pearson's (1988) schema-theoretic view, Mathewson's (1994) model of attitude influence, and an interactive activation model for word identification and comprehension will be briefly discussed.

### **3.6.1 Rumelhart's Interactive Model**

Rumelhart's interactive model of successful reading is viewed as both a cognitive and a perceptual process and demonstrates how syntactic, semantic, orthographic and lexical information can affect the reader's perception and text processing (Samuels & Kamil, 1988). Samuels and Kamil (1988) state that each of these knowledge sources provides input simultaneously and exerts influence on text processing and the reader's interpretation of the text. Thus these components need to interact with each other and the higher-order stages influence the processing of the lower order stages. In Rumelhart's model the following occurs during the reading process (Samuels & Kamil, 1988). Firstly, graphic information enters the process through a Visual Information Store. Secondly a cognitive Feature Extraction Device selects the important features of the graphic input. Next a Pattern Synthesizer takes this information along with semantic, lexical, orthographic, syntactic, and pragmatic knowledge (context) in order to produce the most plausible interpretation for the graphic input. Lastly the reading process is the result of the parallel application of sensory and non-sensory sources of information.

### **3.6.2 Stanovich's Interactive-Compensatory Model**

As neither bottom-up nor top-down models of reading addressed all facets of reading comprehension, Stanovich introduced the interactive-compensatory model which took into account the strengths of the bottom-up and top-down approaches. Samuels and Kamil (1988) state that according to this model, readers rely on both bottom-up and top-down processes simultaneously and alternately depending on the reading purpose, motivation, schema and knowledge of the subject. The 'compensatory mode' is incorporated to this model with the interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing and enables the reader to compensate for reading deficiencies at any level. Through this model researchers have been able to theorise how good and poor readers approach a text. If there is a deficiency at an early print-analysis stage, higher order knowledge structures will attempt to compensate. For the poor reader, who may be slow and inaccurate at word recognition but who has knowledge of the text-topic, top-down processing may allow for this compensation. Thus if one of the

processors (orthographic, lexical, syntactic and semantic) fails, other processors will assist with comprehension (Samuels & Kamil, 1988).

### **3.6.3 Anderson and Pearson's Schema-Theoretic View**

In 1977, Anderson wrote a paper in which he explained that schemata provided an account of how prior knowledge might influence the manner in which a person acquires new knowledge. As it was a vital counterbalance to bottom-up theories of reading, schema theory was immediately applied to understanding the reading process. The schema-theory approach to reading emphasises that reading involves both the bottom-up information from the perceived letters coming into the eye and the use of top-down knowledge to construct a meaningful representation of the content of the text (Anderson & Pearson, 1988). A very simple definition of schema theory is that all a person's knowledge is organised into units of knowledge (schemata) wherein information is stored. Thus schema is a description for understanding how knowledge is represented and used. This theory states that schemata represent knowledge about objects and their relationship with other objects, events, actions and their sequences and situations (Anderson, 1977). This means that people have schemas for everything they experience. These units of knowledge start developing even before learners begin school and are based on everything they experience (Anderson, 1977). When they begin reading, their schemas are activated so that they can make sense of what they are reading (Anderson & Pearson, 1988).

For example upon entering school, a child comes across the word cow. Within the schema of that word, a child might have knowledge of an animal that is used for its meat, milk and hide. Children who have visited petting farms may have encountered tame cows that they were permitted to milk and would have schemas of fun and happiness but for children who have the chore of caring for their family's cattle after school, fatigue and boredom may be part of their schemas, whilst discomfort and fear may be part of a child's schema who has witnessed someone being charged at by a raging cow. Therefore based on a person's experiences, schema is developed and as the person's experiences change, so do their schemas. This concept of

schema is particularly important in the SA context as many educators and learners come from different cultural backgrounds. If one considers the same word cow, for African learners and educators this word would activate schemas of wealth and celebrations like weddings because cows are slaughtered at some festivals and are given by the groom to the bride's family (lobola). On the other hand, for Hindus, slaughtering this animal for its meat would be offensive as it is against their religion to eat the meat of a cow but would instead have schemas of religious festivals and worship. As a result when reading a text pre-reading activities which activate the learners' schema is important as it would not only help the learners to understand the text and build on their existing schemas, but would also help the educator to understand the learners' schema and thus explain the writer's intention to facilitate their understanding of the text and develop their existing knowledge.

#### **3.6.4 Mathewson's Model of Attitude Motivation**

Mathewson (1994) developed a model of attitude influence on reading and learning to read which addresses the role that attitude and motivation play in reading. Attitude is described as tri-componential construct. The three components are the cognitive component (evaluation), the affective component (feeling) and the conative component (action readiness) which together influence the reader's intention to read (the primary mediator between attitude and reading) which in turn affects the reader's reading behaviour (Mathewson, 1994, p.1136). Further to this Mathewson (1994) explains that, "Attitude toward reading includes evaluations of content and purpose, feelings about engaging in a particular kind of reading, and action readiness for initiating or sustaining reading activity". Mathewson (1994, p.1135) defines reading as a "commitment to a plan for achieving one or more reading purposes at a more or less specified time in the future."

Within this model, emotional factors, prior knowledge, purpose, motivation and external motivators affect the attitude-reading relationship by influencing the intention to read (Mathewson, 1994). This model explains that it is crucial to deal with affective concerns when developing learners' reading skills and provides a response to how

motivation may alter. Motivation and attitude may be affected during reading by modifying the reader's goals or by providing feedback relating to the satisfaction with the ideas and affect developed through reading, the ideas constructed from the information that was read, the feelings generated by ideas from the reading process and how goals, self-concept and values were affected (Mathewson, 1994). Thus, whilst it is important to provide learners with interesting texts to enhance their intention to read, sometimes learners have to read texts which they may not necessarily find interesting. However, according to this model of reading, the educator can evoke the learners' interest by identifying their purpose for reading the text, discussing the worthiness of its content and engaging learners in conversation about their opinions and feelings toward what they have read.

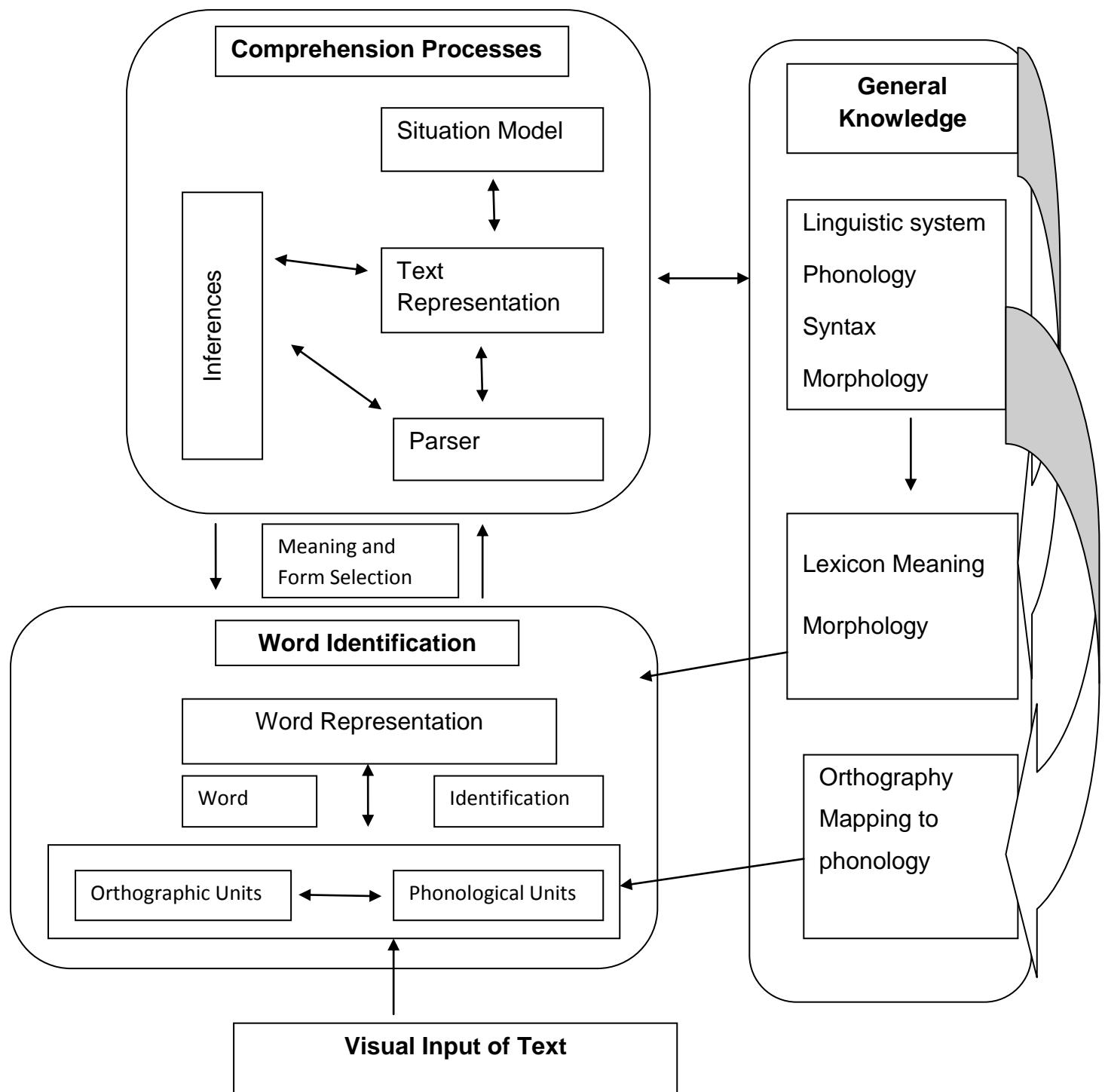
### **3.6.5 Perfetti, Landi and Oakhill's Interactive Activation Model of Reading**

Perfetti, Landi & Oakhill's model of reading aims to understand how people acquire the skill of comprehending what they read (2005). According to Perfetti, Landi and Oakhill (2005, p.228):

“Comprehension occurs as the reader builds a mental representation of a text message. This situation model is a representation about what the text is about. The comprehension processes that bring about this representation occur at multiple levels across units of language: word level, (lexical processes), sentence level (syntactic processes), and text level. Across these levels, processes of word identification, parsing, referential mapping and a variety of inference processes all contribute, interacting with the reader's conceptual knowledge, to produce a mental model of the text.”

Figure 3.6.5. shows the components of reading comprehension from identifying words to comprehending a text. Adapted from Perfetti, Landi & Oakhill (2005).

**Figure 1: An Interactive Activation Model of Reading (Perfetti, Landi & Oakhill, 2005)**



The two main categories of processing events as seen in this model are the identification of words (bottom-up) and the engagement of mechanisms that assemble these words into messages (top-down). Perfetti et al (2005) state if the reader is unable to identify the words and retrieve their meanings, comprehension will not occur. Development in all components is necessary for developing skill in reading comprehension. Orthographic and phonological processes occur almost at the same time to lead to word retrieval at the word identification level. Word identification leads to the process of activating and constructing meaning at the next level of reading, which are comprehension processes.

These comprehension processes result in three levels of representation of the meaning of a text. Firstly the sentence level representation (surface level), which is a word-for-word reproduction of the text being read. Secondly is the proposition level of representation, in which the reader extracts the main ideas from the literal text. With word meaning available, sentence is parsed to establish connections between words leading to construction proposition level meaning. Last is the situation model, which is the highest level representation of the text's meaning and represents the integrated situation described in a text. Extending beyond literal and propositional representations, situation models describe the representation constructed when readers assimilate and update what they already know about the topic into a more compound and holistic conceptualisation of it (Perfetti et al, 2005). The following processes which are necessary for reading comprehension are explained by Perfetti et al (2005): higher level factors in comprehension, the linguistic-conceptual machinery for comprehension, and word identification, decoding and phonological awareness.

### **3.6.5.1 Higher level factors in comprehension (Perfetti et al, 2005, pp. 232-237)**

Inference making, sensitivity to story structure and comprehension monitoring are highlighted as they are crucial sources of both comprehension acquisition and comprehension problems. These three factors are also included in the CAPS IP FAL (DoBE, 2011) document. Firstly, there are two types of inferences; gap-filling and

text connecting. Writers often do not explicitly explain every detail, but expect the reader to draw inferences in order to understand what is going on. If one considers the sentences, “Ayanda put on his helmet with a frown. The motorbike sped off leaving behind the sound of spinning tyres and a cloud of smoke.” Inferring that Ayanda was displeased would be gap-filling. On the other hand inferring that Ayanda was riding a motorcycle would be text connecting. However, if the reader has no prior knowledge of motorcycles, these text connecting and gap-filling inferences would not be possible so comprehension would be limited. In addition to this, processing limitations and not knowing when to draw inferences could distinguish the less-skilled reader from the skilled reader and where the emphasis has been squarely on correct pronunciation, and reading as a public performance, not much on meaning, learners have not been supported in developing skills needed in making inferences.

Secondly, Perfetti et al (2005) state that low reading comprehension may be associated with low monitoring performance. By monitoring comprehension, the skilled reader is able to validate her/his understanding and make repairs where this understanding does not make sense by rereading the apparent inconsistency. Monitoring enables the reader to identify spelling errors, syntactic errors and contradictory sentences which will help the reader to make sense of what is being read.

Thirdly, understanding the linguistic styles and layouts of the different genres of texts is vital as this sensitivity to story structure may assist the reader to scaffold their mental representation of the text. For instance, the educator tells the learners that they are going to be reading a newspaper article. Learners who are familiar with the conventions of this genre would know to expect a text that is probably dramatic and event orientated and would look out for bias and persuasive language whereas learners who are unfamiliar with the conventions of the genre might take longer to unpack what is going on in the article. The reading process described in CAPS (2011, p.10-11) states that before reading a text, its title and first and last paragraphs

must be read. Perfetti et al (2005) explain that by doing so, the reader could be provided with helpful insight into the characters and setting.

### **3.6.5.2 The Linguistic-Conceptual Machinery for Comprehension (Perfetti et al, 2005, pp. 237-242)**

Syntactic processing, working memory systems and building conceptual understanding from words are higher level aspects of comprehension that convert sentences into propositional meaning (basic semantic content). Knowledge about semantic forms and the meaning of words is necessary to obtain propositional meaning.

Firstly, syntax is not much of an issue if a person is reading a text in their Home Language as the reading uses the same grammatical knowledge as the grammar that was acquired naturally at home before beginning school. However, when reading at school, transferring the syntax acquired at home, during a child's early years, may not necessarily be sufficient because written texts use a more complex and formal syntax. As the syntax that children acquire at home differs, this could explain why some learners are more skilled at reading comprehension than others and why less-skilled readers experience a wide range of problems with morphology and syntax. Thus gaining experience with syntactic structures that are common in written texts and not spoken language would enable the reader to comprehend the text. The issue of reading in a foreign language that uses a different syntax to the language acquired at home is not addressed by Perfetti et al (2005). One could possibly conclude that based on the learner's experience with syntactic structures in the foreign language, their reading comprehension would differ. Those who are familiar with the syntax used in the language's written texts would be better at understanding what they are reading whilst those who are more familiar with its spoken syntax (television influence) would encounter difficulties with comprehension.

Secondly Perfetti et al (2005, p.238) state, "Understanding a sentence involves remembering words within the sentence, retrieving information from preceding text, parsing the sentences, and other processes that require resources. Working memory

- one or more systems of limited capacity that both store and manipulate information
- is a bottleneck for these processes.”

It is this active working memory system as opposed to a short-term memory store that is necessary for skill in reading comprehension. Included in the working memory system are different subsystems like the one that is designed for holding and manipulating phonological information. This phonological working memory has a direct link to reading as poor reading comprehension may be attributed to poor memory for words that were recently heard from spoken language. Additionally phonological memory processes may affect comprehension of written texts through the development of word identification. Phonological knowledge prior to literacy could enhance comprehension by either one or both of the following pathways. The first possibility is the causal path from early phonological knowledge through word identification to later comprehension and the second is a pathway from phonological processing to listening comprehension to reading comprehension.

Thirdly it is commonly accepted that knowledge of word meanings and comprehension proficiency are related. If a person does not know what the words in a text mean, comprehension would be hindered. However it is not possible for a person to know the meanings of all the words in a text all the time. Although consulting a dictionary to find the meanings of unfamiliar words could be useful, it becomes time consuming. Thus developing the skill of inferring the meaning of words from the context would result in vocabulary growth from comprehension skill and vice versa.

### **3.6.5.3 Word Identification, Decoding and Phonological Awareness (Perfetti, 2005, pp.242-244)**

Word level processing in comprehension cannot be dismissed because the meanings of words are central to comprehension. If the reader is unable to identify some of the words, they will not be able to understand those words and would thus find comprehension of the text difficult. It is explained that acquiring word representations is a process that begins with being completely dependent on

phonological coding of printed word forms to a process that retrieves words rapidly based on their orthography. As these word reading skills are expanded comprehension is less restrained by word identification and more influenced by other aspects. Thus it can be said that word level processing is not the only part of comprehension. “However it is a baseline against which to assess the role of higher-level processes in comprehension such as comprehension monitoring, and inference making” (Perfetti et al, 2005, p.242).

