CHAPTER FOUR

A RESEARCH BACKGROUND TO READ'S TRAINING MODEL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Fourth chapter seeks to provide the research background to language education and the principles underlying READ Educational Trust's language programmes. However, the main aim of this study is to assess the impact of READ's language programmes on Grade 4 learners' writing competencies. The achievement of effective teaching and learning is topical in present-day educational circles, yet it is an extremely difficult concept to realize. Central to this investigation is the improvement of learning in the primary schools as indicated above. Hergerhahn and Olson (2005:1) define learning as a process through which knowledge, comprehension and mastery are gained through experience or study. Some psychologists, however, would find this definition unacceptable because of the nebulous terms it contains, such as knowledge, comprehension and mastery. Instead, the trend in recent years is to accept a definition of learning that refers to changes in observable behaviour.

One of the more popular definitions is the one suggested by Kimble (1961:1) in Hergerhahn & Olson (2001:1), which defines learning as a relatively permanent change in behavioural potentiality that occurs as a result of reinforced practice. Although popular, this definition is far from universally accepted. For instance, the researcher's understanding of the concept of learning is that it is an educational process that entails the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual growth. Evidently, there are many definitions of the word 'learning' as many connotations may be attached to the concept. Before a language programme can be implemented to achieve the main goal, it is necessary to devote some time to reviewing recent educational theories that are significant for planning language interventions to assist learners with the development of writing skills.

It is also important to shed some light on the organization's origins and mission, its model, the nature of the language programme as well as the theoretical foundations of READ's approach to language acquisition. Other important issues that relate to language development in general are also covered in this chapter, for example, the National Curriculum Statement, Formal Language Education, READ and Outcomes-based

Education. Furthermore, implications of language programmes offered by organizations such as READ Educational Trust for education are also discussed in this chapter. It is imperative to determine the relationship between the kind of service that is rendered by service providers such as READ Educational Trust and the objectives of the national Department of Education if the general aim of education is to be achieved in South Africa.

The 'Call to Action' by the former Minister of Education in the Tirisano campaign, highlighted the urgent need for a combined effort by the public sector, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to raise the levels of literacy in this country. The terms of partnership reflects the various responsibilities of the key parties such as READ Educational Trust. It is clearly stipulated that NGO's would be encouraged to expand their valued contributions to educational innovation, curriculum development, in-service teacher education and other educational services (ANC Document, 1995:46).

The provision of quality education is one of the challenges facing the entire African continent. Hence there has been a variety of strategies implemented by the South African national Department of Education (DoE) in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. For example, the Tirisano campaign aims to involve all the stakeholders in schools. A large number of service providers were involved in the implementation of Tirisano, including the READ Educational Trust, which offers outcomes-based language programmes to language educators who, in turn, implement them in schools. These language programmes are aimed at equipping learners with basic language skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. The ultimate goal of Tirisano is to encourage teamwork in the provision of education in South Africa and to ensure that people are able to attain the high demands of the country's labour market. Undoubtedly, good communication skills are a basic requirement for anyone to perform well in a work environment. Good communication skills also enable learners and professionals to cope with the many demands associated with teaching and learning, which are relevant to the workplace situation.

It is against this background that organizations such as READ Educational Trust are actively involved in the provision of support through language programmes in primary schools. There is still a lot of uncertainty as to whether such language programmes

actually impact on language acquisition and development or not, hence, the importance of undertaking this investigation.

4.2 THE BACKGROUND OF READ EDUCATIONAL TRUST

READ Educational Trust was established twenty-seven (27) years ago. The organization is primarily a teacher-development agency in the Languages learning area. Its experience in selecting and supplying material to previously disadvantaged schools and in pioneering outcomes-based methodology in South Africa has placed the organization at the forefront of school resource provision and in-service training programmes for educators. READ Educational Trust provides its services through the following programmes:

- The promotion of reading, writing and associated language and learning skills through resource-based literacy programmes, based on the principles of outcomes-based education (OBE) and focusing on the implementation of the national curriculum;
- A high school In-service Education and Training (INSET) programme targeting the whole school culture of teaching and learning, in order to bring about improved Grade 12 pass rates;
- A college level Pre-service Education and Training (PRESET) programme for students;
- An Education Management Development programme focusing on regional and district systematic management, including School Governing Bodies, School managers and School Management Teams, Learner Representative Councils and parent communities;
- National motivational events such as READATHON, Festival of Stories and Festival of Books, as well as various other events at regional level, including 'Rally to Read', 'Fun with Words', and various essay-writing and public speaking competitions; and
- Training for adults in areas such as business presentations, communication skills and conflict resolution.

READ emerged as a catalyst for social problems that affected the previously disadvantaged learners in the rural areas. For instance, educators and learners in the rural areas of South Africa had very limited, if any, access to reading material or libraries. The scarcity of books remained a major obstacle to the development of learners' reading, writing and communication skills which are fundamental to all learning.

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READ Educational Trust was registered as a non-governmental organization in 1979 in response to the educational needs of black South Africans voiced during the 1976 Soweto uprisings. As an independent professional organization, which is funded by the South African private sector and foreign donors, it is primarily a teacher-development agency. One of the critical issues raised at the time of its inception was the lack of reading facilities in black townships. Public libraries for black South Africans were scarce and seriously under-resourced. There were virtually no libraries in schools and learners had no experience of books other than government-prescribed textbooks. READ Educational Trust was established with the goal of providing adequate access to books for all South Africans.

In the early years, READ Educational Trust's activities concentrated mainly on setting up secondary school libraries and the training of school librarians. Subsequently, the focus shifted from secondary to primary schools, where the needs, both in book provision and in teacher training, were even greater. READ found that the provision of books was far more effective when combined with whole staff teacher training and follow-up monitoring by well-trained mentors.

Currently, READ researchers develop and deliver comprehensive language and literacy programmes for primary and high schools. The programmes include teacher training, materials provision, and monitoring, focusing on previously disadvantaged learners and educators throughout the country. The organization's goal is to replicate and implement the language programme on a nationwide scale, in co-operation with the national and provincial education departments, other educational agencies, and the private sector. READ Educational Trust has even expanded its language programmes to foreign countries like Ghana and Zimbabwe. All the projects are planned and adapted to suit particular community needs as proposed by the national Department of Education in South Africa. Therefore, the government-NGO partnership is valued by READ Educational Trust as a service provider.

In order to fulfill its mission, READ Educational Trust intends to enable all the people of South Africa to have more control over their lives and to contribute, in an informed way, to the building of a thriving economy and a sustainable democracy. It is for this reason that the organization has decided to empower the poorest of the poor with basic language and literacy skills.

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4.2.1   The Concept of Writing Clarified

Writing is a form of representation that is further from the reality it represents than is spoken language. Vygotsky (1962, in Bernstein and Tiegerman (1993: 341), referred to writing as a second order symbol system.   The hierarchical process of language acquisition is developed through auditory receptive, auditory experience, visual receptive, and visual expressive forms. Logically, the development of abilities in the language hierarchy relies on the initial intactness of the oral language capacity. The main issue is that if there are significant verbal problems, then all capacities above this level will be affected. Similarly, those aspects of functioning that affect the verbal language system will also affect writing performance. It is for this reason that service providers such as READ Educational Trust put more emphasis on all the skills that are required in a language, namely reading, writing, speaking and listening. This is in line with the lessons learnt over the last decade. It became evident during this period that language development cannot be compartmentalized, with each component taught piecemeal.

Language and communication must occur in context. With this in mind, one can understand why the acquisition of writing skills is so difficult for primary school children. Primary school learners are expected to integrate a variety of linguistic and communication skills in order to master the skill of writing. Writing does not represent experience directly but represents a previously acquired linguistic code, a system of arbitrary sounds, by means of a new system. According to Vygotsky (1962), in Bernstein and Tiegerman (1993:341), writing is highly abstract as compared to the immediacy of spoken language. Although written language is similar to verbal language in thought and imagery, its structure and mode of functioning differ.

