

**THE UTILIZATION OF CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING IN THE MANAGEMENT
OF A GRADE 3 CLASSROOM**

by

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ACRONYMS

AS	Assessment Standard
CL	Co-operative Learning
DoE	Department of Education
EMDC	Education Management and Development Center
GI	Group Investigation
LO	Learning Outcomes
LOLT	Language of teaching and learning
LTSM	Learning and teaching support material
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
ORACLE	Observation and classroom learning evaluation project
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
STAD	Learner Teams Achievement Division
TGT	Teams-Games-Tournament
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Jacoba Cornelia Kitshoff, (student number 21264857) hereby declare that this dissertation for the degree Magister of Education at the University of Pretoria, has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that this is my own work in design and execution and that all material from published sources contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

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SUMMARY

Since the implementation of Curriculum 2005 and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in 2004, educators seem unsure of how to manage teaching and learning in the classroom. They find it difficult to develop their own teaching style, display leadership in class, plan and organize effectively to optimize teaching and learning experiences for their learners. The RNCS moved away from homogeneous ability grouping to heterogeneous grouping. Emphasis is placed on the acceptance of individual needs and differences, and equal learning opportunities. Large class groups and masses of administration have left educators with little time to spend with individuals. Group work seems to be the answer and a popular way to organize class work, especially if the educator controls the action well, but learners have minimal contact with the educator who mainly supervises and little cognitive development or interchange happens. Learners sit in groups, but mostly do not work collaboratively as groups. They talk to each other, but work as individuals.

The aim of this qualitative study at a parallel medium primary school was to determine the utilization of co-operative learning in the management of a productive Grade 3 class. The results of the study were compared with findings of a similar Dutch study conducted by Veenman, Kenter & Post in 2000. Data was collected through observation, a semi-structured educator interview, and semi-structured group interviews with Grade 3 learners, randomly selected from a class list, the educator's reflection on group formation, official documents like lesson plans and written assignments of learners based on two open questions put to them.

From the study it is clear that the aim of co-operative learning is to empower learners to gain confidence, develop to their full potential to become responsible and disciplined citizens of our democratic society. To reach these goals, educators should fully understand co-operative learning implement it in a structured and well-planned manner. As educational leader in a productive classroom the educator needs to be well organized, creating a culture of teaching and learning in class. Learners, exposed to harmonious classroom relationships in a well-managed productive classroom where participation of all members are encouraged and valued and open communication is part of daily processes in class, will participate freely, be resourceful, happy, helpful and co-operative and be able to make the most of co-operative learning approaches in class through responsible, enthusiastic and confident participation.

KEY WORDS

Co-operative Learning
Outcomes Based Education
Revised National Curriculum Statement
Constitution
Bill of Rights
Productive classroom
Classroom management
Effective teaching and learning
Values in Education
Social Skills
Human Rights
Group activities

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The underlying principles of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (Department of Education 2002:10-13) are based on the vision and values entrenched in the Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. These underlying principles include amongst others social justice, human rights, a healthy environment and inclusivity. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 sets a constitutionally binding framework for national and provincial legislative action in the field of education. The notion of a democratic society based on human dignity, freedom, and equality is entrenched in the Constitution.

One of the key provisions in the Constitution is section 9 which is dealing with equality. Section 9 (1) commits the government to ensuring that all individuals have the right to equal benefit and protection of the law. It extends to all persons, protection from unfair discrimination, and guarantees the right to have measures designed to achieve the adequate protection and advancement of persons previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination.

In terms of section 9 (3) of the Constitution the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds including race, gender, sex, social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

According to Malherbe & Beckmann (2003:37) section 9 is also known as the equality principle, which is a key provision of the Bill of Rights and underlies many other rights. The right to equality protects the equal worth of people and any law or conduct that violates people's equal worth is prohibited by section 9.

Gans (1973) in Nieuwenhuis (2005:193) identified three possible aims with regards to equality: equality of opportunity, equality of results, and equality of treatment:

- Equality of opportunity: Of the three aims with equality, the one that enjoys popular support is equality of opportunity (Schaar 1997:137). The doctrine of equality of opportunity, according to Schaar, is attractively simple: It asserts equal rights and opportunities to all learners to develop according to their own talents and potential.
- Equality of results: The moment educators try to equalise the outcome in the classroom, through processes of social engineering, they are denying the inherent differences in learners and the desirability to achieve according to their full potential. Given the analysis of equality and the obvious problems to be encountered with ideals such as equality of opportunity and equality of results, the ideal should be to work towards equality of treatment as a valued-based and value-laden concept. This is what Schaar (1997:145) calls another kind of equality that is blind to all questions of success and failure: This is the equality that obtains in the relation among the learners in the classroom/school. It is the feeling held by each individual that all other individuals, regardless of their many differences, belong to the classroom/school community.
- Equality of treatment: It must be interpreted to imply that, after the starting line has been equalised through processes of open admission, we should move towards ensuring equality of treatment as a value-based concern throughout the education process. This means that everybody should have a feeling of being wanted and appreciated.

Educational institutions are not expressly mentioned in section 9 of the Constitution, but in section 9(2) the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms is guaranteed. This right is further protected by section 5(1) of the South African Schools Act No 84 of (1996), which states that a public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way. In other words, the education system should be capable of accommodating the diverse needs of all learners as inclusively as possible. Equal access does not imply total equality, but equal opportunities to education according to every person's abilities and potential (Prinsloo 2006:359).

For the purpose of this study two important aspects relating to access should be highlighted, particularly when focusing on the development of a productive classroom (Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht 1999:47):

- Access refers to all aspects of the curriculum that facilitate successful learning, including the learning programmes, the language of teaching and learning (LOLT), classroom and teaching practices, learning and teaching support material (LTSM), equipment, assessment procedures, quality assurance and curriculum development approaches.
- Access refers to the ability of the psychosocial environment (including the culture and ethos of a school, attitudes, human relations, and the way in which the school and the classroom are managed) to facilitate positive learning and the development of all learners (Lazarus et al. 1999:47).

Section (10) of the Constitution (1996) states that everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected. The right guaranteed by section 10 to have one's inherent dignity as a human being respected and protected is another fundamental right that underlies many if not all other rights. The exercising of other rights comprises various manifestations of human dignity and, as such, human dignity is the cornerstone for the protection of such other rights. Often, when another right is violated, the violation also constitutes an infringement of human dignity (Malherbe & Beckmann 2003:37).

The principle of quality education for all learners is stressed in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. The following provisions made in the South African Schools Act are good examples of how national legislation is fulfilling its constitutional duty to ensure equal opportunities for all learners:

- Section 5 guarantees equal access to public schools. In terms of section 5 of the South African Schools Act a public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way;
- In terms of section 20 (1)(a) the governing body of a public school must promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school.

These clauses encapsulate a vision of an education system that gives recognition to the wide diversity of needs in the learner population, and which ensures a more flexible range of responses. The emphasis on quality education for all learners suggests that schools have to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

The Revised Curriculum Statement moved away from homogeneous ability grouping with its negative effects on learner achievements to heterogeneous grouping. Emphasis is placed on the acceptance of individual needs and differences, and equal learning opportunities.

Teaching methods should be followed which can help make diversity in heterogeneous classes a resource rather than a problem (Veenman, Kenter & Post 2000:281-282). Large class groups and masses of administration have left educators with little time to spend with individuals. While the educator pays attention to one learner, other learners need to be occupied. Group work seems to be the answer and a very popular way to organize class work, especially if the educator controls the action very well. It results in minimal contact with the educator who mainly does supervision and little cognitive development or interchange happens (Shipman 1985:67). This popular form of work also determines the layout of the classroom. Learners would sit in groups, but mostly do not work collaboratively as groups. They talk to each other, but work as individuals. The group is merely the context within which the learner works. Shipman (1985:75) reported that the Observation and Classroom Learning Evaluating Project (ORACLE) of the University of Leeds since 1975 found that if educators mainly use group work to organize their teaching, very little interaction takes place between them and the learners. They also found that very little attention was paid to how the groups were formed. It was used without much thought, merely to keep the learners busy.

Co-operative learning (CL) on the other hand refers to any of a variety of teaching methods in which learners are placed in small groups to help one another learn academic content. In co-operative classrooms, learners are expected to discuss and argue with each other, assess each other's current knowledge, and complete the gaps in each other's understanding. Co-operative learning replaces individual seatwork, individual study and individual practice, but rarely replaces direct instruction by the educator. When properly organized, learners in co-operative groups work with each other to make sure that everyone in the group masters the concepts being taught (Slavin 1995).

According to in Veenman et al. (2000:282), there are many reasons for co-operative learning to enter the mainstream of educational practice. Firstly, there is the overwhelming amount of research showing the use of CL to improve learner achievement and such other outcomes as inter-group relations, acceptance of handicapped classmates and increased self-esteem. Secondly, there is a growing realization that learners must learn to think, solve problems, integrate their knowledge and apply skills; CL is an excellent means of doing this. Thirdly, CL can help make diversity in heterogeneous classes a resource rather than a problem. As schools are moving away from homogeneous ability grouping with its negative effects on learner achievement towards more heterogeneous grouping, CL is growing in importance. Fourthly, CL has been found positively to influence the social relationship with learners of different ethnic backgrounds and mainstreamed special education learners and their classmates. Moreover, learners who are struggling academically in co-operative primary schools also obtain significantly higher achievement scores in reading and mathematics when compared with similar learners in traditional primary schools. According to Veenman et al. (2000:282), co-operative learning clearly fits with current conceptions of learning as a social, cultural and interpersonal constructive process governed as much by social and situational factors as by cognitive ones.

All activities in a classroom, including those of management, revolve around resources, namely people (educators, learners and parents); physical resources (buildings, furniture, text books, exercise books, learning and teaching support material, etc.); and time (tuition time table). The predetermined learning outcomes in the eight learning areas of the Revised National Curriculum Statement are achieved by means of effective lesson strategies and planning, the selection, clustering and integration of learning outcomes, the planning and organizing of work schedules and learning programmes, the implementation of school and departmental policy, decision making regarding teaching strategies and the best interest of the learners, delegating work to individual learners and groups, coordinating the planned activities in the classroom and the assessment of learner achievements according to the assessment standards (adapted from Prinsloo 2003:138).

1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Since the implementation of Curriculum 2005 and more recently the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in the Foundation Phase in 2004, educators seem unsure of how to manage teaching and learning in the classroom. They find it difficult to develop their own teaching style, display leadership in class, plan and organize effectively in order to create an effective teaching and learning climate in inclusive classrooms to optimize teaching and learning experiences for their learners.

As a Senior Curriculum Planner in the General Education and Training band in the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) I visited a number of Grade 3 classes in the province to monitor the implementation of the RNCS. I observed that many foundation phase educators frequently made use of group work. I noticed that while some learners were actively involved, others just seemed to sit around and watch their peers working. There was little evidence of shared responsibility for the work the group had to do. The manner in which group work was dealt with did not contribute to a better atmosphere of social intervention and acceptance or to create an inclusive environment in the classroom. I decided to investigate the management of co-operative learning in Grade 3 classes to ensure better teaching and learning.

1.3 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study was concerned with the impact of the management of co-operative learning on productive/effective learning in a Grade 3 classroom.

The problem statement revolved around the following critical questions:

- What is co-operative learning?
- How does the educator manage a productive learning classroom?
- How do educators perceive the effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning, the way it is incorporated and adapted to the classroom and the problems encountered during implementation?
- What is the reaction from Grade 3 learners with regard to working in co-operative groups?

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

In the view of the problem formulated above, the aim of the study was to determine the utilization of co-operative learning in the management of a productive Grade 3 class.

The objectives of this research are:

- To determine what co-operative learning is.
- To determine how educators could manage a productive classroom.
- To examine how educators perceive the effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning, the way it is incorporated and adapted to a classroom and the problems encountered during implementation.
- To determine the reactions from Grade 3 learners with regard to working in co-operative groups.

1.5 THE RELEVANCE OF THIS STUDY

The findings from the research could be useful for:

- Foundation Phase educators managing their planning of teaching and learning in class to ensure maximum benefit from learning experiences. The Western Cape Education Department has about 1 200 schools with foundation phase educators.
- Learning Support Staff who have to support class educators and give them guidance on effective management of teaching and learning.
- Curriculum Advisors in Education Management and Development Centers (EMDCs) (districts) who support and advise educators with regard to the implementation of the RNCS in the classroom.
- Senior Curriculum Planners who develop provincial policy, guidelines and workshops on the implementation of the RNCS as well as effective teaching and learning and develop and manage the roll out of learning and teaching support material (LTSM) for educators in the classroom.
- Textbook writers who develop activities for learners in class.

1.6 DEMARCATION

Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:117) indicate three main issues in site selection:

- Appropriateness – can rich and relevant data be obtained at the site?
- Access – The researcher's relationship with the site of research and all participants in the research has an effect on the results obtained.
- Ethics – The following questions should be kept in mind when making the choice of site:
 - Should anyone research the specific site?
 - Should this specific researcher do the research?

1.6.1 APPROPRIATENESS

The parallel medium school chosen had 1091 learners, 557 boys and 534 girls. Although the school is situated in a better socio-economic environment, learners come from a mixture of socio-economic backgrounds. A number of learners came from rural multi-grade schools to attend this school, as they came to stay with their parents who found employment as house workers or gardeners in the metropolitan area. The school had 4 Afrikaans and 2 English Grade 3 classes, 170 learners in total, of which 74 were boys and 96 girls. Rich data were obtained from this specific site, as the researcher and the participants shared the same home language and the intricacies of language and non-verbal behaviour were well understood by the researcher.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design and methodology used in this study will be discussed in detail in chapter 4. Only a short overview will be included in chapter one.

1.7.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design refers to a plan for selecting subjects, research sites and data collection procedures to answer the research questions.

The different methods of data collection which were employed to gather relevant information for the study was:

- Literature review
- Qualitative research

The aim of this research was to determine how the educator should manage co-operative learning to create a productive classroom in Grade 3.

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:22) define literature review as "...a process of reading some background information that has been published and appears to be relevant to the research topic." Relevant data pertaining to the study problem was gathered from both primary and secondary sources, critically examined and evaluated and objectively recorded to achieve the objectives of the study.

The research adopted a qualitative approach: Interviews were firstly used to determine how the educator perceived the effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning, the way it was incorporated and adapted to the classroom and the problems encountered during the implementation; and secondly to determine the responses from Grade 3 learners with regard to working in co-operative groups.

The results and findings of a Dutch qualitative research conducted by Veenman et al. (2000:281-302) to determine the success of the implementation of co-operative learning in Grade 3 classes were then used to do a comparative study.

The research design and methodologies, applied in this study, will be described in detail in Chapter 4. This section of Chapter 1 will just give a short overview of the design, methodology, data collection and analysis which were used.

This qualitative research was done as a phenomenological study in a qualitative style, as the researcher tried to get an overall understanding of the impact of the management of co-operative learning in Grade 3.

1.7.2 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

Data was collected from one Grade 3 class as a similar group of a population of Grade 3 learners, and randomly selecting every second learner on the alphabetical class list as part of the sample.

1.7.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The personal reflection notes of the educator, official documents about various groups and learners' written work and layout of the classroom were used to verify information received via interviews and observations in class and add to the richness of data obtained.

The researcher spent a few days in the class observing the educator and all the learners in teaching and learning and group work activities. This also helped the learners to get used to the interviewer. It assisted to ensure better contact and openness when the interviews were done.

A semi-structured, focused interview was held with the educator in the afternoon after school. Afterwards interviews were held with the Grade 3 learners who formed part of the sample. The learners were interviewed during the school day. It was held in the form of group interviews, as young learners more easily share information if the interview is held in a group format. None of these group interviews lasted longer than 45 minutes at a time.

The educator was requested to keep a reflection diary regarding her planning of classroom activities, the reasons for specific groupings of learners in class and what measures she took to ensure effective classroom teaching.

Learners were also be asked to do two written assignments after the interviews on how they felt about group work and who they would have liked to be in a group with and why.

Table 1.1 below indicates links between the research focus, the manner in which data was collected and which resources were used.

Table 1.1 Linkage between research focus, data collection methods and data resources

Research focus	Data collection method	Data resources
To determine what co-operative learning entails	Literature review	The South African Constitution, relevant DoE policy documents as well as national and international literature were reviewed.
To determine how a productive classroom should be managed	Literature review	Relevant DoE policy documents as well as national and international literature were reviewed.
To determine how educators perceive the effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning, the way it is incorporated and adapted to the classroom and the problems encountered during the implementation	Classroom observation Semi-structured individual interview with an educator. Copies of lesson plans Reflection diary	National and international research literature were viewed. Compared the findings of this study with a similar Dutch study.
To determine the reactions from Grade 3 learners with regard to working in co-operative groups.	Classroom observation. Semi-structured group interviews with learners from a grade 3 class. Written assignment by the learners on the topic	National and international literature were viewed. Learners' written work Compared the findings of this study with a similar Dutch study.

1.7.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Applying a coding system, the collected data was organized in a number of meaningful categories. The researcher used these categories to find meaningful relationships or patterns which were then presented in the most appropriate manner.

The researcher ensured that the results of the research were consistent by first discussing the interview questions with a small group of colleagues to check that the questions lead to reliable answers. After interviewing the first group of learners, the researcher also re-examined the list of questions, adjusting some, ensuring that it contributed to the interviews and did not cause confusion.

The researcher planned to use a number of instruments, e.g. observation, taped and transcribed interviews, reflection diary, written work and copies of daily planning to obtain data. This contributed to a greater measure of triangulation and corroboration between the collected data. Although narratives were used to report the findings of the study, actual quotes from participants were also included, as well as maps and graphs to make the results easier to interpret.

1.7.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Busher (2002:75) argues that research should be designed in such a way that the needs of the researcher and respondents can be met, without giving up or privileging the needs of some of the participants or stakeholders in the study.

True to the heart of this research to better social understanding, respect human rights and to value diversity in our community, this research project used unbiased language while reporting the research findings. The identity of the school, learners and educator were not revealed. The educator's classroom authority was not undermined and disruption of the usual flow of the day kept to a minimum.

This research at all times protected the dignity and privacy of participants, sought the consent of parents of the learners who were identified as part of the sample and the complete procedure of the research was disclosed to the relevant participants. All

participants were informed that they could stop their participation at any time should they so wish.

1.7.6 LIMITATIONS

Being an official working at the provincial Education Department Head Office as a Senior Curriculum Planner might have intimidated the educator at times, so the researcher took great care to establish a trusting relationship with the educator. The same care was taken to win the trust of the learners, as the researcher was so much older and an unknown adult to them at the onset of this research. The researcher took great care to ensure that her inputs were honest and sincere and enhanced the realities of education in this class.

A further limitation of this study could be the fact that only one school and only one class were used as a sample for the research.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

The following structure was applied in this study in order to meet the aims of the research.

1.8.1 CHAPTER 1:

Orientation

The opening chapter of this research study consists of the introduction, the rationale of the study, the problem statement, aim and objectives, the relevance of the study, demarcation, appropriateness, research design, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

1.8.2 CHAPTER 2:

A literature review: Co-operative Learning (CL)

The literature review of co-operative learning includes the definition of concepts concerned, the values entrenched in the Bill of Rights, what a learning school and its focus is as well as the principles which guide such a learning school. It also covers

issues such as the Revised National Curriculum Statement, how learners learn and the implications of learning as a social activity in classroom practice. Various aspects of cooperative learning are included, such as its characteristics, how to implement CL, groups and their needs, the phases of development a group goes through, the basic elements of CL, the skills learners need to function in a group, the various approaches to CL and how assessment of group work should be done. Lastly international research findings are covered as well as the role of the educator in CL.

1.8.3 CHAPTER 3:

Managing a productive classroom

Organizational culture, the culture and climate of a school and classroom as well as the characteristics of a school with a sound culture of teaching and learning are issues discussed in chapter 3. Furthermore it covers the elements of the management of a productive classroom, which are divided into human and task dimensions and lastly effective learning is discussed.

1.8.4 CHAPTER 4:

The research design and methodology

This section of the study covers the research methodology used. The research design, how data was collected and analyzed, the limitations, validity, ethical aspects, reliability and confidentiality are included in this chapter.

1.8.5 CHAPTER 5:

The empirical study

The empirical part of this research includes the analysis and interpretations of data collected. A few graphs gives further insight into the learner sample. Diagrams are used to give more clarity on the classroom context.

1.8.6 CHAPTER 6

Findings, shortcomings and recommendations

The last chapter reflects the findings, comparison of the results of this research with the study done by the Dutch and addresses the research questions. The recommendations, limitations and future aspects for research complete the chapter. References and appendixes follow after chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2

A LITERATURE REVIEW: CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Much research has been done on the benefits of the co-operative learning in class since John Dewey first wrote *Democracy and Education* in 1916, promoting the idea that the classroom should actually be a replica of the larger society in which it is situated, a so-called *mirror image*, in which real-life learning can take place, but little has been said on how the learners experience it. Since the 1990's co-operative learning has become even more popular as a result of the numerous benefits highlighted by research.

The birth of a democratic society in South Africa has brought to this country a new Constitution of which the Bill of Rights has arguably the greatest impact on our society. In terms of section 7 (1) of The South African Constitution (1996), the Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the values of human dignity, equality and freedom.

South African education entered a new era from 1994 when a democracy was declared. Associated with this socio-political shift has been an emphasis on important values such as equity, non-discrimination, liberty, respect and social justice, which have provided the framework for The South African Constitution. These values are central to a socio-perspective, which developed in education as a result of a sharp critique (Burden 2000:28). Policy documents and subsequent legislation have emerged that reflected these values.

The South African Constitution together with the new education legislation and policy for example, the White Paper on Education and Training No. 1 of (1995) and the South African Schools Act No 84 of (1996), recognize diversity and the provision of quality education for all learners within a single system of education.

These policies and laws provide a framework for and are the first steps towards the accommodation of diversity in education in South African schools (Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht 1999:46). It emphasizes an education system that is inherently capable of meeting the diverse needs of all learners as inclusively as possible within schools. In other words it emphasizes the accommodation of all kinds of diversity, including diverse learning needs within the ordinary classroom.

These values are also embedded in the Revised National Curriculum Statement, (Department of Education 2002:10) which is currently being implemented in all schools in South Africa. This chapter deals with the relationship between the underlying values as part of the principles of the Revised National Curriculum Statement and co-operative learning.

2.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The Major Dictionary, Fourteenth Expanded Edition of Pharos (1997:889) explains the word “definition” as a description, a sharpness of vision or clarity. By defining some of the concepts which this study will deal with, the researcher aims to generate clarity and a better understanding of certain concepts.

2.2.1 BILL OF RIGHTS

Chapter 2 of The South African Constitution deals with the inalienable rights of every person in our country, called Human Rights. This Chapter of our Constitution is known as The Bill of Rights and it protects the fundamental rights of each and every person, young and old, in South Africa. The Bill of Rights forms the cornerstone of our democracy and protects our democratic values namely human dignity, equality and freedom. All policies, guidelines and decisions made by government, including Departments of Education must be aligned to The Bill of Rights (South African Government: 1996).

2.2.2 CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING

Van der Horst & McDonald (1997:127) state that co-operative learning is more than just learners working in groups. They define co-operative learning as “...learners working

together in a group small enough that everyone can participate in a collective task that has been clearly defined, and without direct immediate supervision of the teacher.”

Abrami, Chambers, Poulsen, De Simone, Apollonia & Howden (1995:1) define co-operative learning as “...an instructional strategy in which students work together in groups that are carefully designed to promote positive interdependence. This positive interdependence is coupled with individual accountability so that students are responsible for learning and contributing to the group task.”

2.3 VALUES ENTRENCHED IN THE CONSTITUTION

In the South Africa context the *Manifesto on Values, Human Rights and Democracy* (Department of Education 2001: 13-20) identified ten values, which the authors described as the founding values of the Constitution.

The authors of the Manifesto describe the Constitution as a vision of a different society based on equity, justice and freedom for all. It is a call to all South Africans to seek to build a just and free democratic society in which the potential of each person is freed. Underpinning the Constitution are the following values identified by the authors of the Manifesto:

- **Democracy**

The Constitution commits all citizens to the establishment of a society based on “*democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights*”, and defines South Africa “*as a sovereign, democratic state*” founded upon the value of “*universal adult suffrage, a national common voters’ roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of government.*” It means that government is based on “*the will of the people*”, that we are responsible for our own destinies since, through the electoral process, we run our country and our public institutions. This is an inalienable right and one that needs to be carried into the education system from the highest level down to schools and educational institutions. The implication is that all policies and laws developed must be founded on, as well as protect and promote democratic principles (Department of Education 2001:13).

As an education leader, the educator can uphold these democratic principles in class when implementing co-operative learning (CL). By participating in co-operative learning, taking responsibility for learning certain sections of work and making sure that other group members understand it well, learners experience being part of a successful process. Learners have to take responsibility for their own learning in their groups; learning at a young age that each of them are responsible for their own destinies, as learners in co-operative learning , as well as later in life as adults participating in our democratic society.

- **Social Justice**

The Constitution establishes as a right the access to adequate housing, health-care services, sufficient food and water, social security, and a basic education. Children, specifically, enjoy the inalienable right “*to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health-care services and social services*”, and “*to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation*”. However, without the implementation of social justice to correct the injustices of the past, reconciliation will be impossible to achieve. The social justice clauses in the Constitution have profound implications for education because they commit the state to ensuring that all South Africans have equal access to schooling – and that they have access to such schooling in their mother tongue if they so desire (Department of Education 2001:14).

The classroom should therefore be a space in which the core social values such as social justice, tolerance, concern for human dignity and mutual respect are protected and promoted. When initially exposed to co-operative learning in class, educators need to plan, not only the academic activities for these groups, but also the social skills which learners need to learn and practice while working in groups in co-operative learning settings. By doing so, educators can ensure that learners begin to accept each other in class and develop mutual respect for the different strengths displayed by different learners. Learners with specific barriers to learning should be encouraged to participate fully in co-operative learning, their peers should be encouraged to support and accept them as fully functioning members of their co-operative learning groups. By doing so, learners’ rights to basic education and their dignity will be protected.

- **Equality**

Section 9 of the Constitution states unequivocally “*everyone is equal before the law*” and may not be unfairly discriminated against on the basis of “*race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, language and birth.*” The implications of this clause is spelt out in the South African Schools Act 84 (1996) stating that: “*all children must obtain equal education, and the state must strive towards giving all students the same access to resources and to personnel, and the same opportunities to realize their fullest potential.*”

Equality should underpin the relationships in schools. Just as the state has an obligation not to unfairly discriminate against any of its citizens, so the school has an obligation to protect everyone against any form of unfair discrimination. Understanding the value of equality and the practice of non-discrimination means not only understanding that you have these rights, as an educator or as a learner, but that others have them as well. The implied consequences of the equality clause are that it promotes values such as tolerance and respect for diversity (Department of Education 2001:14).

Learning to get along with peers in the classroom situation will help learners to be tolerant towards others and respect the diverse groupings which constitute the South African population. Well-planned co-operative learning activities can ensure that all learners get equal opportunities at taking the lead, or develop specific other skills, like presenting the task to the rest of the class, interviewing other parties or summarizing all inputs made by group members. The educator should manage processes and activities carefully to ensure that all learners understand fully what is expected of them, also those learners who use an additional language as language of learning and teaching. This might even mean that the educator may have to switch code to explain activities to them in their mother tongue. By doing this, the educator will make sure that there is no unfair discrimination against these learners; they will better understand what is expected of them in co-operative learning groups and will be able to earn the respect of their peers as they will be able to contribute more when they understand the activities better.

- **Non-Racism and Non-Sexism**

The Constitution's emphasis on the value of "non-racism and non-sexism" is aimed at creating practices that treat everybody as equal – and that work, specifically, towards redressing the imbalances of the past where people were oppressed or devalued because of their race or their gender. For the values of non-racialism and non-sexism to have any meaning, black learners and female learners have to be afforded the same opportunities to free their potential as white learners and male learners. Non-sexism also means, specifically, that female educators and learners are not subjected to sexual abuse or harassment in schools, and that as female learners they are not discouraged from completing their schooling because of abuse, harassment or pregnancy (Department of Education 2001:15).

Educators can play an important role in class to ensure that all learners develop a variety of skills and competencies; preventing them from being typecast. The social skills learned in small heterogeneous groups could promote respect, acceptance and tolerance for different groups. Educators should strive to ensure that tasks given to group members are not perceived as typically "boy's" or "girl's" tasks. The educator should set the example by planning in such a manner that boys and girls get equal exposure to all kinds of tasks and skills. This means then that not only boys should act as leaders of groups and that not only girls should be given the task of cleaning the area where they worked. When planning groups, the educator should take care to ensure that all groups are formed in a heterogeneous manner, consisting of boys, girls and that all cultural, language or ethnic groups are represented in the class. Such heterogeneous groups should also include learners with different cognitive abilities. Gender groups, all language groups, all ethnic groups and all racial groups represented in the class should be allowed to enter in competitions and should have the opportunity to see their best work displayed on the walls of their class. By working and learning together in the co-operative learning activities, learners will get to know, respect and accept each other, across gender, ethnic, cultural and racial divides. This can be achieved when implementing co-operative learning in class, which would give learners a solid foundation in social skills and values. When grown up they will be aware of the importance of values like democracy, equality, tolerance and respect in our society.

- **Ubuntu (Human Dignity)**

The postscript of the Interim Constitution (1993) stated that there was a need in South Africa “*for understanding but not for vengeance a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for Ubuntu but not for victimization*”. In the Constitution on 1996, the notion of Ubuntu is encapsulated in the value of “Human Dignity” in Section 10. Out of the values of Ubuntu and human dignity flow the practices of compassion, kindness, altruism and respect which are at the very core of making schools places where the culture of learning thrive – of making them dynamic hubs of industry and achievement rather than places of conflict and pain. Ubuntu requires you to respect others if you are to respect yourself (Department of Education 2001:15).

Being exposed to co-operative learning in class where small, inclusive groups are formed in a heterogeneous manner, including different race, gender and abilities groupings, learners will learn compassion and respect for self and others, especially if they are treated with respect and dignity by the educator.

- **An Open Society**

The South African Constitution lays the foundation for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people. In an open society every person is afforded the opportunity and right to be a participant rather than an observer of the democratic process. It means being given access to as wide a range of information as possible through as wide a range of media as possible. It also means encouraging a culture of dialogue and debate; a culture of discussion out of which values and priorities are perpetually being evaluated and reassessed (Department of Education 2001:16).

Educators should ensure that learners have a positive experience in the co-operative learning environment; participating freely in group activities; not merely watching others work. Learners should be taught to value each other’s contribution to group activities and be allowed to offer opinions and assistance to each other. Learners should be allowed to share ideas, argue various points and jointly get clarity on topics they study together. In such co-operative learning settings, learners get to be exposed to view points which differ from their own and the educator should guide them on how to deal with such divergent views to reach an acceptable position which the whole group can support. Getting used to

participating in positive discussions where views, values and priorities can be reviewed and adjusted when needed, will provide a valuable background later in life for adult participation later in life in an open society.

- **Accountability (Responsibility)**

Through the process of elections, voters elect the political party to represent their interest in all matters of government. Voters therefore have the duty to elect those people who can best serve their interest and to hold those elected accountable for the decisions and actions taken. The Constitution makes it clear that public administration – which includes the public school system – must be governed by the values and principles of professionalism, efficiency, equity, transparency, representivity and accountability. The Constitution acknowledges the interest of communities in their local schools and grants communities the right to take responsibility for them and to hold the educators and elected School Governing Body members accountable for what is happening at the school. Accountability therefore requires that all school governing bodies become legitimate and working institutions of civil society. Above all *accountability* means that we are all responsible for the advancement of our nation through education and through our schools and that we are all responsible to others in our society, for our individual behaviour (Department of Education 2001:17).

Working in a co-operative learning setting, learners can begin to understand that the decisions of the group need to be transparent for all group members to support it. They also learn that the different members are accountable to the group with regards to the section of work they are responsible for. When learners take responsibility for the learning of their group, for their own individual learning and they understand individual accountability, they will begin to understand that each person in the country is responsible to other people. This valuable lesson will prepare learners to become adults who act responsible towards to society, for their own individual behaviour.

- **The Rule of Law**

“As a state South Africa is founded on the value of ‘*the supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law*’. This means, literally, that the Constitution is supreme, that there is a consensus of rules and regulations we must obey – and that we understand that if we do

not, we are breaking the law of the land, and that the State is thus entitled to punish us. Within schools, the rule of law is the guarantor of accountability, for it holds us all to a common code of appropriate behaviour – not just because we know we should, but also because we understand that if we don't, those to whom we are accountable will discipline us” (Department of Education 2001:18).

The educator should be clear on the rules, responsibilities of learners and consequences for those who transgress. Transparency in our open society requires that learners know upfront what the consequences will be if they do not behave and participate as expected. Learners should understand that one is responsible for one's own behaviour and accountable to peers and others. As part of the realization of accountability learners will understand the consequences, when you are displaying inappropriate behaviour such as breaking the rules for co-operative learning, previously decided on between the educator and learners.

When deciding upon these rules for behaviour in co-operative learning settings, the educator must guide the learners to ensure that a democratic process is followed, that it underwrites the basic human values such as human dignity, acceptance of all, free participation, respect for others, inclusion of all in activities, no discrimination against certain groupings and equal work load for all group members.

- **Respect**

As a value, “respect” is not explicitly defined in the Constitution, but it is implicit in the way the Bill of Rights governs not just the State's relationship with citizens, but citizens' relationships with each other. The essence of respect (as a value) can be deduced from other declarations and conventions supported by the state. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that *education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms*. Education should therefore prepare learners to take responsibility for life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sex, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin (Department of Education 2001:19).

Educators should set an example of respecting the dignity of all learners in class. Being kind and tolerant, developing co-operative learning activities which include all learners to participate to the best of their abilities, will lay a good foundation for learners to become aware of the positive influence of respect towards self and others in class and in society as a whole.

- **Reconciliation**

The Constitution stresses that it is important that the divisions of the past are healed and that a new society is established which is based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. Reconciliation has as its aim the valuing of differences and diversity as the basis for unity. It means accepting that South Africa is made up of people and communities with very different cultures and traditions, and with very different experiences of what it means to be South African. Reconciliation is impossible without the acknowledgement and understanding of the complex, difficult but rich history of our country. The conditions of peace, of well-being and of unity – adhering to a common identity, a common notion of being South African – flow naturally from the value of reconciliation. Reconciliation also requires an active engagement in the “reconstruction of society”, for, as President Mbeki has often said there can be no reconciliation without transformation. In this way, the value of reconciliation is inextricably woven into the value of equality (Department of Education 2001:20).

The heterogeneous classroom is an extension of society and therefore the ideal place to start with reconciliation, justice, tolerance, concern for human dignity and mutual respect. As the classroom can be seen as a mirror image of the larger society, it is therefore also the ideal place to help learners practice social skills they would need to function successfully as grown-ups in our new democracy in South Africa.

Values such as social justice, (e.g. protection against abuse and ridicule from others) equality, (no unfair discrimination and respecting the rights of others in the group), Non-racism and non-sexism (ensuring all learners are accepted and equally valued for their contributions, guarding against type casting in roles and tasks), respecting human dignity (showing respect and kindness towards each other in groups and in class) open society (allowing all learners participation in activities, access to books, websites and having transparent goals) accountability and responsibility (being accountable to other

group members for the task done and as individual being responsible for own behaviour) and a spirit of peace, tolerance, inclusion and acceptance of each other can result from the careful implementation of co-operative learning by an educator who will ensure that planning not only focuses on tasks and group formation, but also on the social skills learners need to learn while interacting with their peers.

2.4 A “LEARNING SCHOOL”.

The traditional *Western* notion of a *school* is a place where a *master* (teacher) and a group of followers (learners) meet so that the students can hear and listen to the wisdom of the master. Although many things have changed during the Age of Enlightenment, the educator and the teaching that had to take place remained at the heart of a school. A successful school is still seen as a place where effective teaching takes place when an educator initiates and determines the whole teaching process with little or no contribution being made by the learners. In fact, it is often seen as desirable that learners should be passive recipients of knowledge. Educators who follow a *learner-centered* approach will not find this description of a school palatable and they will argue that they need to shift the focus to the learning that should occur (Nieuwenhuis 2004:219).

In the learning school the interaction is focused on learning with the aim of achieving specific learning outcomes. According to Nixon, Martin, McKeown & Ranson (1996) in Nieuwenhuis (2004:220) the school environment supports, facilitates and promotes quality learning that will ultimately feed into quality education resulting in the learning school being no so much about a set of methods and techniques for instruction, as it is about a values-based school climate that will foster fairness and respect for others.

2.4.1 THE FOCUS OF LEARNING SCHOOLS

Learning schools have a clear focus. That is, the school has a clear statement of its purpose and values, what it is trying to achieve, why those are its goals, and how it intends to go about reaching its stated goals (Berkowitz 1998:3). This focus as captured in their mission and vision statements articulates with and is aligned to the learning outcomes of the school. The focus of a school becomes more clearly defined when the mission of a school speaks to the outcomes that it wants to achieve. Such a focus displays the following characteristics:

- A clearly defined vision and purpose rooted in the collectively agreed upon values.
- The school is constantly in search of quality in teaching and learning and continuously undertakes self-evaluation and professional development aimed at improving the quality of the learning offered.
- The school sees itself as publicly accountable to the local community for the service that it renders to the learners and for the example that educators and parents set for learners to imitate.
- The school places a high premium on its relationship with and the involvement of the community. Parents are valued as complementary educators (Nieuwenhuis 2004:221-222).

2.4.2 PRINCIPLES GUIDING LEARNING SCHOOLS

Nixon et al. (1996) in Nieuwenhuis (2006:80) states that learning schools are guided and directed in their functioning by the values that they uphold and the policy frameworks developed. The values of a learning school are derived from the South African Constitution and from the community within which the school is based. The *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (Department of Education: 2001:13-20) identifies ten values of the South African Constitution. These values are democracy, equality, tolerance, non-racism and non-sexism, social justice and equity, Ubuntu (human rights) an open society, accountability (responsibility), rule of law, respect and reconciliation. These important values must be upheld in teaching and learning situations, but the value specific content of the community within which the school operates must enhance these values.

In essence, learning schools are constantly aware of the educators' task as role models and promoters of a human rights culture. Learning schools remain sensitive to the diversity of values that may be espoused by parents and learners. No matter how disadvantaged the environment may be, learning schools never give up on their children but offer hope for the future.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2004:222) within classrooms, learning schools will also promote the following educational values:

- Valuing of the identity and dignity of each individual in the classroom. Difference and diversity are valued and respected and seen as an asset. Tolerance, respect and understanding are promoted.
- Importance is attached to the capacity of individuals to achieve and the multi-dimensional qualities of learners are recognized as they enhance greater appreciation among learners for diversity and respect for others.
- Self-dignity and self-confidence are seen not only as an essential bases for personal development and progress in learning, but also as important in promoting a greater awareness of the collectivity of the group. Learners need self-confidence to reach out to those with whom they should collaborate and also to embrace and accept new learning challenges.
- Development of autonomy and responsibility that will create independent learners that manage their own learning. To achieve this, learners must be able to critically construct new knowledge through active participation and reflective thinking.
- Taking responsibility for fellow learners and people in the wider community thus acknowledging their own interdependence on society in which they must make a contribution.

The educational values mentioned above which are promoted by learning schools in classrooms, match the positive aspects of co-operative learning (CL) in class. In both cases responsibility for own learning plays an important role, as learners participate actively in the learning process in CL, link new concepts with their current knowledge and learn to become reflective thinkers. Participating in CL activities in class, learners have the opportunity to get to know and respect peers from other social groupings, other cultural, ethnic and language groups. They learn respect, tolerance and acceptance through co-operative learning activities in heterogeneous groups working together towards a common goal. In groups they learn to take responsibility for each other, to ensure that all members of the group understand and know the work and by doing so experience the positive aspect of taking responsibility for fellow learners. By doing so, learners' self-confidence improves and they will more easily participate in activities in class and later in life in the activities of the community.