#### **3.6.5.4. Summary**

Perfetti et al (2005, p.245) state that comprehension monitoring, question answering (educator generated) and question generation (learner self questioning), use of semantic organisers, summarisation of texts and instruction in story structure are some categories of comprehension instruction that have been found to be effective. Furthermore, Perfetti et al (2005, pp.246-247) make the following assumptions:

- Comprehension skills and their related components improve with reading and spoken experience.
- There is a reciprocal relationship between reading and listening comprehension but this does not imply that the two are in any way equal.
- Word identification limits comprehension in the initial stages of reading development.
- Knowledge of word meanings is fundamental to comprehension.
- Application of a high standard of coherence to understanding a text is essential for high levels of comprehension.

#### **3.6.6. Applications of Interactive Models**

According to Verbeek (2010, p.29) the NCS supports balanced or integrated approaches and emphasises the following five components of teaching reading:

- Phonemic awareness instruction
- Phonics instruction

- Fluency instruction
- Vocabulary instruction
- Text comprehension instruction.

Verbeek (2010) states that focussing on just these five aspects has been criticised as being too narrow so five additional aspects must also be taken into account when teaching learners how to read:

1. Providing access to interesting texts.
2. Matching readers with appropriate texts.
3. Recognising that reading and writing have positive reciprocal effects.
4. Creating a balance with whole class teaching, small group and side-by-side instruction.
5. Making expert tutoring available.

The following suggestions of classroom implications and applications of the interactive approach are made (Carell et al,1988). Firstly, learners can be assisted to develop their bottom-up skills by developing their vocabulary and grammatical skills. This means that the educator must include instruction on cohesive devices of the language and their function across sentences and paragraphs as well as pre-teaching vocabulary and background knowledge concurrently. Secondly their top-down processing skills can be developed by building background knowledge which will help the learners to predict which prior, existing knowledge to access. Moreover activating background knowledge using text-mapping strategies and developing predictive skills, gives the reader a purpose for reading. Thus when observing the participants' lessons, my observation schedule will refer to the above- mentioned categories in order to determine whether these are being used as the educators work to develop their learners' reading skills. Furthermore, when analysing the transcriptions from the interviews, I will be interested to see whether the participants

were taught to read, were trained to teach reading and currently teach reading in the above-mentioned manner.

### **3.6.7. Teaching reading for meaning to ESL learners in the SA context: a discussion of CAPS**

The Department of Basic Education has revised and amended the curriculum so the NCS (2002) will be replaced by CAPS (2011). The implementation plan is as follows: Grades 1, 2, 3 and 10 in 2012, Grades 4, 5, 6, and 11 in 2013 and Grades 7, 8, 9 and 12 in 2014. Burt, Ridgard and Botha (2012, p.6) summarise the principals of CAPS as follows:

- “access to education that is equal and promotes the rectifying of past disparities in education;
- promotion of teaching methodology that is effective, to replace outdated styles of rote teaching;
- education provided to learners that is internationally competitive in terms of its content and quality;
- a high standard of academic attainment, that progresses in complexity in each grade;
- education that embraces diversity and caters for a range of learners;
- education that is characterised by value of South Africa’s unique history and respect for its Constitutional values.”

According to the CAPS FAL IP policy document:

“Language development takes place within a **balanced approach** to learning and teaching where skills-based and comprehension-based approaches are combined to address the needs of all learners.”

FAL in the IP has a teaching time of five hours per week. Within a two week cycle, reading is allocated five hours in Grades 4 and 5, and 4 hours in Grade 6, listening and speaking two hours and writing and presenting two hours in Grade 4 and 5 and 3 hours in Grade 6. Whilst language structures and conventions must be integrated

within the time allocation of the four language skills, one hour is allocated for formal practice.

### **“The reading process**

The reading process consists of the pre-reading, reading and post reading stages.

The activities the learner will be engaged in can be summarised as follows:

#### **Pre-reading:**

- Activating prior knowledge
- Looking at the source, author, and publication date.
- Reading the first and last paragraphs of a section.
- Making predictions.

#### **Reading:**

- Pause occasionally to check your comprehension and to let the ideas sink in
- Compare the content to your predictions
- Use the context to work out the meaning of unknown words as much as is possible; where this is not possible, use a dictionary
- Visualise what you are reading
- Keep going even if you don't understand a part here and there.
- Reread a section if you do not understand at all. Read confusing sections aloud, at a slower pace, or both.
- Ask someone to help you understand a difficult section
- Add reading marks and annotate key points
- Reflect on what you read

#### **Post reading:**

- If you will need to recall specific information, make a graphic organiser or outline of key ideas and a few supporting details
- Draw conclusions
- Write a summary to help you clarify and recall main ideas.
- Think about and write new questions you have on the topic
- Ask yourself if you accomplished your purpose.
- Understanding – confirm your understanding of the text

- Evaluate – bias, accuracy, quality of the text
- Extend your thinking – use ideas you saw in text”

(DOBE, 2011, pp.10-11)

However, learners will not be able to master the above-mentioned skills if they are unable to decode the text with fluency and accuracy. According to an educator's guide designed by Maskew, Miller & Longman (2011), when assessing learners' reading aloud skills the following criteria should be assessed:

Prepared reading (reading aloud)

- Use of tone, pace, eye contact
- Pronounce words without distorting meaning

Unprepared reading (reading aloud)

- Read fluently according to purpose
- Pronounce words without distorting meaning
- Use tone, pace, eye contact

Pronunciation can be defined as the production of sounds that we use to make meaning (Yates, 2002). According to Yates (2002, p.1)), “It includes attention to the particular sounds of a language (segments), aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual sound, such as intonation, phrasing, stress, timing, rhythm (suprasegmental aspects), how the voice is projected (voice quality) and, in its broadest definition, attention to gestures and expressions that are closely related to the way we speak a language.” Yates (2002) asserts that pronunciation is important because the way a person speaks conveys something about them. Learners with good pronunciation are more likely to be confident and understood even though they make mistakes in other areas. On the other hand, learners who have perfect grammar but who have difficulty with pronunciation may not be understood because their pronunciation may distort the meaning of the message they are trying to convey and they may be judged as incompetent, uneducated or lacking in knowledge (Yates, 2002). Furthermore, these learners will avoid speaking in English which could result in social isolation, employment difficulties and limited opportunities for further study (Yates, 2002).

In addition to focusing on learners comprehension skills, when developing learners' reading skills, emphasis should also be placed on pronunciation and punctuation, vocabulary development and language structures and conventions. According to CAPS (DoBE, 2011, p.12), "Through interacting with a variety of texts, learners extend their use of vocabulary and correctly apply their understanding of language structures and conventions...Create activities related to these texts that will enable the learners to use these items, in context." Thus vocabulary and language activities must be selected from and placed within the context of the text that the learners have read. A list of grammatical structures and conventions as well as vocabulary development that learners are required to identify, understand and use in the IP is provided in the CAPS document (DoBE, 2011, pp.18-21). The question that now arises is whether the participants are familiar with these expectations and whether they have received the necessary training to enable them to work with this new policy document. In addition to this, it would be important to note which of these strategies the participants are currently using when teaching their learners how to read.

### **3.7. Teaching reading teachers**

Pavy (2006) states that research has shown that teacher personality and belief is the greatest contributing factor to learner success. Additionally Rios (1996) contends that the teacher's knowledge, beliefs and theories, have the most profound influence on their classroom. Moreover, studies conducted in South Africa have concluded that teaching practices account for a more significant variance in achievement than smaller class sizes, more teaching resources, higher qualifications or more experience (Fleisch, 2008). The focus of this research was to investigate the past and current reading practices of three IP educators. Their early experiences and primary and secondary school experiences of learning reading, and their tertiary and in-service training of teaching learners how to read will be investigated in order to determine how these may have shaped their current practices. Thus I will now review literature regarding teacher belief and how this may influence their practice, and research regarding the training of effective reading educators. These aspects

will provide a better understanding of why educators teach in the way that they do, which is helpful in the analysis of the data that will be collected for this research.

### **3.7.1. Educators' experiences and beliefs about learning and teaching reading**

Klausewitz (2005) states that all student teachers bring rich experiences and images into the classroom that affect their attitudes, approaches, and decision-making. Studies conducted on qualified educators have had similar conclusions. For instance, Kagan (1992), Richardson (1996), Johnson (1999) and Borg (2003) contend that educators' beliefs and experiences influence their behaviour and the decisions they make in the classroom. In Klausewitz's (2005) study, it was found that life experiences (from activities such as parenting, travel, reading, and community involvement) were entrenched in the perceptions of the student teacher. These serve as a filter through which decisions were made in the classroom. Moreover, these life experiences provided connections that could be built on or barriers which might be reconstructed. Thus teacher education should include the need for promotion of the examination of prior life experiences to integrate self-knowledge with theory and practice and to eliminate possible obstacles to the development of effective teaching practices (Klausewitz, 2005).

The personality, educational and professional experiences in an educator's life are usually very influential on the development of their teaching styles (Borg, 2003). Kagan (1992) further states that most research in this field found that teachers' beliefs would be evident in their teaching style. Moreover, Johnson (1999) contends that the manner in which teachers make their instructional judgments and decisions are usually based on their beliefs. Therefore, exploring teachers' beliefs and finding out how these beliefs change is important in order to understand the teachers' classroom practices (Richardson, 1996).

The over-emphasis in SA schools on decoding when teaching learners reading may be a result of the poor education that many educators received when they were at school. During the apartheid era black learners were subjected to an education policy, Bantu Education, which restricted them to achieve what the government at

the time considered to be relevant for their opportunities in life (Mgqwashu, 2007). It is common knowledge that during the apartheid era many black South Africans were disadvantaged in terms of the quality of education they received as well as socially and economically. As a result many lived in over-crowded, impoverished conditions. Not only did they not have access to necessities like electricity and running water, they could not afford to purchase luxury items like books and magazines. It is against this landscape that many black South Africans lived and raised their families.

Furthermore Sachs (2002) states that in comparison with schools reserved for other population groups, black schools were afforded little attention and funding so they lacked facilities and valuable resources like textbooks and were also often over-crowded. Therefore the weak reading abilities of our learners could be attributable to the fact that teachers did not get an education that prepared them to adequately teach and develop reading skills. It was the belief of the apartheid government that by limiting people's education, their access to knowledge would be limited and thus, their power within the country would be limited (Sachs, 2002). For our learners to succeed in mainstream economy, they should learn to comprehend what they are reading. Those who cannot may be socially and economically disadvantaged and could be marginalized.

According to Davids (2009), an uneven landscape in terms of teacher development in SA was created by Bantu Education as it did not make quality education accessible to black South Africans. Further to this Keevy (2006) states that most black teachers started teaching even though many of them did not necessarily complete the highest grade of secondary school (cited in Davids, 2009). Moreover, if educators do not receive quality training and development, the overall quality of education will be negatively affected (Davids, 2009). Additionally Verbeek (2010) found that the manner in which educators teach reading is generally in line with their beliefs about reading. The participants selected for this research are part of the generation of learners who received instruction under Bantu Education. Thus their current teaching practices may be influenced by the poor education and training that they may have received.

### **3.7.2. Educators' training of teaching learners how to read**

Verbeek (2010, p.74) provides the following list of what effective reading teachers do, taken from Wray (1998), and Wray et al. (2000, 2002).

- Reading is contextualised, starting with the text, teaching grammar, phonics, spelling and so forth in the context of the text.
- Critical thinking and literate behaviour is modelled extensively.
- Reading aloud by the educator occurs frequently as does listening to the learners reading aloud.
- Learners are assisted to make links between the text, words and sentences by using their knowledge of language.
- Learners are probed as to how literacy decisions were made and what conclusions they have drawn.
- Learners are encouraged to speak openly and clearly about their reading and writing.
- Learners' attention is engaged on the current task, time limits are provided and lessons are focussed, beginning with a purposeful introduction and end with a conclusion that reviews the learning experience.
- Learners are taken through a process of interaction between existing knowledge and new concepts whereby they are assisted to recognise and work from their existing knowledge.
- Group interaction is employed as a teaching strategy because it is recognised that learning is social process.
- That learning is a situated process is acknowledged, so meaningful learning contexts are provided.
- The metalinguistic process of learning is promoted.

All of the above are visible in the CAPS HL policy document as summarised in 3.6.7. above. The only point of contention is group interaction. Although this strategy was introduced and promoted by OBE in 1997, its implementation has been difficult in many SA classrooms. Firstly, if one considers the large class sizes, seating learners in groups is challenging and educators may become overwhelmed by the increase in noise levels. Secondly assessment is complicated because weaker learners may copy from the other members of the group. Furthermore educators have to be extremely vigilant to ensure that the learners are working on task which may not always be possible because the educator may not understand what the learners are discussing as learners may sometimes choose to communicate in a language that the educator does not understand. Lastly some learners may not contribute to the task assigned which may cause conflict within the group. On the other hand if implemented correctly, group work has many advantages which include peer support, the development of skills like listening, compromising, team work and self confidence. For these reasons educators must receive adequate training on how to manage group work activities and should rather use this strategy for activities that will not be recorded as formal assessments.

When teaching teachers how to teach reading, the following assumptions contribute to a quality reading programme (Moll & Drew, 2007). Firstly, the programme must be structured and sequenced to promote progression and links between its various elements. Secondly, students must be enabled to understand children's literature and its place in the reading programme. Thirdly, they must be given access to a number of theories which they must be able to apply and make choices among. Moreover, sufficient time must be allocated in the programme to the teaching of reading which ought to be proportionate to its importance in the school curriculum. Finally a quality programme should support the teaching of reading in multiple ways across the programme. In a study conducted at three universities in SA with education students it was found that there were no coherent links between modules within the programme, inadequate time was allocated to children's literature and in theory students could make choices about theories but could not necessarily apply them in the classroom (Moll & Drew, 2007).

Further to this, when teaching teachers at tertiary level, knowledge of the policy documents ought to be emphasised as this forms the basis for all teaching and learning. If an educator does not understand the policy document (CAPS) or does not achieve the prescribed outcomes a gap is created so the next educator has to first bridge the learners before starting with the current year's syllabus. For example, if by the end of Grade 4 a class of learners were not taught comprehension skills, the Grade 5 teacher will have the mammoth task of teaching learners how to extract information from the text that they are engaged with before other skills like skimming and scanning can be taught.

In addition to attending a tertiary institution, educators must engage in ongoing professional development as this would contribute to the creation and sustenance of effective schools (Davids, 2009) by enrolling to study further or attending workshops. These workshops must be designed to improve classroom practice and develop autonomous responsible thinking through transformative learning. Mezirow (1997, p.9) states, "Autonomy here refers to the understanding, skills, and disposition necessary to become critically reflective of one's own assumptions and to engage effectively in discourse to validate one's beliefs through the experiences of others who share universal values."

Transformative learning involves the process of changing a person's existing belief systems or frame of reference. Frames of reference (associations, concepts, values, feelings and conditioned responses acquired during one's lifetime) are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences and are composed of two dimensions (Mezirow, 1997, p.5). First are habits of mind which are habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting and are influenced by assumptions comprised of cultural, social, educational, economic, political or psychological codes. Second are points of view. Unlike habits of mind which are more difficult to change, points of view constantly change through reflection of the content or process by which we solve problems and identification of the need to adjust assumptions (Mezirow, 1997, p.6). Although educators existing frames of reference create a sense of comfort and security, to improve classroom practice they need to understand their preconceptions and misconceptions and change their habits of mind and points of

view, which can be achieved through critical reflection and development workshops. However, Mestry, Hendricks and Bisschoff (2009) state that educators are reluctant to attend development workshops as they find it too time consuming and many of these workshops rely heavily on team learning which the educators find too demanding. Thus it will be important to investigate whether the participants in this study received a tertiary qualification, whether they were adequately trained at tertiary level to teach reading and whether they attend effective, ongoing professional development workshops.

### **3.8. Conclusion**

In this section I dealt with aspects that influence and contribute to the data collection and analysis of data for this study. Thus definitions of reading, reading in a second language, the bottom-up, top-down and interactive approaches to reading, as well as a brief discussion of CAPS have been provided. A review of literature pertaining to how educators' beliefs, experiences and training affect their choice of methods and teaching practices was included. Key points worth recapping which are particularly relevant to the SA situation include the following. Firstly reading consists of both decoding and comprehension processes, which are vital for learners to make meaning of a text. Secondly comprehension is the most important part of reading. Thirdly comprehending a text involves being able to summarise key points, make inferences, critical thinking and making links between prior knowledge and the text. Lastly if educators do not understand and place value on the complexities involved in teaching reading for meaning and were not adequately trained at college or in subsequent workshops to teach reading for meaning, reading instruction in the classroom will be superficial resulting in a poor quality education system in SA.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings of the study**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

In this Chapter the findings from the data collection and analysis processes described in Chapter 2 will be presented and discussed. In addition to providing some background information of each participant, the findings will be based on the interviews and lesson observations and structured around the key research questions. These are:

1. What were the participants' experiences of learning to read at home, in primary school and in high school?
2. What pre-service and in-service training for teaching reading did they receive?
3. How have the experiences and training of these educators shaped their teaching of reading?
4. What challenges and barriers do these educators encounter when developing their learners' reading skills?
5. How have these experiences prepared the participants to implement the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in the Intermediate Phase (IP) in 2013?