Because of the complexity of writing, learners' underlying processing capacities of attention and memory as well as higher levels of cognitive functioning need to be adapted and used in unique ways. For example, children must acquire the linguistic awareness that enables them to use effectively the syntactic and semantic aspects of language in writing. A writing task demands an awareness and control of linguistic processes that are different by nature and medium to speech. In view of the above, one would say that the conventions of writing have their own discourse rules that demand more formal use of complete syntactic conventions, such as connectives, cohesiveness, less redundancy and fewer examples or illustrations.

Northedge (1997:10), perceives writing as the most important and challenging aspect of studying and learning. He goes on to justify his argument by explaining that the reason why writing is especially demanding is that it forces one into a very deep and powerful kind of learning. Northedge bases his argument on the notion that the ideas only become a properly functioning part of one's thought processes when one can recall them with a view of putting them in writing.

Landsberg (2005:128), suggests that there are three elements of writing, namely the essay, spelling and handwriting. Spelling may be seen as a prescriptive aspect of writing, while the other two aspects are more advanced and difficult to learn.

A brief overview of these three elements of writing is presented in the next section.

4.2.1.1 Spelling

Spelling is the ability to construct the order of letters in words according to prescribed rules. Each language has its own set of rules for constructing the order of letters in a word. To be able to spell words correctly, primary school learners must be familiar with the following spelling principles:

- Sound-letter relations;
- Variations in the sound-letter relations;
- Vowel combinations;
- Consonant combinations;
- Consonant-vowel combinations;
- Word analysis; and
- Spelling rules.   *(Landsberg, 2005:128)*

4.2.1.2 Handwriting

According to Landsberg (2005:128), handwriting is the ability to execute physically the graphic marks necessary to produce legible compositions or messages. Intermediate phase learners are expected to form letters and numbers with a writing instrument. Writing is a visual-motor skill that determines the quality and legibility of the written text. Basically, handwriting depends on the following aspects:

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- Eye-hand coordination;
- Knowledge of the writing direction from left to right;
- Visual discrimination of letters and words; and
- Intact brain functioning.

(Landsberg, 2005:128)

4.2.1.3   Essay

The essay is the most advanced stage of writing. It must be written according to the conventions of a specific language and rules of the language structure (Landsberg, 2005:128). The essay can be divided into three components of writing, namely the cognitive component, the linguistic component and the stylistic component. A brief discussion of these components follows:

(a)   The cognitive component

The cognitive component of written language enables the writer to write his message logically so that the reader can understand it with ease. The cognitive processes in writing an essay are the writer's thoughts, impressions, and metalinguistic skills.

(b)   The linguistic component

The linguistic component includes the use of prescribed syntactic and semantic conventions of the specific language while writing. Pragmatics as an aspect of the cognitive component is only involved in the choice of words and the manner in which the words and sentences are written down. Punctuation is also important to the development of the linguistic component.

(c)   The stylistic component

The stylistic component of written language also includes the use of capitalization and punctuation according to prescribed rules. All these components are significant for the development of writing as an aspect of language development.
It should also be remembered that language programmes of service providers such as READ Educational Trust also put more emphasis on writing as an important

aspect of language development. Such language programmes include a variety of courses that are specifically directed at the development of writing as a skill. Courses such as teaching writing, shared reading and writing, and independent writing are offered in the implementation of the language programmes. In addition, all language lessons are planned in such a way that they end up with written activities. Reflection time is also longer than the time allocated for teacher-led activities.

4.2.2   **READ's Approach to the Teaching of Writing**

READ's model puts the teaching of writing at the center of its practice as already discussed. However, there is a close connection between all the basic skills that are required in a language, namely reading, speaking, listening and writing. The concept of writing is the main focus in this particular investigation. Reading and writing are so inextricably linked that the development of one language skill fundamentally affects the other (Landsberg, 2005:128). For example, emergent readers are also emergent writers in the sense that they know how print works, that a word is a collection of letters, that there are spaces between words, and that one must read from left to right. This knowledge is also essential for early writing. The grapho-phonic knowledge gained when learning to read fundamentally affects how quick learners learn to express themselves. Learners will be able to put sounds together phonetically to build up meaningful words and sentences, even if the spelling is phonetic and not conventional.

Nowadays, the definition of writing assumes that learners will learn mechanistic skills of actually developing meaningful communication through the creation of a text. By so doing, real opportunities for writing are created when learners fulfill tasks such as the writing of an invitation to someone, re-telling a favorite story or re-writing a list of items, etc. READ Educational Trust also uses teaching methods such as modelled writing, shared writing and independent writing. All these approaches are in line with requirements of the National Curriculum Statement. In terms of the NCS, writing as a skill falls within the fourth learning outcome. It is envisaged that the learners will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes. According to the detailed specifications of this learning outcome, learners continue to develop their writing skills for different purposes and audiences   Learners are also expected to develop and organize ideas appropriately in factual and creative texts by

following the steps in the writing process. However, writing is a very difficult skill to learn. It is this high level of difficulty that actually prompted the researcher to undertake this particular investigation.

It appears that the more learners write, the quicker their writing skills develop. Unless the learner is inspired and encouraged to write everyday, very little progress will be made. This implies that even though the learner can learn to write neatly, these skills may not prepare him/her to write purposefully. In other words, writing skills should promote a learner's ability to communicate meaningfully. Therefore, the educator's role is to ensure that he/she provides the input that learners need in order to write properly. According to READ's model for teaching writing, written activities should regularly form part of the whole lesson.

However, the relationship between writing and reading should always be kept in mind when implementing language programmes in schools. Reading prolifically improves writing, as reading texts improves the learner's syntactic, semantic and grapho-phonic knowledge systematically.

The Department of Education also holds a holistic view of the concept of language development. For example, the NCS has been designed in such a way that it highlights the learning outcomes of all four language skills, namely, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In terms of learning outcome four (viz. Writing), Grade 4 learners should be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes (South African National Department of Education, 2003:78).

4.3   FORMAL EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE TEACHING

The teaching and learning of Home languages and Additional languages occurs at different levels. For example, in home languages, the outcomes dealing with reading and writing are normally weighted more than the others, whilst in additional languages outcomes that are related to speaking and listening are typically stressed. Another difference is the level of complexity of the texts selected.

Following are aspects of teaching and learning that are peculiar to the Languages Learning Area:

- Text-based approach;

- Process approach to writing;

- Reading strategies;

- Reading and writing in an Additional Language; and

- Communicative approach.

(South African National Department of Education, 2003: 26).

The next section deals with the relationship between READ's approach to the teaching of writing and Outcomes-based education.

4.4   READ EDUCATIONAL TRUST AND OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION

South Africa embarked on a radical transformation of education and training between 1989 and 1994 (du Plessis & du Plessis, 2007:42). One of the most challenging aspects of this transformation has been the adoption of an Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach that underpins the introduction of the National Curriculum Statement. OBE is widely considered to have its roots in two educational approaches, namely, the competency-based education movement and mastery learning (du Plessis & du Plessis, 2007:42). The development of an OBE model that derives from competency-based learning was led by William Spady and its aim was to prepare learners for success in fulfilling various life roles. Another model of OBE derives from mastery learning and it focuses on the need to create favourable learning conditions as regards time, teaching strategies and learning success (du Plessis & du Plessis, 2007:42). Mastery learning promotes the idea that all learners can achieve the desired teaching outcomes if given favourable learning conditions such as flexibility, sufficient time provided and alternative ways of learning. According to du Plessis and du Plessis (2007:42), OBE is based upon the premise that educators can help learners to create definite and reliable evidence of achievement.

The re-engineering of the learning system towards the outcomes-based approach is a major attempt to build the country into becoming an international role-player. The shift to outcomes-based learning versus mainly content-based learning in the education system and competency-based training is analogous to the total quality movement in the business and manufacturing sector. Outcomes-based learning is also based on the notion that the best way to get where one wants to be, is to first determine what one wants to achieve.

Once the end goal (product, outcome, etc.) has been determined, strategies, techniques and other ways and means can be put in place to achieve that particular goal (Olivier, 1998:3).