2.5 THE REVISED NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT (RNCS)

The previous 19 Education Departments in this country taught their learners differently and prepared them for a life of inequality as all learners did not have the same opportunities and were not exposed to the same expectations and opportunities at school.

Although the curriculum change started soon after the change of government in 1994, it became necessary to review, streamline and strengthen the Curriculum 2005 which was the first curriculum implemented by the newly elected government of the new democratic South Africa. The Cabinet instructed the Department of Education to develop the Revised National Curriculum Statement in clear and simple language with clear expectations for learners in each phase. The Department of Education also had to give a clear indication of the expected knowledge, skills, values and attitudes which would be expected from these learners at the end of Grade 9.

The RNCS has been implemented in South African schools since 2004. As the transformation of our nation is of the utmost importance for the building of a democratic society, it has the values of human rights, a healthy environment, social justice as well as inclusivity as its first principle (Department of Education 2002:4-8). One can find these values embedded in all the learning areas. These learning areas statements give guidance as to the minimum requirements for learners from Grade R to Grade 9. It states what the learners are expected to do in the form of Learning Outcomes (LO) and the level at which they should be able to do it, Assessment Standards (AS) in each grade.

The RNCS consists of eight learning areas in the General Education and Training band, each with its own unique field of knowledge, but also with links to the other learning areas, which allows educators to teach it in an integrated fashion. It is based on the principles and practices of the new democracy of South Africa and has as its goal the preparation of our learners to be knowledgeable, well rounded and able to respond to the many challenges on their path in the twenty first century.

The kind of learner that is envisaged in the RNCS would be a lifelong learner, confident and independent, literate and numerate. This learner would be developed to full potential, be compassionate, respectful of the environment and participate as active and responsible citizen in our society (Department of Education 2002:4-8).

It stands to reason that in order to achieve this, educators would need to teach in such a way that the values of the Bill of Rights, as taken up in the South African Constitution, becomes part of teaching and learning in class. Although the LO and AS are clearly stated in the RNCS, there is no prescribed teaching style, strategy or method which must be used. It is left to the professional judgement of the educator. It is however, necessary that the educator needs to be informed about theory, research and findings in order to develop their own professional judgement to the full (Bennett & Dunne 1992:1). Acceptance of and caring for others should be part and parcel of life in class each day. Implementing co-operative learning as part of classroom methodology can help educators to instill many of these values while teaching.

There is a very close relation between the kind of learner envisaged by the RNCS and the positive aspects experienced by implementing co-operative learning. The RNCS envisages a confident and independent learner, similarly learners participating in co-operative learning activities develop better self-esteem and function independently as they learn to participate, tackle tasks, improve achievement, solve problems and integrate new knowledge with their existing knowledge base. Working in heterogeneous groups, learners learn to respect others, to be tolerant and appreciate the contributions made by a diverse group of peers. The RNCS has the same values in mind, as it envisages learners who develop to full potential who are compassionate and can participate fully as citizen in our society. Learners, who were exposed to positive group relations, learned to accept diversity in co-operative learning settings and who developed into confidence and good self-esteem will be able to participate responsibly in society as adults.

2.6 HOW CHILDREN LEARN

How children learn is quite a complex issue, but in this section we take a brief look at the core issues of the learning process of children and how it impacts on classroom practice.

2.6.1 IMPORTANCE OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OR EXPERIENCE

Bennett & Dunne (1992:1–5) state that what children already know, have a large influence on what they will learn in the classroom. Children have some knowledge and concepts which help them to understand their everyday experiences. They gain the knowledge from talking to family and friends, from books, television, games, and outings to places of

interest and from previous classroom activities. These conceptions are also called schema. Children's schema are most likely incomplete and sometimes incorrect, depending on their source of information. Depending on their social background and life experiences, there will be vast differences in the schema of the children in a particular classroom. It is the task of the educator to extend, enhance or modify the learners' schema through the most effective manner possible. Learning can thus be summed up as the process via which the current schema of concepts of a learner is extended, modified or broadened.

2.6.2 BROADENING THE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Although learners all have different conceptions, those who are already in school will most likely share almost the same schema based on their previous shared scholastic experiences, the same environment they all experienced and the same television programmes they may favour. These schema "...which are differentially complete or correct, some of which are shared" (Bennett & Dunne 1992:2) change in school because of the knowledge the educator expose them to by explaining, telling or demonstrating or by involving the learners in activities. Learners develop a wide range of knowledge and gain understanding of the world when they are allowed to take part in well-designed tasks aimed at broadening their conceptual understanding of the world. Learners find meaning in these classroom activities if they can link it with their previous experiences and known concepts.

"It is assumed that the construction of links is an active intellectual process involving the generation, checking and restructuring of ideas in the light of those already held" (Bennett & Dunne 1992:2).

This is an ongoing process and is referred to as a constructivist view of learning.

2.6.3 LEARNING AS A SOCIAL ACTIVITY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

According to Bennett & Dunne (1992:1–5) in the world of today developmental psychologists see the child as a social being who likes to play and talk with peers and interact with parents and educators. Through this social life the child learns how to interpret experiences and how to construct meaning during the social interaction with more knowledgeable adults or peers in such a way that it is in keeping with what is

expected in a particular culture. The learner makes sense and constructs knowledge through experience in a social environment, in a social process while being part of a particular culture and historic context. The importance of this social environment and the learner's involvement with other people and the co-operation with peers is playing a vital role in the process of learning.

Bennett & Dunne (1992:1–5) continue by saying that understanding the process of learning is further supported by Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" which explains how much anyone can do alone and without support versus how much the same person can do with the help of other people who are more knowledgeable. If learners can be successful in such a co-operative environment, working together socially, they will be able to achieve the same success later on their own.

In a social environment language and communication play a huge role in solving practical tasks. Learners will rely on their inner speech and talking to others to organize their experiences, actively make sense of it, construct new knowledge and find links to their existing body of knowledge or schema (Bennett & Dunne 1992:1–5).

Saab, Van Joolingen & Hout-Wolters (2005:605-606) describe the communicative processes which contribute to the construction of knowledge and developing a common ground of understanding as argumentation and checking of information, asking questions and explaining. They summed this process of communicating up as follows in the following table:

Table 2.1 Examples of the communicative process

EXAMPLES OF THE COMMUNICATIVE PROCESS	
Communicative Activities	Examples
Informative	"I think the answer is three"
Argumentative	"Because we did it the other time also I like this"
Evaluative	"That's really good!"
Elicitative (asking others for response)	"What do you think about this question?"
Verification (checking)	"Do you also think that?"
Critical (checking)	"Do you really think that?"
Responsive	Answer to a question

Confirmation/Acceptance	“Yes, I agree”
Directive	“Try the other one”
Off Task	“Yesterday I went to the beach”
Off task technical	“Can you move the upper window, please”

2.6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICE

As already mentioned before by Bennett & Dunne (1992:1–5), all learners enter the classroom with their own schema, sometimes shared, sometimes incomplete, and sometimes incorrect. In planning classroom activities in order to reach the learning outcomes as stated in the RNCS, educators need to observe learners closely, question them carefully and be able to determine the level of knowledge and understanding each and every learner has of the concepts, skills and values which must be taught. Ensuring that each learner will be given tasks appropriate to his or her level of understanding and development is very important. Only then will learning take place. Learners should not be given activities which are too difficult or easy. If the educator’s skill to evaluate the learner properly and determine the level of knowledge is not well developed, good professional judgements cannot be made to match the task with the learner’s level of development and understanding.

Bennett & Dunne (1992:1–5) continue by saying that the educator needs to present the task in a clear manner, to ensure that the learner knows exactly why the task must be done and how it fits into the work done before and that which will be expected in the future. This will assist the learner in constructing meaning by making links to prior knowledge and gain a better understanding of concepts.

Furthermore Bennett & Dunne (1992:1–5) argue that the importance of talk, inner speech as well as communication with more knowledgeable others, also has an impact on classroom management. The educator needs to encourage learners to talk in order to explore possibilities. By talking learners will be able to connect what they already know with what they now experience and the ideas they discuss. Educators should ask open-ended questions. Learners should be given the opportunity to question ideas, speculate, form hypothesis, test opinions and be allowed to predict final results. When this is allowed and encouraged in classrooms, learners are using language as an instrument to actively learn and construct new knowledge. The educator should ensure that all

learners feel safe and accepted in class to enable them to voice their thoughts and emotions. They should feel free to think aloud, investigate ideas and get clarity of thought, not just communicate the obvious and what is already known.

Based on the joint knowledge and action, the learners exposed to CL, a co-operative learning environment will create a framework of shared understanding which will help them to raise their level of mental development (Bennett & Dunne 1992:5–6).

2.7 CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING (CL)

The term co-operative learning is often used very loosely and frequently when learners are grouped together. Very often when one takes a closer look it is purely a seating arrangement and they are working as individuals on a task, not involved in co-operative learning at all (Topping & Ehly 1998:9). In the book '*Groups in Schools*', edited by Kutnick & Rogers (1994:84) a very short and to the point definition of co-operative learning is given:

“Working together co-operatively to accomplish shared learning goals.”

They felt confident that it can be applied in all grades in all learning areas or subjects and will enhance interpersonal relationships and have a positive impact on psychological health.

One often comes across various terms, like collaborative learning, co-operative learning and group work. The following definition attempts to cover all three these concepts and also points out the necessity of delegating a task to learners and the importance of a task which must be completed. According to Grisham & Molinelli (1995:4) co-operative learning takes place when learners work together in small groups which will allow everyone to participate in the collective task that has been clearly set. The learners should be able to work independently from the educator, without being directly supervised.

According to Cowie, Smith, Boulton & Laver (1994:190-193) it is important to firstly understand the meaning of the word co-operation, as different groups can interpret it differently. They interpret it as “being fair” and “being trustworthy”. They do not attach the

meanings “being friendly, unselfish, obedient or conformist” to the word co-operation. Bearing this in mind, they describe co-operation then as “...working together for a common goal” (Cowie et al. 1994:190-193).

Some educators may look at co-operative learning as only a learning theory or teaching model, but Hijzen, Boekaerts & Vedder (2006:9–21) describe it as a set of instructional principles which clarify how learners learn from and with each other and accomplish tasks by working together.

2.7.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING

Grisham & Molinelli (1995:10–11) describe five characteristics of CL. The first one is that the educator plans a task which the learners need to do together. They will interact face-to-face, talk, discuss, ask and answer questions and possibly explain sections to each other. Jacobs, Gawe & Vakalisa (2001:194) calls this distributed leadership, as it is the responsibility of each member of the group to ensure that the task gets done.

A second characteristic of CL, according to Grisham & Molinelli (1995:10–11), is the fact that individual accountability would be expected; as the group must all participate on an equal basis to complete the task. On the surface working together, but being individually accountable could be seen as mutually exclusive, but learners would be individually accountable for their learning when they all participate fully in their learning experience.

The third characteristic cited by Grisham & Molinelli (1995:10-11) deals with heterogeneous grouping of learners to ensure that they gain academically as well as socially from working in the groups. When an educator applies heterogeneous grouping, it means that groups are planned in a deliberate manner to ensure a mix of race, gender and ability in each group. In planning the groups the educator should also make sure that the groups are not larger than six, otherwise it would have a negative influence on the quality of interaction between the group members. Grisham & Molinelli (1995:10-11) further state that initially two learners per group might be a good idea to get learners to understand the idea of co-operative learning , but eventually groups of four are preferred by experienced educators.

Teaching social skills to learners who participate in co-operative learning is very important as they do not automatically know how to work in groups and which social skills would be required. According to Grisham & Molinelli (1995:10–11) the teaching of social skills, the fourth characteristic of co-operative learning can be done directly or by using planned group activities. Thacker, Stoate & Feest (1992:6) agree that learners should learn to get along with others while getting the work done.

The fifth and final characteristic of co-operative learning is the monitoring and processing of social skills which builds the foundation of co-operative learning in class. The educator needs to deliberately and systematically observe the social skills displayed by learners and give feedback to the learners about their progress in becoming socially skilled, developing the attitudes and values which would improve their self-esteem to become a fully functional member of our society (Grisham & Molinelli 1995:10–11).

The successful implementation of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) is dependent on the use of co-operative learning as a learner-centered teaching approach as it promotes the principles of OBE, namely co-operation, critical thinking and social responsibility. The five principles of co-operative learning as mentioned before have at its core the development of social skills, critical thinking and co-operation (Jacobs, Gawe & Vakalisa 2001:197). The educator-centered approach used previously in our education system produced educated members of society, but did not succeed in developing a democratic society where all people are valued, developed to their full potential and had the opportunity to participate on equal footing in society.

2.7.2 IMPLEMENTING CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING

Clearly much training is needed to become efficient in implementing co-operative learning successfully in class. Merely arranging learners in groups will not result in co-operative learning with all its social benefits for learners.

2.7.2.1 GROUP FORMATION

Groups can be planned in different ways for various purposes. It is a great way to foster interaction between learners. It can also help to cater for different learning styles in class. By grouping various learning styles together in one group, learners can learn from each

other. In many primary schools groups are organized around friendship, ability or mixed ability (Moyle 1992:97–98). In organizing or assigning groups for differentiated teaching, Tomlinson & Allan (2000:142) point out that the educator needs to make sure that the group-size will match the need of the learner and that groups vary from those learners were assigned to previously. Slavin (1995) has reported that by using co-operative learning strategies, learners learn to listen to the opinions of others, accept other opinions, change some of their own opinions, and some learners feel less threatened when working as part of a group. Shy learners also benefit from being in a small group. The support of other learners can also motivate the bored learner to contribute and become part of the success of the group. He has not mentioned the learners' opinions on co-operative learning though.

According to Kutnick & Rogers (1994:67) CL can be used in four ways in class:

- Formal co-operative learning groups:

This type of grouping may last for only a period or several weeks and can be used to address any learning outcome in any learning area. As part of this type of group learners can be expected to make decisions or solve problems, write reports, make experiments or answer a set of questions after completion of a certain section of work. The educator will have to set objectives; explain the task and how the co-operative learning needs to be approached; monitor progress; intervene when necessary to ensure development of social skills; assess learners' progress regarding knowledge and skills and have learners assess themselves with regards to their own participation in the group.

- Informal co-operative learning groups:

These groups last for a few minutes up to as long as a period and helps to focus learners' attention on the knowledge and skills required in the specific period. In such short co-operative learning sessions learners will learn to cognitively process information being taught. It can also be used as conclusion to a specific section of work during a lesson or period.

- Co-operative base groups:

These long-term groups are formed to give assistance, encouragement during a year perhaps to ensure class attendance, preparation for tests and are usually heterogeneous groups. It provides learners with healthy, supportive social groupings which give them

the opportunity to demonstrate their social skills while supporting or helping a group member.

- Co-operative learning scripts:

These are the ordinary CL groups used for repetitive activities during lessons and managing classroom routines.

2.7.2.2 NEEDS BROUGHT TO A GROUP

According to Thacker et al. (1992:13–14) as individual members of a group learners may wish to lead or to be lead, to be accepted by their peers and some not, others may have the need to speak or possibly to be silent.

A group, however, has its own needs: firstly the task they need to perform and secondly the need for the group to feel comfortable as they perform the task. Actions by the learners to ensure the comfortability of the group help with its maintenance.

The need for a task and the need for maintenance are interdependent as a group will have no purpose without a task and will not be able to perform the task if they are not comfortable together, not maintained as a group.

When learners are focusing on the task they:

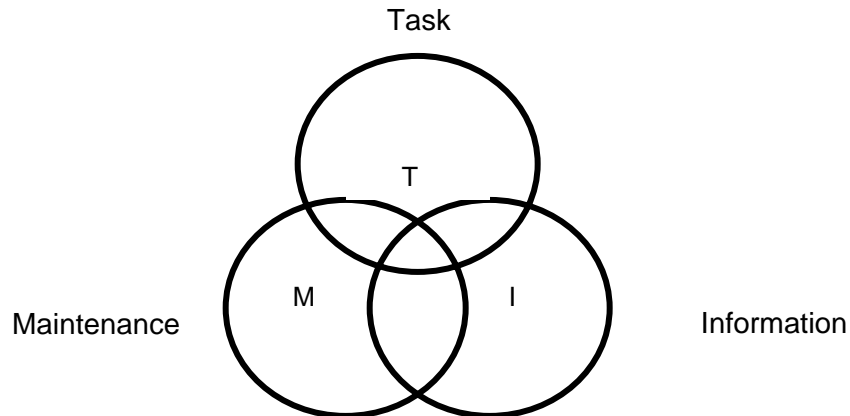
- Give or find task related information
- Make enquiries about the task
- Sum up the progress and achievement of the group (Thacker et al. 1992:13–14)

Learners pay attention to the maintenance of the group when they:

- Support other members of the group
- Help to ease the tension in the group
- Allow each other the opportunity to be heard in the group (Thacker et al. 1992:13–14).

Thacker et al. (1992:13) illustrate the interdependence of task and maintenance of the group with the following diagram:

Diagram 2.1 The interdependence of task and maintenance of the group



Although completion of the task is important to the group, it will be achieved much quicker if the group members pay attention to group maintenance. Ideally all learners should be given equal opportunity to contribute to the task and maintenance needs of the group. In practice, however, some learners may be better or more task focused and others may be better or more focused at maintenance of the group. The educator should ensure that some learners do not become type cast and get stuck in certain roles in their groups. Group workers should allow learners the opportunity to become comfortable in a number of roles, not always performing the same role, e.g. initiator, peacemaker, leader, class clown or devil's advocate (Thacker et al. 1992:13–14).

Paterson (2002:42) recommends that educators pre-choose the roles the learners play in groups to ensure that all learners get to experience the variety of tasks available in the group, e.g. leader, researcher, recorder, collector, presenter, interviewer, artist and editor.

2.7.3 THE FIVE PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT OF A GROUP

All groups having to work together, regardless of the length of time they spend together, experience the following five phases: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning (Thacker et al. 1992:11–12). Groups working together for only one lesson

may experience these phases to a lesser degree than those who work together for half a term or a whole year.

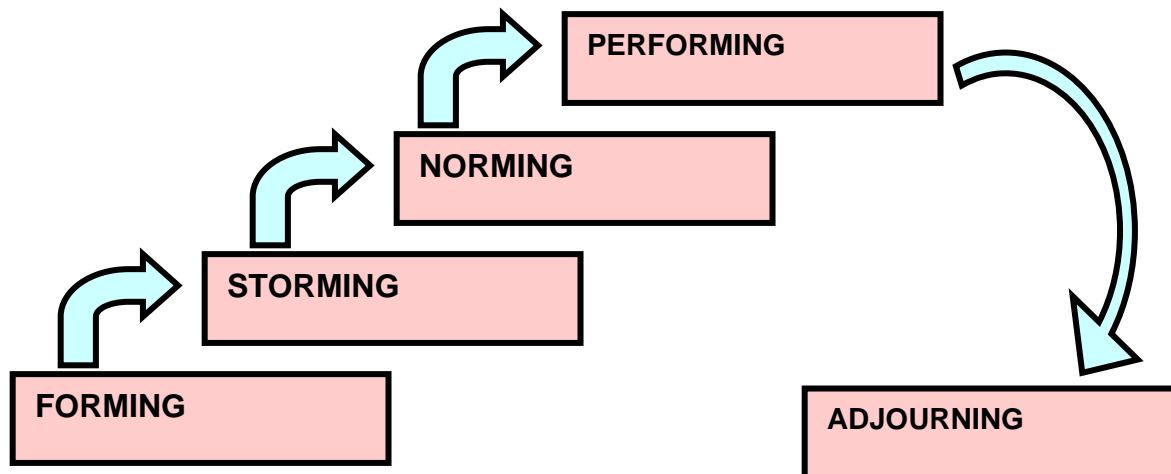
During each phase the group goes through specific experiences

- **Forming:** When a group first comes together, they have very little in common, except for the fact that they have to become a group for a given time. Mostly the members of the group will experience anxiety as they are unsure of what the task will be, how they will be accepted and treated by the other group members and what behaviour will be acceptable in the group. The educator in a leadership role in class plays a huge role in ensuring that learners experience this forming phase in a positive light. Typically group members may be subdued during this forming phase, observing others to find out how the group will develop.
- **Storming:** During the storming phase, each group member will try to make him or herself comfortable within the group. Learners may all behave differently and it may seem as if the group is battling to get together to make it work. As leader the educator should be aware of this phase in group formation and give groups space to work through the storming phase in order to get along and to be able to work well together.
- **Norming:** During this phase the behaviour within the group is being worked out and becomes the “norm”. Different groups will have different norms and successful group interaction and task completion becomes a possibility.
- **Performing:** Now the group will perform the task. Although the five phases follow neatly in succession on paper, it does not always mean that each group will progress smoothly from phase one to phase five; it might have to return to a previous phase, e.g. norming, as different behaviour may suddenly occur which were not covered during the previous norming phase and learners need to first deal with it before they can get on with the task. Some groups may keep on returning to previous phases, not getting to the task and may be perceived as difficult or unsuccessful groups. They merely need to be guided through the change in group dynamics which forced them to revisit the earlier stages. Afterwards the group can again focus on performing the task.

- Adjourning: When a group activity comes to an end, groups should be given the opportunity to look back at what they have achieved together and forward to what is coming next. Some people find endings difficult and might use even rejection to cope with these feelings. Educators should understand this type of behaviour by learners and realize that it is a normal reaction to help them deal with the ending of activities. The adjourning phase will give learners the opportunity to get closure on group activities (Thacker et al. 1992:11–12).

The researcher summarizes the phases through which all co-operative learning groups go according to Thacker et al. (1992:11-12) in the following diagram:

Diagram 2.2 The phases of group development in co-operative learning



Educators need to be aware of these phases within co-operative learning group work and guide learners through it to ensure that co-operative learning activities are successful. When learners experience tolerance and acceptance in class, following the example set by the educator as leader, they will not find it difficult to become a group during the forming stages. During this stage the educator should observe all groups in general to ensure that group members behave in an acceptable manner towards each other, according to previously expressed group behaviour rules. Once groups start with the storming phase, the educator should give them the necessary space to work out how they will function as a group. Moving around in the classroom, the educator should be aware of the fact that different groups will have different norms of behaviour and the educator should not expect all groups to follow exactly the same type of group behaviour.

Each group will decide what the norms are which they want to operate in. If learners are exposed to an atmosphere in class which respects human rights and acceptance of all individuals, learners will automatically uphold this within the group. They will allow differences in contributions and appreciate the ideas of others. The educator should ensure that groups continue and move forward to perform their task, as some groups might keep returning to the norming stage if they were initially not successful in establishing norms for their behaviour. No matter how short the co-operative learning task or how busy the schedule for the day is, the educator should always allow groups to get closure, to end off their activity and to appreciate what they have done as a group. This will also allow learners to reflect shortly on their co-operative learning experience with regard to the positive interactions and the success of the group. Learners will reflect on how successful they were to take on the shared responsibility of the task and accepting the contributions of diverse individuals to complete the task.

2.7.4 THE FIVE BASIC ELEMENTS WHICH ENSURE TRULY CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING GROUP ACTIVITIES

As mentioned before, all CL sessions go through five phases. According to Roy Killen (2000:100) within these phases, learners experience the following basic elements which ensure that they are truly doing CL.

- Positive inter-dependence: Learners realize they need each other to complete the task.
- Face-to-face promotive interaction: Learners help each other to learn by sharing and encouragement.
- Individual accountability: Everyone within the group is responsible for the learning of the group.
- Appropriate interpersonal skills: Learners must develop and use social skills such as communication, trust in others and ways to resolve conflict in order to ensure successful interaction with other members of the group.
- Reflective learners: In the final stage of co-operative learning group activities learners should reflect upon their success and how effective they were as a group. By doing this they will become reflective learners (Killen 2000:100).

2.7.5 FOUR SETS OF SKILLS LEARNERS NEED FOR SUCCESSFUL CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING

Van den Horst & McDonald (1997:129-130) stress the fact that learners need to be taught certain skills necessary to ensure success in co-operative learning. Educators therefore have to plan not only the activities for academic learning, but also which social skills the learners should be taught. The educator has to make sure that the learners understand the meaning of these social skills, practise it while working in the groups and reflect with each group on how successful they were at it afterwards. Future use for the particular social skill they practiced should also be discussed with each group.

Van den Horst & McDonald (1997:129-130) name four particular sets of skills:

- Forming skills
- Functioning skills
- Formulating skills
- Fermenting skills.

In order to get groups going, learners need the skills to go quietly to their groups, stay working with the group in a quiet manner, encourage own group members to take part in group activities without disturbing other groups. These are known as forming skills.

Once in a group, the learners need to be able to manage and control their interaction as a group by staying focused on their activity, seek clarity or assistance when unsure, explain and assist each other, accept and give support to each other and be able to capture or summarize what has been said in the group. These all form part of the functioning skills which would support group management while working on the task.

While working in the group, learners need to be able to summarize the most important facts, need to understand how different ideas of facts link to each other, need to build on to certain concepts, need to discuss and check their understanding of the facts or ideas and need to be able to remember the detail, facts or ideas. These kinds of behaviours are called formulating skills.

Lastly Van den Horst & McDonald (1997:129-130) describe the fermenting skills which would assist learners to rather discuss and critique ideas, than their peers in the group, to give or ask justification for certain view points or statements, to elaborate on ideas of others and to be able to pull diverse ideas together. These fermenting skills will help them to overcome conflict when working towards a common goal in the group.

Keeping in mind the movement away from homogeneous grouping to heterogeneous grouping in the RNCS, the teaching of social skills as mentioned by Van den Horst & McDonald (1997:129-130) will help learners to get on better with their peers in co-operative learning. It will teach learners to accept and appreciate each other and learners will begin to develop a collective and shared responsibility for the activities they have to complete. The teaching of social skills as part of co-operative learning will thus support the RNCS principles, such as inclusion, human rights and acceptance of individuals and groups in class. When learners learn to respect each other while at the same time feel protected and safe to contribute to co-operative learning without fearing ridicule, they learn to value the importance of human dignity which forms such an important section of The Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of our Constitution. The values and attitudes the learners get to practice in the safe and positive environment of their classroom will help them to become valuable members of the society in their adult life.

2.7.6 THREE APPROACHES TO CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING

Co-operative learning can be implemented in a variety of ways and educators can develop their own variations, based on the basic principles of co-operative learning as discussed before. For the purpose of this study, three of the approaches to co-operative learning will be discussed as summarized by Van den Horst & McDonald (1997:131–133).

- The first approach is: Learner teams achievement division (STAD). According to Van den Horst & McDonald (1997:131–133) this approach has originally been developed by Robert Slavin and colleagues.

New academic content are taught on a weekly basis by using worksheets or direct verbal instruction. Heterogeneous groups of not more than 5 learners per group are formed, with different races, ability groupings, and both sexes and different ethnic groups represented in each group. Groups take responsibility for their own learning and mastery of the content by using quizzes, worksheets, discussions to clarify content and tutoring

each other. Learners undergo weekly or biweekly quizzes to check their mastery of the content. The improvement the learners have made mastering the content since the previous quiz indicates the level of progress. The degree by which the learners exceed the previous assessment score, will be taken as the mark of improvement. This encourages learner progress. Learners with full marks or the highest level of improvement since the previous quiz will be recognized in some form, e.g. notice board or class newsletter.

- The second approach is: Jigsaw - According to Van den Horst & McDonald (1997:131–133) this approach has originally been developed by Elliot Aronson and colleagues and adapted by Slavin and colleagues.

In this approach, heterogeneous study teams are formed consisting of five to six learners per team/group, also called home groups. The team receives content in written format and each member of the team takes responsibility to learn a certain section of this given content. Each member of the team gets assigned a specific number. Learners with the same numbers of all teams meet as expert groups and they study and teach each other the section they are responsible for. These expert groups then return to their home groups where they teach the other members of their own teams or home groups what they have just learned in expert groups.

- The third approach is: Group Investigation - According to Van den Horst & McDonald (1997:131–133) this approach has originally been developed by Herbert Thelen, but extended and refined by Shlomo Sharan and colleagues.

As the most complex and difficult CL approach, well-developed classroom norms and structures are needed for implementation of Group Investigation. Communication and group process skills should be taught to learners before implementing Group investigation. As in the two previous approaches, heterogeneous groups of about five or six learners are formed. Each group chooses its own topic for in-depth study, investigate sub-topics in greater detail and present their own report on the issue to the rest of the whole class.

The Group Investigation (GI) approach can be divided into six steps:

- Topic selection

Learners are exposed to a general body of knowledge within which their educator pre-selects certain sub-topics which learners will investigate in smaller heterogeneous groups.

- Co-operative planning

The educator supports the smaller group of learners to plan their learning process, tasks and objectives they want to investigate within their chosen sub-topic.

- Implementation

Using a variety of skills and tasks, learners investigate their topic according to the plan they have decided on. They should be exposed to a variety of sources in their investigation. In this implementation stage their educator supports them.

- Analysis and synthesis

Learners then evaluate and analyze their information at hand and decide on the best way to present it to the rest of the class.

- Presentation of final product

Groups present their information to the rest of the class in the most interesting format they can find to ensure that all members of the class has an overall view of all areas the various groups have studied.

- Assessment

If the groups studied different aspects of the same topic, the educator and learners assess each group's section which completes the topic as a whole. Work can be assessed on an individual or group base, or sometimes on both, depending on the educator's decision beforehand.

According to Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:132) implementing Group Investigation also differs from the previously discussed approaches as far as the formation of groups are concerned. Although heterogeneous groups can perform Group Investigations, groups can also consist of friends or interest groups studying a specific topic together. In Israel this approach has been popular for teaching gifted learners in such interest groups.

When planning teaching and learning activities in class, the educator needs to select the most appropriate co-operative learning approach which would suit the needs of the learners of the particular class as well as the learning outcomes and assessment standards which need to be addressed. The responsibility lies with the educator to ensure the establishment of sound relationships and good communication in class:

- Between educator and learners – to ensure willingness of learners to be guided in the various processes to make a success of the different approaches of co-operative learning, like Jigsaw or Group Investigation, where learners need to follow the lead and guidance of the educator.
- Between learner and learner – to ensure good co-operation in groups, working together to plan, investigate, teach each other, support each other, make the best decisions regarding presentations and give quality feedback to home groups.

Learners who are exposed to harmonious classroom relationships where participation of all members are encouraged and valued and open communication is part of daily processes in class, will participate freely and be able to make the most of such co-operative learning approaches in class.

2.7.7 ASSESSMENT OF CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING

Wiggins (1993) in the book 'The keys to effective schools' edited by Hawley & Rollie (2002:68), explained that the word *assessment* is derived from *assidere*, a Latin word and that it means "to sit with". When considering this origin of the word, it becomes clear that assessment means more than merely giving marks, percentages, points or averages. It brings to mind images of educators observing learners, getting to grips with the learners' understanding of the work, talking to learners to detect possible misunderstandings.

Assessment as part of learning plays a critical role in checking learners' understanding of formulas, stories, theories, models and solutions (Hawley & Rollie 2002:69). Learners are exposed to new concepts; they make meaning of it by interpreting it, finding links to their existing body of knowledge and sometimes having to reorganize their understanding and belief systems to accommodate the new knowledge.

When handling assessment correctly, the educator will have detail information with regard to the learners' progress, understanding and concept formation of learning outcomes in learning areas of the NCS.

Hawley & Rollie (2002:68-69) further states that there is no one single approach to assessment and that educators need to create their own understanding of assessment, growing professionally, making their own professional judgement in each scenario. Keeping in mind that assessment should therefore be strengthened, transformed and applied in a more focused way to become part of the learning process, educators should rethink their approach to teaching and assessment practices, especially of co-operative learning activities.

Learners contribute to co-operative learning group activities as individuals, but complete the tasks as groups. Therefore co-operative learning group activities as well as individual contribution needs to be assessed and recognized (Van der Horst & McDonald 1997:136).

When applying the STAD and Jigsaw approach (Van der Horst and McDonald, 1997:136), objective quizzes are used to assess the learners' grasp of the content. Learners may obtain full marks in these quizzes and get recognition for having scored 100 %. Other learners obtain points which indicate how much they have improved since the previous quiz. This allows low performing learners to also show growth in their understanding of the work, since their scores are compared against their own previous scores. This kind of reward system facilitates the acceptance of the learners with lower abilities by the group.

When applying the GI approach, group presentation is evaluated, but the individual contribution of each learner should also be assessed (Van der Horst & McDonald 1997:136).

Ross & Rolheiser (2003:119-136) state that assessing learners in co-operative learning settings is seen as a huge challenge by educators as they struggle with what learners know and can do on their own versus that which they know and can do in a co-operative learning setting. Educators worry about exploiting high-ability learners and giving proper recognition to low-ability learners. Ross & Rolheiser therefore argue that educators should not judge assessment and award only group grades, as it will inflate low-ability

learners' scores and may encourage some learners to loaf, others to resent doing all the work and still some others to frequently just copy work as they cannot keep up with the group. They conclude by saying that there still needs to be research done in future which focuses on the better understanding of teachers' collective assessment literacy and how they grapple with decisions regarding individual versus group performance, how they report this to parents and develop a fair measure for social as well as cognitive growth.

2.7.8 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

In order to manage co-operative learning effectively and ensure learners benefit from it on a social level, the following needs to be considered:

- **Learner beliefs about co-operative learning:** Learners should have a positive view of co-operative learning, feel accepted in the group and that they can make a positive contribution to group activities (Hijzen et al. 2006:9–21). The school climate, the availability of the educator and peers to render academical and emotional support will play a vital role in the learners' perception of co-operative learning.
- **Seating arrangements:** The arrangement of the classroom should allow for easy access to desks clustered in groups and other working areas where resources are stored and other activities take place.
- **Planning outcomes:** Outcomes for a specific lesson with co-operative learning group activities should focus the attention of the group on the success of the whole group, not of individuals. Learners must know exactly what they need to learn or do and how well they are expected to do as a group. Learners will then understand the process in which they are involved as a group. Example of an outcome can be: All members of the group need to be able to identify all proper nouns in the second paragraph of the story and explain what a proper noun is (Jacobs et al. 2001:198-199). Hijzen et al. (2006:11) recommended that the task should be challenging, but not too complex and the assignment structured in such a manner that all members of the group can relate to it and contribute towards the successful completion of the task.
- **Skills needed:** Learners need to know which skill to use and should have had the opportunity to develop it previously and should have access to it. One such skill

could be to co-operate with others in the group. This could include willingness to express own opinion, openness to listen to the views of others, give help, ask assistance and clarify understanding of specific concepts. This will improve the quality of learning that takes place in a CL environment (Hijzen et al. 2006:11).

- **Shared responsibility:** Learners need to understand that they share responsibility for a task by dividing what needs to be done between the group members. By sharing resources, facilities and ideas they will further develop the sense of shared responsibility to get the task completed successfully as a group. They will learn to share ideas, to listen to others and to make compromises to reach their goal. This will lead to the development of group cohesion and interdependence.
- **Monitoring progress:** The educator will monitor the progress of groups as well as individuals. Groups can easily be monitored by their success at completing the task. By giving homework to be completed by each individual learner, based on the group activity, the educator can measure the progress of individuals (Jacobs et al. 2001: 198-199). It is recommended that educators facilitate the monitoring and support in such a manner that groups can increasingly complete tasks by themselves. The educator should constantly model the social skills needed in co-operative learning. Learners, who are more often off-task, should be more closely monitored (Hijzen et al. 2006:11).
- **Rewards:** At the beginning stages of implementing this in class, it is important to reward both groups and individuals once the desired outcomes has been reached. Rewards can take the form of 5 dried raisins; longer time in the reading corner or the educator can read an extra story to the class at the end of the week. Once the learners understand the co-operative learning approach and can successfully co-operate in groups, these rewards should not be given any more as learners can easily become dependent on it (Jacobs et al. 2001:198-199). On the other hand, Hijzen et al. (2006:11) reported that the final word has not been spoken about the use of rewards in co-operative learning yet as some researchers say that a combination of group and individual rewards may undermine the group process in co-operative learning.

- Positive ground rules: Johnson, La Montagne, Elgas & Bauer (1998:193–194) state that explicit expectations as to what learners can do in a co-operative learning group situation help them to better understand their roles and tasks in the group, especially in the case of younger learners. They find such parameters easier to follow than being told what they should not do. The authors give the following as examples: Share your work space with other learners in your group; stay with your group members in the area allocated to you; work with your group members and take turns in speaking to the educator if the group comes across a problem they cannot solve. Further expectations can be that all group members pack the resources away once they have finished.
- Making choices and decisions: Allowing the learners to make choices regarding certain issues while doing co-operative learning group activities will give them a sense of ownership of what happens in the class. Examples of such choices may be selecting the style in which they will do a presentation; choosing material which they will use to build a 3D-structure; or decide on the kind of graph they want to use to present their findings after doing some market research.
- Group size: Palmer & Pettitt (1993:33) recommend that educators first start learners off in groups of 2 until they get used to working in pairs and then move towards larger groups. They also state that groups should not attempt too many different tasks at the same time as it would lead to crisis management by the educator trying to support all groups as soon as possible to get them to start with their activities. It could be beneficial for the majority of groups to be involved in similar tasks but at different levels. Job/work/activity cards can also be used to help the educator to control some of the activities which the learners need to do without assistance.

Given an adequately defined task, learners who are clear on the rules for participation and success, can participate knowing that they will receive optimal academic and emotional support from the educator and their peers. Such learners will be more likely to persist, make an effort and complete their tasks (Hijzen et al. 2006:11).

2.7.9 RESEARCH FINDINGS OF CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING IN OTHER COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD

Research into interaction in pairs and groups gives us insights into the patterns of collaborative learning and helps us to better understand how individuals and groups function best and benefit from co-operative learning (Biott & Easen 1994:2). Sharan et al. (1984:7) reported that David Johnson had done research on co-operative learning in 1981 in actual classrooms which have shown that the academic achievements of learners taught via co-operative learning methods were not lower than those of learners taught via the traditional direct instruction method. In fact, they reported that it might even result in higher academical achievements than the scores of learners taught via the whole-class instruction. The social relationships amongst the learners taught via co-operative learning methods were also more positive and therefore it is recommended that co-operative learning be used when teaching multi-racial or heterogeneous classrooms.

Gillies and Ashman (2003:6-7) report that a meta-analysis done on the results of 122 studies on co-operative learning by Johnson and colleagues in 1981 revealed that achievement and productivity were higher when learners were taught via co-operation rather than competition. These results were consistent in all age groups in subjects such as language arts, mathematics, reading, science and social studies. This therefore means that co-operative learning can be used in any kind of academic task, by all age groups.

- **Learner Participation:** In her article, “Whose participation is it anyway? Examining the context of pupil participation in the U.K”, Helen May reported that although there is a growing interest in researching learner participation, such research mostly looked at the roles played by adults to ensure learner participation. She suggested that there is a need for research based in the classroom to acknowledge learners as “...motivators and executors of their own participation” in a child-centered teaching and learning process (May 2005:31–32).
- **Grouping practices:** In England Her Majesty’s Inspectorate reported in 1978 that ability grouping was still taking place with the result that 75 % of classes were grouped according to their mathematical ability. Research done by Boydell in 1974 regarding the conversations that takes place in groups in informal junior classes indicated that they

mostly talked to other learners of the same gender and only half of the talking was directed at the activity they had to do. She felt that merely seating learners in groups would not guarantee that they talk about the activity. Tizzard (1988) in Bennett & Dunne (1992:11–12) reported that they found very little evidence in infant classrooms that learners worked co-operatively on activities or solved problems together.