I have changed the participants' names to Njabulo Maduna, Pearl Khumalo and Andile Nzimande to protect their identities.

#### **Presentation of findings**

##### **4.2. Njabulo Maduna: Grade 4**

###### **4.2.1. Background**

Njabulo lives in Pietermaritzburg with her children. She is a single parent who enjoys watching television in her spare time. Furthering her studies is the most important thing in her life at this point in time as she would like to improve her classroom practice and learn about different methods.

#### **4.2.2. What were the participants' experiences of learning to read at home, in primary school and in high school?**

Njabulo grew up with her mum and six sisters. She was the last born and did not know her dad. Her mum was a domestic worker and was illiterate. She recalls taking her sisters' books when she was young and looking at the pictures. Her older sister used to tell her stories, her favourite were the stories about King Shaka because he was a brave king. In their home everyone read newspapers for information, "just to know what is happening outside our world".

She began school in the early 1960's and first learnt to read in primary school. Although it was a small two-teacher school, she enjoyed her first experiences of being in school. The principal was a male and there was a female teacher who taught Grade 1 to 3 in a large classroom. She speaks fondly of this teacher and considers her to have been a good teacher from whom she learnt a lot. When describing how she was taught to read by this teacher, she explains that they were given papers with pictures. Underneath each picture were words which they had to say. Thereafter they would read whole sentences with the same words. Then they would turn to their storybooks and the same words were repeated in the story that they were reading. They learnt to read in IsiZulu from books called "Masansane Prescribed Books" and also read poems. She enjoyed these books because the stories had morals. It was her immediate older sister who used to help her with the reading homework they received because her mum and other sisters were already working.

In the early 1970's she began Form 1 (Grade 8) and completed JC (Grade 10). Her English teacher was a male who always told them "you must reach for the sky". He used themes to teach reading and after reading a passage from their reading books he would ask them questions relating to the story like what the story was about, if the learners enjoyed the story and the lessons they learnt from the story. At this stage all her sisters were working so she used to do her reading homework by herself.

#### **4.2.3. What pre-service and in-service training of teaching reading did they receive?**

Upon completing JC, she completed a two-year formal teacher's course at a teacher training college in Hammarsdale to teach in the Foundation Phase. She did not study to be a language teacher specifically but due to the circumstances of the school, she now teaches First Additional Language (FAL) in Grade 4. However, at college they were taught how to teach reading. She recalls them being taught how to use flashcards before reading the story. They were trained to ask learners which words were difficult and write these on the chalkboard. Thereafter they should explain the word using pictures or even the actual object and explain to learners how to use punctuation. After obtaining her certificate in the late 1970's, she completed her Matric (Grade 12). At present she is studying Advanced Certificate in Education-Management.

During her years of teaching, she has attended many workshops including Early Childhood Development and Outcomes Based Education (OBE). She also attended a workshop which dealt with using newspapers to teach reading which she has implemented in her classroom by bringing copies of the "Echo" newspaper for her learners to read. She says they particularly enjoy the stories of "Mkhize" and the activities linked to the story which is provided in this newspaper.

#### **4.2.4. How have the experiences and training of these educators shaped their teaching of reading?**

Njabulo explains that to be a better reading teacher, she needs to like what she is doing and to be positive. She describes how she teaches her learners how to develop their reading skills as follows:

"When I come in the classroom – I come in, I greet them, I tell them that they must take out their books and I tell them the page. I ask them to read for me as I did. I try to get the mistakes."

This means that she models how the text should be read before her learners begin decoding. Moreover she explained that these are pronunciation mistakes and although she also has difficulty pronouncing some English words when she reads,

she tries to model good reading practices and corrects her learners as best she can. Njabulo says that the methods she uses now are adapted from how she learnt to read; how she was taught to teach reading; and what she learnt from the workshops she attended (“I use the new methods and the old methods”).

This description is very similar to what was noted during the lesson observation. A summary of that lesson will now be provided. The whole class gathered on the floor in front of the class. The educator used a big book titled *Mr Sun and Mr Sea*. She asked questions about the title, author, illustrator and picture on the cover. When learners answered questions she reminded them to answer in full sentences. She also explained that this was a “traditional story” (folktale). She did not explain what a “traditional story” was or from which tradition the story originated. As a result it was not clear to the learners how this story connected to them. Thereafter she asked the learners what they saw in the picture. The learners responded by saying that they saw the sun, sea and clouds and Mr Sun’s house covered by the sea.

The whole class read the story from the big reader, altogether. The educator reminded them to read with expression. Upon watching the learners it was noticed that three learners were just moving their mouths to the rhythm as they could not decode. Therefore using this strategy (whole-class reading), could mean that it would be difficult for the educator to assess who is actually decoding and who is just moving the mouth. The pronunciation of the word ‘merrier’ was corrected. After all the learners read the whole story together the following discussion was held:

*Njabulo: How was the story?*

*All learners: The story was very interesting.*

*Njabulo: What was the story about?*

*Learner A: The story was about Mr Sun and Mr Sea.*

*Njabulo: What happened in the story?*

*Learner B: Mr Sun said Mr Sea to visit him. Mr Sea brings all his children and Mr Sun flush into the sea.*

*Educator: Okay, let us turn to the workbooks.*

It is unclear what learner B meant but the educator accepted this response and moved on to the next phase of the lesson. Workbooks were handed out. From page 26, the whole class read the instructions. The educator made a list of new words on the board and each word was spelt out (Eg. chimney: C H I M N E Y) and their meanings were explained. She switched to IsiZulu to facilitate understanding. She also discussed some language concepts like contractions (didn't and we'll) and past tense (jumped). After asking some textual questions (Eg. "Where was the house of the sun?, Who is inviting another one?, What made Mr Sun nervous?"), which the learners struggled to answer, the educator read the whole story to the class. She paused on four occasions to ask questions. She concluded the story but did not explain that the purpose of the folktale was to explain why the sun is in the sky and why it looks like it is rising from and setting in the sea. Thereafter the learners returned to their desks and group by group they read the same story again. By this time the learners were fidgety and were chatting amongst themselves so the educator had to repeatedly ask them to be quiet and listen. After each group read the story (often mispronouncing the words that the educator had mispronounced, like wondered was pronounced as wandered) the educator asked them to write down the new words and meanings in their personal dictionaries but at that point the siren wailed for break. Thus there was no written activity nor was there any individual reading.

As can be seen, the methods she uses seem to be a combination of how her high school educator developed her reading skills and how they were taught to teach reading at college. However she explained that she first models how to read the text and then learners read but it was observed that the learners first read the text and only when she saw that they did not understand the text, did she read to them.

#### **4.2.5. What challenges and barriers do these educators encounter when developing their learners' reading skills?**

The first challenge that Njabulo encounters when developing her Grade 4 learners' English reading skills is pronunciation which was discussed in 4.2.4 above. It is

difficult to correct her learners' pronunciation when she battles to pronounce certain words.

Secondly she explained that her current Grade 4 learners have learnt reading in IsiZulu only up until then. They completed Grade 1–3 before the implementation of CAPS. The schools' language policy offered IsiZulu as Home Language from Grade 1-7. Learners are introduced to English (FAL) in Grade 4. The language of learning and teaching (LOLT) was IsiZulu from Grade 1-3 and English from Grade 4-7. This means that this would be their first year encountering English and reading in English. For an educator who is not a specialised language educator this would be a mammoth task.

Lastly, she explained that her learners are unable to comprehend what they are reading. She says that they are able to "read" (decode) but they do not understand because they do not understand the language.

She said that she has discussed these challenges with her School Management Team (SMT), who have been very supportive and have tried their best to help. She did not explain how they assisted her or how helpful their interventions were.

#### **4.2.6. How have these experiences prepared the participants to implement CAPS in the IP in 2013?**

Njabulo stated that she is excited by the official implementation of CAPS in her grade next year. She has attended a workshop which was an hour long. This workshop introduced the educators to the CAPS policy document. When asked what CAPS says about teaching reading she said, "They stick more into shared reading, into shared reading." Although she does not feel very ready to implement CAPS next year she is already using methods from the document. For example, the use of Big Books is recommended by CAPS as a classroom resource (DoBE, 2011, p.14). A Big Book is a large-sized book which the educator uses whilst reading to the learners or engaging them in group or whole-class reading. Additionally, she tries to use aspects from the reading process described in this policy document (DoBE, 2011,

pp.10-11) like looking at the source, author and publication date, discussing difficult words and summarising what was read.

### **4.3. Pearl Khumalo: Grade 5**

#### **4.3.1. Background**

Pearl lives in Imbali by herself. She enjoys reading, watching television and socialising with people. The most important thing in her life is to see her family united, doing things together and planning a bright future together.

#### **4.3.2. What were the participants' experiences of learning to read at home, in primary school and in high school?**

Pearl grew up with her mum, dad, sister and older brother in Johannesburg. Her mum was a school principal and her dad was a sergeant in the police department. Pearl's mother taught her to read at an early age, before she began school. She would try to summarise what she had read and if she did not understand something she would ask her parents or consult a dictionary. Her earliest memories of reading include reading the bible in Sunday School, reading stories and writing her own stories which she used to read to other children. She especially enjoyed reading funny stories with her cousins. Her parents used to read magazines and her dad bought and read the newspaper daily. She says that he was addicted to newspapers but the rest of the family would also read them and her mum would ask them questions about what they had read in the newspaper. Moreover, her mother often told them stories which she thoroughly enjoyed, her favourite being the story about the three piglets because it taught her that if you want to get used to something you must go out and experience it.

She has fond memories of her primary school and spoke very highly of her first principal as he was somebody who encouraged the learners to turn to him and their teachers if they had a problem. Being a prefect and tea-girl (a learner who is in charge of making tea when visitors arrive at the school, a high status, sought-after position among the children) at the school built her confidence. Whilst many people nowadays may argue that learners are at school to learn and not make tea, giving

the learners such tasks develops both confidence and responsibility. Her primary school teacher taught them to read in English and taught them both the names of the letters (A, B, C) as well as phonics (ah, beh, keh). This teacher emphasised punctuation when reading and encouraged the learners to point with their fingers to follow where they were reading. This was reinforced at home because her mum also made her use her forefinger when she was completing her reading homework. Although the teacher used basal readers to teach reading at school, she would give her learners magazines to read as homework to teach them more about topics like flowers, insects or birds. Her sister helped with this homework sometimes but her mother seems to have been most instrumental as she would model how the story should be read and then Pearl would read, trying to imitate what her mother had done.

High school was also a good experience for Pearl. It was the first time she came into contact with people who spoke other languages (IsiZulu, Xhosa, Sotho but not other race groups). For this reason there were many dictionaries in their classroom as learners would be able to check the meanings of words from other languages if they did not understand what their peers were trying to say. She describes their language educator developing their reading skills by motivating them to read and developing their confidence. He would say' "We must not be afraid of anything. If you want to do something, have some confidence in yourself- tell yourself that this is me and I can do whatever I want." Her teacher used "Modern Graded English" and would give them poems to memorise and present in class. They were not taught how to analyse advertisements or cartoons but did get magazine and newspaper homework where they had to read articles or cut pictures associated with a particular theme. By that stage her sister had become a teacher so she used to help her with her homework.

#### **4.3.3. What pre-service and in-service training of teaching reading did they receive?**

Due to illness, Pearl had to leave school for one year but returned to complete her education at an adult school in KZN. Upon completing her Grade 12, she decided to

study to become a language educator because she liked English and was good at it in school. She studied at a teacher training college in Umlazi. Here they were taught to teach reading by reading stories and then summarising what they had read. Furthermore they were taught to teach learners the names of the letters of the alphabet as opposed to phonics. When asked whether there was an emphasis on teaching reading for meaning, Pearl said, "They used to say whenever we read, we must understand what we are reading and we must get the words through the dictionaries." They were not taught how to read a text critically.

During the seventeen years that Pearl has been a language educator she obtained a diploma and will be starting ACE next year at UKZN. Further to this she has attended several workshops like OBE, CAPS and assessment. Most of these workshops were organised by the DoE.

#### **4.3.4. How have the experiences and training of these educators shaped their teaching of reading?**

Pearl said that she believes that she can be a better language educator by learning how to teach reading to her learners more effectively and if she is able to learn about different methods that she could try in her classroom. By increasing her own knowledge base, she feels she will be better able to help her learners achieve what she wants them to achieve. She describes her current reading lessons as follows:

"Hmm, I first read a story for them- I first read a story for the learners, then for the first day I read the story and then after reading the story and then I just do the oral questioning to them, maybe what is it that you understand about the story, what was the story about. That was for the first day; that was normally on a Monday. Then on Tuesday I will just tell the learners to read the story on their own and then they can read the story on their own. After reading the story on their own, then we go over the questions with them and then I write the questions for them. Then the third day we will answer all the questions (written)... then we will mark the questions together."

In addition to this she explained that she does group, peer and individual reading. Her learners read from the textbooks and readers which are recommended by the DoE. She also encourages her learners to read magazines and newspapers and to consult dictionaries “so that they will be able to know there is a story and understand it correctly”. The day that I observed Pearl’s lesson she had the flu so she explained that she was unable to read to the learners. A summary of this lesson will now be provided.

The learners were given readers. They were seated in mixed ability groups of six. The first group was asked to read *The Shoemaker and the Elves* (aloud, together, to the rest of the class) which turned out to be a play script. Although the vocabulary and sentence structure was simple enough, this book would be obscure to the learners as the educator did not explain the conventions of the genre; that it was a play script which is different to a story. The entire group read (decoded) the entire script. Incorrect pronunciation was not corrected. As I looked around the class I noticed that the other learners were not following in the books and many books were closed. After the group read, they were asked what the story was about to which a learner said that it was about the shoemaker and the elves. When asked what about the shoemaker and the elves a learner responded that each night the elves made shoes to which the educator asked what else. Another learner replied that the elves made beautiful shoes. The next group was then instructed to read.

When the second group started reading a text called *Crocodiles*, I realised that each group had a different reader. So while one group was reading the other groups had to listen. I thought that this was an interesting way to develop learners’ listening skills, even though it would diminish time that ought to have been spent developing the learners’ reading skills. However the rest of the class were never asked questions to check if they had been listening. Again, the entire group read and were asked questions. The educator linked this text to Natural Science by explaining that crocodiles were reptiles.

The third group read *The Frog Prince*. The educator stopped them after a few pages of reading, as the story was long, and asked them what the part they read was about. They had read up until the part where the frog retrieved the ball for the princess yet they answered about things that were still to come in the story. Moreover the educator did not correct incorrect answers and did not seem to clearly understand the plot.

*Educator: Okay group three, we know the story is longer. Tell us what is happening there.*

*Learner A: The frog wanted to marry the princess.*

*Educator: The frog wanted to marry the princess. So what happened? Did he marry the princess?*

*Learner A: Yes.*

*Educator: Altogether group, did he marry the princess?*

*Whole group: Yes.*

*Educator: What happened after they were married?*

*Learner A: The frog want to marry the princess and change like a man.*

*Educator: Oh really! The frog want to change like a man (laughs). Was it a female frog?*

*Learner B: Yes*

*Educator: Oh really. Thank you. Group four?*

The next group read *William and his White Wheelchair*. By this point the other learners were fidgeting with their pens, talking and staring out the window. The educator corrected the pronunciation of the word ‘mechanic’ and asked learners the meanings of some difficult words (javelin, athletes and medals). The group was then asked to summarise what they read.

The next group read *A Medal for Nicky*. The pronunciation of the words ‘alive’ and ‘pinned’ were corrected and they had to read the whole sentence again. Like the other groups they answered oral questions and again if the learners gave incorrect responses they were not corrected.

The last group read *What is an elephant?* The pronunciation of ‘their’ was corrected. They were asked questions about the printer, publisher and writer. The educator also linked the lesson to Social Science and used an atlas.