The traditional view of classroom activities, which assigns the learners the role of passive recipients of facts, and the educator as the presenter of factual knowledge, has been subject to criticism by many educational theorists. Locke's *tabula rasa* theory, which describes the mind of the learner as a blank "wax tablet on which grooves are made by a stylus" (Eby,1952:291) in Jacobs *et al.,* 2002:2), and the teaching methods based on it, have long formed the subject of severe criticism from educators. Among the recent critics of this view is Freire, who rejects what he terms the banking concept of teaching and learning (Eby, 1952:290 in Jacobs *et al.,* 2002:2). Teaching that reduces the learner to an empty vessel into which the educator pours content and expects the learner to pour it out at testing time continues to draw criticism from educational theorists, who maintain that learners are responsible for their own learning. In other words, what the learner knows, at the end of a lesson, is the result of what the learner has achieved in the teaching-learning situation.

Outcomes-based education is a curriculum approach to teaching and learning that requires a shift from educator input to a focus on learner outcomes. It is a curriculum theory that developed from two earlier teaching models, namely mastery learning and competency-based teaching. During the 1960s and 1970s, these two models were adopted by some educational departments in the United States of America (Good & Brophy, 1991:330 in Jacobs *et al.,* 2002:102).

The idea of an outcomes-based curriculum was first proposed by Johnson (1977) (in Jacobs *et al.,* 2002:102), an American curriculum specialist, who believed that the perennial curriculum model placed too much emphasis on the aims and objectives of educators and not enough on the end-performances of the learners. He argued that the learners are taught too much theoretical knowledge that they do not need in the job-market and which they soon forget after they have written their examinations. On the other hand, important skills that learners need for employment purposes, such as business and technical skills were not adequately taught to learners. The best way to overcome these problems, Johnson believed, was that educators should no longer base their learning programmes on objectives, but rather on helping learners to achieve worthwhile outcomes

of learning, that is, useful things that the learners are able to do at the end of their schooling.

Olivier (1998:3) supports this view when recognising that outcomes-based learning is learner-driven and aimed at achieving specific outcomes. According to Olivier, knowledge and skills can be drawn from any source and the role of the educator or trainer changes accordingly to provide guidance for the learners to achieve their outcomes. The educators are expected to guide learners through specific learning procedures that are connected to real-life situations and the ways in which outcomes are achieved in the real world (Olivier, 1998:3).

The outcomes-based model is seen as a transformational approach to the curriculum that was necessitated by technological advancement, changes of societal needs and goals, new political dispensations, and other factors. An educational system based on outcomes gives priority to the end results of learning. The curriculum is considered to be outcomes based if it is learner-centered, results-oriented, and founded on the belief that all individuals can learn.

The principles of outcomes-based education (OBE), which underlies the South African curriculum, derive from the accumulated body of knowledge about the nature of learning. Gravett (2005:18) reiterates the importance of distinguishing between meaningful learning and rote learning. Rote learning involves the acquisition of single, somewhat contrived concepts, the solution of artificial problems or the learning of arbitrary associations where the effect is usually short term.

Conversely, meaningful learning has a long-term effect, and involves the acquisition and retention of the complex network of interrelated ideas characteristic of an organized body of knowledge that learners must incorporate in their cognitive structures (Gravett, 2005:18). Although meaningful learning includes memorization which is in fact, a very important part of this kind of learning, learning should not be equated with mere memorization (Gravett, 2005:18).

The main differences between the 'old paradigm' (teacher-centered) and the 'new paradigm' (OBE), as tabulated by du Plessis *et al.,* (2007:50-51), are:

Table 4.1 The main differences between the old contents-based education and OBE

Contents –based education	Outcomes based education (OBE)
- Educators transmit information. - Educator-centred. - Knowledge of syllabus contents. - Syllabi are content based and focus on educator input, that is, what the educator has to teach. - Syllabus and content are independent of the learner's experience. - Focuses on facts and information. - Does not give credit for knowledge or skills acquired outside the formal education system. - Rigid, compartmentalized subjects with an expected corpus of knowledge in each.	- Teaching means providing learning experiences, and guiding and supporting the learner, mediating and facilitating learning. - Learning means the development of the learner's knowledge, understanding, skills, activities and values, and is based on interaction between educator, learner, context and content. - Learning programmes are outcomes based, that is, based on what learners should be able to, know and understand. - Learning is relevant to real-life situations and the experience of the learner. - Cross-curricular integration of knowledge and skills to prepare learners for real life.

Contents-based education	Outcomes based education (OBE)
Methodology and teaching style	
• Teaching refers to the act and methodology of conveying knowledge to a learner (transmission mode). • Learning means memorization of content presented by the educator (rote learning, without the learner necessarily understanding what he or she is learning). • Educators often use the talk and chalk lecture mode to teach learners. • Learners are empty vessels to be filled with content by the educators (the approach is educator-centred). • The pase of work is not differentiated, but dictated by the educator, who has not necessarily taken into account the varying levels of learners' abilities. • Learners do not have learning expectations explained to them. • The style of teaching used by the educator does not take into account the different styles of learning learners may have.	• Critical thinking, reasoning, research, reflection and action. • Learners engage in group/team/pair work, debate, role-play, experiments. • Learners are active and take responsibility for their learning by being actively involved in research, debate and experiments. • Learners are able to work at their own pace. • Learners know what outcomes and assessment standards they must strive to achieve. • A variety of approaches are used in the learning process (which is inclusive), therefore accommodating different learning styles.
Use of learning materials	
• The main learning and teaching resource used is the textbook.	• New learning materials encourage an electric approach, taking into account a wide range of resources.
Assessment	
• Assessment of knowledge of syllabus content is mainly through tests and end-of year exams. • Assessment focuses on how much knowledge the learner retains and not on whether the learner is able to apply the knowledge. • Assessment is norm referenced. • It is used to grade learners for promotion.	• Assessment is continuous, based on a variety of techniques apart from formal testing. • It is used to find out what the learner can do, and to help educators to plan learning programmes. • Assessment is broad, covering a number of assessment standards, which include skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values. • Assessment includes the educator's assessment and peer assessment, resulting in a descriptive statement of what a learner has achieved.

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The basic pinciples of OBE, as highlighted by du Plessis *et al.* (2007:42), are:

- Experiential learning;
- Clarity of focus;
- Designing down;
- Expanded opportunity;
- High expectations;
- Learning areas;
- Importance of skills, knowledge and values;
- Evidence of achievement;
- Individual learning; and
- The fact that what and whether we learn is more important than how and when we learn it.

To summarize these principles, both the educator and the learners should be successful if they do the following:

- Consistently, systematically, creatively and simultaneously clearly focus on their exit outcomes;
- Plan 'backwards' all the steps needed to get there; and
- Have high expectations of their learner without limiting their opportunities to achieve these outcomes (du Plessis *et al.,* 2007:60).

The guiding principles of OBE have always been central to READ Educational Trust's educational activity. Apart from unavoidable terminological differences, the READ language programme is essentially in accordance with the conceptual framework of OBE and the broadly defined provisions of the national curriculum statement. The convergence of OBE with the theoretical underpinnings of READ Educational Trust's practice, are best seen in these shared beliefs and principles:

Knowledge is a process, not a static aspect;
- Experiential knowledge is central to READ's training model;
- Clarity of focus is guided by READ's balanced literacy programme;
- Language is a multifunctional tool for communication and learning;
- Language and literacy develop best when used for real purposes;

- Children are active learners;

- Teaching is mediating the learning process;

- Integrated content facilitates learning;

- A classroom is a community of learners and knowledge is acquired in a social environment;

- Learning programmes must respond to the educational needs of learners;

- Expanded learning opportunities;

- Importance of knowledge, skills and values; and

- Continuous assessment conducted to determine evidence of achievement.