Biott & Easen (1994:9) included Galton & Williamson's (1992) classification of four types of groupings in class and described the task and intended outcome for each grouping as follows:

Table 2.2 Galton & Williamson's classification of four types of groupings, tasks and intended outcomes

TYPE	TASK DEMAND	INTENDED OUTCOME
Seating groups	Each learner has a separate task	Different outcomes from different assignments
Working groups	Each learner has the same task	Each learner completes same assignment independently
Co-operative groups	Separate but related tasks	Joint outcome from different assignments
Collaborative groups	Each learner has the same task	Joint outcomes, all learners share the same assignment

In England the ORACLE study of 1980 found that although learners mostly sit together in groups, only 9 % of the class time is spend on co-operative learning, for the rest of the time they worked individually on tasks. Ten years later Galton & Patrick found that the picture has not really changed, as learners spent only 5% of their time on co-operative learning, although they sat in groups for 56 % of the time.

- Gender differences:** When Hijzen et al. (2006:9–21) researched goal preferences, contextual factors and co-operative learning in vocation schools in the Netherlands they noted that girls benefited more from co-operative learning in class as they were more inclined to help others, verbally organized activities and were willing to take turns. Girls generally preferred to understand and complete tasks (mastery) while being with friends where a sense of belonging and security is being created (social goals).

This type of behaviour normally set the scene for successful co-operative learning in class.

Boys, on the other hand, experienced school as competitive with social comparisons and peer pressure being part and parcel of every day in class. Superiority and competition was far more important to the boys than mastery of tasks by the group or social support to all. They concluded that girls felt more confident in co-operative learning activities than boys.

- **Academic achievement and minority groups:** It is also reported that co-operative learning may have a positive influence on the academic results of minority groups in the USA as learners from minority groups scored better after learning in small groups. The majority group did not achieve better than their peers who were taught in traditional classrooms. Slavin investigated this in 1981 over a six-week period using four periods a week teaching English language skills. Five white educators taught 230 Grade 6 – 8 learners, 85 of who were black. All learners wrote a standardized pre-post test, using the same parallel forms of the test. Both the black and white learners who were exposed to co-operative learning improved, but the black learners improved more, as they scored lower than their white peers in the pre-test, but scored the same than the white learners in the post-test. On the other hand, the black learners who were taught in the traditional manner did not manage to reduce the gap between them and the white learners in the post-test (Sharan et al. 1984:7-8).

Almost the same results were found in Israel when lower class learners in elementary school achieved on the same level than other learners in their class on a post-test after being exposed to small group teaching in arithmetic. Although there were many differences between the various researches done, it still seems that learners from a poorer socio-economic group benefit more from co-operative learning than their peers from middle-class backgrounds (Sharan et al. 1984:7-8).

Joyce, Calhoun and Hopkins (2002:110) reported on research done by Shlomo Sharan and Hana Shachar in 1988, comparing academic achievements of learners taught for a whole year using whole class instructions versus that of learners taught via group investigation, a co-operative learning approach. Pre- and posttests were done on both groups. Each group consisted of learners from lower socio-economic background

(referred to as low SES) as well as learners from middle class background (referred to as high SES). After exposure to the various methods for a year the results of the posttest indicated that the Low SES learners exposed to Group Investigation did on average two and a half times better than the Low SES learners taught with the whole class approach. They also did better than the High SES learners taught with the whole class approach. The High SES learners taught by means of the Group Investigation approach also did better than before, and better than the other High SES learners taught by the whole class method. This indicated that learners from low socio-economic backgrounds learned much better than learners from better backgrounds if they are exposed to the Group Investigation approach, one of the co-operative learning strategies.

- **Social relationships:** The social relations in multi-racial classrooms have improved when co-operative learning was implemented. It is reported that with the implementation of the Group Investigation method in a research that the attitudes of white learners have improved against Mexican-Americans. The interethnic conflict was reduced and learners were keener to help each other. It was also found that more cross-ethnic friendships developed in classrooms where studies applied the Teams-Games-Tournament methods (TGT) in 1978. This could be due to the fact that this TGT method is based on structured activities using cross-racial groups.

Sharan et al. (1984:9-10) reported that Johnson and Johnson, together with a number of other researchers, have done a number of investigations on the impact of co-operative learning on social psychology of learners since 1976. They found that co-operative learning had a positive affect on the interpersonal relationships of learners, their sense of being accepted by peers and educators, their trust in others, their liking for school and learning. They generally found a more co-operative social atmosphere in the classrooms where co-operative learning was used (Sharan et al. 1984:9-10).

- **Structure and guidance given in the learning process:** In a small case study in an elementary school in Vancouver in Canada, as reported by Mueller & Fleming (2001: 259), researchers observed a mixed group of Grade 6 and 7 learners working in six groups on a science project over a period of five weeks. The assignment was clearly outlined with a specific timeframe. It became clear that learners used language to perform the task by expressing ideas (61 % of the time) as well as to get social and organizational agreement (39 % of the time) within the group. By listening and talking

to the group helped to grow the educator's understanding of how learners construct knowledge within a group. It was also clear that the different groups were organized in different ways. In their reflection the learners reported that they learned better by doing, than when they were only reading from the textbook. They learned from the mistakes they made. They experienced the learning as "real" and exciting and were proud that they could actually figure it out on their own. Self-esteem therefore improved. They had a positive response to the activities, as they felt they would remember it better after doing the practical work.

Learners also reported that although they did not always like working in a group, they realized that it is better to get group experience as they will have to do it in the working environment after school. Learners recommended afterwards that the structure of such co-operative learning should include time for groups to work out how they will work together and how they will do the tasks, they need time to listen to each other and there should be time to present to others what they have learned. A final observation made it clear that the educator plays a pivotal role in ensuring the success of co-operative learning by setting up conditions which will ensure successful co-operation within the group. It was recommended that educator education should include courses and practical experience in creating co-operative and collaborative learning environments (Mueller & Fleming 2001:259).

Warwick & Maloch (2003:54–62) reported on research done in the United Kingdom and the United States of America in the scaffolding process of speech and writing activities in the primary classroom to give structure to the activities done by learners. They used the Vygotsky's statement that a mold gives shape to a substance; similarly words can shape an activity into a specific structure. In this process of scaffolding, the educator's goals and expectations were written down, further explanations were given regarding each goal as well as strategies associated with these goals. As learners became efficient in using the structures provided, they became more independent, being able to work successfully and productively for longer periods on their own. These scaffolds helped them to learn. This study holds the following implications for the classroom:

- Learners can use frameworks or strategies to scaffold and support their learning

- Should these frameworks be flexible enough, learners can use it in a number of learning areas
- Learners will be able to use these conversational strategies in their own independent learning.

• **Quality of group co-operation:** Veenman, Kenter and Post (2000:282-302) investigated the quality of group co-operation, as well as learners' reactions to co-operative learning and how educators used and evaluated it in Dutch primary schools after many Dutch educators reported that they do not use co-operative learning frequently. In total, twelve primary schools (Grade 1- 8) in suburban areas in the central and southern part of the Netherlands were included in the sample. Although the cultural and social-economic background of the learners was diverse, very few learners from ethnic minority groups were present in the sample. Educators were given a questionnaire on their perceptions of co-operative learning, learners also received a questionnaire dealing with their perceptions of co-operative learning and lastly learner behaviour was observed in co-operative learning lessons.

Although the educators reported that they felt prepared to implement co-operative learning, they received little support from their peers, they did not clarify rules and instructions beforehand with the groups and this lead to problems, as they had to monitor the groups in action. The educators paid little attention to the basic elements of co-operative learning as mentioned earlier in this chapter. All these problems resulted in little co-operation in groups, the quality of their co-operative learning influenced negatively by the lack of proper preparation of learners for co-operative learning. Groups struggled to create a climate in which they could function properly, make decisions, listen to each other and divide the work amongst each other.

Despite these problems, educators reported that learners benefited socially by co-operative learning, their self-esteem improved and they had better time on task behaviour and achieved better in groups. Educators battled with decisions regarding rewards, finding it difficult to reward a group for group productivity and success. It was felt that it might be better to reward for the performance of each member of the group; this would encourage the group to ensure that all the learners reach the outcome and can perform the given task successfully.

Joyce et al. (2002:111) reported that research results on co-operative learning are very positive in general:

”The more intensely co-operative the environment, the greater the effects; the more complex the outcomes, the greater the effects.”
Joyce et al. (2002:111)

The learner behaviour improved as aggression and tension decreased in groups, they had a better understanding of each other, had positive feelings for all members of their group, regardless of their ethnic background Joyce et al. (2002:111).

- **Educator use and evaluation as well as learners’ reactions to co-operative learning:** In a Dutch study the educator’s use and the evaluation of co-operative learning were studied using questionnaires, as well as how learners experienced co-operative grouping and what the quality of group co-operation was. They found that most of the groups were formed by educators in a heterogeneous way, using mostly 2 learners in a group, but sometimes also three-to-four-member groups. The educators believed that the learners’ social skills, time-on-task behaviour and self-esteem improved as result of the use of co-operative learning. Only about a third of the educators thought that learners benefited academically by using a co-operative learning approach and only about 16 % of the educators felt that the learners from a lower social standing improved academically due to co-operative learning. More than half of the educators found that they could not monitor the groups effectively. Preparation of the classroom and selection of materials were not a serious problem. Parents gave very little positive feedback on co-operative learning being done. Support from colleagues was extensive.

The learners seemed to have a positive attitude towards co-operative learning activities where they could receive help from peers, hear what their peers think, explain work to their peers. The learners felt that they worked effectively in groups; with work division, co-operation, listening skills, complimenting other group members on their work and efforts mentioned as areas which they experience as very positive.

2.7.10 THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR IN EFFECTIVE CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING

The educator plays a pivotal role in empowering learners to make a success of co-operative learning. Part of this role is to ensure that learners will feel safe and supported in the classroom environment to be able to take risks in the group, to feel that their opinions are valued (Allard & Wilson 1999). Killen (2000:99) reported that educators would need to do careful planning and preparation to help learners to succeed and optimally benefit from co-operative learning. He summarised the role of the educator in co-operative learning as follows:

- Thorough and thoughtful preparation of teaching activities.
- Good grasp of how language mediates learning in class.
- Good understanding of barriers to learning in class.
- The ability to cater for diverse group of learners with regards to culture, gender, ethnicity, language ability and more.
- Ability to support learners to develop internal discipline within the learning environment created in class.
- Supporting learners in the development of critical and creative thinking abilities.

Foot, Morgan & Shute (1990:252) state that where the co-operative learning strategy has been promoted properly and well-planned and organized, learners remarked positively about it. Learners have reported their realization that other people may see issues differently and that there may be more ways than one to do a specific task. They appreciated the idea of formulating own perceptions and getting the opportunity to share it with others. They realised that by doing this they can become participants in a world, forming views of their own, not just being spectators of events. Working in a group helped the learners to break down barriers between them, become more sensitive to the needs of others, and grow in areas such as self-awareness, trust, decision-making and assertiveness.

The aim of co-operative learning is therefore to empower learners to gain confidence, to develop to their full potential which will enable them to become responsible and disciplined citizens of our democratic society. In order to reach these goals, educators

should fully understand and believe in the approach and will have to implement it in a structured and well-planned manner.

The educator needs to keep an open mind and needs to be observant to realize when certain strategies are not delivering the desired results to replace it with others which will deliver the desired results (Jacobs et al. 2001:198).

Patience and effort on the side of the educator will be needed initially to get the learners so far to collaborate, share and to listen to the opinions of others. An educator who sets a good example for learners by being accepting and respectful of others, displaying tolerance and understanding them daily at school, creates the correct atmosphere which will allow learners copy and master this behaviour.

If it becomes necessary for the educator to intervene when it is clear that one of the learners may be rejected or dominated by the group, it should be done in such a manner that learners benefit from the intervention and that it will not negatively influence the social acceptance of these learners.

During co-operative learning learners with different values and perspectives would be placed in the same groups and expected to work together successfully. Should some learners challenge the educator's authority when placed in different groups and not with their friends or even the members of their gangs, it can be addressed if the educator knows enough about the social dynamics of the class, knows how to cope with a bully in class and are experienced in and committed to co-operative learning (Kutnick & Rogers 1994:208).

“What educators think and do to promote collaborative learning in their classrooms will relate partly to their own social experiences as well as to what they have read in libraries or had been taught during courses” (Biott & Easen 1994:2).

Therefore it is important that educators reflect on their own collaborative experiences with colleagues, as it will influence how they implement co-operative learning in class and what guidance they give to their learners to benefit optimally from the experience.

2.7.10.1 THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR IMPLEMENTING CL IN GRADE 3

Educators should remember that learners need not work in co-operative learning groups all the time. At times direct teaching is needed in class, sometimes learners would work on individual tasks at their desks and sometimes they would be involved in co-operative learning activities.

Based on the previous sections of this chapter, co-operative learning can be implemented successfully in grade 3 if the educator makes sure that learners feel safe and supported and they have enough trust in the educator and the climate of the classroom to risk participation in groups to air their opinions. Learners can participate in setting up the classroom rules for co-operative learning, so that everyone can benefit optimally from the experience and use the time in groups efficiently.

The educator should carefully select each skill (academic as well as social) the learners would need to function successfully in the group, explain it carefully and provide opportunity for the learners to practise it before they have to apply it in the group situation. Grade 3 learners would need much guidance with regards to the use of social skills as well as reflection afterwards, per group if needed, to discuss their progress in using the skill in the group and how they could apply it in life in general and in class in future.

It is vitally important that learners at Grade 3 level understand exactly what they need to do in co-operative learning to ensure success at the task, growth in self-esteem and willingness to participate in similar events in future.

Heterogeneous groups should be carefully selected to ensure a good mix of abilities, gender and skill which could provide each group with the ability to complete the task successfully. Learners should all get the opportunity to fulfill important roles in the group, like leader, reader, artist or discipline captain, as these give them the opportunity to try out new skills and fulfill new roles which might not have been expected from them ever before. It also gives the peers the opportunity to learn to accept each other as individuals with different abilities. They could learn to recognize that not everybody is good at the same thing, but everybody has his or her own strength and that diversity in a group can make it stronger.

As other groups close by might easily distract younger learners, the educator should ensure that all groups have sufficient space to work without being too close and distract or disturb others.

The educator should be aware of the various stages a group goes through while performing their tasks and should make sure that these young learners get enough opportunity to form, storm and find the norm within the group, but should they also not be left on their own for too long should they struggle to get on with the task and keep returning to the previous stages of group formation, like the storming or norming stages. Staying in too close vicinity to the groups on the other hand might make them too self-conscious, they might not get started, so the educator would need to learn to observe groups from not too near, but also not too far away, to ensure that all the groups can be scanned with one sweeping glance to check on progress. When a group really struggle to get started or to overcome some hurdles along the way, the educator should guide their thinking and decision making by asking leading questions to guide them in the right direction and set them on their way again.

Younger learners need ample warning time to prepare them for the closure of the co-operative learning session, so the educator should ensure that the whole class takes notice that the end of the session is nearing, that it is almost time to complete their task and finally to end the task and reflect on their progress and final product.

By such careful planning of the implementation of co-operative learning in Grade 3, the educator will support learners in the development of social skills which will benefit their social relationships. As a group they will work together, think, solve problems and start to integrate knowledge and skills on a very young level. Their self-esteem will grow as they experience success in co-operative learning which is carefully guided by the educator.

2.8 CONCLUSION

The democratic society of South Africa is guided by the values spelled out in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution. These values of democracy, social justice, equity, non-racism, human dignity, an open society, responsibility and accountability, the rule of law, respect and reconciliation are also embedded in the Revised National Curriculum Statement, which is currently being implemented in all schools in South Africa.

There is a close relation between the values of the Bill of Rights and co-operative learning. Co-operative learning does not merely focus on the development of academic skills in class, but also on the development of social skills which will ensure that learners will be empowered to become caring and responsible adults who will participate fully in our democratic society. By participating in heterogeneous groups in co-operative learning, learners will be exposed to a diverse group of peers where they will learn to accept, respect and value the contributions of a diverse group and together they will accept responsibility for their own and each other's learning. They will become used to working in a collaborative, supportive, nurturing and open community where contributions are discussed in a transparent manner. By setting rules and boundaries for acceptable behaviour in groups, learners will learn the principles of acceptance, equity, respect, justice and fairness.

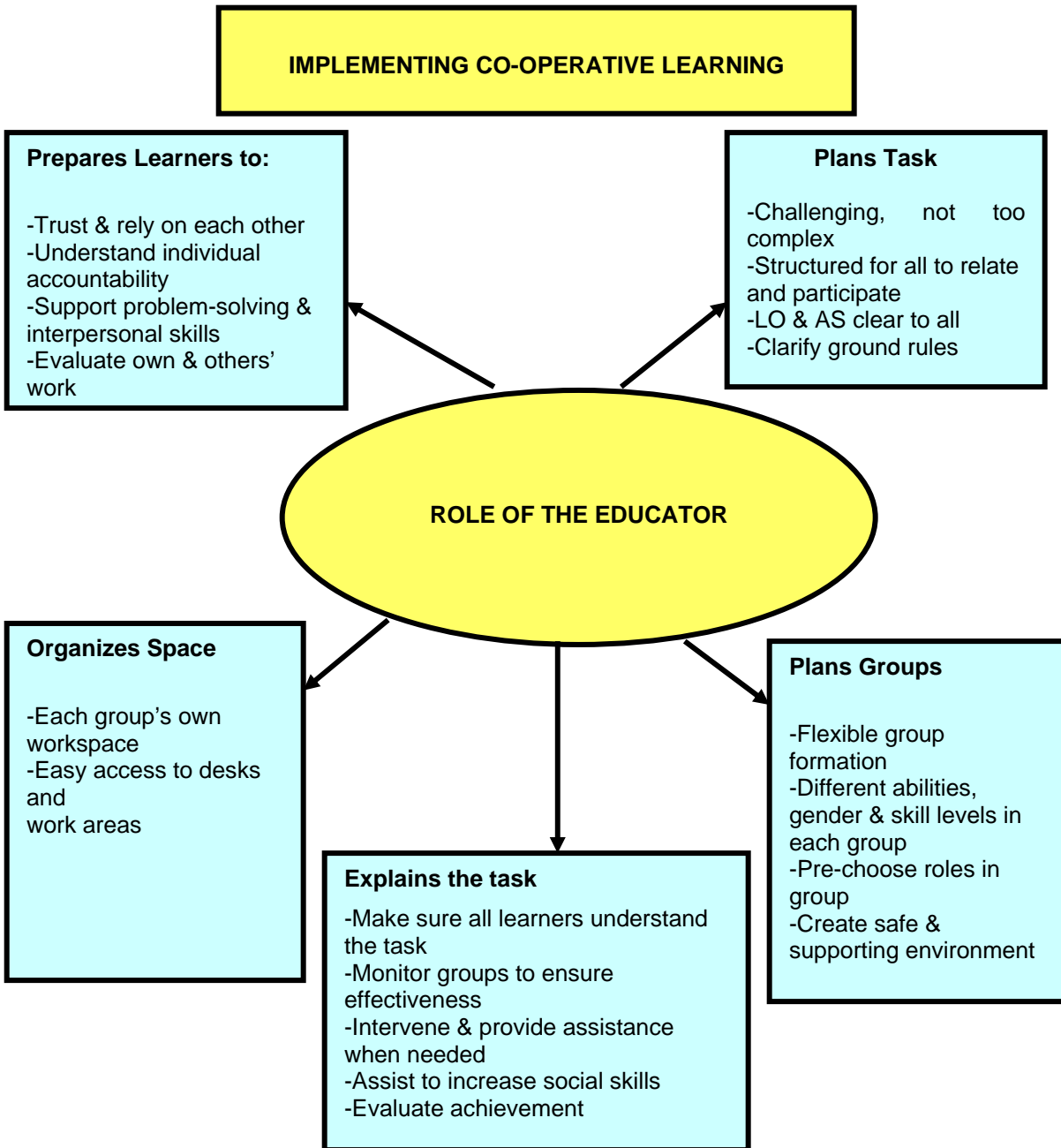
The educator plays an important role in preparing learners to develop the necessary social skills and academic achievement in co-operative learning activities. Learners, who are well prepared, will benefit optimally by their exposure to co-operative learning. Thoughtful and thorough preparation, understanding the importance of the mediation of language in class activities, understanding the barriers to learning present in the class, catering for diversity in class (culture, gender, ethnicity, language, intellectual capacity), supporting learners to develop internal discipline and assisting learners to develop critical and creative thinking abilities are some of the key issues the educator needs to pay attention to.

As learners will not automatically display the necessary social skills, the educator needs to carefully select the social skills learners need to practise during co-operative learning activities. These social skills must be explained and if necessary modeled to the learners before the time. Once practised in groups, the educator and groups should reflect on their successes and how they can use these skills in future situations.

The educator also needs to pay close attention to the planning of the space in which the learners will work, to ensure successful implementation of co-operative learning. Learners should understand their task clearly, should know exactly what is expected of them and how they will be evaluated at the end of the task. Group roles should be given to ensure smooth interaction and participation of all members of the group.

The researcher sums up the task of the educator in co-operative learning in the following diagram:

Diagram 2.3 The task of the educator in Co-operative Learning

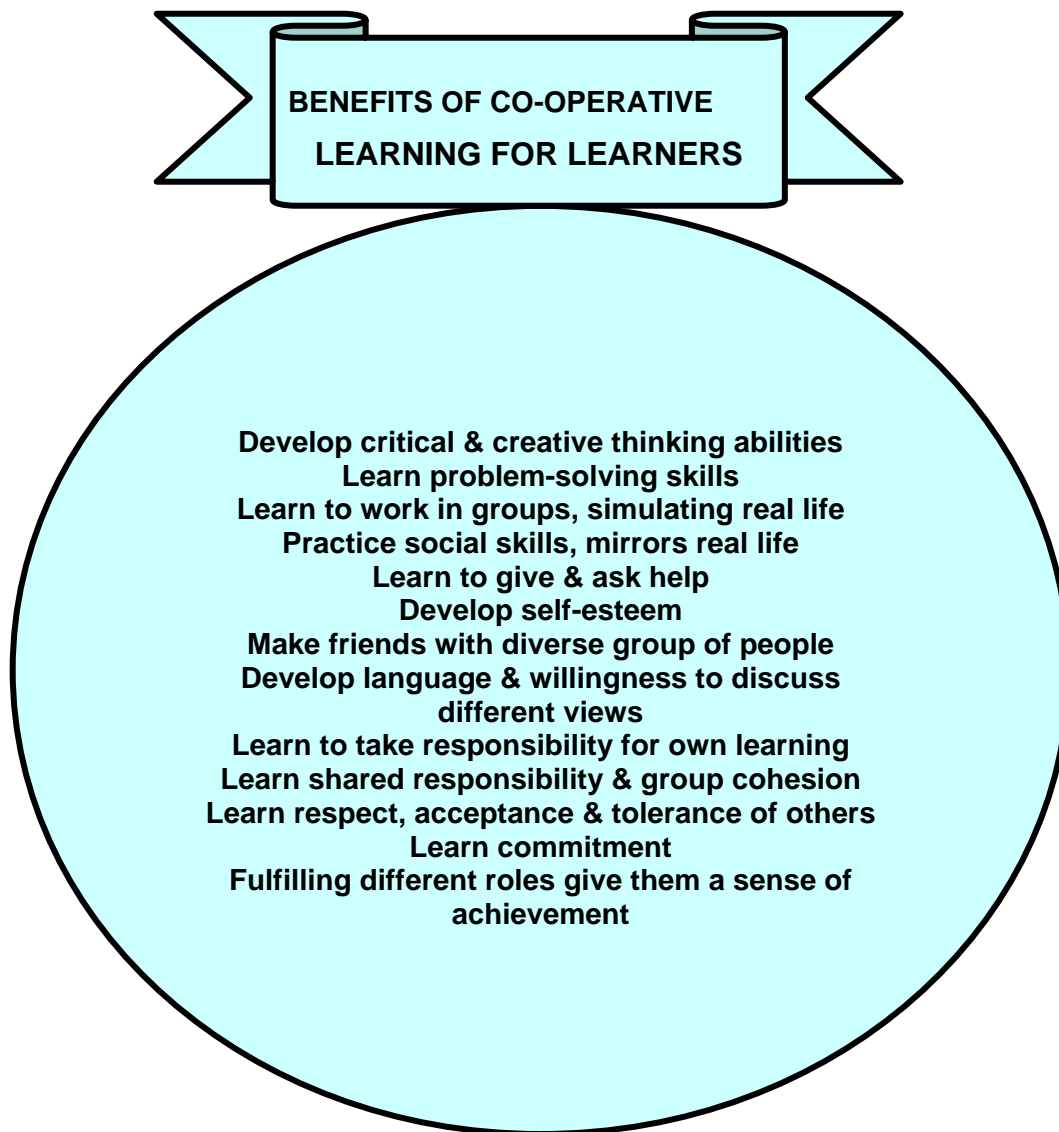


The educator also needs to pay attention to the five characteristics of co-operative learning. The characteristics of co-operative learning requires firstly that the educator plan a task which the learners need to do together, by interacting face to face and each member takes responsibility to get the task done. Secondly each individual will be held

accountable for their learning as they participate on equal basis to complete the task. Thirdly groups are organized in a heterogeneous manner to ensure academic and social development. Fourthly social skills should be taught to ensure learners learn tolerance and acceptance of each other. By doing this, diversity becomes a resource to the group. The fifth and final characteristic of co-operative learning is the monitoring and processing of social skills by the educator to give feedback on progress to ensure learners become skilled and develop attitudes and values to become adults who respect human dignity, have confidence and good self-esteem, will promote justice and respect for others in society.

Within the five phases (forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning) that each co-operative learning session goes through, five basic elements needs to be incorporated to ensure that activities are truly co-operative learning: These are the elements of positive inter-dependence (learners realize they need each other to complete the task), face-to-face promotive interaction (learners help each other to learn by sharing and encouragement), individual accountability (everyone within the group is responsible for the learning of the group), appropriate interpersonal skills (learners must develop and use social skills such as communication, trust in others and ways to resolve conflict in order to ensure successful interaction with other members of the group) and reflective learners (learners reflect upon their success and how effective they were as a group in the final stage of co-operative learning).

Diagram 2.4 Benefits of Co-operative Learning for learners



This diagram summarizes the benefits of co-operative learning for learners. Overall learners benefit by being exposed to co-operative learning as they learn to work together with others, they learn to be tolerant, appreciate the contributions of others, accept the ideas of others, to ask and give help, to solve problems, to develop their language abilities as they make contributions to the group and learn to explain themselves better, they learn to take responsibility for own actions and learning and to develop critical and creative thinking skills.

In order to achieve co-operation in co-operative learning, it is thus important that all members in the group participate evenly and work effectively to get the task done. Co-operative learning can be seen as an overarching term given to a variety of teaching strategies which sometimes overlap. It brings learners from different ethnic and cultural groups together in working groups, not necessarily based on friendships, same gender or socio-economical background. To be able to get the task done, they need co-operation, need to trust each other and have a fair distribution of the workload. Different authors reported that the co-operative learning strategies can assist in affirming the social values in a heterogeneous classroom and that a carefully managed co-operative learning atmosphere in class can assist in improving interpersonal relationships amongst learners. As such, co-operative learning can assist in affirming the values enshrined in the Bill of Rights, and which are also taken up into the RNCS. These same values we wish to see reflected in an inclusive education system.

The next chapter (Chapter 3) will focus on the management of a collaborative classroom. The most important characteristics of the climate and culture of a collaborative classroom will be discussed. Lastly the human and task dimension of the elements of the management of a productive classroom where effective learning can take place will be dealt with.

CHAPTER 3

MANAGING A PRODUCTIVE CLASSROOM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Before discussing classroom management in detail, it is necessary to have a look at the change that has come about in our worldview, which has influenced our understanding of management and leadership in the post-modern era.

In the mechanistic worldview the bureaucratic-managerial style favoured effectiveness, efficiency, productivity, profits and the pursuit of organizational goals. Leadership placed great emphasis on hierarchy, order, authority and control. Management was seen as processes run by the manager to ensure that the organization would run smoothly, like a well-oiled machine. Senge (1995:231) referred to it as:

“...the holy trinity of Western management: planning, organizing and controlling.”

Black (1999) in Van Nieuwenhuis (2006:125) argues that the development of the holistic worldview has evolved from the realization that the world is evolving, ever changing and has to adapt to change in its environment or become extinct. One cannot understand the whole world by analyzing only its parts; one needs to also look into the relationship between the parts to be able to understand it. Therefore the holistic worldview focuses on wholeness and the relationships of the parts within the whole.

The understanding of management and leadership has been influenced by the holistic worldview, as leaders are now essentially designers of the learning process (Senge, 1990:341–345). Rost (1993:102) states that in the holistic worldview leadership is not a position or a possession. It is an area of interaction where meaning is created, where communication takes place for a specific purpose and leader and followers share the process.

The current view of leadership and management has been influenced by assumptions and values which underpins the restructuring of our social reality towards a holistic

worldview. The holistic worldview of today has as its focus individualism, imagination, sensitivity, emotion, tenderness, freedom, autonomy and liberty, but does not completely rule out the values of the previous mechanic worldview, as it incorporates many of these values, such as punctuality, achievement, thoroughness, efficiency, order and rationality (Kung 1991:21).

Management and leadership now play a socially responsible role in society, focusing on social betterment for all. Individual and organizational goals cannot be promoted by leaders while neglecting the environment, community or their civic responsibility (Starratt 1993:108).

In addition, the sharing and espousal of values that make learning central to the classroom is of particular importance in ensuring that the school can go forward as a learning organisation. According to Fuglestad and Lillejord (2002:14) the two dimensions of a productive learning culture are cultural values and communication patterns. This relates to cultural values, namely norms of inclusion and acceptance of appreciation of individuality towards one end and towards the other end is collectivity and shared responsibility. Sometimes one can experience a tension between concern for the individual and concern for the whole group, but there are basic contradictions between the two. In fact, appreciation of individuality is an important condition for feeling included in the group and from that feeling of inclusion and acceptance follows also identification with the group and work towards common goals.

This shift from a mechanic to a holistic worldview also influences the way in which schools and classrooms are managed today as well as the way in which the educator acts as a leader in class. No longer can the educator only pay attention to processes, planning, efficiency, thoroughness, order and punctuality only, as effective management of a class will also require taking into account the learners as individuals, their emotional experiences, sensitivity and understanding of the different backgrounds they come from to allow each individual to develop to his or her own full potential (Nieuwenhuis 2006:128).

To summarize it can be said that the influence of the holistic worldview also impacts on the planning of teaching and learning in the National Curriculum Statement as it allows the educator the freedom to choose teaching methods, as no single method is being prescribed, and Learning and Teaching Support Material can be incorporated as and

when he or she sees fit. Managing a productive classroom therefore does not only require knowledge and understanding of a technical set of skills, but also needs insight in the relationship between the educator and learners as well as the background and needs of the individual learners. Although different aspects of classroom management will be discussed individually, eventually all of it needs to come together, the parts need to form a whole, relationships between the various parts should come into play to ensure the management of a productive classroom.

In Chapter 2 it is mentioned that using properly planned co-operative learning activities in classrooms can help to promote co-operation, critical thinking and the development of social skills. In order for learners to benefit optimally from co-operative learning, the educator needs to be well prepared, organized and know how to create a culture of teaching and learning in class. In chapter 3 various concepts dealing with the culture of teaching and learning and managing teaching in class will be discussed.

3.2 DEFINITIONS

3.2.1 ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF A SCHOOL

Van der Westhuizen, Erasmus, Janson, Mentz & Theron (1996:105) define organizational culture as follows:

“Organizational culture thus symbolises the totality of beliefs, values and norms that are shared by all people who are involved in the school, and serves as motivation for all actions in the school. These beliefs, values and norms are expressed in symbols and customs, and determine the characteristic manner in which everything in a school happens and functions.”

3.2.2 LEADERSHIP

Hackman & Johnson (1991:11) reported that leaders encourage other people to change and use their own influence to ensure that group goals are reached. They define leadership as follows:

“Leadership is human communication which modifies the attitudes and behaviours of others in order to meet group goals and needs.”

Du Bois (in Calitz, Fuglestad & Lillejord 2002:43) agrees by defining leadership as follows:

“Leadership, as influence, should focus on the ability of people to meet job requirements, perform beyond expected levels and grow professionally.”

3.2.3 PRODUCTIVE CLASSROOM

A productive classroom can be defined as a place where all learners can learn. It is managed and organized in such a manner that the learners are intellectually productive and feel safe on an intellectual, emotional and physical level. Learning is central in a productive classroom environment and the educator employs teaching technologies that are appropriate to the learning area or subject matter he or she teaches. The educator also ensures the intellectual growth of all learners in the classroom (Teachers for a new era: 2006).

3.3 THE CULTURE AND CLIMATE OF A SCHOOL

3.3.1 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

According to Prinsloo (2005:266) the attitudes and work practice of educators and learners are influenced by the organizational culture of a school. Culture can be defined as “shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes and norms” which brings a community together and forms the conclusion they draw from their experience and how it develops over time (Prinsloo 2005:327).

Prinsloo further describes organizational culture as “...the way things are done around here” (Prinsloo 2005:327) and it is indicative of a learned pattern of conscious thought. It is reflected and reinforced by the behaviour of the participants at the organization and silently and powerfully it shapes the experiences of them all.

3.3.2 THE RELATION BETWEEN THE CULTURE AND CLIMATE OF A SCHOOL

The values and norms which promote inclusion and acceptance of individuals in class as well as in the school should be the most important characteristics of the climate and culture of schools (Fuglestad & Lillejord 2002:5). As a result of this everybody should feel wanted and appreciated, and should know that there is a need for his or her special

contribution. Other core social values such as justice, tolerance, concern for human dignity and mutual respect would also be part and parcel of such an environment.

According to Sergiovanni & Starrat (1988:106) school culture is a part of school climate. They state that school climate is interwoven with the interpersonal relations in the school, while school culture is related more to the aspects such as norms and values. School culture and school climate influence one another. Aspects of school culture such as traditions and ceremonies have an effect on school climate while the attitudes of those involved with the school certainly have an influence on school culture.

Kruger & Steinman (2003:14) state that school climate is the quality and frequency or interactions between all the stakeholders involved in the school. School culture, on the other hand, is the belief system or values of those stakeholders. The interactions or activities of the stakeholders of a school have typical patterns which are characteristic of a specific school. The culture of the school can be reflected in its climate. Should the culture of a school be effective teaching and learning, it will follow naturally that the interaction between educators and learners will reflect this value. The climate of a school is visible in all aspects of the school. It can be observed in the quality of the work and the people, in the architecture of its buildings, environment and in the history and culture of the school.

The relationship between these two concepts can be defined as follows:

- School culture (the situation) is a set of values, convictions, ceremonies and norms which reflect the communication, symbols, management style and behaviour of people involved and which are evident in the management philosophy and goals of the school.
- School climate is the perception of those involved (stakeholders) regarding the assumptions, stereotypes, prejudices and personal or societal values (Mentz 1990:86).

3.3.3 CLASSROOM CULTURE AND CLIMATE

The relationship between school culture and climate and classroom culture and climate differs for various groups of learners, depending on the age level. For instance, Learners

in the Foundation Phase would not differentiate well between school culture and climate and classroom culture and climate as they spend most of their time in the same classroom (Kruger & Steinmann 2003:15).

As learners grow older, they differentiate more between school climate and classroom climate when they start to go to different classrooms for different learning areas or subjects. The personality and teaching style of the educator also begins to play a role on the differentiation the older learner begins to make between school climate and classroom climate and culture. Kruger & Steinman (2003:15) further state that if enough classrooms with positive climates exist in a school, they contribute towards a positive whole school climate.

Similar to school culture classroom culture is related to aspects such as a set of values and norms which reflect the communication and behaviour of everybody in the classroom and which are evident in the classroom management philosophy of the educator. In a classroom where individual needs and differences are accepted, where everybody has a feeling of being wanted and appreciated and where the core social values such as justice, tolerance, concern for human dignity and mutual respect are acknowledged/respected, promoted and fulfilled, a positive climate in which effective teaching and learning can take place will be created.

- By using their knowledge, skills and specific behaviour, effective educators can ensure the creation of effective learning environments in their classrooms. In these environments well managed learners will experience maximised opportunities to learn, and will be motivated to learn. In such environments learners can rely on the educator to create a sense of security and order in the classroom, to create opportunities to participate actively in the class, and to ensure that it will be an interesting and exciting place (Kruger & Steinmann 2003:17-18).

Learners participate enthusiastically in classes where their intellectual curiosity is provoked and participation encouraged, especially if they believe that the educator appreciates them as individuals.

Kruger & Steinman (2003:18) recommend the following activities for the creation of a classroom climate that supports learners' learning:

- Let your learners get to know you.
- Get to know your learners and treat them with respect.
- Learn your learners' names and how to pronounce them.
- Show your learners your respect.
- Use language and humour appropriately.
- Build a sense of community in the classroom.

The creation of a positive and open classroom climate is forms part and parcel of the educator's classroom management practice. The way in which all the elements within the classroom is managed by the educator determines the climate of the classroom, and in turn it will have an influence on the attitude and inclination of the class (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk 1997:93).

Learner behaviour forms a major aspect of positive classroom climate. Learner behaviour is facilitated by clear expectations within a school setting. When all learners consistently behave appropriately, a positive classroom climate is created.

By implementing effective classroom practices, learner behaviour which falls within the range from consistently attentive to mildly disruptive, is managed by the average classroom educator. Classroom management can be described as the planned, organised activities and procedures put in place by the educator to ensure effective teaching and learning take place. It is characterised by:

- Well-placed and varied lessons
- Minimal disruptions and disciplinary actions
- Calm and efficient problem solving
- Differentiated instructions for learners with different needs
- Established routines for specific behaviours
- An atmosphere of respect
- Consistency.

Kruger & Van Schalkwyk (1997:17) gave the following descriptors in Table 3.1 for classroom climate:

Table 3.1 Classroom Climate (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk 1997:17)

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Happy	Competitive
Friendly	Indecisive
Sincere	Discouraging
Warm	Tense
Co-operative	Hostile
Relaxed	Rigid
Pleasant	Cold
	Clinical

A positive classroom climate will allow learners to be their true self, open up and have a positive teaching and learning experience. A negative classroom climate results in tense, introverted learners who do not open up to others with negative influences on teaching and learning climate in class (Kruger & van Schalkwyk 1997: 86–87).

A positive classroom climate will also be promoted by the following educational values:

- The equal valuing of the identity and dignity of each individual in the classroom. Difference and diversity are valued and respected and seen as an asset. Tolerance, respect and understanding are promoted.
- Importance is attached to the capacity of individuals to achieve and the multi-dimensional qualities of learners are recognized as they enhance greater appreciation among learners for diversity and respect for others.
- Self-dignity and self-confidence is seen not only as an essential basis for personal development and progress in learning, but also as important in promoting a greater awareness of the collectivity of the group. Learners need self-confidence to reach out to those with whom they should collaborate and also to embrace and accept new learning challenges.

- Development of autonomy and responsibility that will create independent learners that manage their own learning. To achieve this, learners must be able to critically construct new knowledge through active participation and reflective thinking.
- Taking responsibility for fellow learners and people in the wider community thus acknowledging their own interdependence on society in which they must make a contribution (Nieuwenhuis 2004:222).

Acceptance of and caring for others, should be part and parcel of life in class each day. Implementing co-operative learning as part of classroom methodology can help educators to instill many of these values while teaching.