*Educator: Who printed this book? The book is printed by whom? Who printed it? The book is printed by?*

*Learner A: It was printed in Cape Town.*

*Educator: It was printed in Cape Town. Very good! By whom? Who printed it in Cape Town?*

*Learner A: South Africa.*

*Educator: South Africa is the country. Cape Town is the? Cape Town is the what? If SA is the country, what is CT? Because SA has CT what do we call CT? What is CT? It falls under what CT in SA? Anyone can answer that?*

*Learner A: It's a province.*

*Educator: Very good, it's a province. Ok, it's a province. Good it falls under a province because CT is a town. What do we call the province? What do we call the province? When we say CT is a province what do we call it? Not as a city in SA or town in SA, but as a province! In SA, what do we call CT as a province? What province is it? How many provinces do we have anyway?*

*Learners: 9*

*Educator: Now in which province CT fall?*

*Learner B: KZN*

*Educator: No! Never, never! Anyone with an atlas please give him answers. Anyone with an atlas please give him answers. Anyone with an atlas please give him answers. No-one with an atlas? Ok, let's look at a page with SA. This is atlas. This is SA, this is CT. In which province is CT? In what province is CT? Of the nine provinces, which is this one, the one that has CT, which is this one, the one that has CT, which province is this one? Falls under what province? This is now history and geography. What is this province?*

Eventually a learner guessed Western Cape. Thereafter the educator picked one learner from each group to the front of the class to read a few pages until the end of

the lesson. There was no written activity nor was there any activation of prior knowledge, language extension and very little vocabulary development.

Based on her responses during the interview, one may have expected more dictionary work. However this lesson did have aspects of how she was taught reading and how she was trained to teach reading at the teacher training college in terms of reading and then summarising what the story was about.

#### **4.3.5. What challenges and barriers do these educators encounter when developing their learners' reading skills?**

Pearl explained that the greatest challenge she has when teaching reading to her learners is that the learners do not seem interested. If the educator displays enough interest in something the learners are likely to exhibit a degree of interest as well. Thus using strategies like pausing to make predictions, and having a clear understanding of the content could demonstrate her own interest and excitement in what is going on in the story which may result in her learners being more interested and making a greater effort. In addition to this she said that she finds it difficult because educators are not allowed to punish learners anymore, they are now expected to be patient and talk to them, and try to make them understand what is important in life.

A second challenge is the lack of parental support. Although the school makes every effort to get the parents to come in to discuss their child's progress or lack thereof, by sending letters or even telephoning them. She stated that the parents do not even take the time to look at their children's books.

During language committee meetings, these challenges were discussed. The SMT was informed and tried their best to assist by calling parents, yet still the parents do not go to the school.

#### **4.3.6. How have these experiences prepared the participants to implement CAPS in the IP in 2013?**

Pearl is very excited and welcomes the introduction of CAPS in her grade in 2013. She has already attended two CAPS workshops; the first dealt with how to teach reading (one hour long) and the second dealt with assessment (one hour long). They were also told to use DVD's, radios and plays to improve their learners' listening skills. Reading must be done in the mornings when learners' minds were fresh and alert and to encourage learners to read a variety of texts like magazines and different types of books.

Elements of CAPS were present in her lesson. For example, the types of questions she asked during the oral discussion after the group had read their text included looking at the source, author and publication date. Additionally learners were asked to summarise what they had read. These are all part of the reading process described in the policy document (DoBE, 2011, pp.10-11).

#### **4.4. Andile Nzimande: Grade 6**

##### **4.4.1. Background**

Andile lives in a rural area on the outskirts of a large city in KZN. He lives with his wife and two children. He has another child who lives with his wife's mother. In his spare time, Andile enjoys visiting his friends and watching soccer. He also enjoys writing stories and has won many competitions in the local newspapers. The most important thing in his life is giving his children a better life. He said, "The most important thing in my life is to make sure that my children get what I never get for myself, so I want to support them to learn, to achieve their goals- unlike myself; not to live in the same place like me- in fact to get more than what I achieved in my life."

##### **4.4.2. What were the participants' experiences of learning to read at home, in primary school and in high school?**

Andile's father was a bricklayer and his mother was a domestic worker. His father worked out of town a lot so he was often away from home. At home, reading was done mostly for pleasure. Everyone enjoyed reading novels and newspapers.

However, no-one at home taught or encouraged him to read before he began school. His grandmother did tell him stories which he really enjoyed.

He attended a primary school near the Vulindlela area. The school was in a church and was over crowded. He recalls his first teacher teaching him to read in English by teaching them the vowel sounds. Thereafter they began learning the consonant sounds, followed by blends. He learnt to read in IsiZulu from poems and readers, some of which he uses when he is teaching his learners. He found the poems especially enjoyable because they did actions whilst reciting the poem. It is also surprising to note that although their classes were over crowded all the learners were able to read on the same level. They did not get any homework and could not do any work at home because they wrote on slabs of slate which remained at school. However, his mother did extra work with him like practice spelling and rhymes.

He began school in 1984 but moved school several times due to political violence. These disruptions resulted in him completing school three later than he should have. Andile recalls the principal of the school being their language teacher in Grade 11 and 12. He developed their reading skills by teaching them how to pronounce the words and using dictionaries to help them to understand. As with the other two participants, meaning is associated with using a dictionary to understand isolated words and not using the text to work out what a word means in that context. He admits that they were never taught how to analyse a text critically, "in fact we are just suppose to vomit what we have been taught." Further to this, they were only exposed to textbooks that contained only stories and poems with very basic questions at the end of each text.

#### **4.4.3. What pre-service and in-service training of teaching reading did they receive?**

After leaving school, Andile wanted to pursue journalism, but because there was not much support from his family he studied to become a language teacher. He obtained a diploma from a college. Over the past few years he completed his ACE, ABET and Honours in Education through the University of SA.

During the interview, he said that he does not remember how they were taught to teach reading. Although he found the training college to be good, he feels that he was not adequately trained to teach reading, and most of what he learnt about developing his learners' reading skills was from workshops which he attended in the afternoons after school. At one of these workshops he explains that they were taught about different kinds of reading and how to find out whether the learners know the language.

#### **4.4.4. How have the experiences and training of these educators shaped their teaching of reading?**

To become a better reading teacher, Andile explained that he believes that he needs to attend more workshops and learn from teachers who know more about reading methods. He said that he uses textbooks and worksheets that contain all types of texts during his reading lessons. When asked how he teaches reading to his learners, he describes the following:

"Sometimes I can read and then ask them to read. If maybe it's going to the proof reading, I can read firstly and then ask them to read and then listen to them, find the various – and when they are not able to pronounce, write them down, not disturb them while they are reading. After they finish...So I will just tell the learner to read and then after that, when they finish maybe that paragraph then I will tell them, 'you were supposed to read like this and this word you were supposed to pronounce it.' They can say 'opportunity' so I leave them, when they finish the paragraph and then after that I go back and say, 'let us look at these words,' and then I give them an opportunity again. It is easy if it is an individual; it is difficult in a group because I am supposed to go around and listen because someone will be hiding with the others and be quiet but the manner is to find their mistakes and then correct them and then continue."

A summary of the lesson that was observed is now provided. The teacher greeted the class and went on to handout a copy of the poem to each learner. The learners

were seated in mixed ability groups of six. The poem was written by Peggy Dunstan and was titled *You can't depend on anything*.

The educator then asked learners what the title of the poem was and who the author was. Learners were asked to describe what they saw happening in the picture alongside the poem. A learner responded saying that he saw a boy kicking rubbish bins.

Each of the four groups was asked to decode the poem twice and the second paragraph a third time. Next one learner was asked to read the whole poem aloud to the rest of the class. A second learner was then asked to read the whole poem to the class and again, incorrect pronunciation was not corrected. However both learners decoded with fluency and clarity and observed the punctuation marks.

The educator began discussing the poem by asking the learners what figures of speech they saw in the poem. No one responded so the educator said, "Metaphor, simile, figures of speech." Again no one responded. The educator then asked the learners to look at a line 5. He proceeded to read the entire poem to the class. Upon completion he asked what figure of speech was present in that line ("we learn things as we grow"). The learners did not respond so the educator explained that it was a simile because it had the word 'as'. However, upon examination of that line, it is clear that although the word 'as' is present in the line it was not actually simile.

He then asked the learners what the boy learnt as he grew older but he had to repeat the question in IsiZulu as the learners did not understand his question. He also tried linking the poem to the learners' experiences by asking them what bad things they did. Next the educator tried to explain the message of the poem. The learners responded as follows:

*Educator: Is there any message in this poem for others? (Silence) So what is the message? (Silence) So what is this message?*

*Learner A: You can't depend on anything.*

*Educator: Message, you can't depend on anything. For example?*

*Learner B: You can't kick rubbish bins.*

*Educator: What is going to happen if you kick that? (Silence) What is going to happen? Why is it wrong?*

*Learner A: Is you can break your toe.*

*Educator: Is you can break your toe. What did he learn as he grew older?*

*Learner C: He learnt not to kick the tin.*

*Educator: Can you summarise, tell me all about, can you summarise this? (Silence) What is it about in your own words? (Silence) What advice it gives us except the advice that you can't kick the tins. (Silence) Any advice it can give us this poem? (Silence).*

He eventually told them that the poem focused on not taking risks and the consequences of bad behaviour (I am not certain if this is entirely correct as the poet's message seemed more likely to be that as we grow older we gain experience and that we should learn from our mistakes and not repeat them). Thereafter he explained the concept of summarising but they did not summarise the poem. For the remainder of the lesson the learners were told to read (decode) the questions that they would answer in the next lesson. There was no written activity.

#### **4.4.5. What challenges and barriers do these educators encounter when developing their learners' reading skills?**

During the interview process, when asked about developing his learners' reading skills, Andile said that he finds that pronunciation is his greatest challenge. He explained that he finds it difficult to let his learners read a whole sentence or paragraph if they are unable to pronounce one word correctly. He explained that he discussed this challenge with his SMT who organised a remedial class with the Foundation Phase educators to help bridge the learners who could not read properly.

#### **4.4.6. How have these experiences prepared the participants to implement CAPS in the IP in 2013?**

Andile believes that CAPS is going to be better because it is similar to the old methods of teaching. He is anxiously waiting for its implementation next year and looks forward to the reduction of learning areas in the IP from nine to six. He also feels that the textbooks are better because now teachers only need one textbook and a reader whereas before they had to use many sources to get information. He has not attended any CAPS workshops but has been reading the policy document to familiarise himself with its expectations.

Although he obviously tried to incorporate elements from the reading process (DoBE, 2011, pp.10-11) in his lesson, like asking about the author, title and picture, summarising and linking the text to his learners' experiences, there was no activation of prior knowledge, making predictions, written activity or dictionary use and help with construction of meaning of the text.

#### **4.5. Summary**

Based on the classroom observations, interview transcripts, and the list provided by Wray (1998), and Wray et al (2000, 2002) (cited in Verbeek, 2010, p.74) of what effective reading teachers do (Chapter 3, 3.7.2) the following table is a summary of the manner in which the participants developed their learners' reading skills. O stands for often, S for seldom, and N for not at all.

**Table 2: How the participants fare in terms of what effective reading teachers do.**

	Njabulo: Grade 4			Pearl: Grade 5			Andile: Grade 6		
Did the educator:	O	S	N	O	S	N	O	S	N
contextualise reading, starting with the text, teaching grammar, phonics, spelling and so forth in the context of the text?		x			x				x
model critical thinking and literate behaviour extensively?			x			x			x
read aloud frequently and	x			x			x		

listened to the learners reading aloud?								
assist learners to make links between the text, words and sentences by using their knowledge of language?		x			x			x
probe learners as to how literacy decisions were made and what conclusions they have drawn?			x			x		x
encourage learners to speak openly and clearly about their reading and writing?			x			x		x
engage learners' attention on the current task, provide time limits and, begin with a purposeful introduction and end with a conclusion that reviewed the learning experience?			x			x		x
take learners through a process of interaction between existing knowledge and new concepts whereby they were assisted to recognise and work from their existing knowledge			x			x		x
employ group interaction as a teaching strategy because it is recognised that learning is social process	x			x			x	
provide meaningful learning contexts?			x		x		x	
promote the metalinguistic process of learning?		x			x			x

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion of the findings**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

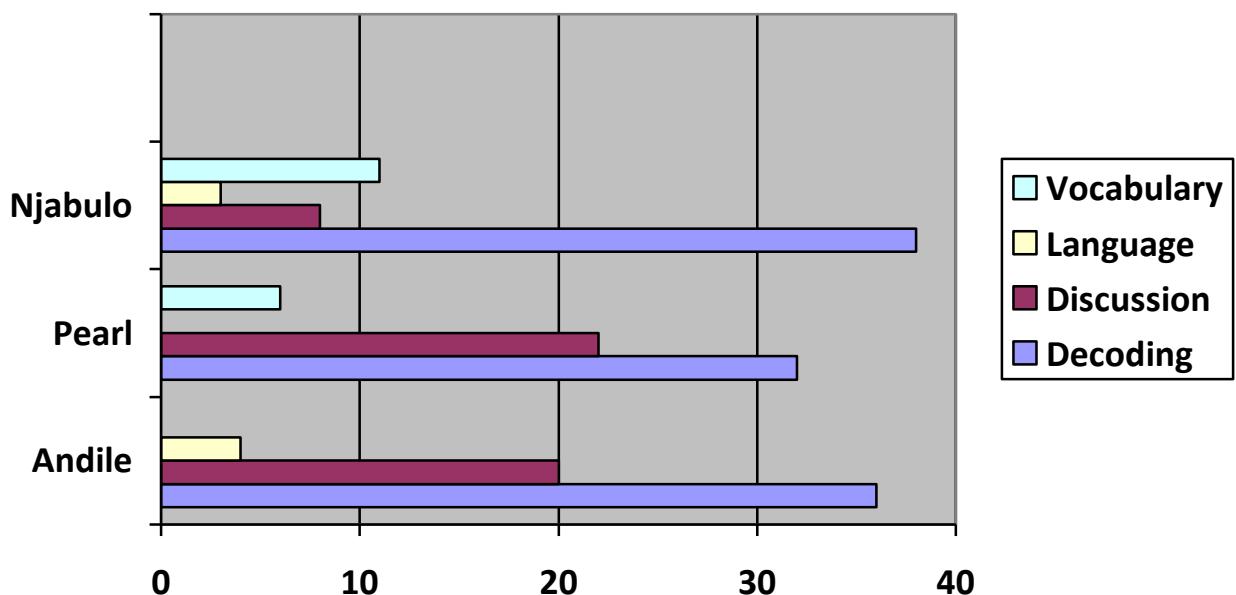
To analyse the data collected, content analysis was used. The interviews and observations were first transcribed and these transcripts were reduced using a set of codes. These codes were generated by aspects of the theoretical framework, research questions and the data itself. Using the codes, the data was then categorised into themes. This chapter examines the key themes that emerged from the observations and narratives constructed by the three Intermediate Phase language educators who participated in this study. The findings presented here relate to these participants, and are not meant to be generalised to the greater population of language educators. The findings will be discussed under the subheadings of the themes that emerged from the data.

#### **5.2. Established understanding of what constitutes competent reading**

As explained in Chapter 3 (3.6.) the interactive model of reading states that reading is a combination of both bottom-up and top-down processing. The multiple processes of each of these types of processes must interact simultaneously throughout the reading process. Thus value is placed on both decoding print and comprehension. This is similar to one of the processes discussed (3.2.1.) that reading is a *rapid and efficient process* because when we read, we simultaneously coordinate rapid and automatic word recognition, syntactic parsing, meaning formation, text-comprehension building, inference making, critical thinking and connections with prior knowledge. For competent readers all these cognitive processes happen in sync and without any real effort. The bulk of the three lessons observed were dedicated to reading aloud with little time spent on vocabulary extension or language development. The time spent on discussion of the text was often limited to the educator asking questions and the learners providing short answers as opposed to the educator using the discussion to clarify aspects in the text as well as develop critical thinking skills. Based on this it would be fair to state that the participants understand reading to be primarily decoding since they were

asked to teach a reading lesson for this lesson observation. The following graph shows a breakdown of the time spent on each of these four aspects.

**Figure 2: Breakdown of time spent during classroom observations**



Another indicator that reading is thought to mean decoding by the participants is that when asked about challenges they face in the classroom when teaching reading, they placed emphasis on pronunciation. Only Njabulo briefly mentioned that her learners do not understand what they read but she attributed this to the fact that they do not understand the language and not that their comprehension skills may not be sufficiently developed. Grabe (2009) states that reading is most importantly a *comprehending process* because when we read, our intention is to understand what the writer intended to convey in the text. Yet in these three classrooms, comprehension was given the least attention. Oral questions that were asked related to the title, author, illustrator and the plot. It ought to be noted that in doing this, the educators are faithfully following instructions from workshops they have attended and this seems to be an instance of going through the motions without fully grasping why the process is important. Thus it ends up as an emphasis on form (of asking questions) without substance (of using questions to direct learners' thinking and build their comprehension skills). In addition to this the participants emphasised dictionary

usage to enable them and their learners to understand what the text means, and whilst this is a useful skill, it deprives the learners of the social learning integral to language learning.

The participants clearly do not fully understand the complexities and depth of skills required to develop learners' comprehension of text effectively as comprehension is more than understanding isolated words. These educators did not engage their learners in understanding the deeper meanings of the text like inference making (neither gap-filling nor text connecting), critical thinking and connections to prior knowledge. The Grade 6 educator made an attempt but his learners were unable to answer his questions which is an indication that they are not used to that type of questioning, and when the learners were unable to provide answers to these questions or if they provided incorrect responses, he would either give them the answer he thought was correct or move on to the next question, without having told them whether their response was correct or correcting an incorrect response. Furthermore it was often clear that the learners did not fully understand the plot in the stories they read and when they gave responses, yet again, the educators did not always do anything to indicate whether their responses were correct or incorrect but simply moved on to the next question. At times it was surprising to note that the educator did not understand the plot as incorrect responses were repeatedly overlooked (refer to examples provided in Chapter 4).