With regard to the provision of education, READ Educational Trust pioneered the book-based, integrated approach to language and literacy learning in South African schools long before it became adopted by the national Department of Education. The instructional strategies or methodologies for developing reading and writing followed the best practice models from countries in which OBE models had been in operation for many years. As a result, and the fact that all projects are implemented only after approval by the Department of Education, READ-trained educators have been able to follow the recommendations of the new curriculum without major adjustments in their daily teaching practices. This substantial overlap between OBE and READ's theory and practice is not coincidental. READ Educational Trust's theory and model evolved over the years under a significant influence and in co-operation with language educators and educational institutions in countries in which OBE and related models have been successfully implemented, namely New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain, Fiji, Singapore, and the United States of America.

In the light of the above, one would say that there is a close relationship between READ's training model and outcomes-based education (OBE). This means that the READ training programmes are also outcomes-based and linked to real-world situations and not driven or directed by mastering knowledge or skills (Olivier, 1998:2). Moreover, the principles of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) underpin both models. At the present moment, READ's topmost priority is to support the work of national and provincial education departments in the challenging process of effecting measurable and sustainable educational changes in South Africa.

4.4.1   The National Curriculum Statement (NCS)

The National Curriculum Statement is underpinned by principles that are important for realizing the aims of the South African education system, such as social justice, a healthy environment, the concept of human rights, and inclusivity. The NCS is geared towards adopting an inclusive approach to teaching and learning in schools. Moreover, all the Learning Area Statements attempt to create an awareness of the relationship between the above principles. This is in line with stipulations of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996*. In brief, the NCS seeks to encourage the learners to develop knowledge and understanding of the diversity in the country, including all other principles indicated above. Figure 4.1 illustrates factors that shape the planning process of learning programmes.

Figure 4.1 Guidelines for the development of learning programmes
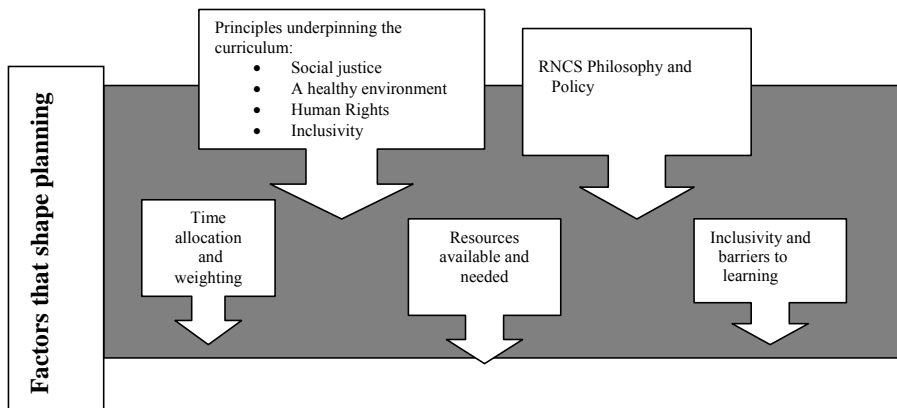
Source: (South African National Department of Education, 2003:2)

The above-given figure highlights the factors that inform the development of learning programmes. It also shows the principles underpinning the curriculum as well as the NCS philosophy and policy. Aspects such as time allocation, availability of resources and inclusivity and barriers to learning are also reflected in the figure 4.1. Other aspects of the NCS, such as the Learning Area Statements, are highlighted in the next section.

4.4.1.1   The national curriculum statement: learning area statement

(a) The structure of the national curriculum statement

The NCS has three key design features, which are consistently applied from Grade R to Grade 12. These are:

▪ Critical and developmental outcomes;

▪ Learning outcomes; and

▪ Assessment standards.

According to du Plessis *et al.* (2007:55), these design features give the national curriculum statement its breadth and depth. A discussion of the three key design features is presented next.

(b) Critical and developmental outcomes

The NCS aims to give expression to the principles embodied in the constitution and develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa. Moreover, the NCS documents state that, in developing the learning outcomes for learning areas/subjects, the developers have used critical and development outcomes.

The critical outcomes envisage learners who can:

▪ Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;

▪ Work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organization and community;

▪ Organize and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;

▪ Collect, analyse, organize and critically evaluate information;

▪ Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;

▪ Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and

▪ Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

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On the other hand, developmental outcomes envisage learners who can also:

- Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies in order to learn more effectively;
- Participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national, and global communities;
- Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive in a range of social contexts;
- Explore education and career opportunities; and
- Develop entrepreneurial opportunities (du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:56).

The importance of these critical and developmental outcomes cannot be over-emphasised. Basically, these outcomes have a direct influence on both the kind of learner that is envisaged , and also the kind of educator that is envisaged.

(c) Learning outcomes (LO)

Learning outcomes are derived from both the critical and developmental outcomes. The NCS describe a learning outcome as a description of what knowledge, skills and values learners should demonstrate and be able to show at the end of a phase (South African National Department of Education , 2002: 3).

(d) Assessment standards (AS)

Assessment standards describe the level at which learners should demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcome(s) and the ways (depth and breadth) of demonstrating their achievement. They are grade specific and show how conceptual progression will occur in a learning area. They embody the knowledge, skills and values required to achieve learning outcomes. It should be noted that assessment standards do not prescribe the method of assessment (South African National Department of Education, 2002:2). Assessment standards are thus criteria that collectively show how conceptual progression occurs from grade to grade.

To summarise: assessment standards

- Are criteria which describe the level at which learners should demonstrate their achievement of a learning outcome;
- Are grade specific; in other words, there are assessment standards for each grade;
- Collectively show how conceptual progression occurs from grade to grade; and
- Embody the knowledge, skills and values required to achieve learning outcomes (du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:57).

It is imperative at this stage to shed some light on the differences between an assessment standard and a learning outcome.

(a) The differences between an assessment standard and a learning outcome

A learning outcome describes what a learner should know and be able to do by the end of the phase. On the other hand, an assessment standard identifies, for each grade, the minimum that needs to be assessed and this, in turn, guides the educator on what must be planned and taught in the grade (du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:57).

In practical terms, this means that learning outcomes can and will, in most cases, remain the same from grade to grade, but assessment standards will tend to change from grade to grade. It is therefore important to mention the fact that assessment standards are minimum standards and that some learners can and are expected to go beyond these assessment standards. It is equally imperative for educators to encourage learners to do different activities that go beyond the assessment standards for these learners. Likewise, during the course of the year, some learners may experience difficulties in achieving these standards. In these cases, the educator needs to support and help the learner, since different learners learn at a different pace and in different ways (South African National Department of Education, 2002:5).

It is important to give a brief discussion of other aspects of the NCS at this stage, namely the learning area, the learning programme, the work schedule and the lesson plan.

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- The learning area (LA)

A learning area is defined by du Plessis *et al.* (2007:58), as a field of knowledge, skills and values which has unique features as well as connection with other fields of knowledge and learning areas. Each learning area statement identifies the main learning outcomes to be achieved by the end of Grade 9 and each learning area statement also specifies the assessment standards that will enable the learning outcomes to be achieved. Assessment standards are defined for each grade and describe the depth and breadth of what learners should know and be able to do. Each learning area statement's assessment standard shows how conceptual and skills development can take place over time. Assessment standards can be integrated within grades as well as across grades. Logically, the achievement of an optimal relationship between the integration across learning areas and conceptual progression from grade to grade are central to this curriculum (du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:58).

The NCS consists of the following learning Area Statements:
- Languages;
- Mathematics;
- Natural Sciences;
- Social Sciences;
- Arts and Culture;
- Life Orientation;
- Economic and Management Sciences; and
- Technology.

The NCS has been designed in such a way that each Learning Area Statement clearly identifies the ultimate learning outcome to be attained by the end of Grade 9. In addition, assessment standards that might lead to the realization of the learning outcomes, are also specified by each learning Area Statement (South African National Department of Education, 2003:2). Following is a discussion of the NCS Learning Programmes.