3.3.4 A CULTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The concept of a culture of teaching and learning is widely used in the context of education in South Africa. In general it refers to an attitude of all role players towards teaching and learning, and the presence of quality teaching and learning processes in schools (Kruger 2003:3). Davidoff & Lazarus (1997:43) identify the following aspects of a sound culture of teaching and learning:

- All role players value the processes of teaching and learning
- Practices reflect a commitment to teaching and learning
- The resources needed to facilitate this process are available
- The school is structured to facilitate these processes

Calitz et al. (2002:239) names the most important factors, which influence the culture of teaching and learning as follows:

- Teaching and learning climate
- Attitude of educators and learners towards teaching and learning
- Commitment and dedication to teaching and learning which has a positive influence on teaching and learning.

They further state that the commitment to teaching and learning is influenced by the effort of educators, personal characteristics of learners, the home circumstances of learners and school and societal factors.

3.3.4.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOLS WITH A SOUND CULTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Kruger (2003:4-5) states the following as some common characteristics of schools with sound cultures of learning and teaching: positive school climate, sound classroom environments, sound home-school relations, effective leadership, management and administration, neat buildings and facilities, availability of resources, high professional standards among educators, healthy relationships between all role players, order and discipline, effective instructional leadership, and a shared sense of purpose.

In a school where the organisational culture is one in which educators have a shared sense of collegiality and a collective desire to achieve, they will, as a result, create a more constructive, productive and positive environment, which is conducive to teaching and learning (Kruger 2003:4). Davidoff & Lazarus (1997:42) suggest a link between organisational culture and the culture of teaching and learning in pointing out that both the written and unwritten rules and norms of the school determine a certain pattern of behaviour. In other words, the organisational culture ratifies what is proper and ideal for the school, it exerts pressure on both learners and educators to conform to the standards and to validate the high expectations or performance as outlined in the school's mission statement and policy.

One could conclude by saying that the culture of teaching and learning in a school will have an influence on a productive and positive classroom environment which is conducive to effective teaching and learning.

3.3.5 CLASSROOM CONDITIONS

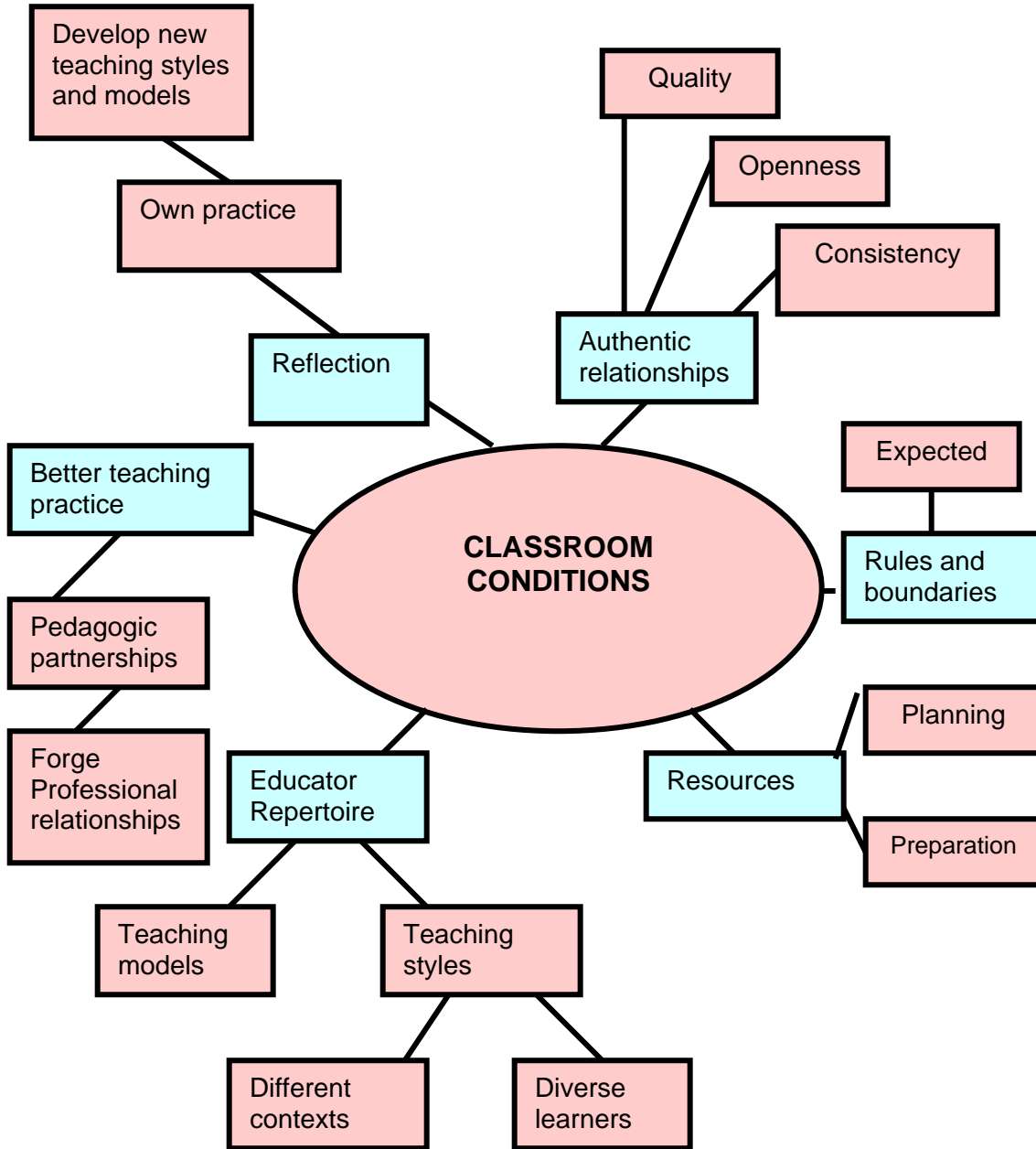
Classroom conditions should not be confused with classroom culture or climate. Certain classroom conditions are needed to enhance teaching and learning and could also enhance a positive classroom culture and climate, e.g.:

- Authentic relationships, based on quality, openness and consistency which influence existing relationships in class
- Rules and boundaries, set by the educator, which inform learners what is expected of them in class

- Planning, resources and preparation, which include planning for a diverse group of learners, access to Learning and Teaching Support Material and the ability to use Learning And Teaching Support Material creatively in a variety of ways
- Educator repertoire, the variety of teaching styles and models the educator feels comfortable with and can apply in class in different contexts, with diverse learners to achieve the outcomes as stated in the Revised National Curriculum Statement
- Pedagogic partnerships, meaning the educator's ability to forge professional relationships with colleagues in order to better their own teaching practice
- Reflection on teaching, which points to the ability of the educator to reflect on own practice and to try out new styles and models recommended by other educators (Hopkins 2001:105).

The diagram below summarizes positive classroom conditions as described by Hopkins (2001:105). It is evident from the previous paragraphs that a positive classroom culture and climate could play a positive role in building a productive classroom. A positive classroom culture and climate conducive to an effective learning classroom requires however, classroom management practices to direct and manage the development of a productive classroom.

Diagram 3.1 Classroom Conditions (Hopkins 2001:105)



3.4 ELEMENTS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF A PRODUCTIVE CLASSROOM

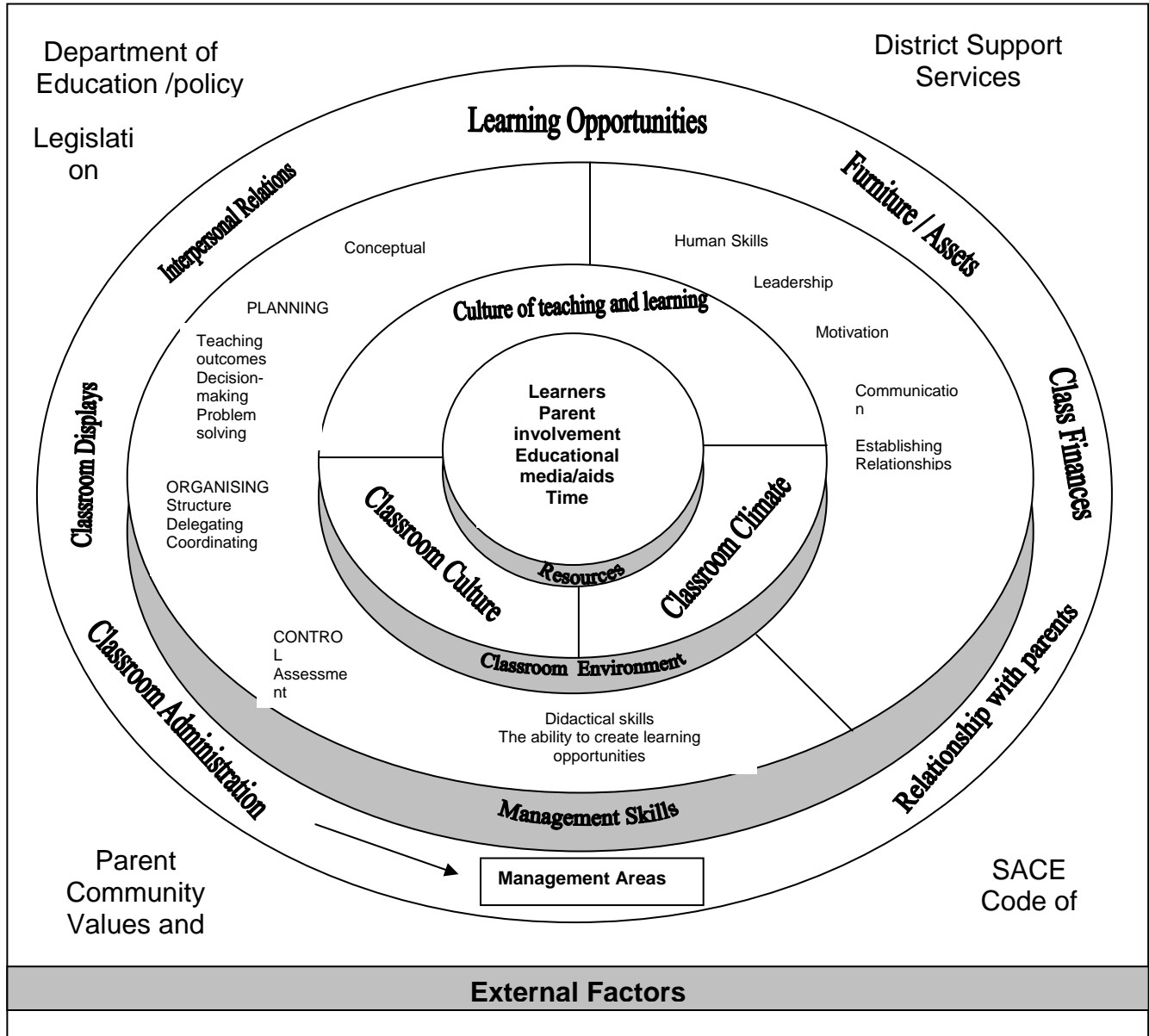
Classroom management is at the heart of the educator's work. The educator must be able to organize and manage learners in a confined space in order to enable learners to feel safe and concentrate on tasks (Hopkins 2001:84).

Moyles (1992:5) describes classroom management as: "...what teachers do once they have considered their organization in order to ensure both the smooth running of the learning environment and fulfillment of intentions."

According to Kruger & van Schalkwyk (1997:6 –8) classroom management includes all the activities needed for the main task, namely teaching and learning, to happen effectively. It deals with management of tasks as well as people. Effective classroom management helps to establish and maintain conditions in the classroom which enhances effective teaching and learning.

To succeed at this an educator will need good skills in long-term planning (learning programme and work schedule) as well as short-term planning (lesson plans and daily preparation) (Jacobs et al. 2000:329).

Diagram 3.2: Leadership and Management model or building a productive classroom (Adapted from Prinsloo 2005:2)



3.4.1 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR BUILDING A PRODUCTIVE CLASSROOM

The framework of Prinsloo (2005:2) has been adapted for the management of a productive classroom and will be used as a point of departure in discussing the elements needed to build a productive classroom.

Classroom management can be seen as the sum total of activities that are necessary to enable the core or main task of the teaching-learning situation to take place effectively. Classroom management is a means to the effective execution of the teaching and learning task of the educator with the aim of attaining the teaching outcomes.

As mentioned in chapter one, all activities in a classroom, including those of management, revolve around resources. The effective utilisation of resources in a classroom, namely people (the educators, the learners and their parents); physical resources (furniture, text books, exercise books, teaching apparatus, also known as Learning and Teaching Support Material); and time (tuition time table) is dependent on the management and leadership skills of the educator. It is therefore important that the educator should have the leadership and management skills necessary to direct learner's actions and motivate them to realise the set learning outcomes. There are two dimensions to classroom management: a task dimension (management aimed at the effective execution of the task at hand i.e. teaching and learning) and a human dimension (people working with other people to achieve the set teaching and learning outcomes) (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk 1997:6-7).

According to Kruger & Van Schalkwyk (1997:6) effective and successful learning can only take place when:

- A teaching and learning environment (classroom environment with a positive classroom culture and climate) is created in which learners and educators are treated with mutual dignity and respect, and in which their integrity is respected and they are treated with fairness and honesty. This can only happen in a classroom where the core social values such as justice, tolerance, concern for human dignity and mutual respect are promoted and respected.
- Learners are motivated and inspired to achieve the set learning outcomes
- Learners' achievements are acknowledged
- Competition is handled in the correct way, that is to say in such a way that every learner is a winner by competing with him- or herself
- Learners experience success because the educators' expectations are not too high or too low
- Learners are empowered to take responsibility for their own learning
- Conflict is handled in the correct and accountable way

- Communication takes place in such a way that learners develop insight into their problems
- The best possible teaching resources are used in order to enrich the learning process
- Sound and favourable relationships are created and maintained
- Discipline is applied in such a way that it will motivate a learner rather than humiliate him or her.

3.4.1 HUMAN DIMENSION

According to Kruger & Van Schalkwyk (1997:19) the human dimension of the educator's task in classroom management deals with the main task of teaching learners, as well as the roles played by parents, colleagues and leaders amongst the learners. It takes into consideration the quality of the relationships between the educator and these various groupings of people and how the educator deals with their needs, aspirations, feelings and attitudes.

3.4.2.1 LEADERSHIP STYLE

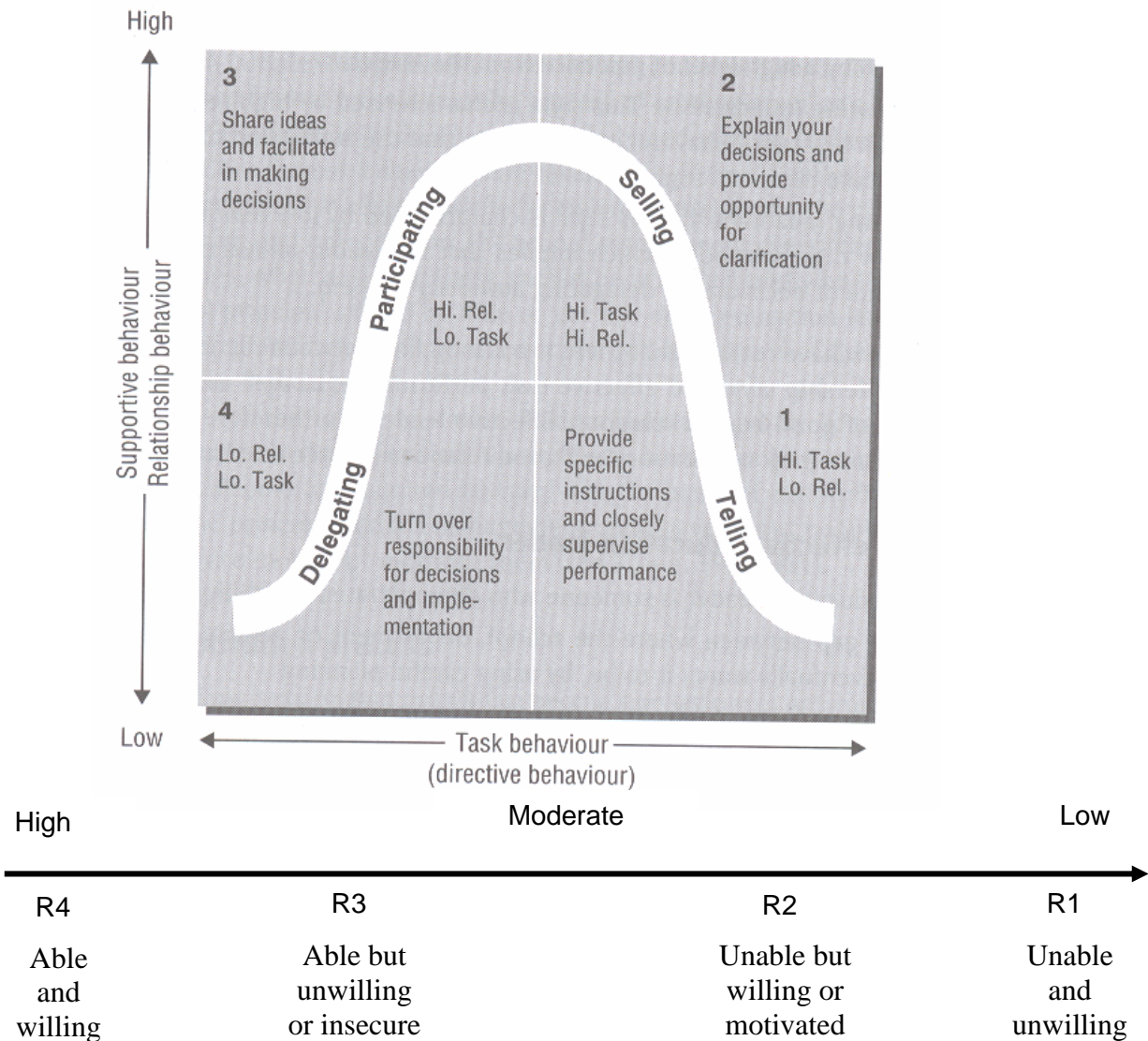
Nakamura (2000:32) indicates that everything an educator does and says impacts on the classroom atmosphere and the learners in it. It impacts on the leadership style of the educator because the educator as leader aims to motivate learners, to improve their character and citizenship by being learner-centered and focused on the attitudes, values, ideals and goals of the learners for their future.

Coert Loock (2003:2) quoted a definition used by Hersey & Blanchard in 1982 in their book *Management of Organizational Behaviour: Utilising Human Resources* 4th ed as follows:

“Leadership is the activity of influencing people to strive willingly for group objectives.”

The leadership and management by the educator in class compares well with Hersey & Blanchard's situational leadership theory.

Diagram 3.3: Hersey & Blanchard's situational leadership theory (Van Deventer & Kruger 2003:147-148)



Follower readiness

Initially learners are insecure and unable to complete a task and need specific instructions and close supervision to complete it (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003:147). This situation can be compared with the Telling phase of the situational leadership theory which can be seen in Diagram 3.3. The educator needs to give learners very specific instructions in order to get them to complete the activities planned and the learners need to be closely supervised to ensure that they can complete it and reach

the outcomes. As they become more motivated they need less support and can complete a task with clarification and explanations in the group as well as to the class as a whole. This represents the Selling phase of Hersey & Blanchard's situational leadership theory. Supported and motivated by the leadership and management skills of the educator learners progress to what is called the Participating phase when they start to share ideas and can help to facilitate the decision making with the educator as leader. Once learners are used to what is expected of them in co-operative learning situations, the educator can delegate the responsibility for their decisions and their learning to the group who will tackle the task at hand. They have then reached the Delegating phase of Task behaviour in the situational leadership theory of Hersey & Blanchard (Van Deventer & Kruger 2003:147).

As a positive classroom culture and climate develops and impacts on positive group interaction in co-operative learning situations, learners will therefore progress through the various phases of task behaviour and the educator's role follows the supportive behaviour route of the theory; while the relationship between the educator as leader and the learners as participants in the process follow the scale of the relationship behaviour as demonstrated in diagram 3.3 (Van Deventer & Kruger 2003:147-148).

Loock (2003:2) identifies six leadership style patterns:

- Coercive – Immediate obedience needed, learners should do as they are told.
- Authoritative – This sets the long term vision and gives direction towards the bigger picture, it sets and monitors the performance standards, seen as firm, but fair.
- Affiliative – People's needs orientated, used to create harmony, not really for achieving goals as it places people first, then tasks second.
- Democratic – A participative approach where all people are involved in decision making, generating of ideas, helps to build commitment to the team and the feedback is almost never given in negative manner. Adequate performance is rewarded.
- Pacesetting – Leading by example, not pro-delegating, this style sets high standards of excellence and the leader rather prefers to personally do the work.
- Coaching – Immediate good performance postponed, focusing rather on long term results while developing skills of others.

Loock (2003:48-49) says that educators should be able to use any of these styles as and when the need arises. Loock goes on to mention that leadership style has unintended consequences which are very important in a school as it reveals the most basic values of the educator as leader. This ultimately influences the tone and cultural climate of the school.

In chapter 2 of this study, the values enshrined in The Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of our Constitution, were discussed. Keeping in mind what Loock has said about the use of leadership style which reveals the basic values of the educator, it is crucial that educators model the basic values of The Bill of Rights e.g. equity, dignity, right of access (e.g. to content of the curriculum), recognition of diversity (for instance in the classroom) on a daily basis. The educator as leader in class should show respect to all learners, and promote tolerance and justice for all in class. Class rules and rewards should be based on transparent decisions made by the group to expose learners to the principles of an open society, of participation and democracy. Accountability and responsibility should be part of the every day experience in class, especially when learners are exposed to group work. When the educator as leader in class models these values on a daily basis, learners have a positive example to follow to act with tolerance, acceptance and responsibility within groups. They can follow the example of the educator in respecting others and accepting the differences of their peers.

Calitz et al. (2002:177) says that:

“The educational leader must also be an effective manager of diversity.”

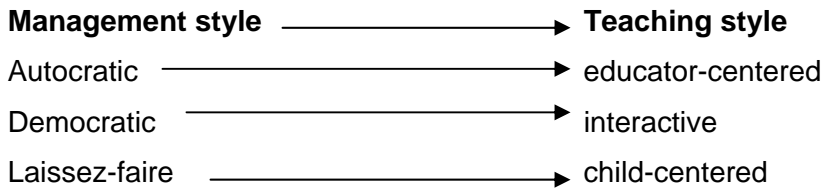
As result of the changes in the social, economic and technological circumstances of learners the role of the educational leader is a strategic and pivotal one:

“Because of diverse school populations, with diverse backgrounds and unique learning styles and needs, effective learning must address these challenges by employing diverse teaching approaches and strategies.”

3.4.2.2 TEACHING STYLE

Moyles (1992:24) states that an educator tends to teach in the style through which they themselves learn.

Kruger & van Schalkwyk (1997:20–23) adds to this picture, saying that teaching style and classroom management style is interrelated. The choice of management style results in the teaching style used by the educator:



Hopkins (2001:90) says teaching style is also called educator behaviour. Through reflection the educator creates an individual style from a combination of teaching skills, relationships and teaching models. In his view reflection helps to form and develop a personal teaching style.

Nakamura (2000:32-37) agrees with this and says that who and what the educator are has a huge influence the learners in class. This includes how you stand, smile, speak, pronounce words, frowns at times, all facial expressions, all body language which influences the atmosphere in the class as well as all learners in it.

He continues to describe three teaching styles, namely:

- Autocratic or controlling educator style:

Nakamura states that very few educators were taught leadership, they mostly tend to model what they were taught, and this lead mostly to the modeling of very strict behaviour, leaving learners very little freedom or responsibility. The educator wants to control everything in class, physically and emotionally involved in every action as planning, organizing, co-ordinating and directing gets done. This educator believes it will only be done right if he or she does it personally, controlling every step of the way. This kind of educator wants to be the boss and all learners must do as the educator says. The educator believes that the knowledge and experience he or she has, as well as the power of the position as educator will make learners follow his or her instructions. The autocratic educator who chooses to motivate learners by fear justifies such behaviour by saying that learners need strict discipline and structure and that this will help learners make a success of their future.

Nakamura further says that this kind of behaviour causes anger and frustration with learners and makes them feel inferior and incapable. The learners feel totally discounted and that what they think is of no consequence at all. Eventually this causes these learners never to reach their full potential. They tend to display the following behaviour in class:

- Back chatting
 - Anger
 - Headstrong
 - Unco-operative
 - Lying
 - Disrespectful
 - Defensive
 - Keeping a distance from the educator on physical and emotional level.
- Permissive educator style:

According to Nakamura the educator with the permissive teaching style creates confusion, frustration and disorder in class as their aloof, cold, uninterested and impersonal attitude cannot motivate learners to do their best. Educators who were not sufficiently trained, too lazy to care, unavailable or preoccupied with other issues are usually displaying this permissive teaching style. The learners gather that they are not important enough for the educator to care about them, that the educator cannot give them what they need and also that the educator is just too overwhelmed to meet the expected teaching obligations.

Nakamura further states that this kind of educator experiences helplessness; does not have sufficient confidence and is afraid that learners will not like him or her. The permissive educator cannot say “no” to learners; finds the teaching responsibilities totally overwhelming; experience inadequacy and are very immature. The permissive educator hardly makes any decisions, does not give direction too often and teaches the minimum to learners.

Learners who find themselves in the class of an educator with a permissive teaching style may display the following behaviour:

- Manipulate situations
 - Often display temper tantrums
 - Withdraw from situations
 - Anxious
 - Frustrated
 - Lack respect.
-
- Healthy or democratic educator style:

Nakamura goes on by saying that educators using the healthy or democratic teaching style empower their learners by giving them the opportunity to be themselves and express their own individuality, by giving learners as much power and responsibility as they can handle at a given time. The democratic educator does this by ensuring a safe atmosphere in class; by letting the learners know that they are accepted as individuals and cared for – no matter what the situation; by listening to the learners, by being open and honest with them and by taking what they say and do seriously; by believing that the learners can solve their own problems and by providing them with choices and to learn from the consequences of their own choices. The learners understand that the healthy or democratic educator like them and regards them as good people.

Learners exposed to this democratic or healthy teaching style, respond by being:

- Helpful
- Co-operative
- Responsible
- Empathic
- Enthusiastic
- Happy
- Resourceful
- Confident

According to Nakamura the educator with this teaching style wants the learners to reach their full potential, to be happy, well adjusted, successful and capable while doing so. Nakamura states that educators should just have confidence in learners, as learners who are treated with dignity and respect are able and willing to co-operate in class; to learn the skills needed to solve problems which will encourage them to exercise self-control.

He lists the following ways in which the democratic or healthy educator can empower learners in class:

- Organize and plan lessons
- Assist learners to develop the capacity to set own goals and the desire to reach them
- Realize that each learner is a unique individual
- Give learners responsibility
- Become a good listener and accept learners' opinions
- Spend time with each learner and make each learner feel capable of success
- Set reasonable limits for behaviour and make fair rules for discipline
- Ensure a safe environment in class
- Allow learners to share in decisions made in class.

Many of these ideas are also applicable to co-operative learning, as learners need to accept responsibility for their own work, need to listen carefully and accept the opinions of others, need to know the limits of accepted behaviour while doing co-operative learning and share in decision making when participating in co-operative learning activities. The educator needs to create a safe environment where all learners feel accepted and respected and needs to organize and plan carefully to ensure success in co-operative learning activities. To sum up, it can be said that the healthy or democratic teaching style would best support the implementation of co-operative learning in class.

Similarly one could argue that the democratic or healthy teaching style best suits the profile of an educator who manages a classroom and displays leadership in the classroom according to the Situational Leadership Style of Hersey & Blanchard, as the democratic teaching style empowers learners to develop their own individuality, gives them the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning and similar to Hersey and

Blanchard, the democratic teaching style gives learners as much power to deal with situations as they can handle at a given time.

3.4.2.3 MOTIVATION

Abrami, Chambers, Pousen, De Simone, D'Apollonia & Howden (1995:10) state that the word motivation comes from the Latin word "movere". Movere in Latin means "to move". Abrami et al. (1995:10) therefore defines it as: "Motivation provides the energy for action and directs it toward a specific goal."

Kruger & van Schalkwyk (1997:67–68) describe motivation as the process by which the educator, as the manager of a situation, provides motives to ensure that a certain action, like learning, takes place to achieve learning outcomes (LO). Educators need to know which motives will make learners respond in a positive manner.

Van Dyk (1998) in Gerber et al. (1998:330) states that to achieve this, one needs to focus on the three defined elements of motivation:

- Know what the needs are
- Know human behaviour
- Achieving goals.

Jacobs et al. (2000:30) felt that learners can be motivated by reminding them which outcomes they need to achieve while working in class. This would also help to increase their competence, because of the growth that takes place in their confidence.

Nagel (2001:38-40) argues that educators need to find ways to keep learners motivated, as motivated learners are energetic and focused in class. If learners are given tasks which motivate them, they persist even in difficult times; they stay focused on the task. In some cultures persistence is valued very highly. Countries like Japan and Finland attribute their high scores on international tests to amongst other things their high level of persistence.

Nagel (2001:38-40) listed a number of learner behaviours observed in whole class as well as in small group settings which gives insight into motivation in groups.

Table 3.2 Learner behaviours according to Nagel (2001:38-40)

Low-Motivation Learners	High-Motivation Learners
Do not question	Ask questions, explore ideas
Make no suggestions or comments	Make comments, suggestions
Are distracted	Attend to the task
Blame the system	Praise the system; adapt to it
Act frustrated	Resolve frustrations
Have difficulties	Do extra work; express interest
Are impulsive	Are reflective, thoughtful
Ignore leader	Cooperate
Do no extra work	Go beyond
Display negative affect	Display positive affect

Nagel goes on by saying that educators as leaders should respond to learners with low levels of motivation, as follows:

- Give them more time
- Reward success
- Try not to involve them in theoretical work
- Use no humour or criticism
- Explain work or give a variation of activities
- Give shorter lessons, or personalize it
- Encourage learners to verbalise their thinking
- Design their questions in such a manner to engage the reluctant learners

Nagel also says that they are generally treated with empathy, receive their instruction on a lower level than other learners, but the atmosphere they work in is not as warm as it could be.

In response to high motivated learners, Nagel states that educators as leaders tend to:

- Give encouragement and discuss theory at length
- Use light banter in class towards them

- Reward success and respond to all questions.

Nagel says that the educator as leader responds positively towards highly motivated learners who act positively in class. Their overall experience in class is richer and they experience a warm atmosphere.

Finally Nagel states that working in small groups, such as co-operative learning activities, comfortable learners will encourage learners who would rather not participate in whole class activities, as they get the opportunity to participate and express themselves in groups. The small group lends itself to opportunities of speaking, listening, and provocative thinking. It can enhance learning and the positive climate can help the learner to achieve and be accepted by others. This can lead to even more achievement and learner satisfaction, which in turn will have a positive influence on learner motivation.

Kroon (1990:332) and Prinsloo (2003:154) both list some guidelines which can help to facilitate effective motivation which can bring about effective teaching in class:

- Recognition of individual differences among learners in class
 - Plan tasks in a challenging manner to motivate learners towards success
 - Include learners in decision-making in class
 - Inform learners of goals and results via effective communication
 - Delegate tasks and authority regarding the development thereof to learners, as they will feel trusted, which will motivate them and develop a greater sense of responsibility in learners
 - Personally acknowledge the achievements of learners
 - Create a climate in class where the individual learner can develop to full potential.
- Successful learners will be happy and motivated in class.

By keeping these guidelines for effective motivation in mind when planning teaching activities, like group work, educators will be able to develop an inclusive approach in class, address the individual needs of their learners and ensure that all learners feel accepted and valued in class. This acceptance will boost the self-esteem of learners with a positive effect on their social interaction in school as well as in the community.

3.4.2.4 COMMUNICATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Calitz et al. (2002: 223) stated that one couldn't acquire good communication skills by reading about it. One needs application, self-reflection and personal growth to become a good communicator.

Communication can be verbal or non-verbal. Communication can be defined as the action by which a person or a group conveys a message, using a specific medium, to a receiver or a group. The receiver or group then responds to this message, giving feedback through a specific medium.

Successful communication happens when the message was understood correctly by the receiver and the feedback given to the sender was acceptable (Kruger & van Schalkwyk 1997:58–60). All interaction in the classroom takes place through communication. It is crucial that the educator:

- Communicate effectively
- Help learners to develop their communication skills
- Ensure a classroom atmosphere where all learners can express their views and feelings
- Ensure that thoughts and ideas of learners are accepted and appreciated in class (Kruger & van Schalkwyk 1997:164).

Prinsloo (2003:171–172) points out that effective communication can be achieved when the educator:

- Earn the trust and credibility of learners, parents and fellow educators
- Has empathy with problems experienced by learners, parents and other educators
- Displays good listening skills
- Communicates in an open and honest manner.

In the classroom effective communication between educator and learners include the sending of clear messages by the educator and the educator receiving clear messages from the learners.

Congelosi (2004:86-87) states that educators will discover how to get learners to listen to them by listening carefully to learners. By listening to learners, observing their body language and actions, as well as reading what they write the educator will get the opportunity to understand what learners feel, think, know, believe, misunderstand and value. The educator will also get insight into what learners needs are and can better decide which learning outcomes and assessment standards should receive more attention, where learners need more support, which attitudes need adjustment via class discussions or activities and what learners are willing or unwilling to do or try.

Schmuck & Schmuck (1997:151) state that certain feelings can lead to learners avoiding communication and closing up. The following feelings can have such a result:

- Being preoccupied with other issues, can result in learners wanting to be left alone
- Fear that they might be perceived as incompetent and therefore holding back on communication
- Simply disliking school
- Peer pressure, as learners perceive that their friends do not think that learners should communicate with educators
- Previous unsatisfactory communication with the educator now causing apprehension about communication.

They recommend that educators should be aware of the thoughts, feelings and expectations of learners which may have a negative impact on classroom communication. The educator should arrange opportunities to discuss such feelings, attitudes and expectations which remain just under the surface in classroom communication to enable learners to improve themselves and benefit from better classroom communication.

Schmuck & Schmuck then continue to list the four relevant levels of classroom communication:

- Spoken-Unspoken Messages – Clear communication needs spoken and unspoken messages to be the same, otherwise learners will be confused by the conflict and unclear communication.
- Surface-Hidden Intentions – This comes to the fore in competitive classrooms where learners will be outspoken about their goals to do well, but will hide their

ambition to do better than others, using negative remarks to air their hidden intentions.

- Work-Emotional Activities – Communication regarding curriculum work in class are always influenced by feelings about the way in which the work is done. If feelings about the work are not addressed and improved over a long period of time, learners may become resistant to learning and develop feelings of apathy to school work.
- Task-Maintenance Functions – Good communication in class can help a group to make progress with tasks and ensure that group members work together in a positive atmosphere.

According to Schmuck & Schmuck (1997:149) an educator can use co-operative learning to raise the level of communication of learners who perform on a lower level than their peers, by giving all learners the opportunity to act as group leader, expert of the group, group convener, recorder from time to time. The educator should set the example in class that all learners' inputs are valued and that all learners' unique talents are valued in every group. The educator should ensure that all learners can contribute on their chosen level to group work. They also recommend that "everyone participates and everyone helps" (Schmuck & Schmuck 1997:149). They further state that the educator should plan social skill training if needed if learners with lower socio status than others in class are not treated equally in groups.

Loock (2003:35) describes three groups of non-verbal communication:

- Paralinguistic communication
This includes signs such as sighing and laughing.
- Kinesics
 - The role of bearing, gestures and facial expression falls under this category. Boredom, superiority, defensiveness, disapproval as well as positive and negative feelings can be displayed by this type of non-verbal communication. Different cultures can interpret different gestures differently and therefore educators should be careful not to analyse all body language. Hand gestures are important in communication and Loock reports that there are more than a hundred different hand gestures, which

can be interpreted differently by different cultures, although some of these gestures have a universally accepted meaning.

- o Frequent eye contact or the total lack thereof can send powerful messages.
- o Listening, as a selective process, is also categorized as body language and can be used to hear, understand, remember audio cues and pay attention to learners.

- Proxemics

According to Loock (2003:25) proxemics deals with the way in which a person handles him- or herself within a specific space (zone distance) to communicate effectively.

This given area is used as an extension of the person within which that person feels safe. Loock (2003:36) further defines this into:

- o Intimate zone – The minimum space each person wants between him or her and others. When others enter this zone, the person feels threatened, cannot listen anymore and the message communicated is lost
- o Personal zone – This zone allows for an arm's length between people is where effective one-to-one communication can take place.
- o Social zone – This refers to the space maintained between the person and others at meetings or interviews where the minimum emotional involvement is needed.
- o Public zone – This comfortable distance refers to the distance between a speaker and the audience.

Schmuck & Schmuck (1997:153) point out the importance of non-verbal communication, also called the silent language in class. Educators use non-verbal communication (nodding, gesturing, eye contact, and change in tone of voice, assuming a certain posture or smiling) in various ways in different situations in class. The learner can easily be unclear about the message of non-verbal communication. Feelings expressed by this kind of silent language can sometimes have various meanings, e.g. blushing can be a sign of pleasure, embarrassment or anger.

They continue to say that the non-verbal communication of influential, high achieving learners are watched closely and may be copied by other learners in class, even though

the influential learner did not intend to set an example by displaying the specific silent language.

On the other hand, Schmuck & Schmuck say that non-verbal communication can facilitate positive relationships in class. This can be achieved by recognizing learners when they approach, by promptly greeting them, making eye contact to indicate that they are recognized. Learners will feel accepted and important. By taking in the whole class, moving head and eyes around, the educator will give learners the assurance that they all are important and that the educator is aware of all of them and what they are doing.

Schmuck & Schmuck (1997:158) continues by explaining six communication skills which will help to enhance communication in class. The following adapted diagram of these communication skills were included by Schmuck & Schmuck (1997:158).

Table 3.3 Communication Skills (Adapted from Schmuck & Schmuck 1997:158)

	Receiving skills	Sending skills
Ideas	Paraphrasing ideas	Making clear statements
Behaviour	Describing others' feelings	Describing own behaviour
Feelings	Checking impressions	Describing feelings

- They say that paraphrasing means that one uses one's own words to rephrase what the other person has said. By doing this, one displays that one cares about the ideas of the other person.
- By describing in words the behaviour of other people it should not be judged, but merely described to call attention to the specific actions.
- When checking impressions the receiver of the message tunes in on the feelings of the sender of the message. It is a tentative action which leaves the channel of communication open for the learner to respond.
- When sending communication it is of the utmost importance that the message and ideas should be given clearly in not more than three or four sentences. If the receiver can successfully paraphrase the message, successful communication has taken place.

- A person should be able to explain own behaviour in a given situation clearly. It helps to inform others of one's own actions and can also be used to display empathy with other people or learners.
- Lastly Schmuck & Schmuck state that describing one's own feelings is a communication skill very seldomly used with the result that it is often misunderstood. The sender of such a message is put in a vulnerable position, talking about own feelings and emotions. In classrooms learners would rather communicate about feelings and emotions in an indirect manner to avoid embarrassment and can then easily be misunderstood.

To summarize it can be said that even though an educator may plan teaching activities in detail and is able to use learning and teaching support material effectively, co-operative learning and other tasks will not be successful without clear verbal and non-verbal communication between the educator and learners. The educator should model communication skills like actively requesting feedback from learners, using statements beginning with "I" when giving feedback about learner behaviour and includes effective communication skills in the planning of skills which should be taught to learners. Although the educator should be aware of own non-verbal communication and take care not to enter the intimate zone of learners as it will have a negative effect on communication, the non-verbal communication of learners from different cultures might have different meanings and the educator should try not to overanalyze each and every gesture or bearing. Finally the educator should at all times ensure that the learners (as receivers) interpret the communication of the educator (as sender) correctly as intended.

3.4.2.5 ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS

According to Donaldson (2001:118-119) it is important that educators have well developed interpersonal skills to enable them to use their own intuition about learners, to use their own feelings, ideas and beliefs. They should be able to rely on the non-verbal cues they pick up to understand others better. Gestures, body language and tone of voice will sometimes give them an idea of what is going on in relationships in class, rather than spoken words.