### **5.3. Decoding versus comprehending**

Based on the criteria for assessing learners' reading aloud skills highlighted on page 48 of this study, after observing the lessons, it could be concluded that most learners were able to decode text to speech fairly well but what must be borne in mind is that most reading took place in chorused reading in groups or as an entire class. During this whole class and group reading one voice dominated and the others droned on behind. They read with fluency, clarity and observed punctuation marks. However, firstly, to vary one's tone when reading, one would have to have an understanding of what one is reading. Although it was obvious in the Grade 4 and 5 classes that they had read the texts before, as the responses they provided to some questions related

to parts of the story that they had not decoded text to speech as yet, the learners did not vary their tone appropriately as they sounded like they still did not really understand what they were reading and struggled to answer questions that were posed after reading. Secondly, it is unclear what is meant in the Maskew, Miller, Longman guide by ‘eye contact’ and with whom or with what they should be making eye contact. If they are meant to make eye contact with the educator whilst being assessed, this did not happen. These FAL learners who have only just come into contact with English would need to give their full attention to the text and would not be able to make predictions about what words would follow to enable them to look up and make eye contact as they do not even fully understand the language let alone what they are reading. Instead they more likely decode word by word. Thirdly, pronunciation was a bit problematic as incorrect pronunciation did distort the meanings of certain words. An example that stands out from the Grade 4 class: the learners could not decode the word ‘wondered’. The educator said ‘wandered’. Thereafter every group that read the extract said ‘wandered’ instead of ‘wondered’. Lastly, perhaps it is time that Maskew, Miller and Longman and other publishers assist educators by calling the processes by their correct names. Instead of calling it “prepared reading (reading aloud)”, it is clear that they are referring to decoding so this should rather be listed as prepared decoding text to speech (decoding aloud) because what the educator is required to assess here is only one aspect of reading, the rest is comprehension. By doing so, educators would get used to defining reading as both decoding and comprehension.

Whilst decoding did not seem to be very problematic, comprehension on the other hand was very problematic. The following table is a summary of the cognitive levels that must be addressed when asking comprehension questions.

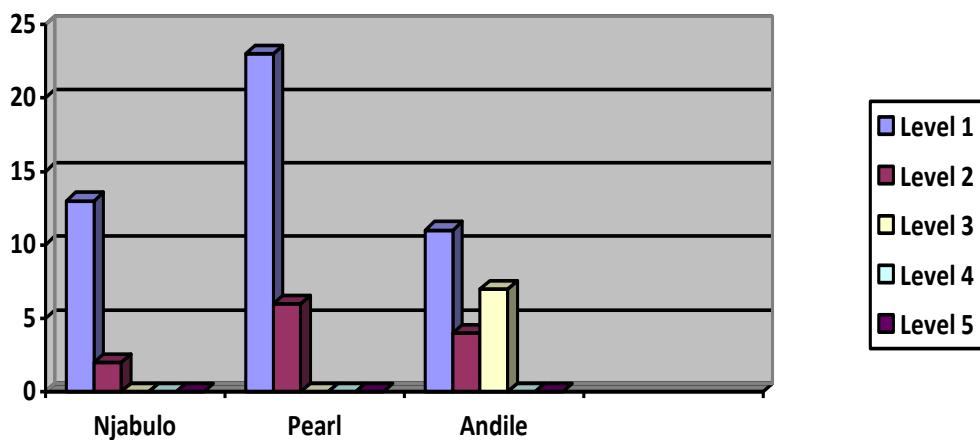
***Table 1: Levels of questions***

Cognitive Level	Activity
Literal (Level 1)	Questions that deal with information explicitly stated in the text.
Reorganisation (Level 2)	Questions that require analysis, synthesis, or organisation of information explicitly stated in the text.
Inference (Level 3)	Questions that require a candidate's engagement with information explicitly stated in the text in terms of his/her personal experience.
Evaluation (Level 4)	These questions deal with judgements concerning value and worth. These include judgements regarding reality, credibility, facts and opinions, validity, logic and reasoning and issues such as desirability and acceptability of decisions and actions in terms of moral values.
Appreciation (Level 5)	These questions are intended to assess the psychological and aesthetic impact of the text on the candidate. They focus on emotional responses to the content, identification with the characters or incidents, and reactions to the writer's use of language (such as word choice and imagery).

(Adapted from DoBE, 2011, pp. 96-97)

Using this table and the transcripts from the lesson observations, the questions that the educators asked their learners before and after reading the text were coded based on their level. The following figure represents the findings graphically.

**Figure 3: Questions asked during classroom observations**



It was found that all three participants asked their learners level 1 and level 2 questions and the Grade 6 educator asked his learners a few level 3 questions which the learners were unable to answer. Level 4 and 5 questions were not asked at all. Although the educators asked mostly level one and two questions, the learners struggled to answer even these. They were however always encouraged to answer using full sentences. The value of using full sentence when teaching FAL learners is clear as it encourages these learners to practice using the language. Apart from this, it would be pointless if the responses to the text that were given, in full sentences, were actually incorrect as this was supposed to be a lesson designed to develop the learners' reading (decoding and comprehension) skills.

Pre-reading questions were asked in Grade 4 and 6, and one group in Grade 5 but these questions did not activate background knowledge. These questions related to the author, title, illustrator and pictures on the cover but the educators failed to make the crucial link between the text and the learners' prior knowledge. Additionally, they did not use the cover or title to engage learners in predicting what the text might be about. These two pre-reading activities are extremely important as they can be used to evoke the learners' interest and excitement. In addition to this understanding would be facilitated as the learners would have some idea about what is going on in the text as their schemas would be activated. This would also enable the educator to

determine the learners' experiences and associations as the educator's schemas might be different from those of the learners. Predicting and activating prior knowledge would provide learners with a better understanding of what to expect in the text, the purpose of the text and their purpose for reading the text so they would be able to use varying tones, make eye contact and read more fluently.

After decoding each text (several times) oral questions were asked which were mostly level 1 and 2 questions. The educators did not always indicate whether the learners' responses to these questions were correct, by using positive reinforcement, or incorrect by telling them so and then leading them through a range of related questions that would help them to work out the correct answer. Instead they simply repeated what the learner said or asked the next question (refer to examples in Chapter 4) which may imply passive acceptance of the learners' incorrect understanding of the text.

For educators to fully develop their learners' reading skills they need to ask a range of questions relating to the plot, setting, themes, moral, social and cultural issues and encourage learners to voice real opinions regarding different aspects of the text to test their knowledge and lead their thinking. Asking the learners if they found the text interesting and have them reply in unison, "The story was very interesting" does not constitute the learners' voicing of their true opinions. And although one might argue that these are IP FAL learners who are using English for the first, second or third year only, and thus do not have the vocabulary to answer higher level questions, exercises such as multiple choice, choosing words to fill in the blanks and discriminating between true or false statements can be asked to scaffold the learners' understanding and then gradually they can be introduced to answering questions using full sentences (DOBE, 2011, p.96). All of these exercises require the learners to work with the information in the text, so their attention is on it and they have to get at meanings in the text in order to do the exercise.

## **5.4. Choice of texts**

### **5.4.1. Genre**

Perfetti et al (2005) state that understanding the linguistic styles and layouts of the different genres of texts is vital as this sensitivity to text structure may assist the reader to scaffold their mental representation of the text. Poems and readers were used by the three participants in their classes. These were the same types of texts that they read when they were at school learning to read. There was only evidence of textbook and readers in classrooms. The Grade 4 educator did use Big Book which was a folktale. However this Big Book was not used correctly. This Big Book should be used by the educator when reading to the learners as learners are expected to listen to what is going on and enjoy the pictures and the story, and learners were supposed to have matching copies of small books when they are reading. Although the Big Book is indeed big, and although the learners were all sitting on the floor, in a class with large numbers not all learners were sitting in close proximity to the book so it might be difficult for them to see the words so decoding would be dominated by those closest to the book.

Grade 5 read a mix of Eurocentric stories (The Frog Prince and The Elves and the Shoemaker) and informative texts (Crocodiles) and Grade 6 read a poem. CAPS (2011, p.14) states that classrooms should have, “A variety of media materials: newspapers, magazines, brochures, posters, flyers, advertisements, notices.” Grade 4 should have Big Books and all grades should also have copies of readers, textbooks and dictionaries. With all the emphasis placed on dictionary usage during the interviews with each participant, one would have expected to see at least one dictionary between each group of learners. There were no dictionaries visible.

The participants may view reading texts only as poems and books because these were the texts they read when they were at school as they stated during the interviews. However reading texts includes media materials (listed above), formal and informal letters, postcards, recipes, food packaging, diary entries and so on. These texts are useful as they can be used to teach learners a range of skills like understanding how to use and understand different genres, formal and informal

language, persuasive, bias and emotive language and critical literacy. Instead the participants choose genres that they are familiar with from their own schooling and thus restrict their learners' exposure to a variety of genres.

#### **5.4.2. Learner interest**

As explained in Chapter 3 (3.6.1.) when developing learners reading skills they must be provided with access to interesting texts (Verbeek, 2010). When Grade 4 was asked how the story was, they all replied, "The story was very interesting." It seemed like they were trained to respond in this manner and does not necessarily mean that they enjoyed this story or even fully understood what they were saying as they did not even seem to understand what the story was about. In addition to this, Njabulo did very little to captivate the learners' interest. They were not asked questions that may have captured their attention before reading nor were they given any fun activities after reading.

According to Mathewson (1994) identifying the purpose and feelings about engaging in reading before reading may affect the reader's attitude and motivation to read. He further states that motivation and attitude may be affected during reading by modifying the reader's goals or by providing feedback relating to the satisfaction with the ideas and affect developed through reading, the ideas constructed from the information that was read, the feelings generated by ideas from the reading process and how goals, self-concept and values were affected (Mathewson, 1994). Firstly, before reading the text, the educators did not identify the purpose for reading that particular text nor were the learners asked what they felt about reading the text or what they hoped to achieve by reading the text. As a result they were not sufficiently motivated to read in the sense that reading is something pleasurable but would possibly view this reading as just another classroom task. Secondly, when approaching the text, the participants did not use body language, facial expressions or a change in tone to signal that what they were about to read would be interesting, informative or enjoyable. Instead they simply asked their learners to open the book or look at the text and start reading. Pausing during reading to check comprehension or make further predictions would motivate the learners to read further but the

participants also failed to do this. Their learners decoded the entire text into spoken word after which questions were asked and these oral questions were yet another classroom task as opposed to being structured so as to affect the learners' attitude and motivation.

Spending an entire one hour lesson decoding a text into spoken word and answering oral questions definitely resulted in the learners getting bored. As the story progressed during decoding, their reading deteriorated from most learners trying to read loudly and keep the pace to a state where most seemed to be dragged by the few learners who were still trying to go through the motions. The learners were also drifting and getting fidgety. They were observed clicking their pens, staring at the walls and chatting to each other. This was especially the case in the Grade 5 class as each group read a different text and only one group was active at a time whilst the rest of the class was expected to sit silently. The learners could have been given some sort of written activity to keep them actively engaged and more importantly to assess whether they understood what they read, language aspects or vocabulary extension after decoding and answering oral questions because reading and writing have positive reciprocal effects (Chapter 3, 3.6.1.). A consequence of not motivating the learners throughout the reading process may be that the learners' attitude toward reading might be that it is a difficult boring task which they relate to the classroom whereas the outcome should be to inculcate a love for reading and passion for books which they would want to engage in, in their spare time as well.

Although there was some evidence of the educator trying to link the text to the learners' lives and experiences in Grade 5 and 6, it is questionable whether the learners were actually able to appreciate this link to make the text relevant and enjoyable, facilitate understanding and whether they were able to make links with the texts that were used. An example that stands out in Grade 6 was when Andile asked his learners what bad things they do in the classroom. The learners were able to answer this question very well and gave many things like talking, eating and so on. However, they were unable to use this to work out the poet's message. Perhaps the educator did not expand on this idea adequately, and effectively take the learners

from the known to the unknown or use questions to lead by subtle suggestions that supply some information but leave the learner to make the final connection. A possible reason for the educator's lack of success in this regard may be because he did not clearly understand the poet's message (refer to example in Chapter 4, 4.4.4).

#### **5.4.3. Appropriate and relevant**

Verbeek (2010) states that the educator must match readers with appropriate texts (Chapter 3, 3.6.1.). The participants used texts that were prescribed for their particular grades' FAL learners. It is all well and good to choose a series of readers from a publisher based on what the publisher deems fit for a specific grade but in this instance the question that arises is whether those texts were the correct level for those particular learners. In terms of decoding text to speech, the learners decoded fairly well with the odd pronunciation mistake. As most decoding was done in mixed ability or whole class groups it would be difficult to assess who was decoding and who was merely moving their mouths. In the Grade 4 class, during whole class reading, three learners were observed doing just that and in all the classes, during group reading, one voice, which was slightly louder and faster than the others, clearly led the group's reading. Whilst this might be useful at the very beginning stages of learning to read where an uncertain learner's first hesitant efforts are supported by the chorusing of the group, the problem with this strategy is when it becomes habitual for some learners never to read independently of the group and it would be difficult for the educator to identify learners who are struggling to decode. At the end of group and whole class decoding and after orally discussing the plot, the participants did pick out individual learners to decode the given text to speech which they all did fluently. It is possible that this indicated that the educator picked the learners who were good at decoding. In the Grade 5 class, a learner's hand shot up and the educator said to him that someone else will have a turn today and that he would read the next day.

It was also difficult to determine whether all the learners understood the story as the same learners raised their hands to answer all the questions. Those learners who did not raise their hands were not asked. So perhaps some learners got the gist of

the story but the rest quite possibly did not have a clue. Again the importance of giving the learners written activities based on the text is highlighted because based on their individual written responses the educator would be able to assess which of the learners understood which aspects of the text and which learners still require development in which aspects. For example, some learners may be able to answer level 1 and 2 questions pertaining to the plot but would not be able to answer level 3, 4, and 5 questions. Others may be able to answer level 1, 2 and 3 questions but may battle with level 5 and 6. Some may battle to answer even level 1 and 2 questions. When marking the learners' written responses the educator will have a good indication as to which areas require more attention and what the learners need more exposure to.

Whilst it is a good idea to expose learners to things they are not familiar with to increase their knowledge base, it is pointless if these new concepts are not explained properly. During the classroom observations, the participants used texts like folktales, poems, play scripts and Eurocentric stories but did not explain the features of these texts, like their different formats or structures and punctuation and use of either formal or informal language. Understanding these features of different genres supports learners' understanding of what is happening in the text. For example, Andile, the Grade 6 educator handed out the worksheet with the poem and then asked his learners what that was on the worksheet. His learners responded correctly and said that it was a poem. He did not go further to ask his learners how they knew it was a poem which is what he ought to have done next. In this way, the next time that he read a poem with his learners they would know to look out for things like figures of speech, rhyming words, themes and the poet's message while they are decoding the poem. They would also be familiar with the vocabulary (poet, stanzas, lines etc.) and unconventional punctuation associated with poems.

The play script in Grade 5 was not even read correctly which would entail each learner being allocated a different part to read. Instead the entire group monotonously read the entire play script and were unable to appreciate its purpose and possibly lost the opportunity for a fun lesson. Furthermore the first question

posed to the Grade 6 learners after decoding the poem was what figures of speech they saw in the poem. When none of the learners responded the educator gave examples like simile and metaphor but did not refresh the learners' memories as to what figures of speech, metaphors and similes were. In fact apart from rhyming words, the poem that was selected had no obvious figures of speech. If the educator wanted to teach the learners about figures of speech, then his choice of poem should have been relevant to this purpose. A poem that contained obvious figures of speech ought to have been selected. Expecting Grade 6 FAL learners to just identify figures of speech from a poem would be difficult especially considering that these learners did not seem to have a clue as to what similes and metaphors were. The educator could have rather selected a poem that highlighted a specific figure of speech or poems like *An African Thunderstorm* (Rubadiri, 2004) which contain many easy to identify figures of speech.

Therefore, when selecting learning and teaching support material like textbooks and readers, educators ought to analyse the choices available very carefully. They must choose materials that would be most appropriate for the level at which their learners are at and not at the level they are expected to be at. These materials must also have some relevance to their learners' lives and experiences. On the other hand, not everything in a textbook or reader would be totally appropriate and relevant to those specific learners because textbooks are designed to cater for a wide range of learners. This is not necessarily a negative thing as learners need to be taught about things that they are not familiar with to increase their knowledge base. This is especially vital for underprivileged and rural learners who do not have the means to go out and see and experience different things. Their only opportunity for this is maybe television or newspapers or the classroom. Thus they need to be taken out of their familiar environments and experience the world at large through literature. According to Lombardi (n.d.) literature is a term used to describe spoken and written material. It is valuable because it introduces us to new worlds of experience and we may even grow and evolve through our literary journey with books (Lombardi, n.d.). Thus literature could help learners to grow; help shape the learners' identity, promote morals and values and improve their linguistic ability. As a result the onus is on the

educator to take that unfamiliar or difficult text and make it relevant and appropriate, and not simply go through the motions, so that their learners will understand and learn about new things and will be able to cope later on in life when they are placed in different situations.