4.4.1.2   The national curriculum statement: learning programmes

Central to the NCS is the promotion of commitment and competence amongst the educators. In other words, it seeks to equip them in such a way that they will be capable

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of developing their own learning programmes. In brief, a learning programme can be defined as a phase-long plan that provides a framework for planning, organising and managing classroom activities for each phase (South African National Deparment of Education, 2003:2). According to du Plessis *et al.* (2007:61), a learning programme is the structured and systematic arrangement of activities that encourage the attainment of learning outcomes and assessment standards for the phase, to ensure that the teaching, learning and assessment programme is coherent. It seems to be a powerful tool for ensuring that the learning outcomes for each learning area are systematically attended to.

A learning programme specifies the scope of teaching and learning activities in order to achieve its goals. Therefore it interprets and sequences learning outcomes and assessment standards as reflected in the NCS. The learning programme also serves as a guide to the educators in the sense that it identifies core knowledge and concepts to be used in achieving the learning outcomes for a specific phase. Furthermore, different contexts and local realities such as the needs of the community, schools and learners are taken heed of in the learning programme. It also considers how integration within and across learning areas would be carried out, as well as what resources are readily available to engage in effective language teaching and learning activities.

A learning programme translates the NCS of a learning area/subject into phase-long plans that give details of the following:

- The sequencing of the learning outcomes and assessment standards;
- The core knowledge and concepts that will be used to attain the learning outcomes for the phase;
- The context that ensures that teaching and learning is appropriate to the needs that exist in the comuninity, school and classroom;
- The time allocation and weighting given to the different outcomes and assessment standards in the phase;
- How integration within and across learning areas will happen;
- The resources needed when determining the learning activities; and
- Any special or national events likely to be included in the school calendar (du Plessiss *et al.*, 2007:62).

Typical of a learning programme is its flexibility, thus it could even be translated into year-long grade specific work schedules and shorter activity-long lesson plans. Of significance to this study is the fact that service providers such as READ develop their language programmes in accordance with the stipulations of the NCS.

Nevertheless, it would be naïve to think that the NCS will serve as a panacea for all the educational problems in South Africa. South Africans still have a long way to go as far as the actual implementation of the new approaches is concerned. South Africa has already learnt a good lesson from the process of implementing the NCS and OBE in schools. Much money, time and effort have been put into it, yet many educators are still applying the traditional method of teaching. The transformation of an education system and the changing of mindsets cannot happen overnight. However, South Africa is not alone in this battle. The USA is a very good example, because many efforts are still being made to review its OBE model despite the fact that it is a developed country.

A work schedule is a yearlong programme that shows how teaching, learning and assessment will be sequenced and paced in a particular grade. It is a delivery tool, a means of working towards the achievement of the Learning Outcomes specified in the Learning Programme, and incorporates the Assessment Standards that will be achieved in that grade (South African National Department of Education, 2003:2).

A work schedule provides the educators in a grade with a year-long programme based on the learning programme. It develops the sequencing, context and core knowledge and concept choices made at Learning programme level. Educators will, in developing the work schedule, plan:

- The assessment programme for the year;
- The use of resources needed;
- Integration within and across learning areas; and
- Lesson plan.

A lesson plan is the next level of planning and is drawn directly from the work schedule. It describes concretely and in detail teaching, learning and assessment activities that are to be implemented in any given period (South African National Department of Education, 2003:2). A lesson plan could range in duration from a single activity to a term's teaching,

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learning and assessment and, in terms of actual time, may last from a day to a week or a month. It includes the approach and methodology of teaching, learning and assessment activities that are to be managed in the classroom.

The lesson plan provides a detailed structure for teaching, learning and assessment activities. It provides the day-to-day details. The following elements should be contained in the lesson plan:

- Those elements already determined by the learning programme and work schedule;
- The actual dates over which the lesson plan will stretch;
- Conceptual links to previous and future lesson plans;
- Details and sequencing of the teaching, learning and assessment activities;
- Any particular teaching approach and method to be used; and
- Special and important notes regarding the needs of learners (du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:63).

A discussion of the legislative framework and policy underpinning READ's language programmes is presented in the next sub-section.

4.5 THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK AND POLICY UNDERPINNING READ'S LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN GENERAL

In all countries, national curriculum frameworks shape and give direction to teaching and learning. In fact, these curriculum frameworks set out a country's education goals.

Since 1994, South Africa has undergone a great deal of educational change as a result of the situation that the first democratic government inherited. The South African education system was fragmented before 1994 as the 19 different education departments were separated on racial, geographic and ideological bases. Following the 1994 elections, one of the first tasks of the National Education and Training Forum was to begin a process whereby the national syllabi were revised and certain subjects rationalized. The purpose of the rationalization process was to lay the foundations for a single national core syllabus. Subsequently, the White Paper on education and training, the South African Qualifications Act 58 of 1995 and the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996, provided a framework for the educational changes (du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:47.

In June 1995, a draft NQF bill was published and in Ocober 1995 an act was passed to establish the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). This was established to act as the overall national authority to govern, manage and recognize all educational and training qualifications in South Africa (du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:48).

The purpose of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is primarily aimed to structure education and training in such a way that South Africa can become an international economic role-player. On the one hand, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) provides the means to enable each person who enters learning to achieve nationally recognized and internationally comparable qualifications. The higher education qualifications framework (HEQF) is also an integral part of the NQF (du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:49). The framework is a qualifications framework, represented by level descriptors, the main qualification types and their descriptors, and standards for specific qualifications. According to du Plessis *et al.,* (2007:49), level descriptors and qualification descriptors are expressed in terms of learning outcomes. They further postulate that the measuring of volume is expressed in terms of study time, for example the number of academic years of study required, or the number of notional hours of study expressed as credits.

The NQF consists of 8 levels and each level is described by a unique level descriptor. SAQA develops guidelines on level descriptors in consultation with each National Standard Body (NSB) and Standard-Generating Body (SGB) to ensure coherence across fields and to facilitate assessment and the international comparability of standards and qualifications (Olivier, 1998:1). It is necessary at this stage to highlight the levels of the National Qualifications Framework, in order to clarify the level which is the focus of this investigation, namely Grade 4 learners.

(a)   NQF levels

NQF level 1 is embedded in the General Education and Training Band (GET) which consists of Grades 1-9 and equals Adult Basic Education levels 1 to 4. Grades 1-3 are in the Foundation Phase, Grades 4-6 are the Intermediate Phase, and Grades 7-9 are the Senior Phase. NQF level 1 qualifications can be achieved either by means of what is commonly known as formal education or by any other means of learning (Olivier, 1998:1).

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NQF levels 2-4 are embedded in the Further Education and Training Band, (FET) and equals qualifications obtained at schools, colleges or other comparable types of institutions. NQF levels 5-8 are embedded in the Higher Education and Training Band (HET) and are tied to occupational certificates, first degrees and higher diplomas, higher degrees, doctorates and further research degrees. Qualifications are founded on a coherent combination of learning outcomes which have a defined purpose, and which are intended to provide qualifying learners with a basis for further learning (Olivier, 1998:2).

Furthermore, a record of learning, which is established for each learner, embodies credits and qualifications gained by means of any delivery system and enables learners to build on what they learn as they move from one learning situation to another. The whole process is aimed at fully integrating learning through education and training systems. The following quality assurance infrastructures are meant to ensure that education and training conform to the required standards:

- National Standard Bodies (NSBs);
- Standard-Generating Bodies (SGBs); and
- Education and Training Quality Assurers (Moderation Bodies).

The legislative framework that led to the formation of the above bodies enables South Africa to develop its own integrated National Qualifications Framework accompanied by a supporting quality assurance system. The link between OBE and READ's language programmes is evident in the sense that they are both guided by the principles of SAQA and the NQF. However, this particular study focuses mainly within NQF level 1, as it seeks to evaluate the impact of READ's language programmes on Grade 4 learners' writing competencies.