Donaldson further states that to be able to build successful relationships, educators need to be aware of these issues mentioned above, use their skills and other “intelligences” to build successful interpersonal relationships.

According to Goleman (in Donaldson: 2001:119) to become mature, emotionally intelligent leaders, the educator should:

- “Knowing their own emotions as they come into play in their interactions at work (self-awareness)
- Managing those emotions so they contribute to unified rather than fragmented relationships (appropriate expression)
- Motivating themselves (marshalling emotions in the service of the goal)
- Recognizing emotions in others (empathy)
- Facilitating the expression of emotions so they contribute to strong working relationships (social competence; skill in managing emotions in others and with others) “

Donaldson argues that if the educator as leader in the class can manage these skills, he or she will be able to give honest feedback, consistent at all times, accept diversity and display tolerance in class. Such an educator will be able to create a nurturing atmosphere for teamwork and collaboration in class and school.

Kruger & Van Schalkwyk (1997:90-91) mentions the three types of interpersonal relationships which has an influence on classroom climate, namely:

- Educator/pupil relationship
- Educator/parent relationship
- Pupil/pupil relationship.

They go on to say that interpersonal relationships can determine whether the learner will benefit from teaching and learning in class as it has the potential to create a sense of fulfillment, happiness and well-being for all.

Kruger & Van Schalkwyk continues by saying that these relationships can:

- Be neutral and have no influence on learner development
- Be negative and influence learner development in a negative manner. Negative relationships can be detected by conflict, unfriendliness, lack of sympathy, lovelessness, lack of respect and pride, conflict, jealousy and egotism.
- Be promoting learner development by sound, open and sincere behaviour of the different role players.

Kruger & Van Schalkwyk lists the following as techniques which could develop sound relationships:

- “Addressing the child by his or her name
- Be genuinely interested in the child
- Avoid criticism and judgement
- Make it look easy to correct mistakes
- Show honest and sincere appreciation and recognition
- Smile
- Let the child do the talking
- Let the child feel important
- Avoid conflict and arguments
- Show respect for the child’s opinions
- Admit your own mistakes
- Be sympathetic
- Be interested and enthusiastic”

McEwan (2000:167) says that the educator needs to be able to build working relationships with families, understand that a number of issues can affect families and their perception of their children’s life at school, communicate effectively with parents and also be able to develop strategies to reach out and include the diverse families represented in class.

McEwan (2000:186-187) further argues that learners do not exist in a vacuum; they are representatives of their families and spend most of their days with these families.

According to Donaldson (2001:61) open channels of communication and trusting relationship between parents and educators, and other adults, such as coaches or even

hostel parents, ensures that learners learn best. Mostly educators and parents understand this and it is seen as the ideal situation in most homes and schools.

3.4.3 TASK DIMENSION

Educating and teaching can be seen as the main task of the educator. It forms the task dimension of classroom management (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk 1997:19).

The task dimension of classroom management involves issues like planning, organizing, controlling and didactical skills. Each of these issues will be discussed in more detail.

3.4.3.1 PLANNING

To successfully manage classroom activities, the educator should place a high priority on planning. Planning is normally the starting point of managing any task, activity or project. Planning can thus be seen as an essential part of management and forms the basis for all further management actions. Good classroom planning is a must if the educator wants to be successful at classroom management. To do effective classroom planning in order for learners to achieve learning outcomes in class, the educator needs to think carefully about:

- Policy
- Methods
- Means
- Standards and
- Proper use of time to facilitate teaching (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk 1997:27–31).

Abrami et al. (1995:117) give guidelines for planning co-operative learning activities. Apart from deciding what the groups must accomplish, which resources they should use and how long they should spend on the task, they also give guidelines with connection to planning, explained in more detail in table 3.4.

Table 3.4 The Planning Guideline (As Adapted From Abrami et al. For The Purpose Of This Study)

PLANNING GUIDELINE FOR CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING	
Grade and Learning Programme	
Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards	
Group Task: <i>What must the group achieve?</i>	
Estimated time for the completed activity: <i>How much time should be allowed for the complete activity, including explaining the activity, forming groups, completing the task, reflection within groups and assessment of completed activity?</i>	
Learning and Teaching Support Materials: <i>What will be needed for the activity?</i>	
<p>Grouping</p> <p><i>How many learners in each group?</i></p> <p><i>Which learner characteristics should be considered when assigning learners to each group?</i></p> <p><i>Will groups be heterogeneous or homogeneous?</i></p> <p><i>What technique will be used to group the learners?</i></p> <p><i>How long will learners work in the same group?</i></p>	<p>Positive Interdependence</p> <p><i>How should activity be structured to ensure participation by all learners?</i></p> <p><i>Will group rewards be used to ensure that learners work together?</i></p> <p><i>Who will divide the task, who will assign roles?</i></p> <p><i>Should learners share resources?</i></p> <p><i>How will learners be encouraged to realize the benefits of cooperation?</i></p>
<p>Individual Accountability</p> <p><i>How to avoid free riders and domineering group members?</i></p> <p><i>How to ensure that each learner accepts responsibility for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Own learning and completion of his or her share of the activity?</i> • <i>Helping other members learn and accomplish their share of the task?</i> 	<p>Interpersonal and Cognitive Skills</p> <p><i>How will interpersonal and cognitive skills be selected and developed?</i></p> <p><i>How will learners be made aware of their use of these skills?</i></p> <p><i>Which techniques will be used to help learners develop the selected skills?</i></p> <p><i>Which behaviours are learners expected to engage in during group work?</i></p>
<p>Evaluation and reflection</p> <p><i>What will be evaluated: on interpersonal level as well as academic learning?</i></p> <p><i>Who will evaluate what – self, peer, educator?</i></p> <p><i>How much, if any, of individual evaluation, will be based on group performance?</i></p> <p><i>How can educator monitor and assist groups to achieve the learning outcomes?</i></p> <p><i>How will learners reflect on their interpersonal and academic development?</i></p>	<p>Further extension of the activity</p> <p><i>What additional task will be given to groups who finish their original task early?</i></p>

By using this planning guideline the educator will ensure that co-operative learning is implemented properly in class and that learners will optimally benefit on academic as well as interpersonal level from taking part in such co-operative learning activities. By incorporating this guideline into classroom planning the educator will also ensure that the core values of the Revised National Curriculum Statement becomes part and parcel of everyday activities, as learners will be exposed to opportunities to learn to accept, appreciate and respect each other in inclusive groups. Careful planning of co-operative learning activities will ensure a high level of skills and knowledge for all learners in an environment where all learners can participate on the level at which they are comfortable. Learners will learn to be accountable for their own learning as well as for the progress and learning of others in their groups.

3.4.3.2 TEACHING STRATEGIES

“It is the broad plan of action for teaching and learning activities with a view to achieve one or more learning outcomes. It gives an outline of the approach to be used when facilitating teaching and learning” (Jacobs et al. 2000:210).

A strategy can be:

- Interactive – uses specific examples to explain a rule, law, principle
- Deductive – gives general rule, law or principle and then the example to make it clear.

According to Jacobs et al. (2000:210) a teaching strategy has certain teaching methods and combining these methods will ensure that the strategy is successfully carried out.

Table 3.5 Teaching strategies as defined by Kruger and Van Schalkwyk (1997: 96):

Demonstrative (Presentation)	Interactive (Discussion)	Self-discovering (Self-activities)
Narrating	Teaching/learning	Game
Lecturing	Discussion	Project
Speech	Class discussion	Worksheets/charts
Demonstration	Group work/ co-operative learning	Fieldwork

Lazarus et al. (1999:65) stated that certain strategies can ensure an inclusive approach in class, namely:

- Ensure that diverse needs of learners are sufficiently addressed by the curriculum goals, plans and assessment procedures in class
- Implement the curriculum in a flexible manner to ensure all learners are included in learning activities

Teaching strategies forms part of the didactical skills an educator needs to be able to create successful learning opportunities in class. To summarize, educators should strive to use the teaching strategy most suitable for the learners when dealing with specific learning areas, learning outcomes and assessment standards. The teaching strategies as grouped by Kruger & Van Schalkwyk will clearly give learners the opportunity to practicing different strengths and expose them to the different strengths and skills of their peers.

3.4.3.3 TEACHING METHODS

Teaching methods refer to specific techniques used by educators to make sure learning takes place and the learning outcome is achieved. In a lesson a variety of teaching methods can be used, like play, demonstrate, conversation or investigation.

Educators must ensure that methods, learners and the learning outcomes they want to achieve are well matched. The educator should choose the method which would best suit the learning experience and learners (Jacobs et al. 2000:210–211).

Kruger & van Schalkwyk (1997:97) state that teaching methods are chosen based on:

- Learners
- Educator
- Learning outcomes
- Time available
- Resources available
- Facilities available.

As the instructional leader in class, the educator should strive to deliver a well-balanced academic programme to learners. Planning of activities in class and the choice of teaching methods can help to develop an inclusive approach to the curriculum. Such an inclusive approach will take cognizance of factors which shape the learners in class, such as language ability, gender and socio-economic implications.

3.4.3.4 CLASSROOM ORGANISATION

Through classroom organization it is decided who does what. It includes the responsibility for various actions, how the classroom floor plan is organized and developing relationships in the class. Organizing is a managing task in class which has to do with the educator and learners:

- What needs to be done
- Who does it
- How they work together
- Which resources they use
- When it should be done

Organizing is important because it:

- Spells out relationships of authority
- Creates a framework of position and task allocations
- Ensures that tasks are done in a systematic and orderly manner
- Facilitates and improve guidance, command and control because the educator knows who must do specific tasks
- Allows for sufficient usage of resources
- Promotes effective cooperation between educator and learners
- Assists in optimal utilization of available knowledge, talents, time, energy and resources (Kruger & van Schalkwyk 1997:32-33).

Classroom organization can also include the physical arrangement of furniture in the class. Schmuck & Schmuck (1997:153-155) state that the physical arrangement of a classroom impacts on effective communication. The seating arrangement and proximity of learners to the educator affects the communication in class. Learners who sit more to

the middle facing the front of the class will participate more freely in classroom activities. Learners who are seated to the side or the back may feel that they are not important to the class and a marked reduction in their classroom communication can be observed. They deduced from research done by Leavitt that seating arranged in a circle is most effective for groups to work in as most learners will take part in communication, communication paths will remain open and most members will have to make a contribution, will develop feelings of involvement as well as satisfaction.

Jones & Jones (2001:20) reported on research done in 28 third grade classes in 1980 on classroom organization. They found that smooth functioning classrooms where high levels of organization were present resulted in clear instruction, in desirable classroom behaviour and in the carefully monitoring of learners' performance. These effective educators could reteach behaviour if learners could not master the expected behaviour and learners knew that poor behaviour would have consequences which educators applied consistently.

From the above it is evident that classroom organization plays an important role in ensuring effective teaching and learning takes place in class. It also impacts on the behaviour of learners which in turn influences classroom relationships between learner and learner and educator and learner. A well-organized classroom therefore creates a healthy environment in which all learners can flourish in a nurturing environment. Learners will benefit from being in a well-organized classroom as they will be able to achieve their education goals and develop good self-esteem in an environment where good interpersonal relationships can flourish.

3.4.3.5 MONITORING AND CONTROL

Monitoring and control in the classroom includes aspects such as monitoring, assessment, assessment feedback and reflection.

3.4.3.5.1 MONITORING

Moyles (1992:156) defines monitoring as the action by which the educator's awareness of what is actually happening in the day-to-day organization and management of the classroom is heightened and allows the educator to consider the improvement of:

- Practice
- Understanding of practice by practitioners
- The situation in which practice takes place.

By monitoring the learning environment in the classroom the educator can establish what works well and which areas need slight adjustments in order to be effective.

3.4.3.5.2 ASSESSMENT

Van der Horst & McDonald (1999:170) defines assessment as:

“A strategy for measuring knowledge, behaviour or performance, values or attitudes. It is a data-gathering strategy. The measurement you gain from assessment helps you to evaluate.”

“Assessment consists of a task or series of tasks set in order to obtain information about a learner’s competence...” according to Jacobs et al. (2000:125).

It also gives the educator visible evidence on which decisions are made.

Jacobs et al. (2000:31) further points out that assessment should always center entirely upon learning outcomes, because learning outcomes describe the goals that learners are supposed to achieve.

Authentic assessment tasks help learners to make sense of what they learn in school by using it in the world they live in. It is often done through projects or group work (Martin-Kniep 2000:26).

Jones & Jones (2001:193-194) point out that learners need to understand how to assess their own participation in class to prevent them from becoming disillusioned and dropping out if they perceive themselves as failures. They recommend that the educator should discuss with learners what a successful learner looks like and sounds like. Once learners have done this activity in the beginning of the year they can always assess their own behaviour against this “checklist” to see whether they are doing their best.

Table 3.6 Indicators of a successful learner as explained by Jones & Jones (2001:193-194).

Looks like	Sounds like
Eyes focused on speaker Concentrates on their work Is well organized Cooperates with others Follows classroom rules and procedures Sets goals Stays calm when having a problem Uses time wisely Learns from mistakes Shares materials Does not give up	Gives encouragement Uses appropriate voice level Asks questions Asks for help when needed Shares their ideas with others Comments are on-task Is courteous to others Uses problem solving
A successful learner is someone who works hard, cooperates with others, takes risks, sets goals, makes a good effort and asks for help if they need it, doesn't give up and learns from his or her own mistakes.	

These indicators can easily be used in co-operative learning activities as well to manage learner behaviour. When learners start to assess their own contribution in class according to these indicators of success, they will no longer be so concerned about being the best, one of the best, or achieving the top mark in a test or assignment. They will begin to understand that relationships in class play an equally important part of being a successful individual. Paying attention to these assessment measures for success in class will help learners to become caring, respectful and tolerant individuals who will be active participants in their democratic communities as adults.

3.4.3.5.3 ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK

Assessment results can help the educator to plan the next step in teaching and learning. The educator who gives feedback ensures that assessment is effective if:

- Feedback is given within 3 to 4 days after assessment
- Correct and incorrect responses should be explained.

By giving feedback in this way, assessment will have a positive and constructive influence on learners. Only then will learners know what they have done well and which areas need improvement (Marzano et al. 2001:187).

3.4.3.6 REFLECTION

Reflection can be defined as a mindset, a process, a set of tools or methods. Assessment data and subjective perception is used to reflect. To be able to make real improvement in class organization, teaching and learning, an educator should reflect regularly (Conzemius & O'Neill 2001:ix).

Reflection is also known as self-evaluation. Calitz et al. (2002:45–46) states that when reflecting, one revises one's own assumptions, becomes a critic of one's own actions. By reflecting the educator does not have to take a best guess or make use of an informal hunch about what is best or not (Conzemius & O'Neill 2001:14).

Educators can reflect in group discussions, in their own journal entries or by using classroom observations (Farrell 2001:23–38). Two kinds of reflection are discussed by Clifford Mayes (2002:699–718), namely biographical and critical reflection. On a biographical level, the educator reflects on own psychological issues, which has an affect on how he or she teaches, and assists with the development of psychological strengths, which will enhance their classroom practice.

Critical reflection will allow the educator to investigate own perceptions regarding race, ethnicity, gender, size, age, sexual preference and socio-economical background. The educator may reflect on possible preference to some groups of learners, possible marginalization of others. The educator may reflect on questions such as: Do the way in which I organize teaching and learning in my class allows all learners fair access to the curriculum?

Through reflection the educator develops and refines:

- Classroom skills
- A variety of teaching models
- Personal aspects of own teaching.

This will help to develop a teaching strategy which can support effective teaching and learning in class (Hopkins 2001:90) and ensure learners all will have an equal opportunity to develop their potential to the full in an inclusive, democratic society.

It will ensure classroom conditions where all learners will feel welcome and appreciated, are treated in a fair manner and enhance inclusive classroom practice for all by an educator who knows how to use a variety of teaching styles, use Learning and Teaching Support Material creatively and shares experiences with other professionals to enhance own teaching practice.

In their article *Classroom management as method and manner* Richardson and Fallona (2001:705–728) say that when considering effective classroom management, educators should not just be concerned with the technicalities of how they organize their classrooms and plan their days, but should also consider the manner in which they do so. They should keep in mind that ultimately teaching is a moral task, influenced by the educator's own perceptions and beliefs. What is fair, just and right matters and influences the relationship between educator and learner, impacting on the quality of teaching and learning, organizing and management which takes place in class.

They argue that instead of following a list of technical skills, educators should reflect on whom and how they want to be as educators, how they want to engage with learners and what kind of classroom environment they would like to create.

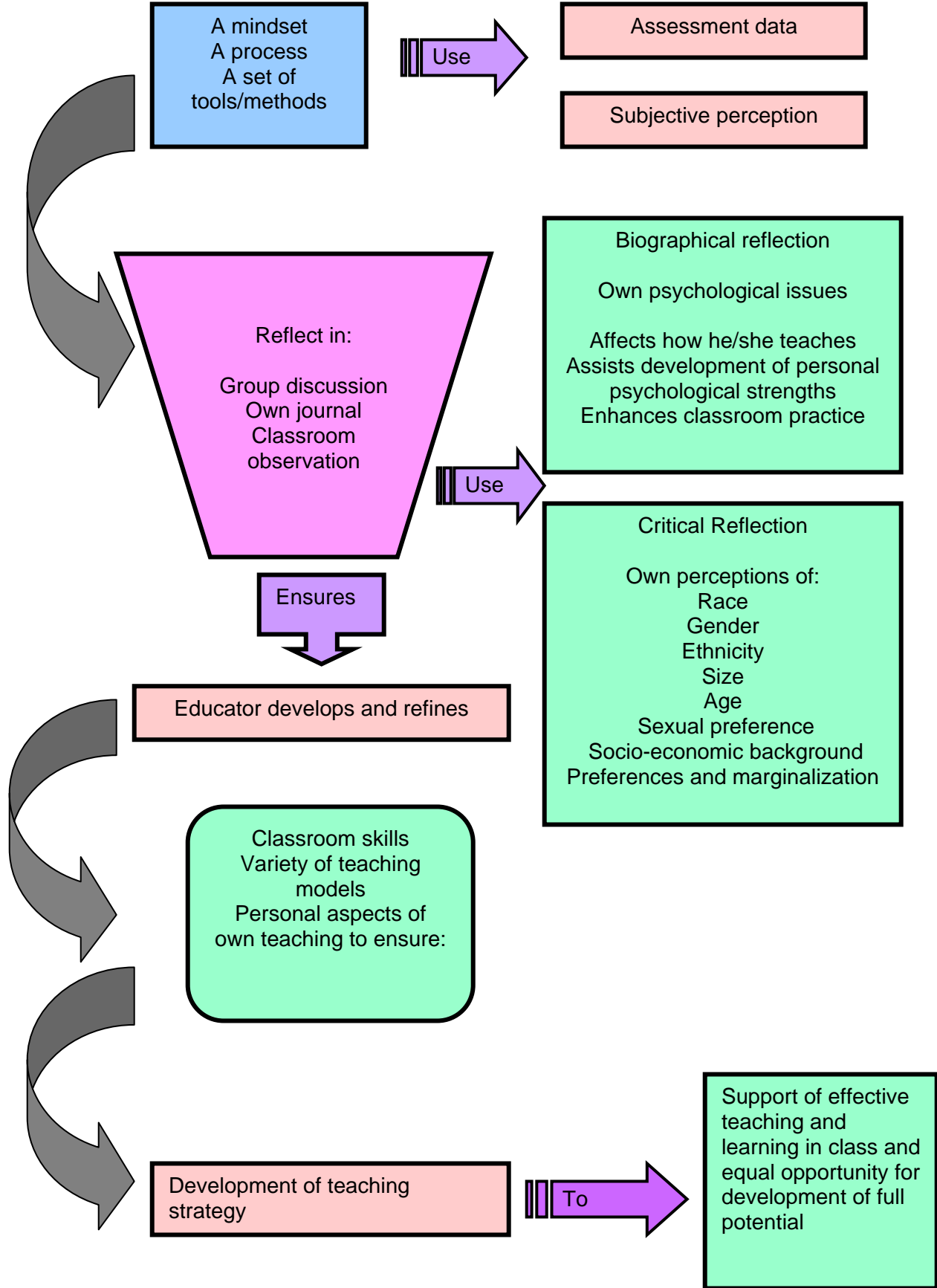
Educator who can successfully reflect on their own pedagogical beliefs and teaching style will be able to:

”Educate children in ways that are ennobling and understanding, that successfully and powerfully impart knowledge and understanding, that promote the learner's capacity for discernment and reflection, that engender the development of character and instruct in virtue, and that promote the welfare of the learner as a person and as a future citizen in a democracy” (Richardson & Fallona 2001:725).

The following diagram is used by the researcher to sum up the process of reflection which contributes towards quality of teaching and learning in productive classrooms.

Diagram 3.4 Reflection

REFLECTION



3.5 EFFECTIVE LEARNING

This is the core business in a classroom. Effective learning depends on the situation in class (Moyles 1992:35). Richard Smith (2002:4) says that effective learning does not only involve the learner in a clinical cycle of active metacognitive processes, namely:

- Planning
- Monitoring and
- Reflecting,

but it also includes taking time to:

- Day-dream
- Find connections between experiences or contents which was read
- Slowly become attuned to what is being taught
- Overcome fears and prejudices and
- Sometimes even to unlearn what was taught before.

As the educator succeeds in managing the human and task dimensions involved in effective classroom management, the situation created in the classroom will allow effective learning to take place. Teaching will no longer be simply a clinical process of steps to follow, tasks to tick off, or completing planned activities to fulfill certain requirements, but learners will begin to understand the broader picture of what is being taught, they will learn to better understand their peers, develop social skills which will serve them well as grown ups when they can participate fully in the socio-economic environment in which they should choose to live. Effective learning, which takes place in such a classroom, will support the learners towards the successful development of the critical and developmental outcomes are the ultimate aims of the Revised National Curriculum Statement.

3.6 IN CONCLUSION

By keeping in mind the influence of a holistic worldview, paying careful attention to creating a culture and climate which will enhance effective teaching and learning in class, the educator needs to be well-prepared, organized, knowledgeable with regard to

teaching strategies and methods to ensure the management of both task and human dimensions which contributes towards the management of a productive classroom.

Co-operative learning, as one of the teaching strategies available to the educator, should be planned in such a way that it ensures effective learning in a productive classroom and helps learners to learn about themselves and others. It must be done in such a manner that the co-operative learning experience confronts learners with the reality of interaction in group activities and draws on the feelings and emotions of group members (Van der Westhuizen et al. 2000:201).

Using properly planned co-operative learning can foster interaction between learners, help to better language abilities and ensure the development of sound social skills. As attention is given to social justice, human rights and inclusion of all learners in all well-planned group work activities the learners will get the opportunity to learn to respect individuals, treat each other with dignity, respond to the diverse needs of their classmates and become fully participative members of their society.

Using properly planned co-operative learning activities in classrooms can help to promote co-operation, critical thinking and the development of social skills. In order for learners to benefit optimally from co-operative learning the educator needs to be well prepared, organized and know how to create a culture of teaching and learning in class.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

When undertaking any research, the researcher should have a clear idea of what it is that must be researched and how to do it. This chapter will deal with how the research was done and the rationale behind the specific choices for this particular study will be explained. The research design and methodology which were applied will be explained, the demarcation of the research site, the ethical issues considered, how validity was protected and how the data was collected, analyzed and reported will all be included in this chapter.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Nachmias & Nachmias (1976:29) describe a research design as a plan which guides the researcher to collect, analyze and interpret observations. It gives direction and boundaries to research activities and focuses on a specific phenomenon. It also alerts the researcher to possible problems regarding the research.

According to McMillan & Schumacher (1993:157) research design describes how the researcher will go about selecting subjects, research sites and data collection procedures to answer the research questions. The design will show which individuals will be studied, and when, where and in which circumstances will they be studied. Selecting the appropriate method for research is important. As every inquiry is unique, each research project will have a different approach, methodology and methods.

In this study the different methods of data collection used to gather relevant information were:

- Literature review
- Qualitative research

4.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Bless & Higson-Smith (1995:22) define literature review as “...a process of reading some background information that has been published and appears to be relevant to the research topic.” In the study of literature, relevant data pertaining to the study problem will be gathered from both primary and secondary sources, critically examined and evaluated and objectively recorded. The research relies on the descriptive method of study in which the research describes the problem as it prevails during the period of research.

For this purpose, the researcher will make a careful selection and study of, books, journal articles, papers read at conferences, departmental circulars and government publications as well as acknowledge the contributions of other researchers to the research problem.

Ary, Jacobs & Rezavich (1990:68) note several important functions of a literature review:

- A knowledge of related literature enables investigators to define the frontiers of their fields.
- A thorough review of related theory and research enables researchers to put their questions in perspective.
- Reviewing related literature helps researchers to limit their questions and to clarify and define the concepts of the study.
- A critical review of literature often leads to insight into reasons for contradictory results in an area.
- Through studying related research, investigators learn which methodologies have proven useful and which seem less promising.
- A thorough search through related research avoids unintentional replication of previous studies.
- The study of related literature places researchers in a better position to interpret the significance of their own results.

All these functions helped the researcher to realise the aims of this research project, to reach the anticipated objectives and to get answers to most of the critical questions.

4.4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is concerned with abstract characteristics of events, the meaning given to events by participants. The research takes place in the normal context in which the participants find themselves every day, as context is very important in qualitative research.

Qualitative research focuses on the *lived experiences*, all its aspects. It attempts to:

- Describe qualities of events
- Interpret meanings and relationships among these events
- Measure importance of events in the larger picture of educational concern
- Ground these appraisals on explicit social values and human interests (Kincheloe 2003:189-190).

Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:19-20) explain that qualitative research usually has as a result the generation of knowledge. It is mostly reported in words in a narrative format. It has an emergent, flexible design and follows an intuitive pattern.

This research was done in a qualitative style and took place in the classroom, as the researcher tried to get an overall understanding of what co-operative learning is, the management of a productive classroom, the implementation of co-operative learning in the classroom and how it was perceived by Grade 3 learners.

4.5 PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

This qualitative research was conducted as a phenomenological study. Phenomenology is both a method and a philosophy. It always has to do with a limited sample, involvement over a period of time and the development of relationships of meaning (Creswell 2003:15). This phenomenological research investigated a specific situation, namely Co-operative Learning, as experienced by the educator and learners in one Grade 3 classroom.

Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:19) state that multiple realities exist. By doing this research as a phenomenological study the construction of the specific reality for these Grade 3 learners and their educator were recognized. By observing them in their own environment and interacting with them in their own language this study sought to investigate effective management of productive classroom, how the educator perceived the effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning, how it was implemented for teaching and learning in Grade 3, which problems were encountered, and how the learners perceived it.

4.6 COMPARISON – CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING IN DUTCH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Veenman, Kenter & Post (2000:281-302) did a study examining how the educators used and evaluated co-operative learning; what the quality of group co-operation was and what the learners' reactions to co-operative learning were in Dutch primary schools where it was implemented. They used a questionnaire to determine the use, perceived effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning in class; how the 69 educators incorporated and adapted it and what problems they encountered with co-operative learning. Their educator sample came from seven primary schools in suburban areas with learners from a diverse cultural background. Five of the seven schools were referred to them by the school advisory services as schools that applied co-operative learning methods. The two other schools were selected from a mailing list of schools ordering co-operative learning material, attempting to implement co-operative learning in class.

They also gave a questionnaire to 363 Grade 4 – Grade 8 learners (46 % boys and 54 % girls) to determine the learners' reactions; what they perceived as the positive as well as the negative aspects of co-operative learning. This learner sample was taken from 5 of the schools that formed part of the educator sample. They also observed interaction of one group during co-operative learning activities in class, focusing on cognitive and social stimulation in the group. Time-on-task levels were also rated for all learners in the co-operative learning classroom. This was done by stopping with observation every ten minutes and recording how many learners were actually involved in academic activities at the time.

Educators participating in the research reported that co-operative learning had a positive influence on social skills, time-on-task behaviour and learner self-esteem, but about 50 % of the educator felt that they experienced difficulties with monitoring the groups. The learners reported that they worked effectively in co-operative learning groups and they were positive towards co-operative learning. The observation of groups showed learners did spend a high percentage of time on task, but that it did not improve effective learning and co-operation. Educators did not spend enough time on teaching group work skills and there was a lack of all the features needed for co-operative learning to be effective, according to literature.

This study incorporated the issues the Dutch study wanted to address, namely: the effectiveness of co-operative learning; the prevalence of co-operative learning; the way it was incorporated and adapted in the classroom; problems encountered with implementation of co-operative learning and how the learners perceived co-operative learning in class.

Some of the questions used in the learner interview of this study were similar to those used in the learner questionnaire by the Dutch. Similarly the educator interview incorporated questions similar to those used in the Dutch study in the educator questionnaire.

After analysis and interpretation of the data of this study, it was compared with the outcome of the Dutch study.

4.7 DEMARCATION

Goodwin & Goodwin (1996: 117) indicate three main issues in site selection:

- Appropriateness – can rich and relevant data be obtained at the site?
- Access – The researcher's relationship with the site of research and all participants in the research has an effect on the results obtained.
- Ethics – The following questions should be kept in mind when making the choice of site:
 - Should anyone research the specific site?
 - Should this specific researcher do the research?

Access and ethical behaviour will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

4.7.1 APPROPRIATENESS:

The parallel medium school chosen had 1091 learners, 557 boys and 534 girls enrolled. Although the school was situated in a better socio-economic environment, learners came from a mixture of socio-economic backgrounds. A number of learners came from rural multi-grade schools to attend this school, as they came to stay with their parents who found employment as house workers or gardeners in the area. The school had 4 Afrikaans LOLT and 2 English LOLT grade 3 classes, 170 learners in total, of which 74 were boys and 96 girls.

This site described above supported the aim of this study which was to determine the impact of the way in which co-operative learning was managed in an productive classroom, as well as its objectives to determine how the educator perceived the effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning, the way it was incorporated and adapted in the classroom and problems encountered during implementation. Observing and interviewing the learners selected to participate in the study assisted the researcher to determine what the reactions of Grade 3 learners were to working in co-operative learning groups.

Rich data was obtained from this specific site, as the researcher and the participants shared the same home language and the intricacies of language and non-verbal behaviour was well understood by the researcher.

4.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection indicates when and how data will be gathered for the study. Eichelberger (1989:118) stated that the quality of data collected is determined by:

- Proper selection of sources for the information needed
- Clarification of procedures used to get the information
- The methods which will be used to transform the data to study the problem.

The educator, who participated in the study, was identified by the school principal after the aims of the study was discussed with him.

Eichelberger (1989:116) describes a sample as those people whom the researcher gets data from, and base findings and conclusions on. Cohen and Manion (1995:87) state that when each learner in the class has an equal chance of being selected, it is called random selection.

However, Wragg (2002:146) argues that such a random sample might possibly leave the researcher with an uneven number of male and female respondents. They recommend that a stratified random sample might work better as it allows the researcher to specify before the time how many males and females would be required.

This study was done by using one Grade 3 class as a similar group of a population of Grade 3 learners, and randomly selecting every second learner on the alphabetical class list as part of the sample for interviews. Should the random selection indicate an imbalance between male and female respondents, an adjustment will be made to ensure a gender equal spread for the research. All the learners in the Grade 3 class formed part of the sample for observation of co-operative learning activities before the interviews.

Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:111) state that the data collection process in qualitative research is a direct and personal process. In this study the researcher personally did the observations and in-depth interviews.

According to Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:119) most authors feel that there are three principle sources of data which the qualitative researcher can use:

- Participant observation and the field notes the observer makes
- Interviews
- Documents, which can include personal or official documents, photographs or even official statistics.

As mentioned before in chapter one, this research used the personal reflection notes of the educator, official documents like lesson plans, the lists of various groups, written

responses by learners and lay out of the classroom to verify information and add to the richness of data obtained during observations in class and taped, transcribed interviews.

A tape recorder was used to collect narrative data during interviews which was transcribed in the form of notes. These notes were rich, descriptive, in-depth and nothing was left out as unimportant or treated as trivial and mundane. The researcher took down direct quotations to portray the participants' perspectives in all its substance and nuances.

4.9 METHODOLOGY:

4.9.1 OBSERVATION

Eichelberger (1989:130–131) describes observation as “the initial exploring of a setting.” He states that it adds supplementary information to a study.

4.9.1.1 TYPES OF OBSERVATION

According to Niewenhuis (2006:17-18) four types of observation are used in qualitative research, namely complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer and complete participant.

- **Complete observer:** In this case a non-participant observer will look from a distance at the situation to get what is called an ‘outsider’ perspective. This least obtrusive form of observation is limited as the researcher does not become immersed in the situation and does not really understand what is observed.
- **Observer as participant:** In this situation the researcher gets into the situation, but stay focused on his or her role as observer of the situation. Although the researcher may look for patterns of behaviour in a particular school or classroom to understand the assumptions, values and beliefs of the participants and to make sense of the social dynamics, the researcher remains uninvolved and does not influence the dynamics of the setting.

- **Participant observer:** This kind of observation can be found in action research projects; the researcher becoming part of the research process and working with the participants in the situation to design and develop intervention strategies. The researcher becomes a participant in the situation being observe, and may even intervene with the dynamics of the situation and may even try to alter the situation. The researcher thus immerses him/herself in a chosen setting, to gain an insider perspective (called emic perspective) of that setting.
- **Complete participant:** As complete participant the researcher gets completely immersed in the setting; those being observed do not know that they are the subjects of the observation. This may happen in some ethnographic studies, but this type of observation is seldom used as it raises serious ethical concerns when those being observed do not know about it and has not given their permission (Nieuwenhuis 2006).

By firstly doing observation in class, the learners and educator were seen in the context of the study. The researcher ensured that everything happened as planned, possible problems were identified which could have an affect on the outcomes of the study. The researcher did the observation as an observer participant, being in the situation, but not influencing it at all. As observer participant the researcher tried to observe the values, beliefs and responses of the participants in class. In the process of trying to make sense of what was seen, the researcher always stayed uninvolved, not influencing the dynamics of the situation at all.

Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:131–133) explain that observation is an appropriate and useful form of data collection when dealing with early childhood research. Being an observer as participant allows the researcher to get to grips with the constructed realities of participants by observing their actions, feelings, beliefs and thoughts. To be able to do this, the researcher needs to be a good listener and know the language of the participants. In this study there will be some interaction, but the observer will still be an outsider.

Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:131-133) further explain that field notes and observation are initially general, descriptive broad and become more focused, narrow and deep over time as the researcher makes progress.

During this study the interviewer spent some time in the class, observing teaching and learning in class, especially co-operative learning groups. This also helped the learners to get used to the interviewer. This ensured better contact and openness when the interviews were done. Observation of the educator took place throughout the process. When observing the co-operative learning activities, all learners in the class were included in the observation.

Field notes included the classroom floor plan and learner placement as observed while learners were involved in various group activities. The dimensions which could be observed in a classroom, as described by Frank (1999:42–43) have been listed in table 4.1. When doing classroom observation, this table was used to add to the understanding of the classroom atmosphere.

Table 4.1 Classroom Dimensions

DIMENSION	EVIDENCE
Softness/hardness	Soft – cosy furniture, sandboxes, messy art materials
Open/closed	Open - Learner centred
Simple/complex	Variety & complexity in tasks & tools available to learners
Intrusion/seclusion	Kind of groupings – to what extent learners could work alone
High/low mobility	Do learners move around, go outside for learning

The observation of the researcher in the classroom included issues such as:

- Norms and values underscoring acceptance of individuality and collectivity
- The appreciation of individuality and building the self-esteem of learners (motivation skills of the educator concerned)
- The extent to which the educator succeeded in developing a cohesiveness and team spirit in class
- The inclusion of all learners and development of a shared responsibility for all.

The leadership and management style of the educator was observed, whether classroom rules promoted feelings of security among the learners and whether it allowed for openness in which every individual could flourish and develop.

The researcher looked for flexible and open communication that allowed everybody to come forward with his/her own ideas and concerns. The researcher looked for signs of an educator who encouraged two-way communication.

Learner participation in the decision-making process in the classroom was also be observed. The researcher looked for instances of educator encouragement of individual learner decision-making as well as decision-making in different groups.

The way in which the classroom activities were organized and in which tasks were delegated to learners was observed. The researcher looked at the way in which the different classroom activities were synchronized to ensure co-operation between learners, to develop team spirit and to engender feelings of responsibility among group members.

The educator's control in the classroom was observed. The researcher observed whether the two important reasons for control, namely to bring about the correct execution of tasks in the classroom; and to develop every individual to his or her full potential was visible in the class. Furthermore the researcher observed for signs of the principles of recognition and appreciation with corrective action which would stimulate learner development.

The researcher also observed whether the educator succeeded in striking a balance between a person-orientated and task-orientated style; whether the educator was able to adopt her management style to the situation; whether the educator was trusted by the learners and the parents; was available if needed; and acted consistently. These issues all gave an indication of how the educator applied her leadership skills in class.

Further observation in class focused on whether the educator showed appreciation for individuality; encouraged shared responsibility; gave recognition and appreciation; took into account the needs of individual learners; created opportunities for individual learners to fulfill their own needs, and by doing so supported them to realize their own potential. These issues mentioned shed light on the educator's ability to motivate learners in class to reach their own potential.

Observation of co-operative learning group activities was be done by using an adaptation of issues as proposed by Wragg (1994:89, 121). The observation table is enclosed as Appendix I. Interaction between educator and learners as well as between learners in specific groups was observed. The researcher will paid close attention to how learners were prepared for co-operative learning activities by the educator, whether roles were given to individual group members, how they fulfilled these roles, whether learners asked help from peers, assisted peers in their group to ensure that all of them understood the task and could do the work.

The application of social skills was observed, whether the educator pointed out certain skills to learners, looking at what extent learners could apply these skills in the co-operative learning situation when needed. The extent to which the educator got involved in co-operative learning activities, whether the groups got started and could complete their tasks was also observed. The observer tried to determine whether learners stayed on task, the discipline of the various groups was observed as well as the level of noise in the classroom, by making an overall check of the class as a whole every 10 minutes when learners were involved in co-operative learning activities.

4.9.2 INTERVIEWS

Wragg (2002:148-150) names three types of interviews:

- Structured – Respondents mostly give yes or no answers to carefully structured questions
- Semi-structured – Carefully constructed questions in this case give the respondents the opportunity to respond with somewhat longer answers
- Unstructured – Requires in-depth answers from respondents which needs a lot of interpretation from the researcher.

Interviews can include different types of questions about experience, behaviour, opinion, and feelings. To have a successful interview, it is important:

- To establish a good relationship with participants,
- To get involved in natural conversations with participants which will result in answering the researcher's key questions,

- To probe the participants for answers without pushing them or making them uncomfortable,
- To be able to recognize unexpected leads which come to the fore during the interviews and
- To be able to follow it and to listen well (Goodwin & Goodwin 1996:134–136).

By interviewing the educator and learners in this study, the researcher began to collect narrative data in the form of rich, descriptive notes transcribed from tapes that were used during the interviews to give the researcher the opportunity to focus on the participants responses and non-verbal behaviour. Misunderstandings were clarified immediately and the interviewer could help the respondent to clarify thinking. The interviewer also had the opportunity to observe evasiveness, non-co-operation, stress or fear.

4.9.2.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

According to Wragg (2002:149) the semi-structured interview is mostly used in the education environment because it gives the respondents the opportunity to respond more freely but it can be contained and endless chatter can be stopped by the researcher. The semi-structured interview has a carefully planned interview schedule with initial questions which can be followed by probes if needed.

This researcher made use of semi-structured interviews with carefully planned questions for the educator as well as learners.