### **5.5. Usefulness of workshops**

The participants said that they attended many workshops; so many that they could not remember most. And those that they remembered, they did not actually remember what they learnt. Most of the workshops that they attended were organised by the DoE. The workshops that they remembered dealt with discipline, assessment and CAPS, and the workshops held by UKZN, one of which dealt with using newspapers to develop the learners' reading skills. Yet there was little evidence of learning about effective techniques and methods, which they were supposed to have learnt about in these workshops, in the participants' classrooms when teaching reading to their learners. They did try to implement aspects from the reading process (DOBE, 2011, pp. 10-11) but this was seriously lacking as the participants used only some aspects instead of going through the whole process.

This leads one to wonder whether these workshops are held for the sake of showing how much is being done to improve the quality of education in the country or are held to actually improve the quality of education in the country, and if the educators really learn and implement things from these workshops or come back to school, try out new ideas for a few days and then revert to what they are comfortable with.

Educators may argue that sometimes workshops are held after school so they are too tired to concentrate; sometimes the venue is quite far away, so transport is a problem; and sometimes the facilitators speak in languages that the educators do not understand so they feel that attending is a waste of time. For instance I have attended workshops where the facilitator speaks mostly in IsiZulu. As I neither speak nor understand this language, I find that I am unable to participate in the workshop and end up leaving early without having gained much.

During the September holidays (2012) the DoE held CAPS workshops for the different IP subjects (Languages, Natural Science and Technology, Mathematics, Life Skills and Social Science). To accommodate most educators these workshops were held at different venues on different dates, over two days from 9:00am to 3:00pm. I attended one of these workshops so that I would have a better understanding of the policy document. For the duration of the workshop the facilitator read from the policy document and explained what that particular section meant, stopping only to answer questions. This eventually became tedious and boring for most educators who ended up leaving early. On the second day my colleagues attended. When we discussed the content of each day, it was disappointing to note that almost the same thing was done on both days. I was under the impression that due to its length and vast differences compared with the NCS, some aspects of the CAPS language document would be covered on one day and the rest would roll over on to the next day.

The CAPS language curriculum is packaged according to four skills; listening and speaking, reading and viewing, writing and presenting and language structures and conventions. If one considers reading and viewing in particular, research has shown that many SA educators experience difficulty when developing these skills in their learners. These difficulties may be attributed to the fact that they are unfamiliar with the current theories, or because they mimic the manner in which they were taught, or because they were inadequately trained, or all of the above. Moreover these educators tend to view reading primarily as decoding text to speech and therefore dedicate very little time to the development of comprehension skills during reading lessons. Additionally the underperformance of SA learners in literacy tests is a clear indication that something is definitely not done correctly in the classroom. Thus, to simply address all four skills on one day, in one workshop is certainly inadequate. Perhaps these workshops should have been held over three days, dedicating one day to reading and viewing and at least half a day to the other three skills and assessment. And instead of simply reading from the policy and explaining what was read, the theories involved should have been thoroughly explained so that the educators understand why they have to do things, followed by hands-on activities for

the educators to do. Based on report-backs and discussions after completion of these activities, the facilitators would get an indication of whether the educators were ready to effectively implement CAPS in 2013.

### **5.6. Willingness to improve**

All three participants stated that they were very eager to improve their teaching of reading. When educators say they are eager to improve, the extent to which they are prepared to improve and how far they are willing to go to improve may be questionable. The participants acknowledged that their teaching of reading needed attention and all three are eager to enrol to study further. UKZN has held four reading workshops. I attended the first one and facilitated the second. The former dealt with theories related to reading like automaticity, whilst the latter provided practical pre-reading, reading and after reading activities that the educators could adapt and use in their classrooms. Emphasis was placed on using different genres and teaching learners the different conventions of these genres, and it was further demonstrated how one text could be used to develop the learners' reading, writing, speaking and language skills as well as expand their vocabulary using a range of fun activities within a particular context as opposed to developing these skills in isolation.

During the classroom observations, there was little evidence of what was discussed in these workshops and the aspects that were used were done very superficially as were the aspects from the CAPS reading process. For instance, the Grade 5 educator, Pearl, posed questions to one of the groups relating to the title, author and publisher which is part of the CAPS pre-reading activities ("Looking at the source, author, and publication date" DOBE, 2011, pp.10-11). The reason for asking such questions would be to enable learners to make predictions about what to expect in the text based on the title and who the author is. In addition to this, providing the author's background information is important as it alerts the learners to whose perspective the text is written from so they would understand bias, the language conventions used and so on. Pearl asked her grade 5 learners who the author was, what the title was and where the book was published. She then went into a lengthy discussion about which province Cape Town was in (refer to Chapter 4, 4.3.4). Thus

in her pre-reading discussion, the learners' background knowledge was not activated nor did they make any predictions about what the text might be about. Below are two vignettes from the Grade 4 and 6 classes which demonstrate the manner in which these two educators engage their learners in pre-reading questions.

### **Vignette 1: Njabulo (Grade 4)**

*Njabulo: Move the desks, I said everyone must come here and sit on the floor. (points to learner with an injured foot). You can sit on the desk. Right, look at this cover. Look at this cover thoroughly. What is the title of the book?*

*All learners (in unison): The title of the book is Mr Sun and Mr Sea.*

*Njabulo: The title of the book is Mr Sun and Mr Sea. Who is the author?*

*All learners: The author of the book is traditi....*

*One learner: traditional*

*Njabulo: There is no author here. This is a traditional story. It tells us about the illustrator. Okay. Who's the illustrator?*

*All learners: The illustrator of the book is Richard Parch...*

*Njabulo: Richard Parkinson. Okay this is a traditional story. Do you understand me?*

*All learners: Yes*

*Njabulo: Right what do you see here?*

*Learner A: Sun*

*Njabulo: No full sentence!*

*Learner B: I see the sun.*

*Njabulo: I see the sun. I see the sun. What else can you see?*

*Learner C: I see the sea.*

*Njabulo: I see the sea. Can you see the sea? Where is the sea?*

*Learner B: Yes. There! (points)*

*Njabulo: Oh the sea! What else can you see there?*

*Learner D: I see the clouds.*

*Njabulo: The clouds, okay. Ya?*

*Learner B: I see the sun's house covered by the sea.*

*Njabulo: Is the sun's house covered by the sea? (Silence) Oooh, you dunno? Let us go inside. Right.*

*All learners: Mr Sun and Mr Sea* (reading aloud in unison).

### **Vignette 2: Andile (Grade 6)**

*Andile: We are going to look at... what's that? What is that? Hands up? Yes?*

*Learner A: Poem*

*Andile: A poem. The title of the poem...*

*Learner B: The title of the poem is 'You can't depend on anything'.*

*Andile: The author?*

*Learner A: Peejy (Peggy) Dunstan.*

*Andile: Peejy Dunstan. Right, before we read can you tell me anything about this picture? (Silence). Anything that you can tell me about this picture?*

*Learner C: The boy is kicking rubbish bins.*

*Andile: First group read the poem.*

*Group 1: You can't depend on anything.* (Reading aloud in unison)

From these vignettes the following aspects are highlighted. Firstly Njabulo emphasised using full sentences when answering a question. Secondly the only indication that an answer is acceptable, is the educators repeating what the learners have said or moving on to next question. Thirdly, incorrect pronunciation is not corrected. Fourthly, although the genre was identified, its features were not explained and there seems to be an implication in the Grade 4 vignette that a traditional story has no author. Lastly the Grade 4 educator, Njabulo, asked her learners what the title of book was and all the learners responded in unison by saying, "Mr Sun and Mr Sea." Njabulo accepted this response and asked the next question which was about the author. Additionally, the Grade 6 educator, Andile asked his learners what the title of the poem was, who the poet was and what they saw happening in the picture alongside the poem. His learners answered all three questions correctly but yet again Andile, like Njabulo and Pearl, failed to go further and lead his learners from the known to the unknown. It is clear that these questions neither created any interest in the text nor where the necessary schemas activated. Further to this the valuable opportunity to predict what to expect in the text and to discuss its purpose was lost.

All three educators seemed content that they had asked the necessary questions as listed in the pre-reading section of the reading process (DOBE, 2011, p.10) but perhaps what they did not realise was that they did not achieve the purpose which would be to fully prepare learners for what to expect in the text which was not explained in the document. Thus they seem to do things but do not know why they are supposed to be doing those things. So although these educators say that they are willing to improve and that they are prepared to do what it takes to improve their teaching of reading, their actions show that so far they have not begun to do this. They seem to do things because that is the way they think they are supposed to but do not try different methods enough, evaluate which work best with their learners and make those methods everyday practice.

Another reason for them reverting to their conventional methods may possibly be that they do not fully grasp or remember aspects covered in workshops they attend so they do not engage with these completely and correctly in the classroom or that it is extraordinarily hard to change ingrained and much practised habits. According to Mezirow (1997) people have existing frames of reference (habits of mind and points of view) so they reject ideas that do not fit their preconceptions. The participants have existing beliefs, habits of mind and points of view created by their own schooling and training. For them to improve their teaching of reading they will need to engage in critical reflection and change those existing frames of reference.

### **5.7. Teachers' experiences (schooling and training), beliefs and knowledge**

The Bantu Education Act, 1953, was a law that legalised several aspects of the apartheid system. This act made provision for the segregation of schooling based on race. It was an education system that was designed to keep Black South Africans subservient to whites, and to provide them with a vastly inferior education. It was the belief of the apartheid government that by limiting people's education, their access to knowledge would be limited and thus, their power within the country would be limited (Sachs, 2002). On 7 June 1954, in the Senate of the South African Houses of

Parliament, Dr H.F Verwoerd justified the introduction of the system of Bantu Education. He said,

“The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open ...Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and mislead him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze,”

(McGregor, 2008, p.1).

In addition to this, McGregor (2008) states that expenditure on education for the 1969-1970 financial year broke down as: R272,70 for every white child in school against R8,62 for every Black child in school. Furthermore Sachs (2002) states that in comparison with schools reserved for other population groups, black schools were afforded little attention and funding so they lacked facilities and valuable resources like textbooks and were also often over-crowded. Keevy (2006) states that most black teachers started teaching before completing their own schooling much less the tertiary education they needed (cited in Davids, 2009). Thus if educators do not receive quality training and development, the overall quality of education will be negatively affected (Davids, 2009). In a book titled *Miriam's Song*, writer Mark Mathabane's sister, Miriam, in the preface to his book, wrote:

“By the time I entered Sub-Standard A (now called Grade 1), in January 1975, it was common for already overworked teachers in the lower primary classes to teach two sessions of over one hundred pupils each. It was estimated that half of black children between the ages of six and nineteen were not in school, that only one in fifty teachers had a university education, and that only one in nine teachers had completed matric (high school).”

(McGregor, 2008, p.4)

The participants all attended school during the apartheid era and both Njabulo and Andile described their classrooms as being over-crowded with limited resources.

Andile explained that his education was often disrupted by violence so he changed schools several times and that when he first started school they did not even have books to write in. Instead they had to use pieces of slate and chalk to complete their written work. Njabulo recalled her primary school being a large classroom which was divided into separate sections for Grade 1-3 learners. Pearl, Njabulo and Andile all believe that they were taught reading in Primary School very well and that their High School educators developed their reading skills very well. On the other hand they all said that they knew that certain areas of their own education was lacking but still these educators described it as being a wonderful, lovely experience. They also do not seem to fully understand the areas in which their education was lacking. They were taught to decode well so they believe that they were taught reading well. However they were only taught basic comprehension skills like summarising and as Pearl explained, when they did not understand something in a text, they would use dictionaries. None of the participants were taught critical literacy nor were they exposed to a variety of texts so they do not fully understand how these work. Thus when developing their learners' reading skills, they use textbooks and poems as they had learnt, and the same methods as they believe that these were good and have the knowledge and confidence as it is what they are used to and familiar with.

Following this, the participants were trained to be educators during the apartheid era which means that they were possibly not adequately trained to teach reading for meaning and develop critical thinking skills. And if they were adequately trained or trained at all, they did not remember clearly. Andile said that he did not remember how they were trained to teach reading. On the other hand Pearl stated that they were given handouts at college which they had to read and summarise and when asked how they were trained to teach reading for meaning she replied that they were told to use dictionaries. Njabulo remembers being taught to teach reading as follows,

“To use the flash cards, they taught us to read a story and ask learners about the difficult words, write them on the board, describe them, describe the difficult words using flash cards and the pictures or even the object to describe the card word- write them and how to use punctuation.”

When asked if she was adequately trained to teach reading she said, "Yes, yes, I am happy, I am happy." Yet it is apparent that her training was seriously lacking. Perhaps the participants were taught methods other than the ones they mentioned but the fact that they could not remember any others is telling in that it possibly reveals that they remember only these aspects because it is what they regularly do in their classrooms.

Verbeek (2010) found that the manner in which educators teach reading is generally in line with their beliefs about reading so as long the participants believe that their learning of reading was good and that their training to enhance their learners' reading skills was adequate, they will continue to use those deficient methods which are not in line with interactive models of reading and CAPS. In addition to this as long as they believe reading is decoding text to speech, comprehension will be neglected. Comprehension needs to be viewed as part of the reading process. As explained in Chapter 3 (p.45), the interactive model of reading can be applied in the classroom by assisting learners to develop their bottom-up skills by developing their vocabulary and grammatical skills. This means that the educator must include instruction on cohesive devices of the language and their function across sentences and paragraphs as well as pre-teaching vocabulary and background knowledge concurrently (Carell, Devine & Eskey, 1988). During the classroom observations, Njabulo engaged her Grade 4 learners in very brief discussions about language aspects in the text. She asked them what the present tense of the word jumped was and the learner who answered did so correctly. She then went on to ask them if didn't was "the long version or short version." The learner who answered said long version and the educator said, "Yes, what about did not?" There was some shuffling and talking amongst the learners which was followed by a few learners saying, "No, didn't is the short version and did not is the long version." This example could be an indication of two things. Firstly the educator did not know much about contractions or she was not paying attention to what the learner had said. Secondly, the learners seemed to be quite adept at language usage but only two language aspects were highlighted and they were only given one example of present tense and two examples of contractions, so perhaps it was the children with better developed

proficiency in English who correctly answered the oral questions relating to these two language aspects.

Andile asked his Grade 6 learners to identify figures of speech from the poem, which they were unable to do, whilst Pearl did not engage her Grade 5 learners in discussion relating to language aspects from their texts. With regards to pre-teaching vocabulary concurrently with background knowledge, none of the participants did this successfully. Pre-reading questions were asked, but as explained previously these questions were not structured to activate their learners' background knowledge. There was a discussion on new words from the text in the Grade 4 class and one group in the Grade 5 class. However, these new words were not discussed before reading the text as proposed by Carell et al (2008). Explaining and practicing the pronunciation of unfamiliar words before reading a text would assist learners with both decoding and comprehension whilst reading.

Another classroom application of the interactive approach would be to develop top-down processing skills by building background knowledge which will help the learners to predict which prior, existing knowledge to access. Moreover activating background knowledge using text-mapping strategies and developing predictive skills, gives the reader a purpose for reading (Carell et al, 1988). Understanding a text means more than using a dictionary to find meanings of difficult words. Instead, comprehension involves being able to answer first level questions, making inferences, discussing values and messages, making links between similar texts, raising and debating social, cultural and moral issues, highlighting the genre, identifying the main and supporting ideas and expressing opinions (DOBE, 2011, pp.96-97). Furthermore the text itself should be used to try and work out the meanings of unfamiliar words. Another misconception that the participants seem to have is that summarising is just stating what the story was about. Learners need to be scaffolded using mind maps and key words to identify the main points to enable them to list the characters and setting, understand the plot and work with the information contained in texts.

However, it would not be possible for an educator to develop their learners' above-mentioned skills if they were not adequately trained and thus do not understand the depth and complexities of skills required in developing reading comprehension skills, and if they themselves do not understand fully what is going on in the text. That the educators failed to correct their learners' incorrect answers could possibly reveal that did not fully understand the plot themselves. For example, when Pearl was discussing *The Frog Prince* with one of the group in her Grade 5 class, it was very clear that she did not understand what the story was about. This story is a fairy tale. A person who is familiar with the conventions of this genre would know to expect to find phrases like 'once upon a time' and 'they lived happily ever after, and things like castles, beautiful princesses, handsome princes, magic, fairies and other magical creatures and so on. For many Black South Africans, magic and magical creatures are associated with the dark arts and their princes and princesses live in villages near rivers, not castles on hilltops. Therefore, if this genre is not understood, the images that are supposed to be created by these words in the minds of the reader would be different so the meaning of the story would be distorted. In the case of this educator, she was not able to understand that the ugly frog would be magically transformed into a handsome prince once kissed by the beautiful princess. She found it very amusing when a learner said that the frog wanted to marry the princess and become a man. She asked the learners if it was a female frog which implies that her thought process had taken her along the lines of the frog being transsexual (refer to Chapter 4, 4.3.4).