(b) Language policy

The Language in Education policy is part of a continuous process in which the policy is still being developed as part of the national language plan (du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:45). This plan includes all sectors of society, including the Deaf community. The main aims of the Ministry of Education's policy for Language in Education (South African National Department of Education 1997(b)) are to:

- Promote full participation in society and the economy through equitable and meaningful access to education;
- Pursue the language policy which best supports the general conceptual development of learners and to establish multilingualism as an approach to language in Education;
- Promote and develop all the official languages;
- Support teaching and learning of all other languages learners need to acquire;
- Counter disadvantages resulting from different kinds of mismatches between home language and languages of learning and teaching;
- Develop programmes for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages;
- All learners shall offer at least one approved language as a subject in Grade 1 and 2;
- From Grade 3 onwards, all learner shall offer their language of learning and teaching and at least one additional approved language;
- All language subjects shall receive equitable time and resource allocation; and
- The Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) must be an official language
  (du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:45).

(c) Education White Paper No. 6, 2001

White Paper No. 6 (South African Qualifications Authority Notice 781) highlights the importance of inclusive education and training in schools. Following are key recommendations that relate to language teaching and learning:

- Acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support;
- Accepting and respecting the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs, which are equally valued;
- Enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners;
- Acknowledging and respecting differences in children, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV Status, etc;
- Changing attitudes, behaviours, methodologies, curricula and environments to meet the needs of all children;
- Maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimizing barriers to learning; and

▪ The NCS addressing barriers to learning by setting the same learning outcomes for all learners.

Basically, the language policy highlights important issues to consider when engaging in the process of language teaching and learning. This means that schools and service providers such as READ Educational Trust must organize language teaching and learning in such a way that all learners can achieve these outcomes. It also implies that barriers to learning and development need to be identified and understood so that learning and assessment can be adapted or modified appropriately (du Plessis *et al.,*, 2007:46).

4.6   THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF READ'S APPROACH TO LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN GENERAL

Perhaps the best introduction to any topic on language acquisition and linguistic theory is a look at some of the facts that linguistic theory must account for. The complexity, orderliness and limited variety in human languages convinces linguists that language must be learned through a biological programme that puts bounds on the possible grammatical system a child can postulate. The type of system that falls within the bounds of this innate learning ability is the matter of linguistic theory (Fletcher & Garman, 1997:49).

Language acquisition does not take place in a vacuum. As children acquire language, they acquire a sign system that bears important relationships to both cognitive and social aspects of their life. The issues involved in assessing the inter-relationships amongst social, linguistic, and cognitive processes in development are numerous, and no attempt is made to present them exhaustively (Fletcher & Garman, 1997:9).

Experts in the field of language development agree that human babies are born with an inherent potential for language learning. It is either through an innate highly specialized language-learning ability or through more general cognitive abilities. The developing child only needs exposure to language in his or her immediate environment, which is very important for the activation of the child's language organs.

Like many other countries, South Africa is characterized by a high level of linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity. The eleven languages recognized by the Constitution

represent the most prominent languages spoken in this country. The curriculum also emphasizes the fact that learners have the right to become literate in their home language and to develop their language skills in that language. Nevertheless, in the interests of nation-building and communication, the curriculum also proposes the learning of additional languages at various points in the South African education system.

According to Krashen (1993:114), languages are best acquired through meaningful interactions with its users. READ's model is in line with the above viewpoint in the sense that it suggests that comprehensible input is the driving force behind linguistic learning. It further proposes that the most accessible comprehensible input can be found in books and stories. Books can develop the learner's conceptual knowledge in the process of language acquisition. READ Educational Trust propagates that access to a variety of books is the most successful way of ensuring conceptual and cognitive growth, which will in turn facilitate language acquisition.
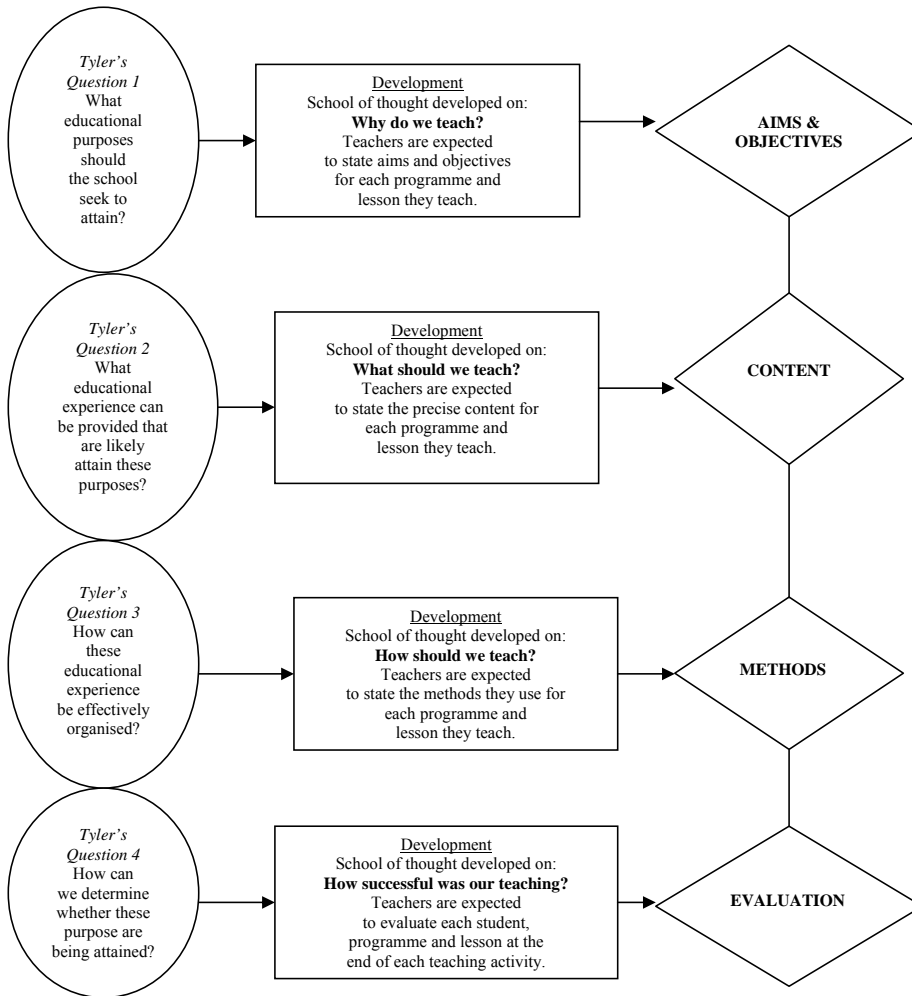
4.6.1   The READ Model

Models are essentially patterns serving as guidelines to action, and can be found for various educational activities (Oliva, 1982:154 in Jacobs *et al.,* 2002: 95). Curriculum models guide the process of decision making in designing learning programmes, because curriculum development should actually be perceived as a task that requires orderly thinking when one examines both the model and the learning that has to be accomplished.

Curriculum theorists who have made contributions with regard to models of curriculum development and design include Ralph Tyler (1949), Hilda Taba (1962), Lewy (1977), Oliva (1982), Marsh (1997), and many others. When all these models are compared, it becomes clear that almost all of them rest on four important concepts, namely aims and objectives, content, methods and evaluation. These four concepts together have become known as the perennial curriculum model. 'Perennial' means evergreen, unchanging, recurrent, timeless and long-lasting. Perennial curriculum thus means a timeless plan that most qualified educators use when they design a lesson, unit, or programme.

The main initiator of the perennial curriculum model was Ralph Tyler (1949) whose model is referred to in the literature as the *Tyler Rationale or the objectives model* (Lemmer & Badenhorst, 1997:58). Tyler based his curriculum plan on four fundamental

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questions which curriculum planners should consider when they design a curriculum. In due time other curriculum specialists, including those of READ Educational Trust, started building their arguments on these four questions and developed four standard curriculum components, one component for each question, as indicated in Figure 4. 2.

Figure 4.2 Developmental processes from Tyler's rationale to the perennial curriculum model

Tyler's Question 1
What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?

Development
School of thought developed on:
Why do we teach?
Teachers are expected to state aims and objectives for each programme and lesson they teach.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Tyler's Question 2
What educational experience can be provided that are likely attain these purposes?