4.9.2.2 EDUCATOR INTERVIEW

The educator was interviewed first. The interview took place after school in the afternoon, in the classroom. A maximum of 1 hour and 30 minutes was spent on the interview.

The semi-structured, but focused educator interview focused on how she managed her classroom, how she perceived the effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning, how it was incorporated and adapted in her Grade 3 classroom and what problems she encountered with the implementation.

The educator was requested to keep a diary of her reflection while planning her teaching and grouping the learners. As reflecting is an important and integral part of planning teaching strategies, it shed new light on how the educator managed a productive classroom.

4.9.2.3 LEARNER INTERVIEWS

Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:136) argue that it may be better to interview young children in pairs or groups, as they will feel more relaxed when their peers are with them. It will lead to rich discussions as they interact with each other. In this way the researcher finds out in an indirect way which questions to ask.

In this study interviews were held with the Grade 3 learners who formed part of the sample. It was in the form of group interviews; as such young learners were more willing to share information in a group format. These groups were not larger than three to four learners at a time.

The learners were questioned about their reactions to working in co-operative groups. The interviewer paid close attention to body language during these interviews, not just to what was being said. These semi-structured interviews allowed for a flexible situation in which learners felt free to offer information about their experiences. These interviews were also focused, as the interviewer will introduce further cues depending on the responses of the learners or educator. About 45 minutes were used per group of learners to ensure that each interviewee received equal opportunity and similar treatment to air views and feelings on this topic. Learners were interviewed at school in the staff room, after 10:00 each day, during the third term of the year.

Learners were also be given two open-ended questions on the following topics, once the interviews were conducted on the following topics:

- How they feel about group work? (*Hoe voel jy oor groepwerk?*)
- Who would they like to be in a group with and why? (*Met wie wil jy graag in 'n groep wees en hoekom?*)

They were requested to respond to these questions in written format as some learners might open up more when writing about the experience than when they talk about it. Certain parts of these written assignments were scanned into Chapter 5.

4.9.3 DOCUMENTS

Gathering information from documents is the third way of data collection in qualitative research. This non-interactive approach supplements the interviews and observations done by the researcher (Goodwin & Goodwin 1996:136-137).

The documents which were used with the view to achieve the research aim and objectives of this study were:

- Lesson plans
- Group lists

The educator's lesson plans for all learning programmes for the duration of the on-site research were collected and studied to add more richness to the gathered data. Lists indicating how learners were placed in a variety of groups, e.g. base groups, reading and numeracy groups as well as co-operative learning groups were also gathered to inform the research.

The educator's actual planning of the groups were used together with her reflection diary and the transcribed notes of her interview to establish how she ensured the management of a productive classroom and implementation of co-operative learning in a Grade 3 classroom. It gave insight on implementation of co-operative learning and the problems encountered with co-operative learning activities in Grade 3.

4.9.4 CLASSROOM CONTEXT

Creswell (2003:188–189) argues that data collection which goes beyond the usual interview and observation can capture information that can be very useful and can be missed during the inter-active data collection process. It can add to the rich data collected and help to stretch the imagination.

The physical lay out of the classroom and learner placement during various group activities were included in the data of this study to add to the richness of the experience.

4.10 RESEARCHER'S ROLE

While collecting the data, the researcher must be aware that constant changes can take place because of the effect of:

- The researcher
- The chosen sample
- Methods used
- Problems which may arise
- Collecting the data (Vermeulen 1998:23).

Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:110-112) state that it is the researcher's role to make no assumptions of how the participants in the research will behave, what they believe and how they perceive their reality. The researcher must try to observe, reflect upon and come to understand the behaviour and statements (external) made by the participants as well as their attitudes and values (internal).

The dimensions of observation, which a researcher needs to capture, explained in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Dimensions of observation

DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION
What was observed	Thick description of what actually happens, no value judgements
Researcher's reflection about what happened	Researcher's thoughts, ideas on the meaning of what was observed

Field-notes must be recorded as accurately as possible; what the researcher sees, hears and experiences must be recorded as if experienced for the first time.

Field notes must be written up as the researcher observes it. It may be recorded with a tape recorder, but the researcher must be quite sure that clarity about the context and participants are captured (Nieuwenhuis 2006:18).

Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:110-112) continue saying that by observing, reflecting and trying to understand the researcher gets an emic perspective, which is a central feature of ethnologic research as it stresses the importance of multiple realities in a phenomenological approach to research the behaviour of a specific group or social event. The term emic refers to data obtained with regard to human behaviour, specifically the behaviour that is meaningful to the participant. On the other hand, one gets etic perspective, which refers to perception of behaviour, which is meaningful to the observer. Researchers interested in constructing meaning of local experiences and rules of behaviour will therefore focus on emic perspective on behaviour (Wikipedia 2006).

Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:110-112) further point out that initially the researcher makes decisions regarding what needs to be recorded, how and when it should be recorded and to what extent and depth it should be done. This places the researcher in constant direct contact with those being studied. When analysing the data, the researcher will again be the decision maker who will act as prime filter and interpreter of the data, not forgetting the fact that the experiences and insights gained while collecting the data will also form an important source of data.

It is clear that the researcher plays an important and ongoing role in the research, to such an extent that the researcher is seen as the instrument in a qualitative research.

It was therefore of the utmost importance that the researcher maintained a neutral position despite such close personal contact, in order to understand the phenomenon under scrutiny as it emerged, to grasp its complexities and to report on it in a balanced and emphatic way.

4.11 ACCESS

Access refers not only to gaining physical access to the school and the class, but it also refers to building up a trusting relationship with the learners and educator in the class. The learners especially would want to know whether they would get into trouble for

sharing their thoughts. They would need to know: 'will the teacher be told?' Building up trust and developing such a relationship is crucial when doing qualitative research (Walford 1991:64–65). This happens slowly and takes time. Having established such a trusting relationship will allow easier access to learners and educator.

The researcher had many years of teaching experience in the foundation phase, not only as educator, but also as head of department of the foundation phase. As a result of this she was very familiar with learners of this age and easily built up good rapport with learners and educators of this phase.

4.12 DATA ANALYSIS

Vithal & Jansen (1997:27) see data analysis as the process of making sense of all the collected data. Data analysis in qualitative research is a multi-faceted process and occurs all through the process of data collection and also afterwards.

Although the researcher must first get an emic perspective of the multiple realities of the participants, an etic perspective (external view, social scientific approach) is then needed to fully analyze the data and understand it completely (Goodwin & Goodwin 1996:110).

Data analysis is done in order to make key findings and generate theories regarding the phenomenon (Goodwin & Goodwin 1996:142). When interpreting the data the researcher will follow an inductive process (Goodwin & Goodwin 1996:120).

During the process of data collection the researcher starts doing data analysis to:

- Conceptualize the purpose of the study
- Set boundaries for the study
- Develop critical questions
- Help the researcher find the focus of the study
- Clarify the purpose of the study
- Generate ideas for the next phase of data collection
- Find possible early themes and relationships of the study
- Remember important points which emerge (Goodwin & Goodwin 1996:143)

The most important element of data analysis in qualitative research is coding. Through coding the data collected is broken down and organized into a number of meaningful categories.

Coding categories can be developed in many ways. Through an analysis processes the researcher will then look for patterns or relationships. Once the important issues have been found, the researcher will decide how it should be interpreted to the various audiences of the study. Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:144) mentioned three major types of coding, namely open, axial and selective. They continue to explain that open coding means to break down the data, to carefully examine it, compare it and find similarities and differences in the data.

According to them axial coding happens after open coding has been done. It entails looking for connections among categories to pull data together in a new way. The researcher must focus on causal conditions, contexts, intervening conditions and consequences of the various categories and also find some subcategories. The last step according to Goodwin & Goodwin is selective coding when a core category is selected, relationships between core and other categories are found. Checking must be done to ensure these relationships are valid. These categories must then be refined if needed and developed further. The result of selective coding process is an analytic story line or a theory, which is grounded in the data of the study (Goodwin & Goodwin 1996:144).

4.13 RELIABILITY

Reliability refers to the issue of "...consistency of results when using the process" (Eichelberger 1989:116). Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:138–140) describes two types of reliability in qualitative research:

- External or design reliability
- Internal or data-collection reliability.

They continue to say that when developing the interview and observation instruments and organizing the data, the researcher should ensure that any other researcher would come to the same conclusions when using the same instruments with the same class and educator.

By discussing these instruments with colleagues, the researcher established whether another person would interpret the instruments in the same manner or whether ambiguity existed which would render the instruments unreliable.

The researcher first piloted the interview instrument with 3 learners of the Grade 3 class and adapted the questions where necessary, ensuring that sufficient information was gained, eliminating any questions that could be confusing before continuing with the rest of the sample.

4.14 TRIANGULATION

Triangulation is described by Mouton and Marais (1990:72) as the use of several methods of data collection. By doing this, the reliability of observation is increased.

By using a variety of instruments, like observation, interviews, official documents of groups lesson plans, written responses of learners to open questions, reflection diary and physical context of the class to gain information about the teaching and learning in the classroom, one would expect some triangulation and corroboration between the data collected in this study.

The variety of data gained through transcriptions of interviews, educator reflection, written work by learners, classroom layout and official documents of groups provided checks and balances ensuring that triangulation took place in this research.

4.15 VALIDITY

Creswell (2003:195) defines validity as a strength of qualitative research as it refers to the level of accuracy reached in the research. As such, Goodwin & Goodwin (1996:140) argue that validity is closely related to reliability. Reliability is a precondition for validity. Whatever threatens the reliability of a study, will also be a threat for its validity. Internal validity points to whether the researcher is able to observe and measure what they think they observe and measure. External validity points to what extent the researcher can generalize findings across groups.

The carefully planned leading questions which were used to guide the semi-structured interviews with the educator and learners were discussed with a group of critical friends working as Senior Curriculum Planners with foundation phase experience at WCED. These questions included a variety to cross check responses given. This was done to ensure the interviews measured what the researcher wanted it to measure.

Using the data collected from the interviews, reflection diary, observations, written responses to open questions and classroom layout, cross checking was done to ensure that the collected data from the educator and learners were valid and the truth.

4.16 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THIS STUDY

According to Busher (2002:73) the underlying principles of educational research is:

- Respect for the dignity and privacy of those participants in the research
- The right of the researcher to research carefully and accurately
- Right of society to know.

De Vos (1998:240) explains ethics as a set of moral principles suggested by either an individual or a group, which are then widely accepted. This then becomes a set of rules, which sets expectations for behaviour about the best conduct towards respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students. Ethical guidelines form the standards and the basis upon which the researcher should evaluate own conduct. Ethical principles should be internalised in the personality of the researcher to such an extent that all decision-making becomes ethically guided and part of the researcher's total lifestyle. The researcher will use the following ethical guidelines in this study:

- **Voluntary participation**

Voluntary participation means that people should not be forced to participate in research. They should participate without pressure, voluntarily and without manipulation. (Trochim 2001:24)

The educator was under no obligation to participate in the study if she felt uncomfortable in any way.

- **Informed consent**

Closely related to voluntary participation is the aspect of informed consent.

Trochim (2001: 24) defines informed consent as prospective research participants who are fully informed about the procedures as well as the risks involved in research and must they give their consent before participating. This means that participants in the research should receive all possible or sufficient information about the aim of the investigation as well as the credibility of the research.

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000:51) state that Diener & Crandal (1978) gave the following description of the term informed consent:

“...procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions.”

Four elements are involved in informed consent to ensure that participants have been given full consideration, namely:

- Competence, as the researcher must ensure that participants are mature and responsible enough to make decisions regarding their participation.
- Voluntarism, as participants freely choose whether they want to participate in the research and expose themselves to possible risks.
- Full information, as the researcher must ensure that participants receive as much information about the research process as possible.
- Comprehension, as participants need to understand the nature of the research and the situation they will expose themselves to.

Eichelberger (1989:36–39) feels that the right of the individual who participates in research should at all times be protected. He outlined an ethical procedure, which will be used in this study as follows:

- Procedures will be described to the educator and learners

- Purpose of the study will be shared with them
- They will be told who will be part of the study
- They will be informed how they can possibly benefit from the study
- They will be informed how the confidential records will be kept and what methods will be used to keep it confidential
- All educator and learner questions on the study will be answered as truthfully as possible
- They will be ensured that participation is voluntary
- They will be informed that they may withdraw if they want, at any time.

Creswell (2003:64–67) adds that participants should also be told that they have the right to ask questions about the study.

Permission was asked from the parents of the learners once they have been identified in the random sample. Parents were assured that learners were under no obligation to participate, and that they could end the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable with the questions put to them or with the way the interviews were handled by the researcher. The letter seeking permission from the parents was enclosed as Appendix C.

Before the start of each group interview, learners will be informed that their parents were asked for permission to include them in the interviews, the process will be explained to them, they will be told what will be discussed and that they could ask to leave the interview at any time if it makes them feel uncomfortable. They will also be given the opportunity to ask more questions if they need more clarity about the process or research.

- **Confidentiality and anonymity**

Trochim (2001:24) states that confidentiality and anonymity are the two standards that help to protect the privacy of research participants. The participant confidentiality given to people, gives the participants the peace of mind that identifying information will not be given to others who are not directly involved in the study. Cohen et al. (2000: 61-62) make the following distinction between confidentiality and anonymity:

- o Confidentiality – although the researcher knows who the participants are, their participation will not be made known, they will not be identified to others.
- o Anonymity – the information participants provide to the researcher does not reveal their identity, e.g. questionnaire with no identifying marks like name, address or even age or town.

The name of the learners, educator and school did appear in the study. Learners were only be identified by numbers.

- **Securing data and the right of privacy**

According to Cohen and Manion (1994:365) the right to privacy:

“...extends to all information relating to a person’s physical and mental condition, personal circumstances and social relationships which is not already in the public domain. It gives the individual or collectively the freedom to decide for themselves when and where, in what circumstances and to what extent their personal attitudes, opinions, habits, eccentricities, doubts and fears are to be communicated to or withheld from others.”

Farnham and Pilmlott (1995:48) state that researchers should take intentional precautions to ensure that information does not accidentally become public or fall into the wrong hands.

Information gathered in this research will be stored in a secure place for 5 years and then destroyed to ensure that others do not use it for the wrong reasons. Information obtained during observations and interviews will also not be carelessly discussed, violating respondents’ privacy.

The researcher also made never disrupted the classroom activities and discipline while doing observation.

When writing the report the researcher used unbiased language and did not use labeling in describing participants. The researcher also took care to acknowledge participants and never called them subjects.

The researcher acted in a sensitive manner and took extra care to protect all participants at all times. By keeping to these conditions for ethical behaviour, participants were not misled about the whole process of research.

4.17 LIMITATIONS

Vithal and Jansen (1997:35) point out that limitations noted in a study help others to understand the constraints within which the study was done and gives a clearer perspective of the context of the study.

Doing observation and interviews with young learners can be problematic, as the researcher as an adult can never become a child. There is a distance between adult and young learner on physical, cognitive and social level. The researcher will never truly be able to do complete participant observation of such learners (Goodwin & Goodwin 1996:134).

The fact that the researcher works for the WCED as a curriculum specialist could have intimidated the educator who might not be so upfront and honest about her actual practices as far as management in class and planning of co-operative learning activities are concerned. The researcher ensured that neither the school, nor the individual educator or her learners were identified in the research report to ensure confidentiality. This way the researcher ensured that the participants were open about the utilization of co-operative learning and the management of a productive Grade 3 class.

4.18 REPORTING THE RESULTS

The results from qualitative research are most often given through long narratives. It describes the understandings, which emerged in great detail and which makes it easy for the reader to follow. In this way grounded theory is generated and the research is linked to the work of others (Goodwin & Goodwin 1996:120-149). A good qualitative research report consists of:

- Narrative description
- Data-based field notes
- Actual quotes from participants

- Researcher's interpretations
- Presentations of current or changed theoretical position
- Conclusion.

A few graphs gives further insight into the learner sample. Diagrams are used to give more clarity on the classroom context.

This study provided a large number of specific viewpoints and some direct quotations were used as illustrations to specific feelings on various issues which were fore fronted during the research. Extreme differences of opinion were highlighted in the form of case boxes, where these extreme opposites were showcased.

Chapter 5 deals with the data analysis of this research in order to determine how co-operative learning is managed in a productive classroom and how it is experienced by learners.

CHAPTER 5

EMPIRICAL STUDY – RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to determine the impact of the utilization of co-operative learning in the management of a productive/learning Grade 3 classroom. Using data obtained through observation, taped individual interviews with the educator and group interviews with learners which were transcribed, educator reflection notes, written responses by learners to open questions, official documents e.g. lesson plans and group lists as well as the classroom layout plan, this chapter will deal with the analysis of the collected data of this research.

5.2 DATA COLLECTION

Rob Watling (in Coleman & Briggs 2003:267) described data as follows:

“It is a term with distinctly positivist origins, coming from the Latin and meaning ‘things that are given’. It implies a scientific, objective approach to reality in which there is a fixed (a given) world of known and unknown facts for us to discover.”

As mentioned in the introduction data was collected through observation, interviews, written responses, the classroom layout, official documents and the educator’s reflection notes.

5.3 DATA ANALYSIS

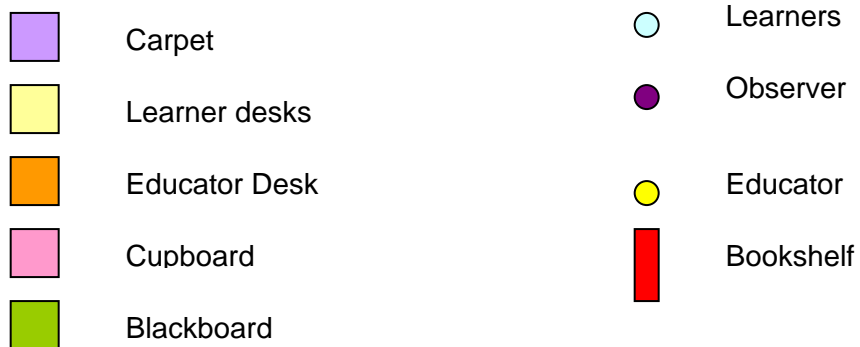
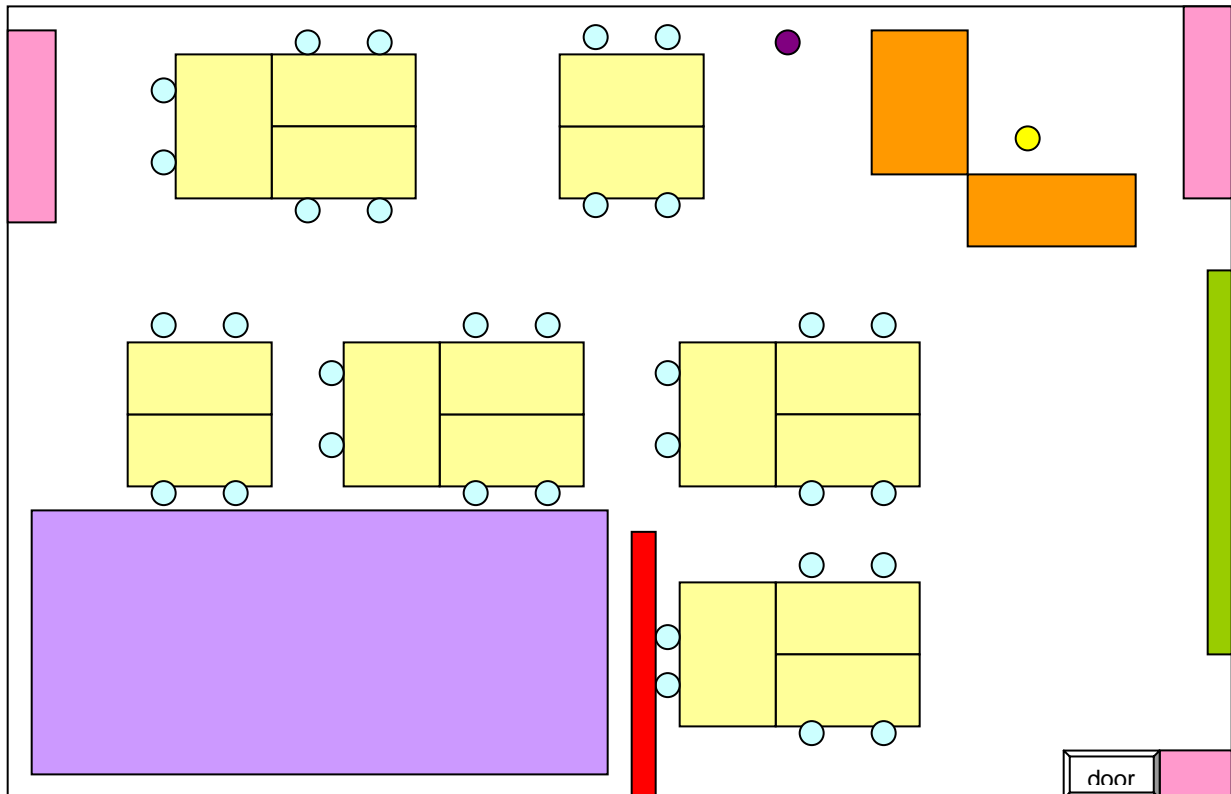
5.3.1 OBSERVATION

Observation included observing all the learners in the class during co-operative learning activities and continuous observation of the educator throughout the process and was done over a period of five days, from 9:00 in the morning until 12:00.

5.3.1.1 CLASSROOM LAYOUT AND CLASSROOM DIMENSIONS

Diagram 5.1 shows the normal classroom layout, used when learners were doing individual work at their desks or when the educator would address all learners in class.

Diagram 5.1 Classroom layout – individual desk placement

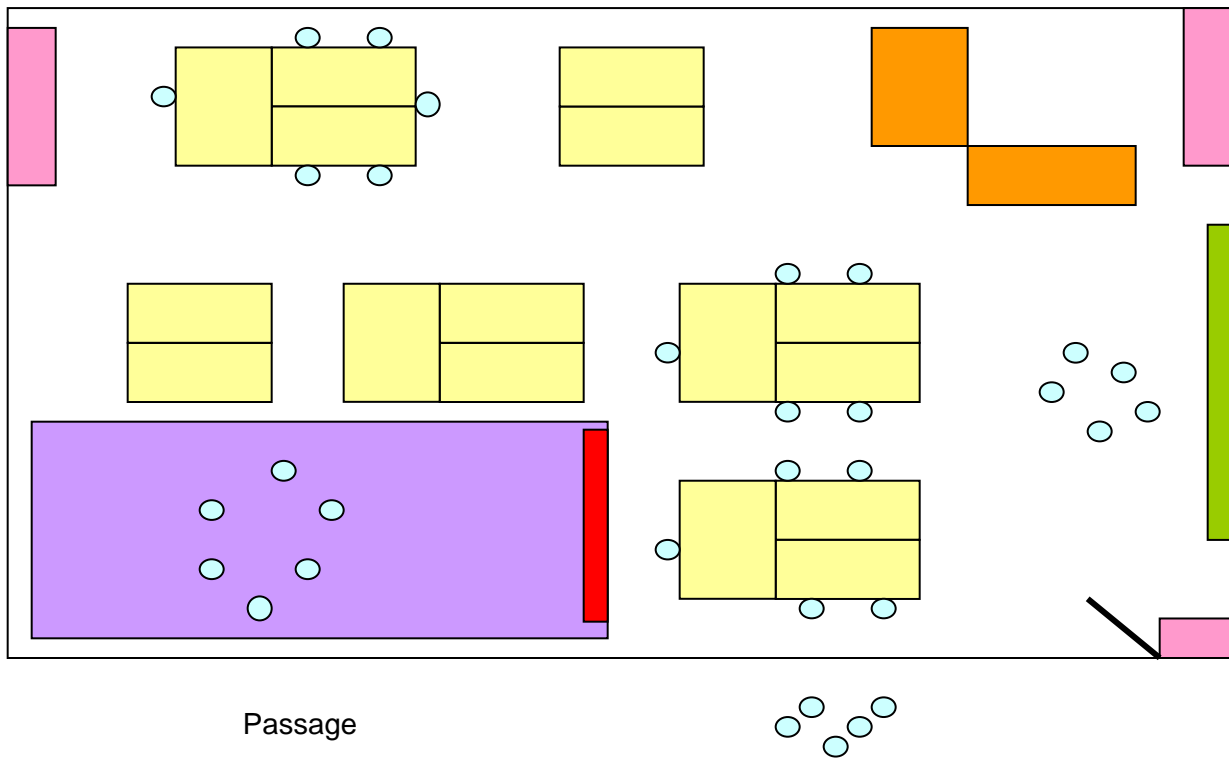


The educator used a variety of groups during each day. At the beginning of the year learners were placed in heterogeneous base groups and would remain in these groups for the year. Base groups were used when learners sat in fixed places doing their pencil and paper tasks and their individual work. Base group learners were also expected to look after each other in general and support each other when feeling sick, or other similar instances. The classroom layout as in Diagram 5.1 would apply to these types of activities.

Ability groups were used for the teaching and learning of mathematics and reading. When the educator used such ability groupings, she would be teaching one of these groups on the carpet, while the other learners would be working on pencil and paper tasks at their desks, seated in their base group places. This resulted in some learners of a particular base group working at their desks and other peers from the same base group being on the carpet, working with the educator on Numeracy or Reading.

When working on co-operative learning activities learners worked in groups which varied in size, depending on the specific activity. Learners were observed working in 8 groups on co-operative learning tasks in Numeracy where each group produced a graph and during an activity for the teaching and learning of Life Skills they worked in six groups. During the Life Skills co-operative learning activity learners needed a lot of space, as each group was constructing a different type of shelter from a variety of paper after reading a passage about the specific type of shelter, who lived in it and where it could be found. The educator made sure that all groups had enough space and one group even worked outside in the passage to make sure that they could work without distracting or disturbing other groups. Diagram 5.2 indicates the placement of the different groups during this Life Skills co-operative learning session.

Diagram 5.2: Layout for Co-operative Learning groups during Life Skills activity



During my classroom observation I tried to determine the influence of the classroom layout and group settings on the following classroom dimensions:

- Softness/hardness
- Open/closed
- Simple/complex
- Intrusion/seclusion
- High/low mobility

Observation revealed neatly organized work areas, desks placed together in 4 groups of 3 each and two groups of two. This allowed for a high level of mobility of learners. They had ample space to move to the carpet area when needed, to move to new groupings when doing co-operative learning activities, to select or fetch necessary resources from shelves or cupboards and to work quietly without interruption or intrusion from peers when seated at desks.

The layout also indicated an open learner-centered approach in the classroom, as learners were seated near to the carpet where they often worked in ability groups during Numeracy and Reading time. They were free to move about in order to select books needed from the shelves, select the necessary numeracy resources needed to complete their sums at their desks or to collect one of the classroom dictionaries when doing written work. The variety of learner support material available ranged from simple books and games to learn certain basic concepts to more advanced reading material and more challenging games. It is indicative of a classroom where provision is not only made for simple task completion but more complex challenges are made available to all learners.

As described previously, learners were grouped in a variety of ways during each school day which allowed for some individual pencil and paper tasks, some ability group activities on the carpet and possibly two or three times a week co-operative learning activities. This resulted in a good balance of seclusion and intrusion between tasks, as learners were sometimes working by themselves and then again working in various kinds of groups.

In general one could say that there was a softness to the classroom, as learner work was displayed, art work could be seen on the walls and a cozy reading area had been organized with pillows in one section of the classroom and colourful curtains framed the window panes.

5.3.1.2 EDUCATOR OBSERVATION

The principal selected the lead educator in Grade 3 and her learners for participation in this study. She had 10 years of foundation phase experience at the time of the study. The educator was observed for the duration of the researcher's presence in class and contact with the educator. Observations made were organized in ten meaningful categories according to which it will be discussed:

- Leadership and management style:

The educator's leadership and management of the class as a whole could be seen in the manner in which the learners knew exactly what was expected from them. There were a

set of reasonable and fair class rules, clearly displayed on the wall which governed the general behaviour in class. It mostly focussed on organising life in the class, e.g.:

- Securing learner safety, preventing tripping and falling in class (*leave your satchel outside in the corridor*);
- Learners learning to keep the class organised (*always pack away the game or book you used before you start with a new activity*) and
- Controlling the movement of learners (*ask permission if you want to leave the class*).

Under the leadership of the educator the learners knew very well what was expected of them during the various sessions of the day, knew where to go when it was time for Numeracy; what was expected when they were doing Literacy activities; what the expected level of behaviour and task completion was and what to do when they needed assistance. They clearly knew where they should place their completed work and what to do once their work was done. The educator switched with ease from an authoritative style (*what groups do on the carpet*) to coercive style (*getting the learners to line up to go to the hall*) to a democratic style (*deciding as class how to approach a project*) or to an affiliated style (*home time, get all organized, packed and off into the right direction with all their books and bags for various afternoon activities and homework*).

- Communication:

The educator always communicated with the learners in a clear voice, not too loud, in full sentences and made sure that they all understood what the instructions were by either repeating or rephrasing it herself or asking one of the learners to repeat what must be done.

Throughout the period of observation it was clear that learners felt comfortable to approach the educator when they needed assistance, not just with academic work, but also with other issues, like problems on the playground or even a friend in another class who needed assistance. It was clear that they trusted the educator and knew that she would be able to assist and support them. The educator took time to listen when learners approached her, but she never just responded with a ready made answer. She guided learners with well directed questions, leading them either to discover the necessary

response to their question themselves or to a resource where they could find the correct response or information. She responded to questions from all learners, but also taught them respect for others, as they were not allowed to interrupt other learners who were talking.

Communication in the class were open and flexible as two-way communication was encouraged during discussions and learners felt free to make suggestions, offer opinions and discuss the positive and negative side of issues. One example of this was when the area where 'good work' was displayed had no more space left over for exhibiting more good work. One of the boys noticed this and recommended that good work also be displayed in the adjacent area, not taking down the current good work, as visitors to the class can then still see all the good work done during the year. The educator asked the rest of the learners what they thought of the suggestion, it was met with great enthusiasm and so a new area for 'good work' was introduced, based on the recommendation of a learner.

The educator's body language also indicated her availability to communicate openly with learners. She would put her hand on a shoulder, bend down to a learner's eye level when speaking to them or draw them close when they approached her with a problem.

- Acceptance and Individuality:

The educator spent a lot of time building the self-esteem of learners. At times she would call the whole class to attention, ask a specific learner to repeat a suggestion made, or show them the work of one of the learners, praise the learner while all the others were looking on, then tell all to continue again with their work. Such experiences supported the improvement of self-esteem of the specific learners. She ensured that each learner received this kind of recognition not just those who really excelled academically. At times she would focus attention on good art work, a learner who packed up and cleaned an area really well, a learner who managed to get through the morning activities without fighting with group friends over seating space on the carpet or one who read much better than the previous day. The individuality of learners were respected, recognized and appreciated. She also would point out to the rest of the class to make them responsive to this and appreciate the individuality of their peers. This caring and accepting atmosphere which the educator managed to create came to the fore again later during learner

interviews. When organizing groups for co-operative learning, the educator ensured that all learners got the opportunity to fulfil the more important roles such as leader, reader, order captain or artist. By doing this she created the opportunity of experiencing these roles for all and the way the learners took up these challenges sometimes surprised all in the class, so much so that at times learners would report back after the specific co-operative learning activities that their leader, artist or reader of the day took them by surprise, they never thought that the specific learner could do it, or do it so well. Such an experience would contribute to the improvement of learner self-esteem. Learners who needed specific support, who battled to reach a specific assessment standard or who were on the brink of doing very well, would get extra attention from the educator to ensure that they reach their potential (*individual attention after analysis of what problem was or how to improve from doing good to doing really well*).

- Inclusion:

At the time of the research, one of the girls had a broken leg, still in a cast and was not mobile at all. The educator ensured that activities planned would include her. Her seat in her base group allowed her to participate in class activities on the carpet, as it was right next to the carpet, still including her in the group. She would ask the learner how she felt; the other learners in class all reacted in a very caring manner, surely following the example set by the educator. The base group where she was seated assisted her in all sorts of activities, like packing her bag in the afternoon, unpacking it in the morning, taking out her lunch and the girls assisted her when she had to leave the room.

Similarly the educator ensured that the very shy learner participate in class discussions. It seemed that in the beginning of the year this learner hardly ever said a word, but was slowly beginning to voice an opinion in co-operative learning activities, on the carpet and occasionally even in the bigger group in class. At the same time the educator also guided one very active and aggressive boy to feel more accepted by his peers, by focussing on the times when he succeeded in not fighting, pushing, shoving or bullying. She did not have to use time out as often for him anymore as in the beginning of the year. It was noticeable that there was a feeling of shared responsibility in this classroom, as all learners wanted the whole class to be able to cope and to be happy. They would easily report to the educator if they noticed that one of them was not feeling too well, was not

coping on the playground, was heart sore and on the other hand they also eagerly reported the successes of the previous day's sport activities, ballet or art class.

On the carpet learners worked in ability groups on Reading and Numeracy activities. The Assessment Standards they were working towards were the same, but the educator took different routes to get the various ability groups to achieve these, acknowledging their strengths and needs along the way. The stronger groups received more challenging tasks, the middle groups received a number of similar activities to practice their skills and explain to each other how they reached the end results, whereas the slower groups were assisted at a slower pace working towards goals they can reach, with much more practical examples, each learner getting the opportunity to explain to the group how the end result was obtained. This group also got the opportunity to start with the written section of the work on the carpet to ensure that they know what was expected and how to complete it before they went back to their desks to do further individual work of the same kind.

- Decision making – Learner participation:

The open communication which existed in the classroom, allowed learners to become part of the decision making process in class. Learners were encouraged to get involved, to voice their opinions and to state reasons for their opinions. Examples of learner participation could be seen in the event of the 'good work' show area which was described before, as well as in discussions on the upcoming entrepreneurial event at school on how to include their peer with the broken leg in the event. Learners acted with enthusiasm when new activities were initiated, they offered suggestions on how it could be enhanced (*brought up the possibility of two stalls in opposite directions, in stead of one, as they figured that their product would be very popular, and one stall might not serve all customers fast enough*). Learners were very co-operative in general and so enthusiastic about their project that when they had to do market research during break for their stall, they never stopped to even have their sandwiches, they continued all through break. After break they also came back with additional items ideas for their stall at entrepreneurial day and voiced some problems they have thought about in the mean time.

- Organized classroom activities:

From diagram 5.1 it is clear that the classroom layout was well planned and each area well used. The educator organised wall space according to the learning programmes and the classroom had an area where learners could read books from their bookshelf without being disturbed by their peers.

The educator's learning programmes and work schedules were all well planned. Lesson plans were developed for a period of two weeks at a time. Planning was done and the educator seemed ready and prepared when she started her teaching day. With her lesson plans at hand she knew who had to do what. Necessary copies were made, books were at hand, examples needed to demonstrate to learners were already in the classroom and materials needed for various activities were collected from the learners well in advance, so that it is ready and available in class by the time it is needed for a specific activity.

Activities for general classroom organization, e.g. handing out books, opening windows, watering the plants, dusting, taking messages or forms to the office were listed on a chart and the responsibility delegated to learners. All learners received the opportunity throughout the year to participate in these tasks.

The variety of group activities planned by the educator, e.g. ability groups, co-operative learning groups or base groups, gave learners the opportunity to interact with a number of learners throughout the day, exposing them to different personalities and different approaches to work. In each group setting it was clear that they have developed a sense of responsibility for their own group, they were routing for each other, as they offered solutions to their peers in groups who struggled with a specific task or would lend some of their pencils, a sharpener or eraser to a peer who needed it. Before break they would also offer to share lunch with the unlucky learner who forgot lunch the specific day.

The educator has collected a number of valuable learning and teaching support material over the years and learners had access to use these when necessary to complete their work. The class layout allowed learners easy access to various areas in the class, like the carpet, the bookshelf or the cupboard with puzzles and numeracy games. Learners were allowed to move around in the class to get to the resource material, but they also knew the class rule which expected them to place it back in its original place after use.

The educator's reflection on her own organization was an ongoing activity, not always written down immediately, but kept in mind when she planned for the next week or session. It also influenced her formation of groups during the course of the term.

- Educator Control of classroom:

During observation it was clear that this educator was in full control of her class, as she executed tasks with the learners throughout the day. The learners mostly reached the Learning Outcomes as planned and she managed to support learners to work according to their potential. She made an effort to plan additional activities for learners who struggled to understand the work and to reach the Assessment Standards for the specific task.

It was clear that with the help of her well-planned learning programmes and work schedules she knew how the various activities follow on each other during the course of the term. Her lesson plans were well constructed, her physical classroom space was well organised and neatly kept and she was available when learners needed her support. She displayed patience to listen carefully when learners talked to her and asked for help. This helped her to develop the necessary corrective activities to stimulate the learners to reach their full potential.

- Balance between human and task dimension:

The educator seemed to easily adapt to the needs of the current situation. While busy organizing some activities, she could easily switch to pay attention to the needs of a learner feeling sick or requesting help with a task. She seemed to be able to keep a healthy balance between her task dimension activities (planning learning activities, making decisions on how to solve problems, organising activities, delegating tasks and controlling activities in the class) and her human dimension activities (displaying leadership in class, motivating learners to do their best, to try something new, communicating in a positive manner with all learners in class and establishing relationships with learners and parents).

She communicated with the parents on a daily basis via the homework book if needed. Parents also had access to her after hours and could phone her at home to discuss issues of concern with her. The warm, friendly atmosphere in the classroom was

indicative of a classroom of an educator who cared equally for the well-being of the learners as well as the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards to be obtained, the learning and teaching support material which had to be used and the fact that eventually the classroom should be neat when all went home at the end of the day.

- Teaching style:

The educator mostly applied a democratic teaching style during the observation period. It was noticeable that learners knew that their participation in classroom activities were welcomed and valued. This was clear from the enthusiasm which the learners displayed when involved in group activities. Learners were helpful in organizing space in the classroom, offered ideas of how activities should be approached or displayed and where it could be displayed. Displaying their work seemed very important to the learners as they were always very proud of the end product. They developed graphs during co-operative learning activities and quickly found a space in class where these could be displayed. The democratic teaching style of the educator also influenced the level of confidence with which the learners approached the researcher, participated and cooperated in the interviews.

- Teaching strategy:

The educator switched with ease between various teaching strategies. The researcher observed her using the following teaching strategies with ease:

- Narrating – what the researcher would be doing and their part in the study
- Demonstrating – weaker group how to work out a specific mathematical problem
- Class discussion – what to do for entrepreneurial day
- co-operative learning activities – poster for business, graph of market research
- Games – mental mathematic activities
- Worksheets and charts – base groups during Numeracy lesson
- Field work – market research for the entrepreneurial stall

5.3.1.3 OBSERVATION OF LEARNERS DURING CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Co-operative learning (CL) activities were not included in each day of each week's planning, only when the type of work the learners did, lend itself to a CL approach. During the observation period two CL activities took place. One co-operative learning activity was planned for 4 groups making graphs about the market research they have done during break for their entrepreneurial day. The other co-operative learning activity was where six groups had to read about a specific kind of shelter people lived in; each group had a different passage to read and then construct their specific type of shelter with a variety of paper during the Life Skills lesson.

As the instructions were given by the educator at the start of the lessons, the researcher observed the whole class and afterwards focused on one group at a time. Observations of the CL activities were made by using an adaptation from Wragg (1994:103-104) and Frank (1999:57), included in Appendix I and will be discussed under eight categories:

- Group formation:

In both instances the educator planned the groups as well as which learners would be together in the various groups during the co-operative learning activities. The groups were set up differently for the two activities, as the decision to have four groups in the one activity and six groups in the other, already resulted in learners being in different groups during the various co-operative learning activities. Learners were not given free choice which group to join. Groups consisted of boys and girls, mixed race and ability which ensured heterogeneous group interaction.