Further to this, if the educators' knowledge is limited, how can they be expected to teach their learners effectively? For instance Andile asked his learners to identify the figure of speech in line five of the poem. He told them that it was a simile. The line read as follows, 'We learn things as we grow.' As can be seen, this is clearly not a simile. By definition, a simile compares things using the words like or as (Sindi is as thin as a rake). Although the line from the poem contains the word as, it is not used to compare things but is used as a conjunction; to join two sentences. Here we also see why using a dictionary is not enough to determine the meaning of a word. The word must be read in context because many words in the English language have

different meanings and different functions in a sentence. An example of such a word is the word lounge. As a noun it refers to a room in a house where people sit and relax but as a verb, it is the act of sitting and relaxing.

Finally, all three participants emphasised the importance of pronouncing words correctly when developing their learners' reading skills, and teaching their learners correct pronunciation. In spite of this, during the classroom observations, they themselves pronounced words incorrectly so their learners pronounced the words in the same incorrect manner. Pronunciation is very important as the mispronunciation of some words may distort the meaning of the entire sentence and thus hinder comprehension. Njabulo assisted her learners to read the word 'wondered'. But instead of saying wondered, she said 'wandered'. These words have completely different meanings. Moreover correct pronunciation is necessary for spelling. Spelling patterns in the English language are very complex (E.g. through, though, thought, bough, trough). What I have observed with my own learners is that they try to spell words as they pronounce them. This might be a possible reason, other than the abbreviated spelling used for social networking (E.g. because-bcoz, for-4), for SA learners' poor spelling. An example of one such observation is that they often confuse the spelling of the words live and leave so when they write a sentence it is difficult to work out what they are trying to say (E.g. I will leave here now). Do they mean that they will be leaving a certain place or do they mean that they will live in a certain place? The reason for this error is because they pronounce the word live as leave so they spell it as they pronounce it. When correcting the pronunciation of the word 'their' in her Grade 5 class, Pearl pronounced it as 'they are'. Here again the meaning of the sentence may be distorted and the learners will confuse the spelling.

### **5.8. Embracing change**

Pearl, Andile and Njabulo all said that they are very excited and look forward to the implementation of CAPS in the IP in 2013 because they believe that CAPS is bringing back the old way of teaching which they feel was better because they actually learnt things at school. This is possibly because it makes them feel safe and secure and they believe they know what they are doing with that instead of

floundering with things that they are not used to and have no experience of working with. Here again they fail to see the flaws in their own education. When asked what she thought about CAPS, Pearl was excited because the textbooks contained the assessment tasks so they would know exactly what to do, and because they must teach reading like it was taught in the old days. Andile said that it was better because there were less learning areas in the IP and that the textbooks would be easier for his learners to understand than the ones they are currently using. He also said, "CAPS- I think we are going back where we are coming from. I think it is going to be better." One wonders why they would want to go back to an education system that was exclusive and limited the knowledge of so many South African people as explained in 5.7. above. For instance, Andile proudly recalled being taught how to write a letter of application at school. But this was not a letter to apply for a job as a manager of a company. Instead it was a letter to apply for a transfer to another school. Perhaps the types of jobs that were reserved for Black South Africans (like domestic workers, gardeners and petrol attendants) did not require them to submit their curriculum vitae and letter of application.

I remember attending a Primary School and (for one term) a High School that was reserved for Indians. Language learning took place as follows. We would begin the week by reading a passage and answering a few level one questions. The next day we would do a language activity which consisted of a series of unrelated sentences. Then we would write an essay on a topic that was also unrelated to anything we had done in the previous lessons. The next day would be an oral presentation on an equally unrelated topic. Spelling words were not even taken from the text. Sometimes the words were related to the essay topic. In 1992 I transferred to an Ex-Model C School. These schools were previously reserved for White learners so when they opened their doors to other race groups, we were amongst the first to enjoy this privilege. Till then, I believed that the way we learnt in Primary School was good because I did not know any other way. In Grade 9, this Ex-Model C School introduced a concept which they called 'integrated learning'. All learning across the subjects and within the subjects was linked by themes. For example, if the theme was 'Water' we would learn about water borne diseases in Science, water

purification in Geography, measuring liquids in Mathematics and so on. In English, the week would begin with us reading a text which related to water. Language aspects were taken from the text and written and oral presentations were also linked to this theme. It was very different to what I was used to. I also found it surprising that those teachers asked us what we thought of the text and if we believed what the writer was saying. In Primary School we were taught to accept what we read as being the truth. Although I do not know the sequence in which the different language aspects were taught when the participants were at school, based on their responses when describing how they were taught the reading aspect, I think it would have been more like my apartheid style Primary School experience, if not worse.

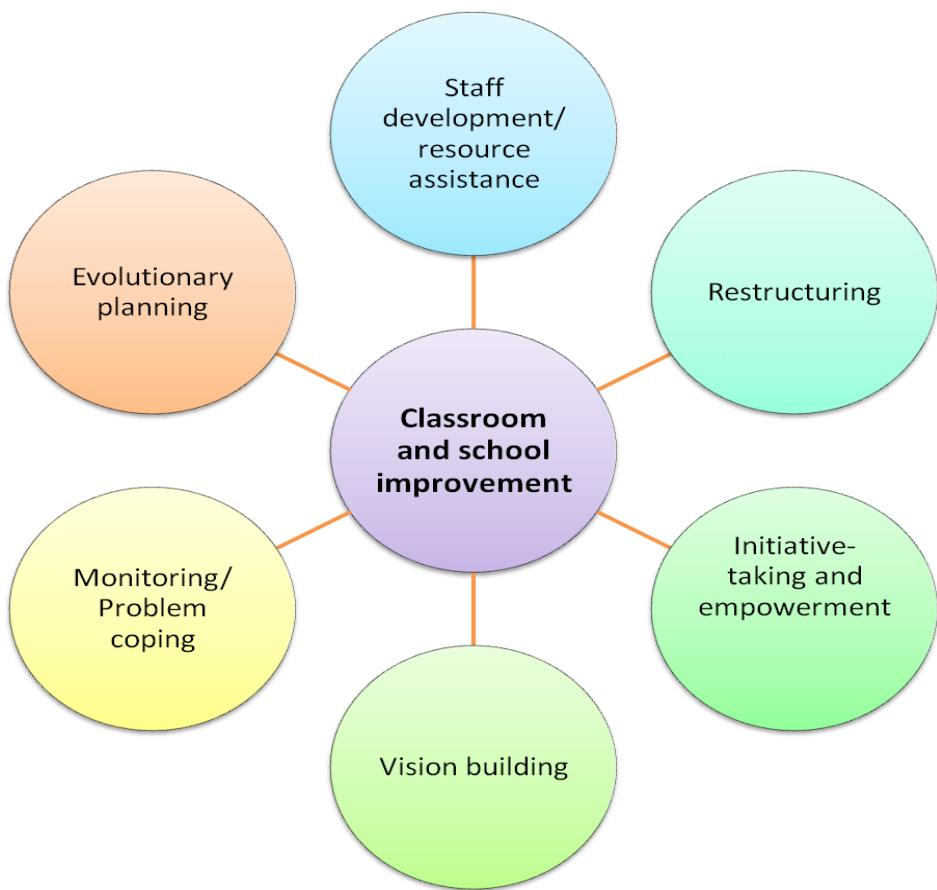
Thus it is clear that there is a big difference between how they were taught and how CAPS aims to promote and guide teaching. CAPS is a document that integrates all aspects of language. This is different to the old way of teaching language as language skills were mostly developed in isolation. Now, one theme must be used to teach decoding, comprehension, language usage, vocabulary extension, listening, speaking and writing so that learning takes place in context and is all related to that particular theme. In this way developing the learners' different language skills and their knowledge on a particular topic is promoted. They are also able to see the purpose and relevance of what they are doing. Although the participants have misconceptions regarding what CAPS is about, it is positive to note that they are willing to change and are embracing the change from NCS to CAPS. This willingness is evident as they are already attempting to use the policy document in their classrooms, even before its official implementation. Perhaps the willingness to change and embracing of change may be attributed to the strong School Management Team (SMT). All three participants hold their SMT in high regard and say that they are comfortable to discuss challenges they experience in the classroom with the SMT. Moreover, it was the Deputy Principal who initiated the UKZN reading project at the school and the rest of the SMT have strongly supported and encouraged the workshops and research that are conducted at the school as part of the project.

It is common knowledge that effective leadership is the most important factor in the success of a school. Good leaders are those who motivate, guide, initiate, anticipate, build visions, create, move forward, inspire and break boundaries (Kotter, 1990). Change does not take place easily in many schools because the leaders are too autocratic. This means that they work alone to create policy, make decisions and assign tasks. Policy change in schools from the top down does not work because all educators should actively participate in the decision-making process (Fullan, 1993). Leadership styles which are more suitable for implementing change and creating learning organisations include transformative and charismatic. Transformative leaders bring people together to achieve common goals by changing people's existing beliefs and they are often charismatic as they are confident in themselves as well as in others (Dunford, Fawcett & Bennett, 2000). They have the personal ability to lead others by having a profound effect on them and by leading by example.

The SMT at this school certainly possess some of these qualities. Not only did they organise the UKZN reading workshops to assist the educators as they were informed by the educators that they were experiencing difficulty when teaching reading for meaning, but they also attended and actively participated in these workshops. Both the Principal and Deputy Principal exude confidence, are energetic, supportive, eager to assist where they can and encourage the educators to improve by enrolling to study further and attending workshops.

Changing from the one policy document to the other is a mammoth task. Not only are the teaching methods different but there are different timetabling implications, subject allocations and assessment requirements. But educational reform is inevitable because teaching is not static. According to Fullan (2001), understanding the change process is less about innovation and more about innovativeness. He goes on to state that change is often unclear, complex and clouded by contradictory advice. Yet we need to embrace change. When implementing change of any sort, some people may resist the change because they are afraid of things that they are not familiar with. Fullan (2001) states that in order to manage sustained change in schools the following are key themes in the implementation process.

**Figure 4: Managing sustained change**



**Vision building** must be a shared process as it represents the values and integrity of the school. The school's SMT must realise it is a dynamic and interactive process. In addition to this **evolutionary planning** is needed to make the fit between the implemented change and to take advantage of unexpected developments and opportunities. Moreover the SMT must encourage and support **initiative-taking** by others. This could raise morale and enthusiasm and open the doors to greater success. **Staff development** is a central theme related to change in practice. They must be given the opportunity to learn the new ways of doing things, and expand on their knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the implementation of the change must be **monitored** to determine what problems are being encountered and how they are dealt with. Lastly, schools need to be **restructured** in terms of transformative leadership, hierarchies and cultures to suit the changing needs of the educators,

learners and community. These six themes feed into and on each other and are required for substantial educational transformation to occur. If the change is not implemented correctly and closely monitored, CAPS may fail as did OBE, RNCS and NCS because the educators do not actually change, but simply revert to what they are comfortable with.

The participants said that they are ready to implement CAPS in 2013 and are familiar with the document, but they were unable to clearly explain what the document contained during the interview process. When asked what the document said about teaching reading, Andile said he did not know anything but Njabulo said, "They stick more into shared reading." On the other hand Pearl explained that reading must be done in mornings when the learners' minds are fresh and that DVDs, radios and TV programmes must be used to teach learners dramatisation. She also said that they should use more books and more magazines and watch more TV because "we must make them aware of everything that is happening, that will make them communicate." The participants have many misconceptions; the most dangerous being that CAPS is designed to bring back the old ways of teaching, because as long as they continue to believe this and as long as they believe that the old way of teaching was better, they will continue to provide the same inferior education to their learners that they received, thus never breaking the chain and improving the quality of education for all SA learners.

# **Chapter 6**

## **Conclusion**

### **6.1. Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to explore the past and current reading practices of three Intermediate Phase language educators in order to ascertain how their experiences of learning reading and being trained to teach reading, at tertiary level, have shaped their current classroom practices, and how these experiences, beliefs and knowledge have prepared them to implement CAPS in their phase in 2013. To begin with, conclusions about the participants' current teaching practices preconceptions and misconceptions will be drawn. This will be integrated with discussions on how they ought to be developing their learners' reading skills, based on the theories highlighted in Chapter 3. Finally, possible reasons for the deficiencies observed in the participants' lessons and recommendations will be provided. The conclusions drawn here are specific to this study and these participants and are based on the theories and findings relative to this study with the intention of addressing the research questions.

### **6.2. Preconceptions, Misconceptions and Classroom Practice**

Although the participants' lessons have some differing aspects, there were many similarities in the methods as noted during the classroom observations and recorded during their interviews. The participants have the preconception (from their own schooling and training to teach reading) that reading is decoding text to speech. They see a good reader as one who decodes with fluency, accuracy, pronounces words correctly and observes punctuation marks. Although comprehension is indeed the most important part of reading, it was allocated less time than decoding. The participants view the development of reading comprehension as a separate entity, the depth and complexities of which are not fully understood by them. They asked their learners oral questions about the author, title, illustrator and picture before reading the text. However they did not use that information to predict what the text might be about and the questions were not structured to activate their learners' schemas and build on their existing knowledge. Therefore those pre-reading

questions did little to enable the learners to understand the text. Oral questions were asked after reading the text but these pertained mostly to the plot and were mostly level 1 and 2 type questions. The participants did not focus on story structure, drawing inferences, the setting, themes, moral, social and cultural issues or encourage their learners to voice real opinions regarding different aspects of the text to test their knowledge and understanding of the text and lead their thinking. Further to this, vocabulary development was lacking as the participants did not demonstrate how to place a word in context by using the text to work out the meaning of the word. In addition to this, although the participants explained that they were taught how to understand a text by using dictionaries to work out the meanings of words, they did not use dictionaries in their own classrooms. Lastly, language structures and conventions were given the least attention with only a few aspects discussed, like one question about past tense and two examples of contractions were discussed in the Grade 4 lesson. In Grade 5 there was no language development and in Grade 6 the educator unsuccessfully questioned his learners about figures of speech. According to CAPS (DoBE, 2011, p.12), "A good knowledge of vocabulary and grammar provides the foundation for skills development (listening, speaking, reading and writing)". CAPS (DoBE, 2011) states that vocabulary and language structures and conventions need to be created in relation to the text, which the participants did. However they did not go into sufficient detail, or not at all, to enable the learners to experiment with language to build meaning and evaluate the text critically. During the oral questioning of vocabulary, language structures and aspects of comprehension, there were many instances when the participants did not give the learners a clear indication as to whether their responses to these oral questions were correct or incorrect so the learners were unable to assess their own understanding of the text.

As can be seen, there were no written activities given. The crucial link between reading and writing was not made so the educator would not have a fair assessment of who among the learners understood the text and who did not. This again demonstrates their misconception that reading is an oral performance; another preconception that has been created from their own inadequate education and training. A further preconception created by their educational experiences was their

understanding of what constitutes reading material. During the interviews the participants explained that at school and in college they were exposed only to books and poems so these are the only genres that they use to develop their learners' reading skills. A wider range of texts, including those from media sources like advertisements, newspaper articles and cartoons, are also texts that should also be used in the classroom and are important in the development of critical thinking skills and their application to real life contexts. In addition to this, understanding the structures of different genres is important as it facilitates comprehension and prepares the learners for situations outside school. The participants did not explain the structures of the genres they used in the classroom (E.g. the poem, play script and traditional story) so the next time the learners come across a text within that genre they might not recognise its unique features which may have prepared them for what to expect in the text. Moreover, using the same types of texts could become tedious and the learners may get bored whereas using different texts to develop learners' reading skills provides variety and creates interest. Whether the learners enjoyed the texts they read was difficult to determine as the participants did not do anything to evoke interest and excitement and motivate the learners throughout the reading process. This may result in the learners viewing reading as a classroom chore instead of a fun hobby as well.

In addition to selecting a variety of texts, texts should be selected that are relevant to the learners' experiences and also to the purpose of the lesson. The educator must have a clear idea as to which skills they want to develop and choose texts that will best enable them to develop those skills. In cases where texts that seem distant from the learners' contexts have to be taught, the onus is on the educator to link the text to the learners' existing schemas and lead them from the known to the unknown. In this way the learners' knowledge base will be expanded and they will be exposed to new ideas and concepts which are important to promote democracy and survive in a country that is as diverse as South Africa. The participants chose texts that were age appropriate but they did not adequately link them to the learners' experiences. A possible reason for this could be that they themselves did not fully understand what was going on in the text. It is not possible to teach something that one does not

understand and in this study it was evident that the participants battled with pronunciation, understanding the plot, language structures and the proper methods, in terms of the interactive models of reading and the CAPS reading cycle, of developing their learners' reading skills.