Development
School of thought developed on:
What should we teach?
Teachers are expected to state the precise content for each programme and lesson they teach.

CONTENT

Tyler's Question 3
How can these educational experience be effectively organised?

Development
School of thought developed on:
How should we teach?
Teachers are expected to state the methods they use for each programme and lesson they teach.

METHODS

Tyler's Question 4
How can we determine whether these purpose are being attained?

Development
School of thought developed on:
How successful was our teaching?
Teachers are expected to evaluate each student, programme and lesson at the end of each teaching activity.

EVALUATION

(Adapted from Jacobs *et al.,* 2002: 97)

READ's model is also based on Tyler's questions. The similarities will become evident when discussing READ's balanced literacy programme in Section 4.5.

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READ Educational Trust's model is an educational intervention that addresses the Languages learning area. Project schools are generally previously disadvantaged schools that are making the transition from the traditional, memory-based schooling to the new educational paradigm consistent with the principles of outcomes-based education and recommendations of the national curriculum. READ's model consists of:

- Resource provisioning;
- Whole-school training;
- Whole-school monitoring; and
- Leader teacher training.

During its many years of involvement in schools, READ Educational Trust has developed a unique approach which, when implemented consistently, guarantees significantly improved learner performance levels. The READ approach has the following characteristics:

- The approach is holistic in nature in the sense that all elements of the teaching-learning process are targeted;
- It is research-based in the sense that it incorporates the findings of worldwide literacy studies;
- READ's model is field-tested because only the strategies that yield positive results in African contexts are implemented in schools;
- It is custom-designed, all its instructional programmes can be modified to respond directly to specific learning needs such as those of rural schools;
- It is curriculum-related as the language programmes work within the scope of the national curriculum;
- The approach is learner-centered because instructional strategies and materials are suitable for the continuum of learning needs, abilities and performance levels typically found in South African classrooms;
- It is community-oriented in the sense that the model fosters community participation in the educational process through motivational programmes and parental involvement; and
- Cost effective when measured against the cost of the supply of textbooks to every school (READ Educational Trust, 2007:1).

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READ's model is three-pronged and it ensures significant results. The following are the three aspects of the READ model.

- *Training*

   Educators are trained through In-Service Education and Training (INSET) on how to implement methodologies in classrooms. READ's methodologies are book-based. The INSET programme enables the organization to improve language competence across all learning areas. In addition, learners are trained in Balanced Language Methodologies and subject educators are trained in research, study and life skills (READ Educational Trust, 2007:1).

   The programme also trains regional and district mangers, school managers and school management teams, learner representatives and parent communities. National motivational campaigns such as Readathon, Festival of Stories and regional events such as Rally to READ and essay-writing and public speaking reach about 27 000 schools per annum. Monitoring also form an integral part of READ's training model. READ trainers conduct monitoring as an important part of every course in order to ensure adequate implementation and sustainability.

- *Materials Development and Resource Provision*

   READ develops books in a variety of languages. Reading Matters, a READ's Material's Development division assist with the alignment of the content with the National Curriculum Statement. The organization also works on booklist selections, drawn from national and international publishers. Books are distributed in tanderm with training.

- *Evaluation and Assessment*

   READ Educational Trust has extensive experience in evaluating whole school development and Languages as a learning area. The organization has developed evaluation instruments with the assistance of experts from Canterbury University in New Zealand, Berkley University, Texas University and Melbourne University in Australia (READ Educational Trust, 2007:2).

For the pupose of this study, whole school training, school monitoring visits and leader teacher training are dealt with.

4.6.1.1   Whole school training

Whole school training is offered to enable language educators to use books effectively in order to promote language skills in all learning areas. This involves training all the language educators in READ's project schools in a range of methodologies that together form a balanced language programme. This is not specific to one language and it is an outcomes-based series of instructional strategies that language educators can use with any language. After each training programme, educators are monitored individually in their classrooms to ensure that the books are being used efficiently and the language programmes implemented systematically.

READ Educational Trust's book-based approach would not be successful without the rigorous teacher training and monitoring programme. An important aspect of READ's in-service training is its emphasis on working with whole school communities instead of selected individual language educators. Experience has proven that training one or two classroom educators in resource-based methods is not enough. The school manager in particular must be convinced that there are gains for both the learners and the educators. The new approach must be delivered into a support environment and embraced by the whole school community to ensure a lasting change in attitudes to writing practices.

On completion of the initial training, project schools have an option to continue with further courses. Since training funds are usually limited, some schools have developed their own fund-raising strategies to afford further training or to purchase more resources. This is encouraged, as it is an important part of the process towards self-sustainability.

4.6.1.2   Whole school monitoring

Educators' completion of training courses and their willingness to use the balanced language programme in their classrooms do not guarantee effective implementation. To help schools with the implementation of the balanced language programme, READ Educational Trust has devised a mentoring and monitoring system. READ monitors visit project schools in order to observe, show how to display materials, suggest

improvements, and generally support less experienced educators in their endeavors to apply outcomes-based methodology.

This professional exchange of concerns, solutions, observations, and ideas not only serves as a confidence boost to newly-trained educators, but provides the READ monitoring staff with valuable insights into the process and alerts them to potential problems or areas of difficulty. Feedback from monitoring visits is used to revise and improve the READ model.

4.6.1.3   Leader teacher training

It is READ's responsibility to ensure that the language programme is sustained after the training has been completed. In order to achieve this, the organization has identified a group of educators in each school who have proved to be highly motivated and committed to the implementation of its training programmes. These language educators are offered further training as leader teachers. READ works with leader teachers for a period of five years after the training has been completed. Leader teachers are trained in a number of additional courses and take responsibility for organizing further training for other language eduators in their respective schools. Thus, READ's language programme and new resources are disseminated and incorporated into the project schools at a minimal cost. Leader-teachers play an instrumental role in capacity building and transforming the culture of their schools by providing support to their colleagues. They also encourage a collaborative approach to language teaching by maintaining links between READ and the school community.

4.6.2   READ's Balanced Language Programme

READ's Balanced Language programme is based on the principles of the National Curriculum Statement. A summary of the learning area Languages is presented in figure 4.3 below.

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**FIGURE 4.3 Summary of Learning area Languages-SO5**

Intermediate Phase Grade 4 to Grade 7

L-SO5: Learners understand, know and apply language Structures and convention in context.	
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (PIs):	LEVELS OF COMPLEXITY OF LANGUAGE (ACTIVITIES): • BASIC LEVEL OF LANGUAGE LEARNING
	• MAIN LANGUAGE LEARNING and EXTENSION IN THE USE OF ADDITIONAL LANGUAGES
In the Intermediate Phase no grammatical terminology is used. Activities should be Undertaken in context and not in formal grammar lessons.	
AC 1: Knowledge of grammatical structure and conventions is applied to structure text	
This will be evident when learners create texts as designated in the adjacent tables:	ENGAGE WITH TEXTS SUCH AS: - completion of sentences - close procedure - unscrambling of paragraphs (logical sequencing) - writing of descriptive and factual paragraphs - dialogue - subjective reports - informal letters
	- short compositions - giving opinions on books - objective reports - newspaper reports - writing of poetry - short stories - short plays
language being mentioned below) concord, active metaphor, race/cultural	TO ILLUSTRATE (select those relevant to studied and others to that language but not - vocabulary - word formation - spelling - noun classes, pronouns (e.g. possessive) - verbal prefixes, verbal suffixes, basic tenses, and passive - qualification, adjectives (basic), adverbs - prepositions - simple sentences - basic punctuation - common expressions - paragraphing - simple figurative language (e.g. smile, personification), simple concrete language - some sensitivity of language regarding gender/ issues

(Adapted from READ Educational Trust, 2000:12)