- Purpose of the task:

The purpose of the Numeracy task was to do market research during break to find out what other learners would like to buy at the class stall during entrepreneurial day and afterwards to construct a graph with their findings. Learners were given a choice between hot dogs, hamburgers, chicken burgers, pop corn or candy floss.

The purpose of the Life Skills task was for each group to read the passage together which dealt with a specific type of shelter. Each group received a different passage. Afterwards

the learners had to construct the shelter they have read about, using a variety of paper available in class.

None of the groups were confused about what the tasks were. They understood exactly what they had to do, as the educator first explained the task, and then asked some of the learners to repeat the instructions to make quite sure that they all understood what was expected. It was clear that learners were used to this kind of approach to a task.

- Appropriateness of task:

Both tasks seemed appropriate for the groups as it fitted right in with the development of the lesson, the stage of development of the learners at the time and the competencies they had as they were able to cut, paste, decide as a group how to approach the task, could read the passage given to them, knew how to do a graph as they had done it before as whole class activity and were very enthusiastic to start with the process. As heterogeneous groups they could tackle the task, assist each other and reach the outcome set for the activity. The graph task might have been a little beneath the level of some of the learners with high cognitive abilities, but they took the lead and explained some of the actions to the others which clarified some aspects of making graphs for their group members. Although the vocabulary of the reading passage was not beyond any member of the groups, not all of them could comprehend how to construct the shelter, and some members of the groups had to explain and support those who did not understand it at first.

- Roles:

The educator firstly formed the groups, and then selected a leader per group. The leader then had to fetch a pack of cards with various roles written on it. After that the leader distributed these cards to the group members. This ensured that each group member had a task, such as reader, artist, cutter, paster, order captain and that the work was evenly shared in the group. Roles depended on the kind of task the group had to do and on how many members the group consisted of. Sometimes group members would exchange these roles with other members of the group, if both sides agreed on the swap. In some groups learners could not find anyone to swap with, but they felt strongly that the role on the card did not suit them and that they would rather not want to do it. The leader

in this group then had to convince the learner to fulfill the role. In one group the learner absolutely refused and another group member offered to take on the role, but did not want to exchange his own role for this one, he wanted to keep his own role and was willing to do the additional task as well. Eventually the leader convinced the whole group to exchange tasks until all members were happy with the roles they were given, but this took up quite a lot of the available time for the activity. The discussion was held very quietly, so the educator did not notice that they were still consulting about roles and did not start with their task in time.

- Learner interaction and collaboration:

Learners interacted with each other with a constant chatter, offering suggestions on how the task should be approached, where what should go on the graph and generally giving the leaders a hard time to lead the group, as they were so enthusiastic. The researcher observed only 3 learners totally withdrawn during the Life Skills co-operative learning activity discussion, not participating at all. In two of these groups the other members were so absorbed in their activity that they did not notice the member who was not participating. In one of the groups the leader noticed that one of his members was withdrawn and he stopped the others, told them that they need to get this member's opinion as well. The group immediately drew this member into their discussions and that was the end of the isolation of this learner. Learners gave recognition to others who did part of the co-operative learning activity well.

- Discipline:

The order captains seemed to have the most difficult task as some groups were very loud and the order captains had to get them to work together quietly – not bothering other groups – without calling the educator to assist. They tried their best. One of the groups really distracted and hindered the groups near them as one of the learners in this group was very headstrong, wanted to do the task in his way and did not want to take into account the opinions of any of the other group members. This resulted in a very loud and furious discussion, the educator stepping in to settle the argument by listening to both sides and reminding the learners that they need to find a way to settle their differences. The obstinate learner was adamant that his idea was better, but that voting would give the group the upper hand. The educator assisted him to take a deep breath, explain his idea

again and point out why his idea would be better than theirs. Eventually he managed to convince them to use his approach to the task. Mostly the groups worked harmoniously and enjoyed the activities.

- Differences between boys and girls in co-operative learning activities:

Boys came across very assertive in groups, they offered ideas, insisted on being heard, but seldom took part in cleaning the work area afterwards when learners worked on the Life Skills activity. Girls on the other hand were more eager to keep the peace, to keep the group working harmoniously, agreed to colour in and to decorate as the boys instructed them. Girls also often ended up as the readers of the group or the writer as they were told that they could read well or could write very neatly. Boys easily got distracted from the task and had to be reminded by the leader to stay on task, to stop talking about other issues like the rugby during break or the rugby match that afternoon. Girls on the other hand were very task orientated and wanted to complete it as quickly and correctly as possible.

- Educator interaction with the groups:

At the beginning of the co-operative learning activities, the educator placed herself more or less in the middle of the classroom, observing all groups constantly from there, to see whether all of them commenced with the co-operative learning activities. The educator moved towards groups which could not get started immediately, stayed in their vicinity, not intervening at first, just staying close by to observe their progress, only intervening when she was quite sure that the leader could not get the process started. She only had to intervene once in this process when the one learner was so very adamant to have his way and did not know how to explain his point of view clearly and calmly to his group members. With her assistance he managed to do this and convince his group members to follow his plan. The educator then proceeded to visit all the groups afterwards, stayed with each group for a while, listened to their plans, complemented where necessary, told the whole class how much time was still left over for them to complete the task and made sure that learners kept to the task at hand.

5.3.2 INTERVIEWS:

Interviews were held with the educator and a random sample of the 16 of the 32 learners in the class.

Semi-structured focused interviews were recorded on 4 tapes. The educator interview was recorded on one tape, marked “Educator interview” and 3 more tapes were used for the learner interviews, marked “Group 1 and 2”, “Group 3 and 4”, and the last tape marked “Group 5”. All four tapes were carefully transcribed by replaying it, listening carefully to responses to questions and writing it down. Sections of the taped interviews which did not deal directly with the topic of research, were omitted in the transcribing process. Interview questions were grouped together in categories and the transcribed participant’s responses are discussed beneath.

5.3.2.1 EDUCATOR INTERVIEW

The interview questions have been grouped as follows in two categories captured in table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Educator Interview questions:

Category	Questions
How the educator perceives the effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning, the way it is incorporated and adapted to the classroom and the problems encountered during implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What do you think is the purpose of learners working together in co-operative groups?</i> • <i>What do you think are the benefits of learners working in co-operative groups?</i> • <i>Which factors do you perceive as facilitating or inhibiting adoption of a group work strategy?</i> • <i>How do you ensure the participation of every individual in the group?</i> • <i>How do you select your groups?</i> • <i>Will you share your experience with group work (success & failures) regarding individuals in your class with me?</i>
How educators could manage a productive classroom:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How do you adapt your teaching practices to accommodate diversity in your class?</i> • <i>What is your experience of parent contribution to learner co-operation in the classroom?</i>

Category 1:

How the educator perceives the effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning, the way it is incorporated and adapted to the classroom and the problems encountered during implementation:

- ***What do you think is the purpose of learners working together in co-operative groups?***

For learners to be learning together in a group from a young age, to be working together to complete a task to the best of their abilities and to get to know each other better. It allows all learners to act as leaders of groups. When they get to Grade 3 they have not done much co-operative group work yet, so it is a new beginning for the learners. They get to complete the tasks to the best of the group's ability, which builds their confidence and they learn to appreciate each other's skills. They learn to work together with many learners as the groups vary throughout the year.

- ***What do you think are the benefits of learners working in co-operative groups?***

Several benefits were mentioned: Learners get to know each other, learn to work together and learn to share. All learners get the opportunity to lead groups as tasks are switched. Shy learners get to voice their opinions in small groups where they have more confidence. Learners learn to argue and discuss points in small group and to come to consensus when they need to make decisions. They develop many social skills throughout the year through their participation in co-operative learning activities.

Die leerdere leer om te redeneer.

(Learners learn to argue.)

- ***Which factors do you perceive as facilitating or inhibiting adoption of a group work strategy?***

Facilitating: It is important to discuss what they need to do beforehand. Groups should understand the task very clearly. Groups should not be left to work totally on their own in

the beginning, they should be supervised from a short distance just to ensure that they get on, start working and will be able to complete their tasks. Later in the year they know the routine and get on with the job fairly easily.

It is therefore important that the educator circulates all the time to ensure that groups stay on track. Should a group get stuck the educator can easily set them on their way again by asking a few well chosen questions to guide them in the correct direction.

Inhibiting: Learners who do not know what is expected of them in the groups will not benefit from it. Some learners do not want to work in groups. Some learners struggle with poor language levels and it takes them a while to open up in groups, but eventually it happens. There might be group members who intimidate them, so it is good that the groups change for each co-operative learning session.

Soms as die sosio-ekonomiese vlakke nie dieselfde is nie, sukkel die leerders om oor hul self uit te druk of met almal oor die weg te kom. Dan moet ek dikwels ingryp.

(If the socio-economical backgrounds are not the same, some learners struggle to express themselves or to get along with everyone. Then I often have to intervene.)

- ***How do you ensure the participation of every individual in the group?***

Each learner gets a specific task in the group. Groups are never larger than 8 learners. Tasks include: leader, cutter, paster, artist, reader, speaker, order captain and scribe. The educator selects the leader per task to ensure that all learners get exposed to opportunities to be leaders. Co-operative learning groups mostly have colour names, like yellow, red or blue group to ensure that there is no preference or hint of some groups being superior to others. Leaders normally get the pack of cards with the rest of the tasks written on it. Although the educator indicates which learners should be together in groups, the leader gets to distribute the rest of the task cards. The method by which the educator divides into groups varies from day to day or task to task. Learners who are really unhappy with tasks may switch with other learners who are willing. Learners mostly stick to their tasks, as they know it is just for the duration of the activity. Mostly they like to try out a new task in the group. The educator also checks that all learners get the

opportunity to be the reader or artist in the group. Smallest groups for this grade 3 class would be 2, but mostly they work with 6 or 8 in a group. The educator also ensures that a learner does not always get the same task, that the tasks are rotated.

- ***How do you select your groups?***

Groups are selected by just dividing them evenly. Sometimes a numbering system is used, one to eight, as there are 32 learners in the class. All the ones then form a group and so on, so that there would be 8 groups of 4 learners each. Sometimes learners would get the opportunity to choose their own groups, but not often. Sometimes half of the class would be asked to stand, then each learner who stands gets to select one other learner who is sitting down, to work with in a small group of 2. On one such an occasion, one learner expressed the fear that no one would select him as a partner in the group, but three of the learners standing, volunteered to have him as a partner in the group of 2. The learner was pleasantly surprised and his self esteem grew markedly. Sometimes learners are allowed to choose own groups. Sometimes groups are formed and they may vote to select their own group leader.

Ek laat nie toe dat leerders uitruil as ek die dag self die groepe gekies het nie. Hulle moet leer om klaar te kom. Soms sit ek doelbewus sekere leerders in dieselfde groep as ek dink dat dit 'n goeie uitdaging vir hulle party van hulle sal wees.

(I do not allow learners to exchange with other groups if I put together the groups myself. They have to learn to get along. Sometimes I purposefully place certain learners together in a group if I think that it will be a good challenge for some of them.)

- ***Will you share your experience with group work (success or failure) regarding individuals in your classroom with me?***

In the beginning of the year it is always very difficult, as they have never done co-operative learning before, but as the year progresses, they get to know what is expected and they slowly develop new skills academically as well on a social level. Certain learners really developed a lot over the past year. They have become more confident. They are willing to take on responsibility. A number of them have developed good

leadership abilities. Some display good artistic abilities, now that they have been put on the spot – having to be the only artist in the group, the group depends on the learner, the learner had to do much better than usual. The learners also have much empathy with their class mates and are very supportive of each other. They have learned to understand each other much better. They would not fight about issues or become involved in physical shuffles in class, as they seem to understand much better what their mates are all about.

Sommiges het leiereienskappe ontwikkel van wie hul vorige onderwyseresse dit nooit verwag het nie. Sommige leerders het ontdek dat hulle baie kunstig is.

(Some learners have developed leadership characteristics; their previous educators have never expected this from them. Some learners have discovered that they are very artistic.)

Category 2:

How educators could manage a productive classroom:

- ***How do you adapt your teaching practices to accommodate diversity in your class?***

Learners must be at ease in class. The educator draws them in to participate. Ensures that the task is not too difficult. Moves between desks at all times, never leaves the learners to get on with the work and leave them on their own. Showing an interest in what they do, while moving between desks is very important. Always available to give them support when needed while they work. Class structure and discipline is known to the learners, they know what is expected of them. Learners feel free to approach the educator if they do not know or cannot do something. They feel at ease in class.

- ***What is your experience of parent contribution to learner cooperation in the classroom?***

Parents are very co-operative and always willing to lend a hand. There is a basic relationship between the school in general and the parents which helps a lot with

relationships between the class educator and the parents. The school has a system of sending interim reports home if a learner is experiencing problems at school of any nature. Parents want to know what they can do to prevent such problems from reoccurring or continuing. Even the parents who are very busy and work till late takes off work and make time to ensure that learners have what is needed for class work.

Homework? Group work mostly gets done in class. Homework is given on a weekly basis. Right at the beginning of the year homework issues were sorted out with parents so that they know what the learners get to do at home is purely for them to practice what has been done already in class.

5.3.2.2 LEARNER INTERVIEWS

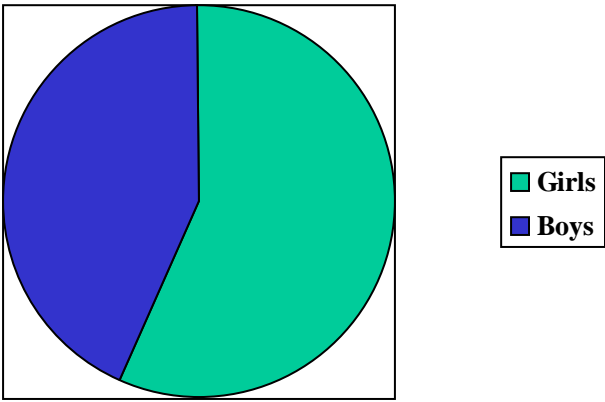
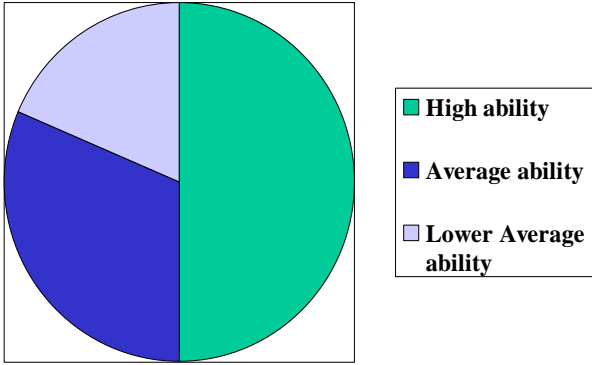
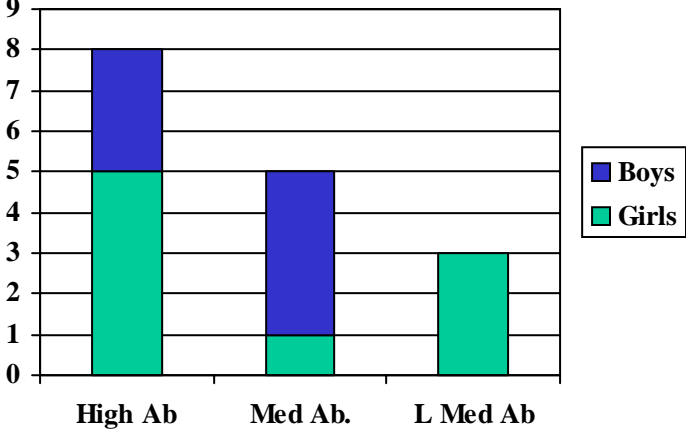
The learner sample of sixteen was interviewed in four groups of three participants each and one group with four participants. The following questions were posed to all five groups:

- How do you feel about working in a group?
- Do you like to explain work to another learner in your group?
- Do you want to be in a group with your best friends?
- Would you prefer to be in groups with boys or girls or would you prefer mixed groups?
- How do you decide what to do when you have a difference of opinion in the group?
- Does the size of the group matter?
- Can one learn in a group? What do you learn?

Although these questions are not exactly the same as those of the Dutch study by Veenman, et al. (2000:281-302), it covers some of the same topics and would allow one to make a comparison of the results.

The following three charts display more information about the participants in the learner sample:

Graph 5.1 Learner Sample

<p>Gender Spread</p>	
<p>Ability Spread</p>	
<p>Ability Spread in Gender</p>	

- **How do you feel about working in a group?**

Slightly more than half of the sample, 9 participants, likes to work in a group because they get to work with friends and have the opportunity to get to know other learners better.

Five participants report that they find it a very good experience to work in groups as it gives them the opportunity to talk to friends, the work is not so boring, they get to keep the group quiet and have the opportunity to learn new things, learnt how to get along with peers.

L 6: Baie lekker, jy leer baie goed. Leer 'n klomp ander goed ook. *Watse ander goed?*
Soos om met maats oor die weg te kom en so.

(L 6: Very nice, one learns a lot. Also learn a lot of other things. Prompt: What other things? Things like getting along with peers amongst others.)

Two participants found group work a very positive experience because they already knew what they wanted to become one day, and it would involved working with others and they both pointed out that getting along with their co-workers would be very important in both instances.

L 8: Dis baie lekker, want jy is saam met maats, almal het 'n stukkie om te doen. Ek gaan 'n beroep doen waar ek moet met ander werk – mariene bioloog. Mens mag nie alleen duik nie, so jy moet met ander oor die weg kan kom.

L 9: Dis lekker, mens leer ander beter ken. Jou brein word beter om met ander te werk. Ek gaan eendag 'n rugbyspeler wees en dis nie iets wat jy op jou eie kan doen nie. Ek moet leer met mense werk, as ek te veel op die rugbyveld sal baklei sal ek afgestuur word. Dis nie goed nie, dan kies hulle mens nie weer nie.

(L 8: It is very nice as you are with your friends and every one gets to do a section. I am going to do a job one day where I have to work with others - a marine biologist. One may not dive alone, so learning to get along with others is important.

L 9: It is nice, one gets to know others better. It improves one's brain to work with others. I want to be a rugby player one day and as it is not something one can do on your own. I need to learn how to get along with others, otherwise I might fight a lot on the rugby field and will be send off. It will not be good, as I will then not be selected to play again.)

L 13: Dis baie lekker. Baie takies wat jy saam met ander doen. Elkeen het 'n takie, dis nie so vervelig nie. Mens sit nie so lank en wag vir ander om hulle werk klaar te maak nie en ander sit en wag dat jy moet klaar werk in jou bank nie. Almal werk saam en kry die werk saam klaar.

(L 13: It is very nice. Many tasks which you can do with others. Everyone gets a task, it is not so boring. One does not have to sit for so long and wait for others to finish their work and others do not have to wait for you to finish your work at your desk. You all work together and get the work done together.)

Four of participants felt that group work can be a good experience, but they had reservations, as fighting in the group, poor cooperation between group members and leaders who gave preferential treatment to friends made it a negative experience for them. They also did not like it if a member of the group was totally ignored by other group members.

Cooperation in groups seemed to be a very important factor for all the participants. They wanted group members to get along, to agree on how to approach a task and they disliked it when the leader could not take the group forward, and fighting prevailed. One participant voiced a sense of helplessness at this point at being a leader of such a group:

L 10: Dit kan lekker wees. Soms luister hulle nie vir jou as jy die leier is nie. As hulle nie wil luister nie, as almal nie saamstem nie, is dit nie lekker nie. Almal moet saamstem, dan is dit lekker. Maar dis nie vir jou om te sê wat ander moet maak nie.

(L 10: It can be nice. Sometimes they do not listen to you if you are the leader. If they do not want to listen, if everybody does not agree, it is not nice. Everyone must agree, then it is nice. But it is not for you to say what others must do.)

Another participant reported that the writing activities in the group got her into trouble as she cannot stand poor spelling:

L 11: Dis nie altyd lekker nie. Toe hulle goed moes skryf is dit nie vir my lekker as die skrywer verkeerd spel nie. Ek hou nie daarvan nie. Verkeerde spel pla my. Ek kan dan nie my mond hou nie en dan baklei maatjies met my. As jy sê dit is verkeerd gespel wil hulle nie vir jou luister nie.

(L 11: It is not always nice. When they had to write stuff it was not nice for me if the writer gets the spelling wrong. I do not like it. Incorrect spelling bothers me. Then I cannot keep my mouth shut and then the group fights with me. If you say it is spelling incorrectly, they do not want to listen to you.)

One participant states outright that only own friends is acceptable as group members as the participant does not like to work with just anybody.

- **Do you like to explain work to another learner in your group?**

Eleven of the participants do not mind to explain work to others in their group. Two participants were quite confident that they always understood the work and love to help, but another participant made it clear that her friends always understood work, it was not necessary to explain to them, but she does explain to other learners if they need help.

L 5: My maats verstaan altyd die werk. Dis nie nodig om hulle te help nie. Ek verduidelik dit vir ander.

(L 5: My friends always understand the work. It is not necessary to help them. I explain it to others.)

One participant pointed out that she is never asked to explain anything. Another says that it is not that easy as she is shy. She could only explain it to learners she knows well.

Another participant points out that by explaining work to others the whole group will benefit, as they will be doing better as a group. The participant likes the idea of being helpful and in such a way having a positive influence on the group results.

L 9: Dit is lekker as ek kan help, dan is mens hulpvaardig, en die groep doen beter.

(L 9: It is nice if I can help, then a person is helpful and the group can do better.)

One participant explained that he is willing to explain work to group members, but that they sometimes felt that he did not know much. One participant felt that she did not have a lot of patience; she could not do it for too long.

L 14: Ek sal, maar het nie baie geduld nie, sal nie lank kan sukkel met verduidelik nie.

(L 14: I will, but do not have much patience, will not be able to explain for too long.)

- **Do you want to be in a group with your best friends?**

Seven of the participants preferred to be in groups with their best friends. Two of them felt that co-operation would be much better in the group if they worked with their friends, they would work together well and three of the seven stated that they did not know all the other learners in their class that well.

L 8: Dit is goed om by jou beste vriende te wees, want dan raak hulle nie later nie-vriende nie. Dis OK met jou ou vriende. Ek en my maats is almal stil, ken mekaar, ken mekaar se persoonlikhede. Sal nie so gemaklik wees met 'n nuweling nie.

(L 8: It is good to be with your best friends, because then you will not later become non-friends. It is OK with your old friends. My friends and I are all quiet, know each other, know each other's personalities. Will not be so comfortable with a new person.)

L 10: Ja, beste maats as ons stil is. Ons dink al lank saam, ons ken mekaar goed. Ons probeer kreatief dink. As julle stil is. *Sal dit moeilik wees om stil te wees?* Nee dit sal nie moeilik wees nie, ons wil almal graag goed doen.

(L 10: Yes, best friends if we are quiet. We think together for a long time already, we know each other. We try to think creatively. If you are quiet.

Further prompt – will it be difficult to be quiet? No, it will not be difficult; we all want to do well.)

Another participant said that working with best friends was better as they would not mind if one helped them with their work, if they had problems.

L 11: Ek kies beste maats. Dit sal lekker wees om saam met haar in groep te wees. Ons is al 3 jaar maats en sy is gaaf. As jou beste maat met spel sukkel, kan jy haar help. Sy sal nie kwaad word nie. Sy vertrou my, vra hulp met Wiskunde werkboekie werk.

(L 11: I choose best friends. It will be very nice to be with her in a group. We are good friends for three years already and she is very kind. If your best friend struggles with spelling, you can help her. She will not be cross. She trusts me, asks help with Mathematics.)

Five participants were against being in groups with best friends. They mostly felt that they would get into trouble for talking too much and that they might start playing and would then get into trouble.

L 7: Ek sal nie by beste maats wil wees nie, sal gesels en speel heeltyd. *Hoekom is dit sleg?* Juffrou sal vir my ma 'n Interim verslag stuur en dan is ek in die moeilikheid.

(L 7: I would not want to be with best friends, will talk and play the whole time. Further prompt: Why will it be bad? Educator will send my mother an interim report and then I will be in trouble.)

One participant feels that being with your friends can limit your growth in other areas, as your friends can decide before hand what you can or cannot do in the group.

L 3: Was al by beste maats in groep, dit was nie lekker nie. Hulle besluit sommer wat jy kan doen of nie. Wil graag by ander ook wees om nuwe maats te maak.

(L 3: Have been with best friends in group before, it was not nice. They decide what you can or cannot do. Would like to be in group with other as well to make new friends.)

One of the learners also indicates that when good friends pick up a fight during break, it is difficult to work together in a group after break, as you are still cross with each other and cannot co-operate.

Four of the participants felt that it does not really matter whether they are in groups with their friends or not. They might fight with them, so it might be better not to be in groups with friends. If they are together and very naughty they will get into trouble, so it might be better not to be with friends. One also felt that meeting new friends could mean that one learned new things from them.

L 9: Ek gee nie om nie. Saam met beste maats is ek stout. Ek leer beter sonder hulle.

(L 9: I do not mind. With my best friends I am naughty. I learn better without them.)

- **Would you prefer to be in groups with boys or girls or would you prefer mixed groups?**

This question brought to the fore interesting views on gender differences and abilities at a very young age. Fifteen of the sixteen participants preferred to be in mixed groups. The one participant, who absolutely preferred a “girls only” group, felt that boys took one’s possessions in mixed groups.

Although the rest of the sample all prefer mixed groups, they have very different reasons for their choices. Four of the participants feel that the boys on their own would simply be too naughty and never get their work done. One participant feels that when there are girls in the group, the group would be more peaceful, boys would behave themselves and it would prevent having a noisy class.

L 8: Meisies en seuns sal werk. Seuns alleen sal heeltyd rof wees. Meisies hou 'n groep rustig. Seuns mag nie meisies slaan nie, so hulle sal ook rustig wees as meisies daar is. As die klas raas kan jy nie konsentreer nie, jy kry hoofpyn, jy luister die heeltyd wat almal sê en kry nie jou werk klaar nie.

(L 8: Girls and boys will work. Boys alone will only be very rough the whole time. Girls keep a group peaceful. Boys may not hit girls, so they will also be peaceful if there are girls. If the class is noisy, you cannot concentrate, you get a headache, you listen to what everybody is saying the whole time and do not complete your work.)

The differences that the two genders bring to a group are perceived as a strong point by various participants. Boys are perceived as good planners, having good ideas, being good leaders and being good at sums. One of the girls fiercely objected to a statement that boys are better group leaders and better at sums. Another immediately tried to bring peace to the group by stating that girls are good at colouring in, but the other girl still felt that that was not all girls can do well.

L 6: Gemeng. Seuns is goed in een ding, meisies weer in 'n ander.
So waarmee is seuns nou goed? Hulle is goeie groepleiers, soms maak seuns ook beter somme.

(L 6: Mixed. Boys are good at one thing, girls again at something else. Prompt: So what are boys good at? They are good group leaders; sometimes boys are also good at sums.)

One female participant feels that boys can make much better plans, especially if groups need to construct a model. It is also a good idea to have boys in the group if heavy

material must be carried or picked up. Girls are perceived as being good at reading, colouring in, drawing, making posters, cleaning up and keeping the peace.

L 9: Gemeng. Net seuns sal te stout wees. Meisies ruim heeltyd op, dan is alles netjies, nou nie dat ek mors nie, maar meisies ruim sommer net aanmekaar op, daar is eers niks om weg te gooi as hulle daar is nie. Ek hou nie so baie daarvan om netjies te maak nie, maar ek mors nie.

(L 9: Mixed. Only boys will be too naughty. Girls clean up the whole time, then everything is neat, not that I make a mess, but girls clean up all the time, there is nothing to throw away when they are around. I do not like cleaning up a lot, but I do not make a mess.)

Having mixed groups is also perceived as a strong point for when they have to make plans, like planning entrepreneurial activities, as one participant feel that if the group consist of only one gender, they might not think to include items for both genders, and then make less money.

L 10: Soet seuns en meisies. As jy iets wil verkoop en dis net meisies in die groep , sal jy net aan meisiegoed dink om te koop en dan is daar minder kinders wat by jou wil koop, want niks seuns sal kom koop nie. Soet seuns moet in die groep wees. *Kry mens iets soos soet seuns? Soms!*

(L 10: Good boys and girls. If you want to sell something and it is only girls in the group, you will only think of selling girl stuff and then less children will buy from you, as there will be nothing for the boys to buy. Good boys must be in the group. Prompt: Does one get good boys? Sometimes!)

One participant felt that keeping naughty boys quiet can be a difficult task and that keeping order could take up a lot of time which could have been spent on the work and getting it done.

Despite the differences in reasons given for the same preference, most of the participants preferred to work in peace and quiet, as they could then get their work done well, get good marks and their educator would not be cross.

- **How do you decide what to do when you have a difference of opinion in the group?**

Participants' responses indicated that they have learned a lot of diplomacy and care about others' feelings. Five of the participants stated that they prefer to vote if group members do not agree on how to complete a task or what to do next. One participant felt that one should only change the other group member's idea slightly, so as not to hurt their feelings. Another one stated that if all work together from the beginning, it would not be necessary to choose between different ideas, as the plan would belong to everybody.

One participant felt that the group decision should be guided by the instruction:

L 2: Sal net die goeie vrae vat, die slegte vrae los.
Nou hoe weet jy watter is die goeies? Jy luister mos wat almal sê. Dan hoor jy of dit goed of sleg is. Jy kyk wat was die taak. Mens kan mos sien as iets nie pas nie. Dan sê jy dit vir die maatjie.

(L 2: Will only take the good questions, leave the bad ones. Prompt: So how will you know which are the good ones? You will listen to what everybody say. Then you will hear if it is good or bad. You look at what the task say. One can see whether it fits the task or not. Then you tell your friend. {Whether it is acceptable or not})

One participant felt that he would listen to everybody, but another said that you should listen to all, but then just fight until you have the correct decision. One participant reckoned that if two group members fight about doing the same task, they should just both do the task together, in that way it would save a lot of time and no one would fight. The same participant also felt that if group members vote, they have to stick to the decision with the most votes, as that is how it is done.

L 8: Ek sal sê as maats veg oor die takies op die kaartjies, dat altwee die takies moet doen. Sit die 2 bymekaar, dan mors mens nie tyd nie. *Wat as dit verskille is oor wat julle as groep moet doen, die idees?* Ek sal laat almal stem, dan het hulle moes gekies en mens moet na die meeste stemme luister, dis hoe dit werk.

(L 8: I will say if friends fight over tasks on the cards, let both do it together. Prompt: What if there is a difference in opinion about the ideas of what you should do? I will let them vote, then they have chosen, and one has to obey to most votes, that is how it works.)

One participant felt that it is better to use the luck of the draw, it will be fair to all if they draw to decide who will do what as it will prevent leaders from giving their best friends the best activities or task cards.

Another participant felt that it is an easy decision, as one gives a difficult personality his or her way, talk to the group to agree with him, then next time the difficult person would more easily agree with the plans of others.

L 6: Ag, dis maklik! Gee die moeilike een partykeer sy sin. Praat met almal dat hulle instem. Dan gee die moeilike een volgende keer in. As hy dan nie wil saamwerk nie, argumenteer mens met hom.

(L 6: Oh, it is easy! Give the difficult one sometimes his way. Talk to the others to get them to agree. Then next time the difficult one would agree more easily. If he does not want to, then one argues with him.)

Three participants felt that this is a very difficult issue for the group leader to handle. Another one stated that if the leader does not want to make the decision, the help of the educator should be called in. One participant confessed that she battled in the beginning of group work in grade 3 when the group rejected her ideas. She cried a lot. The other members of the group assured her that she is much better now.

L 3: Sal probeer om almal te vra wat hulle dink. Sal die wat die lekkerste idees of vrae het sin vat. Ek was aan die begin een van die wat nie daarvan gehou het as almal nie my idees aanvaar nie.

Wat het jy toe gedoen? Ek het heelyd na juffrou toe gegaan en daaroor gekla. Die ander maatjies het gesê ek is 'n klikbek. Nou probeer ek en ek is al baie beter. Ek gee die ander 'n kans. Ek probeer ook om beter dinge te sê, beter by te dra sodat hulle my idees sal kies. Ek sê nie meer net sommer enige ding nie.

9L 3: Will try to ask everyone what they think. Will take the nicest ideas or questions. In the beginning I was one of those who did not like it if everybody did not take my ideas.

Prompt: What did you do then? I always went to educator to complain. The other friends said I was a tattler. Now I try and I am much better. I give the others a chance. I also try to say better things, to make a better contribution so that my ideas will be chosen. I do not just say the first thing that comes to mind anymore.)

- **Does it the size of the group matter?**

The size of the group did not seem to matter to eight of the participants. Five of the participants would prefer to be in smaller groups, three preferred larger groups and one participant could not make a decision on the matter.

More group members would mean more ideas, thus better work, the possibility to divide into smaller groups to work faster on the various sections of a task and can also mean less work for each group member, according to the participants in favour of larger groups.

L 3: Maak nie saak nie. Kan 3 of 4 wees, of een groep kan 8 of tien wees. Ons is meeste 8 in groep in graad 3. Meer is beter, kry meer idees. Dan maak mens kleiner groepies in 'n groot groep. Mens besluit saam wie in die groep gaan saamwerk. Dan kom die werk ook gou klaar as daar baie maats is.

(L 3: Does not matter. Can be three or four, or one group of eight to ten. We are mostly in groups of eight in Grade 3. More is better, get better ideas. Then one can make smaller groups within the bigger group. One can decide together who must work in which smaller group. Then the work gets done quickly if there are many mates in the group.)

One of the participants who did not mind what the size of the groups is, stated that it can be any size, as long as the group members were not naughty. Co-operation and completing the work quickly is a priority, as it would allow her to read. She loves reading and prefers to complete her work to read her library books or her reader. Another participant did not care about the size, as long as the class could do group work:

L 7: Nee, maak nie saak nie. Solank ons in 'n groep is en ons werk doen. Dis vervelig om by die bank te sit en op jou eie te werk.

(L 7: No, it does not matter. As long as we are in a group and do our work. It is boring to sit at a desk and work on your own.)

One participant changed her mind about not caring about group size, as she argued that as she gets more opportunity to read in a smaller group, the educator will be able to have a better idea of what she has done herself and she would get more time to read as well as longer passages to read herself.

There could be good arguments for both according to one participant:

L 12: Ek kies altwee. Min maats is makliker, raas nie en werk net. Vir 'n Moeilike projek is baie maats goed, almal help en kry dit reg. Sal groot groep verkies.

(L 12: I choose both. Few group members are easier, less noise and only work. For a difficult task a lot of friends are good, everyone helps and you get it right. Will choose a larger group).

Participants who preferred the smaller group size felt that one can be lazy and not do much in larger groups, others can be noisy and make life difficult for the order captain who has to keep everyone quiet. They would prefer to rather work harder, but be able to finish the task and know that it is well done.

L 16: Sê nou ek wil 'n som skryf en iemand speel rond in 'n groot groep dan pla dit my. Sal klein groepe kies. Trek nie so my aandag af van wat ek moet doen nie. Groter groepe gee net die ordekaptein moeilikheid en hy kan self nie werk nie.

(L 16: Say I want to write a sum and someone is playing around in a larger group then it will bother me. Will choose smaller groups. It will not distract me from what I must do. Larger groups will give the order captain trouble and he will not be able to do his own work.)

- **Can one learn in a group? What do you learn?**

Fourteen of the sample of sixteen participants in the sample agreed that they learn during group work. One participant complained that one does not learn if the order captain cannot control the group and this distracted another learner so much that all she would contribute was to say that the order captain has been rude to her the previous day. All through the interviews with all the groups it was obvious that order in the group, co-operation and an order captain who does a good job are all very important aspects to ensure good co-operative learning experiences for these learners.

Four of the participants said that they learn how to work together during the group work sessions.

L 6: Ja, jy leer om met ander mense te werk, jy leer om met geld te werk, jy leer hoe verskillende mense is. Jy leer ook om nie so baie te stry nie.

(L 6: Yes, you learn how to work with other people, you learn how to work with money, you learn how different people are. You also learn not to argue so much.)

Learning how to do mathematics, how to read a word correctly, and getting an explanation from a friend if one does not understand work, were all mentioned by these participants.

L 14: Ja, want partykeer verstaan jy nie die werk nie, as 'n maat dit verduidelik dan leer jy makliker.

(L 14: Yes, because sometimes you do not understand the work, if a friend explains it, then you find it easier to learn.)

L 7: Ja, jy leer om met ander saam te werk. Leer van die slim kind, sien hoe hy die somme doen. So kry jy dit ook in jou kop.

(L 7: Yes, you learn to work together with others. Learn from the clever child, see how he does sums. So you also get to understand it.)

L 8: Ja, jy kan, die kinders leer van die ander kinders as swak en goed in dieselfde groep is, sal die goeie kinders die swak kinders help. So raak die hele klas slimmer en slimmer. Dis goed so. *By wie leer die slim kind?* By juffrou en sy ma. Hy weet sy metode is reg, sy antwoord is reg. Hy het nie probleme nie.

(L 8: Yes, you can, the children learn from the other children if weaker and stronger are in the same group, the stronger children will help the weaker children. So the whole class gets more and more clever. It is good. Prompt: Who does the clever child learn from? From educator or his mother. He knows his method is correct, his answer is correct. He does not have problems.)

L 9: Ja, jy leer, maar nie so baie nie. Jy moet net nie maats se werk afskryf nie, want dan leer jy niks. Jy kan kyk na die manier hoe hulle dit doen en by hulle leer planne maak, maar jy moet jou eie somme maak.

(L 9: Yes, you learn, but not that much. You must not copy friend's work, because then you will learn nothing. You must look at the way in which they do it, learn from them to make plans, but you must do your own sums.)

It is clear from these remarks that the participants value the assistance of stronger group members to learn how to do mathematical computations, to read certain difficult words or to spell words correctly. They also value the academical knowledge they gained during group work sessions:

L 10: Jy kan as jou maats mooi is. Jy wys hulle die spel wat verkeerd is, maar jy wys hulle mooi. Toe ons 'n area van karton gebou het, het ons geleer van verkeerstekens en verkeersreëls, en hoe mense se huise verskil.

(L 10: You can if your friends are nice. You show them that they have spelled a word incorrectly, but you do it in a nice manner. When we have build and area out of carton, we learned about traffic signs, traffic rules and the different houses people live in.)

L 12: Ja, want toe ons 'n projek doen oor voëls, het ek baie van voëls geleer.

(L 12: Yes, because when we did the project on birds, I learned a lot about birds.)

5.3.3 EDUCATOR REFLECTION:

The educator unfortunately did not make daily reflection notes as requested, but wrote her own reflection in one session. She described the various group settings in the class. The educator made use of a variety of groups in the class, namely base groups for year long activities, ability groupings for reading and mathematics and co-operative groups for other learning experiences. It took her a while to get the ability groupings sorted out, and

afterwards they were adjusted again at the beginning of a new term as the learners improved.

The educator found it important that a learner must have the opportunity to work in new groups and to reach success.

The educator also feels that learners must feel important in their groups and that they do quality work. Group work in Life Skills rotates all the time. Learners get to work in different groups and each one gets a task. These tasks rotate and each time the learner gets a new task in the group.

Die leerders is MAL oor groepwerk en hulle geniet dit!

(The learners love to work in groups and they enjoy it.)

5.3.4 LEARNERS' WRITTEN RESPONSES TO OPEN QUESTIONS

Learners were given two open questions to respond to in writing. The questions were:

- What do you think about doing group work?
- With whom would you like to be in a group and why?

All the learners in the class were included in this written activity. At the time there were 23 learners present in the class. All 23 wrote that they liked group work; three said they find it exciting and two learners stated that it helps you to complete your work faster.