The table in 4.5. of this study highlights the areas that require improvement in order for the participants to become more effective reading teachers and develop the skills that were neglected in their own substandard education. Although they acknowledge that their own education was deficient, the misconception that the participants have is that their education was a wonderful experience and that their reading skills were adequately developed. This misconception is based on the preconception that reading is essentially decoding text to speech. One cannot dispute that their decoding skills were effectively developed but they fail to see that the same cannot be said for the other side of reading (comprehension). For as long as they do not fully understand the areas in which their education was lacking and for as long as they do not realise that reading involves both decoding and comprehension processes and that reading and writing is linked, the cycle of inferior education created by Bantu Education will continue.

Another indicator that they were satisfied with the mediocre education that they received is that, during the interviews, they stated that they were very excited about the implementation of CAPS because it is the same as the old way of teaching. As explained in Chapter 5 (5.8) the way language must be taught according to CAPS is completely different from the way it was taught in Bantu Education during the apartheid era. The misconception that CAPS is similar to the old ways of teaching is probably the most dangerous one they hold because the participants will feel justified in continuing to use the deficient methods of teaching reading modelled by their teachers at school and training college. This misconception also implies that although the participants say they are ready and prepared to implement CAPS in their phase in 2013, they are probably not. If they did fully understand what the document was about, they would realise that it is indeed very different to Bantu

Education. In addition to this although they tried to implement aspects of the reading process from CAPS when developing their learners' reading skills, the aspects they covered were done so superficially and lacked the depth that is required to ensure that learners are able to enjoy the reading process, make inferences, activate schemas, express real opinions, work with vocabulary and language aspects within the context of the text and so on. Thus at the time of conducting this research, the participants were not ready to implement CAPS effectively and their teaching of reading was still influenced by the misconceptions and preconceptions created by their own inferior education and training.

### **6.3. Barriers to change**

The participants did express an earnest desire to improve their teaching of reading which this researcher believes to be sincere. The question that then arises is why they do not. According to Mezirow (1997) people reject ideas that do not fit their preconceptions. To prevent this from happening, autonomous responsible thinking must be developed through transformative learning. If one critically reflects on the assumptions upon which interpretations, beliefs, points of view or habits of mind are based, frames of reference can be changed (Mezirow, 1997, p.7). However, this is not a simple process because as long as something fits comfortably within our frame of reference, change will not occur. In the case of the participants, they are comfortable with their current practices as these provide a sense of security and give them the confidence. The educator is expected to be the person in the classroom who knows the most so trying out new methods that they do not fully understand may create a fear of failure in front of their learners. They have established points of view and have developed certain habits in the manner of doing things. Their point of view is that they are developing their learners' reading skills adequately because their learners are able to decode well and they believe that they were taught to read well because they are also able to decode well. As a result they stick to the habits that they have developed from their own learning and tertiary training and either do not fully understand the areas that they are not developing all their learners' reading skills effectively, or they are too afraid to venture into the unknown. Perhaps if they begin to critically reflect upon their assumptions, in particular habits of mind, their

teaching methods could possibly change. It is beyond the scope of this research to fully explore the methods involved in changing an educator's frame of reference.

The second question that arises is: how can they change when they do not fully understand what they have to change? They know that their teaching of reading requires attention but they do not fully understand which areas need improvement or why they need improvement. For them, their learners read well because they decode well, although they admit that pronunciation is a problem, and if their learners struggle to understand the text they must use dictionaries to determine the meanings of words. They prioritised pronunciation as a hurdle when they read and when they teach reading because of their preconception that reading is essentially decoding text to speech, but it was evident during the classroom observations that comprehension was a bigger reason for concern for both the participants and their learners. Further to this they seem to be satisfied that they had asked the correct questions before and after reading the text, and to an extent they did. However their questions were structured to only scrape the surface but did not assist the learners to go beyond the surface to work out the true meaning and purpose of the text. To enable the participants to fully understand the areas that need improvement perhaps they ought to undergo ongoing evaluation, by people they respect and trust and who are actually familiar with what developing reading skills entails. Workshops or mentoring should then be organised and structured to address those specific deficiencies, build confidence to deal with new methods, and equip the educators with the tools to implement that change and become more effective reading teachers.

The Department of Basic Education continually changes policy documents with a view to improve the poor results that SA learners continually produce but educationalists in this department appear to fail to see real problem. Policies and learners will fail if the educators are not adequately trained to implement them in the classroom. It is pointless - a time and money waste to implement a new policy document if the educators do not clearly understand what the policy expects them to do. It must be acknowledged that the poor development of reading for meaning is a

problem amongst learners and educators alike, a problem that can be attributed to the substandard Bantu Education, designed in the apartheid era, and its ongoing effects. Educators cannot be expected to work with the documents on their own after attending a few workshops because when they come back to school and try to implement what they were told, they might realise that there are aspects that they still do not understand or that the document was not clear at times or did not provide sufficient detail. For instance, if one considers the reading process (DOBE, 2011, pp. 10-11) it ‘summarises’ the activities that learners must be engaged in. The participants read this summary and implemented it as they understood it. They asked the learners to summarise what they had read and asked questions about the title and author. As no further explanation was provided in the document, they did not use those pre-reading questions to scaffold the learners’ understanding and expectations of the text, nor did they use pre-reading questions to activate background knowledge and make predictions, possibly because they did not know that they had to this or how they were supposed to do it. If educators do not have a complete and clear understanding of what to do with the document, they may lack confidence and have a fear of failure in front of their learners so they might revert to what they are comfortable with and as there is no ongoing evaluation, none will be the wiser.

#### **6.4. Recommendations: Making the CAPS fit**

The problem of literacy in SA is both complicated and serious. At the time of conducting this research, SA celebrated its eighteenth year into democracy. In terms of education, the country has gone from OBE to NCS, to RNCS and now CAPS, each designed to try to fill the gaps that Bantu Education has created. These gaps have proven to be so deep, that eighteen years and four policies later, the effects still characterise the lived experience of both educators and learners in classrooms every day. The mediocre education and training that many SA educators received spills over into their teaching. As a result they use the same limited, inferior methods to teach their learners. Based on what they model to their learners, preconceptions and habits of mind are created in their learners’ frames of reference. Those learners who decide to become educators will teach their learners as they were taught. And so the

cycle will continue. It is huge task to break that cycle because changing a person's existing frame of reference is extremely difficult. To make recommendations in that regard would be unrealistic so the following suggestions are provided to try and help educators improve their teaching of reading in terms of what is expected by CAPS.

Firstly, intensive workshops and training that deal specifically with developing learners' reading skills need to be held because if all the reading skills are not sufficiently developed all learning will be hindered. If a learner cannot decode with accuracy, use prior knowledge, make predictions and inferences, summarise and evaluate what they have read, work out the meanings of new words within the context of the text, and understand the structures of different genres, they will not be able to cope as they advance to the higher grades and at tertiary level where they are expected to work independently with texts in all subjects. Thus these workshops should be designed to highlight the fact that reading involves many processes and not just decoding text to speech. Facilitators must demonstrate how to engage the learners in the reading process summarised in CAPS to ensure that this process is not implemented superficially as a checklist. In addition to explaining the various aspects of comprehension, educators must also be taught the purpose of these different aspects so that they will have a clear understanding of what to do and why they have to do it.

Secondly as mentioned above (6.3.), there should be ongoing evaluation of the methods that the teachers use when developing their learners reading skills because developing learners' reading skills is a complex process that requires the development of many aspects, which is what the reading process explained in CAPS entails. As a result, an educator may improve in one aspect and not realise that they are ignoring or lacking in another. Ongoing evaluation would help the educator to identify and improve on the deficient areas.

Thirdly, as part of their mandatory files (planning and assessment), educators ought to keep a reflective journal wherein they critically reflect on their lessons and their own learning process so that they will be able to critically reflect on their

development or lack thereof, and learn from their reflections. These reflective journals should be reviewed by the relevant subject head or SMT so that the challenges and barriers educators encounter in the classroom, when implementing CAPS, can be addressed individually or if these are common hurdles, as a whole staff.

Lastly, more frequent workshops designed to systematically give educators insight into the limitations of their frames of reference and develop their teaching strategies, at both school and DoE level, and mentoring should be made compulsory as these would provide educators with a platform to voice their challenges and barriers when teaching reading as well as improve their teaching of reading. If educators were assisted in dealing with their individual areas of concern, they would be more comfortable and confident to try out the more effective methods and manage CAPS in their classrooms.

## Appendix 1



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27 March 2012

**Mrs N Mather (972134689)  
School of Education**

Dear Mrs Mather

**Protocol reference number: HSS/0184/012M  
Project title: Investigating Intermediate Phase educators' life histories of learning and teaching reading**

In response to your application dated 02 May 2012, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Collings".

**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee**

cc Supervisor: Sandra Land  
cc Academic Leader: Dr MN Davids  
cc Mr N Memela / Mrs S Naicker



Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

## Appendix 2



**kzn education**

Department:  
Education  
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.:2/4/8/200

**Sandra Land, Mitasha Nehal, Jeff Mkhize, Nkanyezi Cele, Audrey Pillay, Rakesh Sivnarain, Mhlengi Shabane and Nazarana Mather**

Centre for Adult Education  
School of Education and Development  
University of KwaZulu Natal  
Private bag X01  
SCOTTSVILLE  
3209

Dear Sandra Land et al.

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **Developing a Reading Culture among Adults and Children at a Foundation Level in a School-Based Learning Community**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 May 2012 to 31 December 2013.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the following schools and institution:

10.1 Maqongqo Primary School and the attached Adult Learning Centre

  
**Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD**  
Head of Department: Education

  
Date

...dedicated to service and performance  
beyond the call of duty.

### KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## Appendix 3

### INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

#### RESEARCH PROJECT - MASTERS IN EDUCATION DISSERTATION

##### PROJECT TITLE:

Making the CAPS fit: An exploration of the reading development strategies of three Intermediate Phase language educators in a rural KwaZulu-Natal school.

**PROJECT AIM:** To explore the how these educators' experiences of learning how to read may influence the manner in which they teach reading to their learners.

**RESEARCHER:** N. Mather (presently an M.ED student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal)

**CONTACT DETAILS:**      O33 3864900 (H)  
                                0837786056 (CELL)  
                                tink.naz@gmail.com (e-mail)

**SUPERVISOR:**               Sandra Land

**CONTACT DETAILS:**        033 260 5497

**CHOICE OF PARTICIPANTS:** Grade 4, 5, 6 educators

**CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION:** Should you agree to participate the following will apply:

- a) I will interview you on about two separate occasions each lasting approximately 1 hour.
- b) An audio-tape will be used to record information during the interview.
- c) Photographs of your workplace may be taken with your permission.
- d) Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained at all times.
- e) Your participation is voluntary and you will be allowed to withdraw at any stage from the study.
- f) No financial expenses will be borne by the participant.
- g) All information will be stored at the University for safe- keeping.
- h) Interviews will be arranged at your convenience.
- i) Approximately one of your lessons will be observed and audio recorded.

#### DECLARATION

I ..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....  
**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

.....  
**DATE**

## Semi Structured Interview Questions

### Part 1: General

1. Where do you live?
2. Who do you live with?
3. What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?
4. What would you say is the most important thing in your life?

### Part 2: Early experiences

1. Who did you live with when you were growing up?
2. What work did the adults you grew up with do?
3. What do you remember about reading before you began school?
4. Can you tell me about your earliest memories of reading?
5. What kind of reading did you see happening around you in the home and for what purpose was reading being done?
6. How did you learn to read?
7. Did anybody read to you or tell you stories?
8. Can you remember any of these stories? Which was your favourite? Why?

### Part 3: School

#### a. Primary

1. Describe the school you attended where you first learnt how to read?
2. What can you tell me about your first experiences with learning to read at school?
3. How did your teacher teach you how to read?
4. What types of texts did you first read?
5. Did you enjoy these texts and your reading lessons? Why? Why not?
6. Did you get reading homework?
7. Did anybody at home help you with your reading activities or give you extension activities?
8. How did they help you?

#### b. High

1. Describe the high school you attended?
2. How did your high school teachers help you develop your reading skills?
3. What types of texts did you read?

4. Did you enjoy these texts and your reading lessons? Why? Why not?
5. Did you get reading homework?
6. Did anybody at home help you with your reading activities or give you extension activities?
7. How did they help you?

#### **Part 4: Pre service training**

1. Why did you decide to become a language educator?
2. Where did you study to become a language educator?
3. What qualification did you obtain from this institution?
4. How did they teach you to teach reading?
5. Do you apply those principles when you teach reading? Explain.
6. Do you think you were adequately trained to teach reading? Why? Why not?

#### **Part 5: In-service training**

1. For how many years have you been a language educator?
2. Did you study further after obtaining your qualification?
3. What workshops have you attended?
4. Who were these workshops organised by? (DoE, Union,SMT etc)
5. Did any of these workshops deal with methods to teach reading? Explain.
6. Have you used any of these methods in your classroom? How?
7. How effective do you think these methods are?
8. What do you think you could learn to make yourself a better reading teacher?

#### **Part 6: Current reading practices**

1. Describe how you teach reading to your learners.
2. What types of texts do you use to teach reading?
3. What kinds of reading do you do now and for what purposes?
4. What difficulties do you experience when reading?
5. Do you read to children in your home or help them with their reading homework?
6. How is this the same/ different to how you were assisted at home as a child?
7. When you reflect back, what do you realise about schooling and its effect on you as both a reader and a teacher of reading?

## **Part 7: Barriers and challenges**

1. What are the greatest challenges you encounter as a language educator at your school?
2. What challenges do you encounter when teaching reading?
3. Have you discussed these challenges with your School Management Team?
4. What support did you receive from your SMT?
5. How do you feel about the implementation of the new policy document, CAPS, in 2013?
6. What can you tell me about the approach that CAPS takes to teaching reading in your phase?
7. Have you attended any CAPS workshops?
8. If yes, what did you learn from these workshops?

## Appendix 5

### Observation Schedule

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Educator: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Duration: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What type of text was used (genre)? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Title of the text: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Author/ creator: \_\_\_\_\_
4. How much time was spent decoding the text? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Description of decoding strategy used (tick):

Strategy	Tick
Individual (silent/ aloud)	
Paired	
Group	
Whole class (choral)	
Whole class (educator)	
Whole class (individual learners)	
Other	

6. a. How much time was spent on vocabulary extension? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Description of vocabulary extension: \_\_\_\_\_
-

7. a. How much time was spent on developing grammatical skills? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Description of grammatical skills development: \_\_\_\_\_
- 
8. a. How much time was spent on comprehension activities? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Description of comprehension activities? \_\_\_\_\_
- 
9. Tick the appropriate number: 1- never, 2- some evidence, 3- most times, 4- always

<b>Comprehension processes</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Identify purpose for reading				
Answer pre-reading questions before reading				
Make predictions before, during and after reading				
Activate relevant background knowledge for reading				
Genre highlighted				
Features of the genre explained				
Think aloud while reading				
Handle unfamiliar words during reading				
Create visual representations to aid comprehension				
Summarise what was read				
First level questions asked				
Inferences made				
Values and messages discussed				
Links between similar texts made				
Social, cultural, moral issues raised/ debated				
Identification of main ideas				
Identification of supporting ideas				
Expression of opinions				

Notes:

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10. Tick the appropriate number: 1- never, 2- some evidence, 3- most times, 4- always

Did the educator	1	2	3	4
Use a variety of strategies				
Chose texts that would interest the learners				
Chose texts that were at an appropriate level				
Assessed decoding skills				
Assessed comprehension skills (oral/ written)				
Link texts to learners' lives and experiences				

Notes:

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11. Implementation of CAPS (tick): E-effectively, M-made an attempt, N-not at all

a. Pre-reading activities

Activity	E	M	N	Notes
Activating prior knowledge				
Looking at the source, author, and publication date				
Reading the first and last paragraphs of a section				
Making predictions				

### b. Reading

Activity	E	M	N	Notes
Pause occasionally to check your comprehension and to let the ideas sink in				
Compare the content to your predictions				
Use the context to work out the meaning of unknown words as much as is possible; where this is not possible, use a dictionary				
Visualise what you are reading				
Keep going even if you don't understand a part here and there.				
Reread a section if you do not understand at all. Read confusing sections aloud, at a slower pace, or both.				
Ask someone to help you understand a difficult section				
Add reading marks and annotate key points				
Reflect on what you read				

### c. Post reading

Activity	E	M	N	Notes
Ask yourself if you accomplished your purpose.				
Draw conclusions				
Write a summary to help you clarify and recall main ideas.				

Think about and write new questions you have on the topic				
If you will need to recall specific information, make a graphic organiser or outline of key ideas and a few supporting details				
Understanding – confirm your understanding of the text				
Evaluate – bias, accuracy, quality of the text				
Extend your thinking – use ideas you saw in text				

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