Mostly learners listed names of their best friends as group members, stating their friends' strong points which would make them ideal group members. Table 5.2 lists the qualities these learners would prefer their group members to have:

Table 5.2 Qualities learners look for in their group members:

Quality	Number of learners who selected the quality as important for their group
Good leader	10
Good friend	5
Artist	5
Clever	4
Good writer	3
Friendly	3
Kind	3
Not naughty	3
Funny	3
Good workers	2
Good readers	2
Not noisy	2

Other qualities were named only once like self composure, patience, good cleaner, honest, prompt, good ideas, hard working and do what is expected of them.

From the reasons they stated, it seemed that they prefer good leadership in a group. Although the written work did not add much to the overall picture of Co-operative Learning in the classroom as perceived by the learners, it gave learners who were not in the original sample the opportunity to also add their voice to the bigger picture.

5.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter data obtained from observations made, the classroom layout, interviews, educator reflection and written work of learners were analyzed. In chapter 6 the findings of the study will be discussed and a comparison of the findings of this study with those of the Dutch study of Veenman, et al. (2000:281-302) will be made. Recommendations for further study and limitations of the study will round off the chapter.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the aim and objectives of the study, literature review, research methods and results. The findings of the study, its limitations and recommendations are also discussed.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to determine the utilization of co-operative learning in the management of a productive Grade 3 classroom.

The objectives of this research were:

- To determine what co-operative learning is
- To determine how educators could manage a productive classroom
- To examine how educators perceive the effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning, the way it is incorporated and adapted to the classroom and the problems encountered during implementation
- To determine the reactions from Grade 3 learners with regard to working in co-operative groups.

A literature review and empirical research, followed by an analysis of the results and a comparison with the results of a similar Dutch study were undertaken to achieve the aim and objectives of the research.

This dissertation comprises of six chapters. These chapters include the following:

- Chapter one: It gives an orientation to the study and includes an introduction, the rationale and problem statement, research aim and objectives, relevance of the study, the demarcation as well as a summary of data collection methods which will

be used. It also includes how data will be analysed, the ethical consideration of the study and its limitations.

- Chapter two: It covers the literature review of co-operative learning, including the definition of concepts; values entrenched in the Bill of Rights, a learning school and its focus as well as the principles which guide a learning school. The Revised National Curriculum Statement, how learners learn, the implications of learning as a social activity in classroom practice and various aspects of co-operative learning are included. The characteristics of co-operative learning, how to implement co-operative learning, the formation and need of co-operative groups, the phases of development within a co-operative learning group, the basic elements of co-operative learning, the skills learners need to function in co-operative learning groups, various approaches to co-operative learning, assessment of co-operative learning activities are included. International research and the role of the educator in co-operative learning conclude this chapter.
- Chapter three: A literature review of the management of a productive classroom is covered in this chapter. It includes issues such as organizational culture, the culture and climate of a school and classroom, the characteristics of a school with a sound culture of teaching and learning, the elements of a productive classroom and effective learning.
- Chapter four: The research design and methodology are dealt with, including issues such as the qualitative approach of the study, the comparison of the results of the study with that of a Dutch study by Veenman, Kenter & Post, the demarcation, appropriateness, data collection and methodology used, role of the researcher, access, reliability, validity, ethical consideration and limitations of the study, as well as data analysis and reporting of the results.
- Chapter five: The empirical part of the study is covered in this chapter, including the collection of data and the analysis of data obtained from observations, interviews, classroom layout and dimensions, educator reflection and written responses of learners.
- Chapter six: This final chapter of the study will include important findings from the literature review and the empirical study, a comparison of the results with the Dutch study of Veenman et al., the research questions will be addressed, the recommendations and limitations of the study as well as aspects for future research.

6.3 IMPORTANT FINDINGS

The findings of the literature survey and the empirical study will be concisely expounded in this sub-section.

6.3.1 FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE

The review of literature focused on co-operative learning and management of a productive classroom. A synopsis of the most important theories, practices and principles which can influence the findings of this study include:

- Co-operative learning: Co-operative learning takes place when learners work together in small groups where everyone is allowed to participate on a clearly set collective task. The learners learn with and from each other and work independently from the educator, without being directly supervised. Groups are organized in a heterogeneous manner and include learners with high, medium and low ability. It promotes positive interdependence amongst members of the group, but allows for individual accountability so that learners are responsible for learning and contributing to the group task. Co-operative learning activities have five essential characteristics, namely positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, social skills and group processing.
- The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS): The RNCS for General Education and Training is based on the democratic principles of our Bill of Rights and its goal is to prepare learners to be knowledgeable, well rounded and able to respond to the many challenges of the twenty first century. When implementing co-operative learning the educator plans for the teaching of academic as well as social skills and by doing so can uphold the democratic principles of our Bill of Rights in class. The classroom should be the place where core social values such as social justice, tolerance, are protected and promoted.
- A learning school: It focuses on achieving specific learning outcomes, promotes and facilitates quality learning by creating a values-based school climate which will foster fairness and respect for others while placing a high premium on example set by educators and parents and its relationship with and involvement in the community. In learning schools educators act as role models; promoting a culture

of human rights and are sensitive to the diverse values that may be espoused by parents and learners. Even in the most disadvantaged environment, the educators of a learning school offer learners hope for the future and never give up on them. Learners with self-confidence learn to reach out to others and collaborate with them and to embrace and accept new challenges. By actively participating and reflective thinking learners learn to critically construct new knowledge. The autonomy and responsibility these learners develop help them to become independent and manage their own learning. By taking responsibility for fellow learners and people in the community learners acknowledge their own interdependence on society where they live and try to make a contribution.

- Co-operative learning and a learning school: The positive aspects of co-operative learning matches the educational values promoted by a learning school, namely responsibility for own learning, linking new concepts with own current knowledge and learn to become reflective thinkers. Working together towards a common goal in heterogeneous co-operative learning groups, learners get to know and respect peers from other social groupings, other cultural, ethnic and language groups. They learn respect, tolerance and acceptance through co-operative learning activities while ensuring that all group members understand and know the work and by doing so get to experience the positive aspect of taking responsibility for fellow learners.
- Co-operative learning and the National Curriculum Statement: Similarly there is a very close relationship between the kind of learner envisaged by the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and the positive aspects experienced by implementing co-operative learning. The RNCS envisages a confident and independent learner. Learners participating in co-operative learning activities develop better self-esteem and function independently as they learn to participate, tackle tasks, improve achievement, solve problems and integrate new knowledge with their existing knowledge base. Working in heterogeneous groups, learners learn to respect others, to be tolerant and appreciate the contributions made by a diverse group of peers. The RNCS has the same values in mind, as it envisages learners who develop to full potential who are compassionate and can participate fully as citizens in our society. Learners, who were exposed to positive group relations, who learned to accept diversity in co-operative learning settings will develop confidence and good self-esteem which will assist them to participate responsibly in society as adults.

- International research done on co-operative learning: In recent years research was done on learner participation, grouping practices, gender differences, academic achievement and minority groups, social relationships and the structure and guidance given in the learning process. In the Netherlands the educator's use and the evaluation of co-operative learning were studied using questionnaires, as well as how learners experienced co-operative grouping and what the quality of group co-operation was.
- The classroom culture and climate: The classroom culture reflects a set of values and norms which show how all members of the class communicate and behave. A positive classroom climate exists where individual needs and differences are accepted; everybody feels wanted and appreciated, core social values such as justice, tolerance, concern for human dignity and mutual respect are promoted and valued. Effective educators will through the implementation of their knowledge, skills and behaviour create effective learning environments in their classrooms where learners will be motivated; opportunities for learning will be maximized and well managed. Acceptance of and caring for others need to be an essential part of life in class every day. By implementing co-operative learning activities educators can ensure that these values are instilled in learners while teaching.
- Leadership: The leadership style of the educator influences the classroom atmosphere, the learners in it. It influences how learners are motivated to improve their character and citizenship as it focuses on the attitudes, values, ideals and goals for their future. As leader in the class, the educator should respect all learners; promote tolerance and justice for all. By making transparent decisions which includes the learners they will be exposed to the principles of an open society, to participation in it and democracy. Learners should be exposed to accountability and responsibility on a daily basis in class, and this will take place when they are involved in co-operative learning activities. By modeling these values in class the educator set the positive example which learners can follow to respect others and accept the differences of their peers. The leadership and management by the educator in class compares well with the Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory as learners' behaviour, understanding, ability to take responsibility for own learning and levels of independence gradually progress from the Telling phase, through the Selling and Participating phases to finally reach the Delegating phase of Task behaviour.

- Teaching style: A democratic teaching style gives learners the opportunity to be themselves; ensures a safe atmosphere in class, accept learners as individuals and care for them, act in an open and honest way towards them; listen to learners, believe that they can solve their own problems and provide them with choices to enable them to learn from the consequences of their choices. Learners who are exposed to this democratic teaching style will respond by being confident, co-operative, emphatic, enthusiastic, happy, helpful, resourceful and responsible. A democratic teaching style best support the implementation of co-operative learning as both supports the need for learners to accept responsibility for their own learning, to listen carefully and accept the opinions of other, to know the limits of accepted behaviour while working in a group and to share in decision making when working in together in groups. In both instances (democratic teaching style and co-operative learning) the educator needs to ensure a safe environment where all learners will feel accepted and respected. Similarly organization and planning should be done carefully to ensure success in both a democratic teaching style and co-operative learning. A democratic teaching style would therefore best support the implementation of co-operative learning in class.
- Communication and establishing relationships: Clear verbal and non-verbal communication between educator and learners helps to successfully implement well-planned activities. Non-verbal communication can facilitate positive relationships in class and make learners feel accepted. The educator should ensure that communication is always correctly interpreted by learners. Similarly, interpersonal relationships in class between educator and learners, educator and parents and amongst learners themselves can only be promoted by sound, open and sincere behaviour by all of the mentioned role players. The educator needs to understand the issues which can affect families; and develop effective communication with parents to ensure good working relationships with the diverse group of families represented in class. Learners will learn best if there are open channels of communication between the educator and parents.
- Planning, teaching strategies and teaching methods: To be successful in classroom management, good classroom planning is essential. It requires the educator to think about policy, methods, means, standards and proper use of time. By including issues such as estimated time for completion of activity, which learning and teaching support materials will be used, deciding on grouping, how positive interdependence will be enhanced, how individual accountability will be

ensured, development of interpersonal and cognitive skills, decisions on what, who and how much will be evaluated and how the activity can be further extended, learners can optimally benefit on both academic and interpersonal level from participating in co-operative learning activities. Teaching strategies, the broad plan of action for teaching and learning activities, should ensure that the curriculum goals, plans and assessment procedures address the diverse needs of learners and promotes inclusion as it helps to implement the curriculum in a flexible manner. The teaching methods used in class should take cognizance of the socio-economic background of learners and their language abilities. Methods, learners and learning outcomes which the educator wants to achieve, should all be well matched.

- Classroom organization: Classroom organization is a management task which plays an important role in ensuring that effective teaching and learning takes place. It impacts on behaviour of learners as it spells out what needs to be done, who should do it, how co-operation takes place, which resources to use and when the tasks should be done. Classroom organization clarifies relationships of authority, ensures completion of tasks in a systematic and orderly manner, and allows the optimal use of available knowledge, talents, time and resources through the promotion of effective co-operation between the educator and learners. As a result it influences the relationships between educator and learners and learners and learners. A well-organized classroom creates a healthy environment where learners can flourish, achieve their educational goals and develop good self-esteem.
- Monitoring and assessment: Through monitoring the educator can establish what works well and where adjustments should be made to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place. An educator should discuss with learners what a successful learner looks like and sounds like to assist them to assess their own behaviour to check whether they are doing their best. It helps learners to realize that relationships in class are just as important as achieving good marks. It will help learners to become caring, respectful and tolerant individuals, in time actively participating in their own communities as adults.
- Reflection: Biographical reflection on how teaching is done enhances an educator's classroom practice as it helps to develop psychological strengths. Critical reflection on the other hand covers issues such as own perceptions regarding ethnicity, gender, size, social-economical background and preferences

or marginalization of others. Through reflection the educator revises own assumptions and becomes a critic of his or her own actions. It helps the educator to develop and refine classroom skills, teaching models and personal aspects of teaching. Reflection helps an educator to develop a teaching strategy and a personal teaching style which will support effective teaching and learning in class and gives learners access to equal opportunities in an inclusive, democratic environment. Reflection can therefore help to create classroom conditions which are welcoming and where learners are appreciated and being treated fairly.

6.3.2 FINDINGS FROM EMPIRICAL STUDY

- The classroom layout: It was indicative of an open learner centered approach which allowed for a high level of mobility of learners who could work quietly at desks without interruption, easily access teaching and learning resources or work in a variety of groupings with other learners without having to rearrange the whole setup. Open and flexible two-way communication in the classroom indicated an acceptance of all individuals.
- Effectiveness of co-operative learning: The educator perceived co-operative learning as very effective because the learners learn to work together from a young age, learn to complete a task to the best of their abilities and also get to know and understand each other better and appreciate each other's skills – thus accepting and respecting each other. It gives all learners the opportunity to act as leader of a group and this experience helps to build their confidence. As learners get to know each other better, they develop empathy with their peers and are very supportive of their group members as the positive classroom atmosphere motivates the learners to all want to do well. The positive classroom atmosphere helped to make learners feel at ease in class. Shy learners would slowly open up and participate in co-operative learning activities, as they felt more comfortable in the smaller group. It would help them to develop more confidence. The opportunity to discuss issues with peers, argue and justify view points helped learners to develop their language skills. Learners with poor language skills were exposed to the better skills of their peers.
- Prevalence of co-operative learning: The learners found the co-operative learning activities difficult in the beginning of the year as they have only started with it in Grade 3, but gradually as they learned new academical as well as social skills

they grew in confidence and are willing to take responsibility for their own learning. They developed leadership skills, some discovered they are good artists, began to understand and to appreciate each other and fight less. Co-operative learning was included in lesson plans when it suited the Learning Outcomes and the specific content. It might be implemented once or twice a week.

- Incorporation of co-operative learning in class: Learners needed to understand the co-operative learning activity clearly and in time groups could complete their tasks with less supervision and interaction from the educator. Clearly spelled out class structure and discipline also helped learners with their co-operative learning activities as they knew what is expected of them. The educator never left co-operative learning groups alone, however, but was available in case some of the groups got stuck to guide them in the correct direction. While the learners worked on their tasks the educator showed an interest in what they do, sat down with some groups and followed their discussions on the issues. The educator ensured that each learner got a specific task, that tasks were rotated so that learners did not get the same tasks when new groups were formed the next time round and that all learners got the opportunity to be the leader, reader or artist of their co-operative learning groups. The tasks were carefully planned, not to be too difficult, but challenging. The method to form the heterogeneous groups varied; sometimes the educator selected the leader and group members, sometimes the leaders could select their own teams, sometimes learners were given the opportunity to select own groups. Co-operative learning groups were given colour names, like yellow group, green group, red group or blue group to ensure learners understood that all groups were equal and there were no superiority attached to certain groups.
- Problems experienced with implementation of co-operative learning: Learners who did not understand what was expected from the groups would not benefit from co-operative learning. Some learners just did not want to work in the groups. Learners with poor language struggled to participate in the groups. It took them longer to start to participate, but eventually they opened up as the co-operative learning success of the smaller groups helped to improve their self-esteem. Some learners intimidated their peers in the group. Learners from lower socio-economical backgrounds sometimes struggled to express themselves in co-operative learning activities due to poor language development and lacking social skills. Those groups needed closer supervision from the educator to ensure that

these learners were given the opportunity to participate and that the language and social skills of the other learners made a positive impact on the learners in need.

- **Managing a productive classroom:** Learners should feel accepted and at ease in class. Planned activities should match learners' abilities. The educator should show an interest in the learners and always be available, supportive and approachable. Learners should know the routine and class rules.
- **Parents:** According to the educator a good relationship exists between the school and parents. As a result parents are very co-operative and willing to assist with any class activities. Parents oversee homework daily basis. At the level of Grade 3 it is only for practice what has been already done in class.
- **Learners and co-operative learning:** Most learners liked co-operative learning (CL) activities as they got the opportunity to work with friends, to get to know other learners better and in general found it more interesting than doing individual work at their desks. Getting the opportunity to keep the group quiet, learning new things and not having to wait so long for all other learners to complete individual tasks were also amongst the reasons why learners liked CL. Two of the learners who already knew what they wanted to do one day felt that the social skills they learn in CL activities would benefit them one day, as they would need to get along with others as rugby player and marine biologist who has to go diving, an activity which one has to do in groups. 25 % of the learner sample had reservations about CL activities as they felt it could be a good experience, but then all learners need to co-operate, learners should not fight in groups, groups should not ignore one or some of its members and leaders should treat all group members the same. In general learners wanted co-operative groups to get along, agree on procedures within the group and have effective leaders.
- **Explaining work:** Most learners liked to their peers, except for the shy learner who felt she could only explain work to learners she knew well. One learner pointed out that explaining work to a group member would benefit the whole group. At this young age learners displayed good insight into their own abilities, as one pointed out that she is far too impatient and cannot explain work for too long.
- **Group decisions:** Responses indicated that learners have learned to care for each other and used diplomacy in groups. Most learners preferred to vote if they had a difference of opinion, but one pointed out that they can also use the luck of the draw. Various other ways were mentioned to deal with difficult personalities or

difference of opinion in the group which indicated that the learners have developed a number of skills which they apply in groups to ensure that all learners feel included and their feelings are not hurt in the process.

- Group formation: The learners were divided about being in groups with their best friends as 7 felt that it can be very good as they know each other very well, all want to do well and will have a good working relationship, but 5 felt that they would just be too naughty with their friends in the same group and get into trouble. Fighting with friends during break can also have a negative impact on co-operative learning activities after break when one has to be a group with best friends. One learner felt that friends could possibly limit your growth and discovery of new skills as they could decide beforehand what you could and could not do, which meant that you will never be exposed to new experiences. Four learners thought it would be good to be in groups with learners you do not know well as you would get to make new friends. At this young age learners displayed a number of stereotyping in their understanding of what boys and girls are good at. All except one felt that groups should consist of both genders. Most were sure boys on their own would just be too naughty. Girls were seen to be the calming influence and cleaners of groups. According to the learners girls were better readers, artists and writers and they are focused on getting the task done, so that they could go to their seats to read. Boys were perceived as the good planners, the gender with the ideas, the physical strength which is sometimes needed in groups, good at mathematics and good leaders. Only one girl felt strongly that girls can do exactly the same as boys in all the named areas. Half of the group felt that group size is not important, although others felt a large group would mean that you get less work and become lazy, it can be very noisy, but the work will be completed quicker. One learner pointed out that that can also be a disadvantage as you do not get that much practice in reading in a large group. It was also said that group size is irrelevant, co-operation and completing the task is what matters. Learners agreed that it is better than doing individual work at desks.
- Most learners felt that they do learn during co-operative learning activities and also learn how to get along with their peers. Having work explained by peers, following their example in mathematics benefits the whole group as they all would do better. They value the support from academically stronger peers.

6.3.3 COMPARISON OF RESULTS WITH THE DUTCH STUDY BY VEENMAN ET AL.

Only certain sections of this research overlapped with the Dutch study. These are compared in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Comparison of the results with the Dutch study by Veenman et al.

	THE DUTCH STUDY	THIS STUDY
Social skills of learners improve when CL used	88% of the educators agreed	The educator clearly saw this as a benefit of CL
Frequency of CL activities per week	About 4 times per week	About twice per week
Group formation	Mostly done by educators	Mostly done by educator
Group size	Majority use two-member groups, three-to-four member groups also reported	Groups between 6 to 8 members mostly
Learners' opinion of CL	Nice (52%) to very nice (40%)	75 % liked to do CL
Explain work to peers	Nice (55%) to very nice (23%)	93 % liked to explain work to peers
School is interesting /nice because we do CL	Nice (52%) to very nice (35%)	The study did not include a similar question, but learners often referred to the fact that school is more interesting because they get to work in co-operative learning activities.
I think it is nice/very nice to hear what other learners think	Nice (59%) to very nice (24%)	When asked what they learn in co-operative learning groups, learners pointed out that they appreciate learning mathematics, getting explanations and spelling from their friends.

It seems that in both studies, as far as learner perceptions are concerned, learners find school more interesting because they do co-operative learning, like to explain work to peers, like to hear what other learners think in co-operative learning activities. 25 % of the learner participants in this study however, have reservations about co-operative learning. They stated that co-operation of the whole group, no fighting, no ignoring of group members and impartial group leaders are necessary to make a success of co-operative learning.

6.4 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following critical questions were addressed in this study:

- What is co-operative learning?
- How does the educator manage a productive learning classroom?
- How do educators perceive the effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning, the way it is incorporated and adapted to the classroom and the problems encountered during implementation?
- What is the reaction from Grade 3 learners with regard to working in co-operative learning groups?

6.4.1 What is co-operative learning?

Co-operative learning (CL) takes place when learners are placed in small groups where everyone participates to complete a task which has been clearly set on a suitable level. The learners work independently from the educator and learn with and from each other.

CL caters for different learning styles and the groups can be formed in different ways for various purposes. Organizing co-operative learning for differentiated teaching, group size must match the need of the learners and learners should not be in the same groups as before. Learners get the opportunity to listen to the opinions of others, accept other opinions and change some of their own opinions. Shy learners will benefit from being in a small group and the bored learner can contribute and become part of the success of a co-operative learning group

Learners are taught certain social skills to ensure that they get on better with their peers, accept and appreciate each other and begin to develop a collective and shared responsibility for the activities they are involved in. The teaching of social skills as part of CL supports the RNCS principles, such as inclusion, human rights and acceptance of individuals and groups in class. Learners learn to respect each other while at the same time feel protected and safe to contribute to CL without fearing ridicule; they learn to value the importance of human dignity which forms such an important section of The Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of our Constitution. The values and attitudes the learners get to practice in co-operative learning in the safe and positive environment of their classroom will help them to become valuable members of the society in their adult life.

6.4.2 How does the educator manage a productive classroom?

Through reflection an educator revises his or her own teaching strategies to create classroom conditions which are welcoming; where learners are appreciated; being treated fairly and participate in teaching and learning in a productive classroom. The educator creates a classroom climate where individual needs are met, learner differences are appreciated and core values such as justice, tolerance, human dignity and mutual respect is promoted. In such a classroom learning opportunities are maximized as the educator acts consistently and learners know what is expected of them. The educator ensures that the classroom is managed smoothly and effectively and learning outcomes attained.

Managing a productive classroom the educator need to find a balance between the human and task dimension. As leader in the class the educator should model the values of the Bill of Rights, such as namely tolerance, justice, equity, dignity, right of access, recognition of diversity on a daily basis. The educator should use a democratic teaching style which will also empower learners to be themselves, express their own individuality and slowly start taking responsibility for their own learning. Following the development process similar to that of Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, learners in a productive classroom will thus develop from being closely supervised in their tasks to taking full responsibility for the decisions they make and implementation of learning in their life. The educator would ensure that there are opportunities for learning in smaller groups, such as co-operative learning opportunities, as it lends itself to opportunities for speaking, listening and provocative thinking which would also motivate learners to participate. Effective motivation will ensure that learners feel accepted and valued which

in turn will have a positive impact on interaction in class and the community. The educator should display good listening skills, communicate in an open and honest manner and be aware of the impact of not only verbal, but also non-verbal communication on learners in class. The educator should always ensure that all communication is interpreted correctly and that an open channel of communication exists between learners and educator. Good interpersonal relationships in class, between educator and learners, educator and parents, as well as learners and learners are promoted by open and sincere behaviour, which includes open and honest communication.

Good planning is essential for the management of a productive classroom. Considering a variety of teaching strategies, which forms the broad plan of action for teaching goals, planning and assessment will ensure that the diverse needs of learners are met and the curriculum is delivered in a flexible manner. When planning which teaching methods will be used, the educator should take into consideration the socio-economic background and language abilities of learners. The educator must ensure that the methods, learners and learning outcomes are well matched.

The educator is also responsible for classroom organization which regulates relationships in class and informs all of the tasks which must be done, how it must be done, who should do it, when and with which resources. Good classroom organization ensures effective co-operation between educator and learners. It allows for a healthy environment in which learners can flourish.

Lastly the educator should plan and manage monitoring and assessment procedures in class to determine what works well and where adjustments are needed to ensure effective teaching and learning takes place. The educator should also ensure that learners know what a successful learners sounds and looks like so that they can assess their own development. Learners should be made aware of the fact that good relationships in class are equally as important as good marks.

When the educator succeeds in managing the above mentioned human and task dimensions of classroom management effectively, a productive classroom is created where effective learning and teaching can take place. Learners will learn academical skills, but will also understand the broader picture of what is being taught, understand,

appreciate and respect their peers and develop social skills which will serve them well as participating members of a democratic society.

6.4.3 How do educators perceive the effectiveness and prevalence of co-operative learning, the way it is incorporated and adapted to the classroom and the problems encountered during implementation?

The educator perceived co-operative learning as very effective. Learners learned how to complete a task at the best of their abilities, got to know each other, understood each other better, appreciated each other skills and learned to accept and respect each other. The learners developed empathy for their peers. They are more confident and their language skills have improved.

As learners only started with co-operative learning in Grade 3, they initially found it very difficult at the beginning of the year. They needed much support and close guidance to complete their tasks. Gradually they began to understand, their interaction became better and their confidence grew. Learners now take responsibility for their own learning; some have developed new skills such as being a leader or an artist. They understand and appreciate each other better. Co-operative learning activities are incorporated when it suits the learning outcomes and content which is taught. Mostly it is done about once or twice in a week.

It is incorporated by firstly making sure the learners understand exactly what is expected of them in the co-operative learning activities. The classroom routine and discipline is clear to all learners so they know what is expected of them in general in class. The educator makes sure that she shows an interest in the learners; supports them and are available when they need her. She carefully plan the activities for co-operative learning to ensure that it matches the needs of the learners, are not too difficult, but challenging. Co-operative learning groups are formed in a variety of heterogeneous ways and each group member gets a specific role or task in the group. The educator ensures that learners do not get the same task within a group each time. Groups are mostly formed by the educator, who also selects the leaders, but sometimes learners get to form their own groups.

The educator experiences very few problems with co-operative learning. In the beginning some learners just could not understand what was expected of them and some just did not want to do it. These learners missed out and did not benefit from co-operative learning at that stage. Learners with poor language abilities took longer to begin to participate in the discussions, so initially they also did not benefit much. As their confidence grew, they started to participate and now also benefit from the co-operative learning activities. Some learners intimidate their peers in the groups. Learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds lack the necessary language skills and struggle to express themselves. The educator supervises these groups closely to ensure that they participate; getting the opportunity to develop their language and social skills.

6.4.4 What is the reaction from Grade 3 learners with regard to working in co-operative groups?

The Grade 3 learners like co-operative learning groups, co-operation of group members, but no fighting, not ignoring some group members and a good group leader seem important aspects which they feel are needed for successful co-operative learning. Most of them like to explain work to their peers and to have work explained to them by their peers. Although the size of the group did not really seem to matter, they were adamant that co-operative learning groups should consist of both genders. At this young age they have very specific ideas of the strengths the various genders bring to such a co-operative learning group. Boys are perceived to be good thinkers, planners, leaders and good at mathematics. Girls are perceived as the peace keepers, being good at reading, writing, cleaning up and decorating. They have developed a sense of democracy, as they mostly prefer to vote when there is a difference of opinion in the groups. They have also developed sensitivity for the feelings of others, became more aware of the variety of skills in a group and that it is good for the group if all of them do better. At this young age, they have already gained insight into their own actions within a group and realize the value of working well together for the better of the bigger group.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the responses to the research questions, the following recommendations are made:

- Workshops at cluster level are needed to ensure that educators are trained to properly plan co-operative learning activities to include not only academical skills, but also the necessary social skills
- Educators should be addressed on a regular basis by motivational speakers to remind them that education is a moral task, that they should model the values of the Bill of Rights in class and community.
- Exemplar lesson plans of best co-operative learning practice should be uploaded on Thutong, the national education website as well as provincial education websites, to allow educators to see how other educators dealt with some learning outcomes through co-operative learning strategies.
- A booklet, addressing the management of a productive classroom, should be developed to ensure effective teaching and learning for all learners.
- Educators should guard against gender stereo-typing in class; ensure that all learners maximize their opportunities and are not kept behind by such perceptions.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations can be reported:

- As the study is done in only one school and only one class it might just represent the prevalence of co-operative learning in that class.
- Observations were done of all the groups, spending a while at each group. Just observing the same group the whole time might have given different data.

6.7 FUTURE ASPECTS FOR RESEARCH

Although this study had only a limited scope, various issues came to the fore which needs further investigation:

- Classroom based research to acknowledge learners as motivators and executors of their own participation in a learner-centered teaching and learning process.
- How to balance the characteristics of co-operative learning with the social comparison, peer pressure and natural competitive behaviour experienced by boys.
- The impact of reflection on classroom management.

- A study on a broader scale, incorporating more aspects of the research done by Veenman, Kenter & Post.
- Assessment practices in co-operative learning settings.

6.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion one could therefore say that the aim of co-operative learning is to empower learners to gain confidence, to develop on academical and social level to their full potential which will enable them to become responsible and disciplined citizens of our democratic society. In order to reach these goals, educators should fully understand and believe in the co-operative learning approach and need to implement it in a structured and well-planned manner. As educational leader in a productive class the educator needs to be well organized and able to create safe space where a culture of teaching and learning can flourish. Learners who are exposed to harmonious classroom relationships in a well-managed productive classroom where participation of all members are encouraged and valued and open communication is part of daily processes in class, will participate freely, be resourceful, happy, helpful and co-operative and be able to make the most of co-operative learning approaches in class through responsible, enthusiastic and confident participation.

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ANNEXURE A

LETTER OF CONSENT FROM THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

See next page 211 a

APPENDIX B:

LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION FROM PRINCIPAL

Die Hoof
xxxxxxxxxx Laerskool

Geagte xxxxxxxxx

NAVORSING: DIE GEBRUIK VAN KO-OPERATIEWE LEER IN DIE BESTUUR VAN 'N
PRODUKTIEWE GRAAD 3-KLAS

Na aanleiding van ons gesprek 'n paar maande gelede, wil ek nou graag finale reëlins met u tref vir my besoek aan u skool waartydens ek ondersoek wil instel na onderrig en leer in die Graad 3-klasgroep wat u aan my sal toewys.

Indien dit u pas, sal ek graag die klas wil besoek vanaf 29 Augustus tot 15 September 2005.

Die tyd sal soos volg aangewend word:

Maandag 29 Augustus 2005	Gesprek met onderwyser (so 5 minute voordat ek na klas gaan) en observasie
Dinsdag 30 Augustus 2005	Observasie Briewe na ouers (toestemming) Onderhoud met onderwyser (na skool \pm 40 minute)
Woensdag 31 Augustus 2005	Observasie
Donderdag 1 September 2005	Observasie
Vrydag 2 September 2005	Observasie
Maandag 5 September 2005	Gesprekke met leerders
Dinsdag 6 September 2005	Gesprekke met leerders
Woensdag 7 September	Gesprekke met leerders
Donderdag 8 September	Gesprekke met leerders
Woensdag 14 September 2005	Gesprekke met leerders
Donderdag 15 September 2005	Gesprekke met leerders

Die gesprekke met die leerders sal die vorm van 'n groepgeselsie aanneem en nie langer as 45 minute per groep duur nie. Die leerders sal in groepe van 3-4 leerders ingedeel word vir hierdie gesprekke.

Indien dit die skoolorganisasie pas, sal ek op bogemelde datums vanaf 9:00 tot 12:00 by die skool wees.

Vriendelike groete

Kobie Kitshoff
2005-08-15

APPENDIX C

LETTER REQUESTING CONSENT FOR LEARNER PARTICIPATION FROM PARENTS

Geagte

Die WKOD het toestemming aan my verleen om navorsing oor Ko-operatiewe Leer in Graad 3 by xxxxxxx Laerskool te doen.

Ek beoog om groepsgesprekke met die Graad 3 leerders in Mev XXXXXX se klas te voer. Elke groepsgesprek sal ongeveer 45 minute duur en gedurende skooltyd plaasvind.

Die leerders is nie verplig om hieraan deel te neem nie. Ek sal die proses aan elke groep verduidelik en hulle die versekering gee dat hulle die groepsgesprek mag verlaat as dit hulle ongemaklik laat voel.

Die skool en u kind se privaatheid sal nie geskend word deur die navorsing nie en hulle sal nie in die proses geïdentifiseer word nie.

Hiermee versoek ek vriendelik u toestemming om met u kind so 'n groepsgesprek te voer oor hoe leerders in Graad 3 Ko-operatiewe Leer ervaar.

Vriendelike groete

JC KITSHOFF
2005-08-30

.....

Hiermee verleen ek,, ouer / voog van toestemming vir deelname aan die groepsgesprekke.

Of

Ek,, ouer / voog van versoek dat my kind nie aan hierdie proses deelneem nie.

APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE - EDUCATOR

- 1 Wat verstaan jy onder die begrip Ko-operatiewe Leer?
- 2 Wat beskou jy as die voordele van Ko-operatiewe Leer?
- 3 Hoe verseker jy die deelname van elke individu in die klas tydens Ko-operatiewe Leer groepsaktiwiteite?
- 4 Hoe kies jy die groepe vir Ko-operatiewe Leer?
- 5 Hoe pas jy jou onderwyspraktyk aan om diversiteit in jou klaskamer te akkomodeer?
- 6 Wat is jou ervaring van ouerdeelname tot leerdersamewerking in die klaskamer?
- 7 Sal jy jou ervaring met Ko-operatiewe Leeraktiwiteite ten opsigte van individuele leerders in jou klaskamer met my deel? Die suksesse sowel as die probleme?

APPENDIX E

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE - LEARNERS

- 1 Hoe voel julle daaroor oom in 'n groep te werk?
- 2 Hou jy daarvan om werk aan ander maats in 'n groep te verduidelik?
- 3 Wil jy by jou beste maats in 'n groep wees?
- 4 Verkies jy om by seuns/meisies in groep te wees of gemengde groepe?
- 5 Hoe besluit julle wat om te doen as julle verskil?
- 6 Kan 'n mens leer in groepwerk? Wat leer 'n mens?
- 7 Maak dit saak hoe groot die groep is?
- 8 Maak groepwerk jou lui of lus vir leer?

APPENDIX F

EXAMPLE OF THEME ANALYSIS OF TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS DURING DATA ANALYSIS

<p>Verkies jy om by seuns/meisies in groep te wees of gemengde groepe?</p> <p>Leerder 1: Wil gemeng wees.</p> <p>Leerder 2: Liewer altwee groepe, as net seuns, kan mens baie stout wees, meisies alleen kan ook baie stout wees en dan kry mens nie jou werk gedoen nie. Werk beter saam as gemeng is.</p> <p>Leerder 3: Seuns en meisies, seuns het partykeer beter idees as dogters.</p> <p>Hoe so? Hulle kan sê "Nee ons moet dit so maak, of so bou," hulle weet beter.</p> <p>Leerder 4: Gemeng is beter</p> <p>Leerder 5: Net meisies. In gemengde groepe vat seuns jou goed.</p> <p>Leerder 6: Gemeng. Seuns is goed in een ding, meisies weer in 'n ander.</p> <p>So waarmee is seuns nou goed? Hulle is goeie groepleiers, soms maak seuns ook beter somme.</p> <p>Leerder 5: Oo, is nie.</p> <p>Leerder 6: Meisies kan weer beter inkleur.</p> <p>Leerder 4: Dis nie al wat ons goed kan doen nie.</p> <p>Leerder 7: Gemeng, as dit net seuns is sal ons net wil praat oor rugby. Juffrou sal dan die heelyd uitskel.</p> <p>Leerder 8: Meisies en seuns sal werk. Seuns alleen sal heelyd rof wees. Meisies hou in groep rustig. Seuns mag nie meisies slaan nie. As groepe raas kan jy nie konsentreer nie. Jy kry hoofpyn en luister die heelyd na wat die ander groepe sê.</p> <p>Leerder 9: Gemeng. Net seuns sal te stout wees. Meisies ruim heelyd op dan is dit netjies. Ek jou nie daarvan om netjies te maak nie.</p> <p>Leerder 10: Soet seuns en meisies. As jy iets wil verkoop, meisies sal meisieagtig dink en seuns sal nie kan koop nie. Soet seuns. Kry 'n mens iets soos 'n soet seun? Soms.</p> <p>Leerder 11: Gemeng, net nie stout seuns nie. Mens kan nie stout seuns stil kry nie- dis moeilikheid en vat baie tyd en dan kry jy nie die taak klaar nie. Meisies kan ook so wees.</p> <p>Leerder 12: Gemeng, want as dit dalk 'n projek is wat gemaak moet word en somme moet bereken word of iets swaars moet opgetel word, kan die meisies dit nie alleen doen nie. Meisies is beter met plakkate maak en skryf. Seuns moet eers hulle die somme verduidelik.</p> <p>Leerder 13: Albei. Seuns het meer gedagtes, meisies teken goed. Seuns is goed met Wiskunde, lees is weer meisies beter in.</p> <p>Leerder 14: Albei, seuns kry goeie planne, seuns se beplanning is goed.</p> <p>Leerder 15: Albei. Seuns is nooit tevrede met wat meisies verduidelik van somme nie.</p> <p>Leerder 16: Albei want partykeer kan seuns of meisies beter doen. Meeste sê seuns wat gaan aan en die meisies doen dit netjies.</p>	<p>Mixed groups</p> <p>Results of poor Behaviour</p> <p>Girls equally able</p> <p>Only girls</p> <p>Naughty boys</p> <p>Gender perceptions about boys</p> <p>Gender perceptions about girls</p> <p>Girls naughty as well</p> <p>Well-behaved</p> <p>Boys' perception of girls' maths ability</p>
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APPENDIX G

EXAMPLES OF WRITTEN RESPONSES OF LEARNERS

See page 217 a, 217 b, 217 c, 217 d

APPENDIX H

THANK YOU LETTER TO SCHOOL

Die Hoof
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Geagte xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

NAVORSING: EFFEKTIEWE BESTUUR VAN ONDERRIG EN LEER IN DIE PRIMÊRE
SKOOL

Hiermee my opregte dank aan u vir die voorreg om my navorsing aan u skool te kon voltooi. Dra asseblief ook my dank oor aan die Graad-3 onderwyseres, Me xxxxxxxx en die leerders in haar klas waarsonder dit nie kon gebeur nie.

Die hartlike ontvangs by u skool en vriendelike samewerking van een en almal het dit 'n baie aangename ervaring gemaak.

Nogmaals baie dankie.

Vriendelike groete

Kobie Kitshoff

2005-09-17

APPENDIX I

OBSERVATION TEMPLATE ADAPTED FROM WRAGG

OBSERVATION TEMPLATE ADAPTED FROM WRAGG

What does teacher do	
What learners do	
What kind of interaction	
Who talks to whom/about what	
How teacher manages: Classroom rules	
Classroom rules	
How are the Resources managed	
How teacher manages time	
How does teacher manage space	
How does teacher manage learner behaviour	
How does teacher manage own teaching strategies	
What do learners learn	
What tasks do they engage in	
What is level of involvement in tasks	
What is level of success in tasks	
What is day/lesson like from learners point of view	
Do all get good day/Does some have bad deal	
How does teacher deal with gifted	
What support is given to those who struggles	
Who makes decisions: teacher or class or both	
What happens when learners disrupt class/ anti-social behaviour	
Is there continuity in lessons	
Does it appear disjointed from learner's perspective	
What happens when learner does not understand	
How does teacher explain new topics	
How is work monitored	
How is work assessed	
What is teacher's role in group work	
How does teacher make classroom decisions	
What SKAVs seemed to be covered	
Does teacher implement RNCS	
Literacy – type of grouping *	
Math – type of grouping *	
LO – type of grouping *	
Reading – type of grouping *	