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A central principle of the Languages learning Area Statement is therefore the integration of the above aspects of language through the creation and interpretation of texts. Basically, these outcomes have been written to give specific focus to particular kinds of knowledge and skills, and to make them clear and understandable. For example, in learning outcome 4, namely writing, it is anticipated that the learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes as illustrated in figure 4.4. READ's balanced language and literacy programme which incorporates all the above OBE concepts is illustrated in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4 READ's balanced language and literacy programme
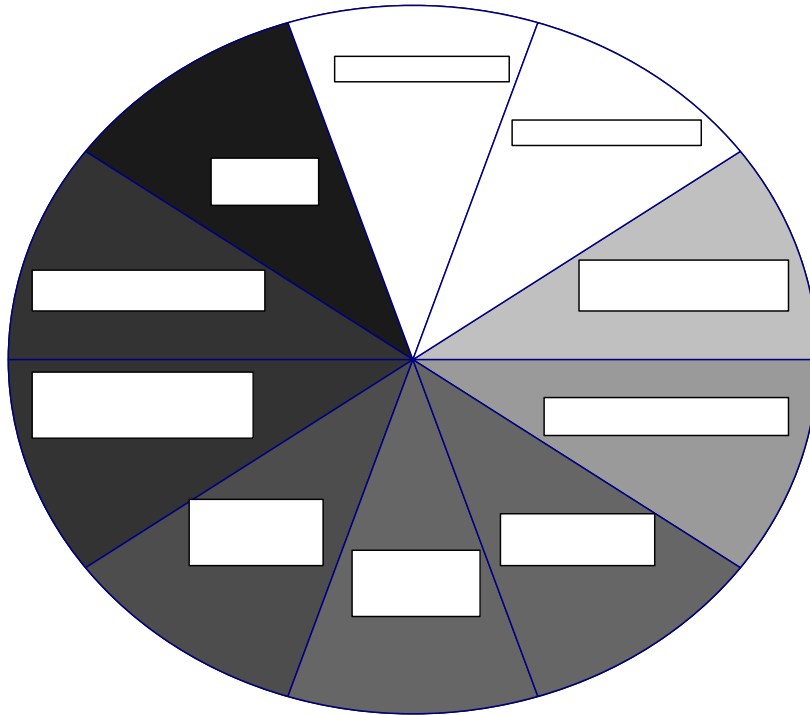
Storytelling

du Plessis (2002:18)

All READ's training and resource provision is underpinned by the approach of a balanced language programme. The entire READ language programme is based on aspects of outcomes-based education and forms the core of READ's balanced language programme. The following principles of outcomes-based education underpin the READ language programme.

Reading for information

Shared writing

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Language experience writing

Independent writing

In

- Learning programmes are results-oriented;
- The role of the educator is that of the facilitator;
- Learners posses knowledge and the ability to learn;
- Learning entails the development of learners' knowledge, understanding skills, abilities and values; and
- Assessment is continuous.

In turn, the READ programme incorporates all the theoretical foundations of learning, language acquisition and literacy acquisition that have informed the organization over the years. The following tenets also underpin the READ programme:

- Reading and writing experiences should be learner-centered;
- Reading and writing for meaning is paramount;
- Writing and reading are inseparable processes;
- Learners need exposure to a wide variety of texts as they read and write;
- Reading and writing are powerful tools for learning;
- The best approach for the teaching of reading and writing is a combination of approaches;
- Assessment of literacy learning is part of sound teaching practice; and
- Reading and writing flourish in a supportive environment.

According to Cambourne (1988:42), a balanced language approach replicates the following conditions of learning:

- Immersion, which means that a language classroom must be rich in print material;
- Demonstrations, which means that the language educator needs to model reading and writing behaviours;
- Engagement, which implies that the learners must also engage with texts and make meaning of concepts;
- Expectations and praise, which mean that the learners must be praised for good performance;
- Responsibility for both learners and language educators to share the responsibility for achieving lesson outcomes;

- Approximations, which means that learners need to be confident enough to take risks and try without fear of being ridiculed;
- Practice and use, which means that the more learners read and write, the more their performance will improve; and
- Response, which implies that primary school learners also require positive feedback from peers, educators and parents.

The balanced language approach is currently used in many outcomes-based systems such as those of New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain, Fiji, Singapore and the United States of America (Cambourne, 1988:42). READ Educational Trust has adopted a balanced language programme because it develops all four language skills simultaneously and holistically (reading, writing, speaking and listening). Other important aspects of a balanced language programme can be summarized as follows:

- It balances the 'phonic' and 'look and say' approaches to the teaching of reading, as well as the apprenticeship approach that uses big books;
- The approach ensures balanced support for learners. Learners are supported and scaffolded by language educators and peer groups until they are ready to work independently according to the Vygotskian model;
- It ensures a balance of methodologies so that all learners are catered for; and
- The approach also balances explicit teaching and learner activities so that learners have stimulating inputs.

4.6.3   The READ Courses

For the purpose of this investigation, teaching writing as a course is discussed. However, it should be remembered that READ Educational Trust offers courses for all the grades, namely, the READ pre-primary programme, group work in the Grade R classroom and courses for the senior phase. The organization also offers courses for the school managers who are the driving force behind the implementation of its language programmes and the general enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning.

4.6.4 Teaching Writing

This course aims to help all educators in such a way that they would be able to use non-fiction books to make subject teaching more interesting and exciting while fulfilling the requirements of the curriculum. Educators are also shown how to prepare lessons and interactive posters using a non-fiction book. Using a non-fiction book on subject teaching is also meant to assist educators working in all learning areas.

4.7 THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN FORMAL EDUCATION

Human language has an important role to play in formal education. For example, it is a means of communication. It, therefore, assists with the organizing of cognition or thinking which is vital for the process of teaching and learning. Although non-verbal communication is important, it is limited to the present situation. Similarly, the integration of new information into our knowledge framework is accomplished through linguistic means as we think and organize thoughts in words (Cambourne, 1988:42).

Thus, the importance of language in formal education cannot be underestimated. Experiential learning must be promoted as concept formation requires good language mastery. Furthermore, language is necessary to analyze the properties of each shape, and to understand the differences between those shapes. In the light of this, one would argue that the level of language skills is, in fact, a good predictor of educational success. However, second language speakers may also experience tremendous difficulties in as far as the grasping of the learning content is concerned.

As indicated above, learners come to school unequally equipped with language skills even though they share the same cultural and linguistic background. The differences can be attributed to exposure to books and environmental print. It is, therefore, very important to expose learners to sources that are content-rich if they are to achieve academic success. In this line of thought, it is vital to reiterate the fact that language is the foundation of learning.

The next sub-section highlights educational implications of the READ model.

4.8   EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE READ MODEL

READ Educational Trust's model is based on the cognitive development theories of teaching and learning that derive from the original work of Chomsky, Feuerstein, Freire, Piaget, Kohlberg and Vygotsky (Cambourne, 1988:43).   For the purpose of this investigation, Piaget, Vygotsky, Chomsky and Feuerstein's theories were discussed. The shared belief that underlies these theories is that teaching and learning are interactive, dialogic processes that involve both the learners and the educators.

With these similarities in mind, and the understanding that not a single theorist has developed a complete explanation of the concept of learning, this section highlights how READ's training model may have relevance to the classroom situation. According to READ's model, educational experiences must be built around the learner's cognitive structure. Children of the same culture tend to have similar cognitive structures, but it is entirely possible for them to have different cognitive structures and therefore require different kinds of learning material (Hergenhahn and Olson, 2001:428). On the other hand, educational material that cannot be assimilated into a child's cognitive structure cannot have any meaning to the child.

Thus optimal education involves mildly challenging experiences for the learner so that the dual processes of assimilation and accommodation can provide for intellectual growth. It is evident then, that both Piaget (a representative of the cognitive paradigm) and most of the above theorists have reached the same conclusion about education, namely, that it must be individualized. Similarly, READ's model suggests that the ability to assimilate data varies from child to child and that educational material must be tailored to suit each child's cognitive structure.

4.9   CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the research background to READ's language programmes was highlighted. A number of aspects that constitute the background to READ's training programmes, such as the origins and mission of READ Educational Trust, the relationship between READ's model and outcomes-based education, the READ model itself, READ's balanced language programme, the structure of the national curriculum statement, critical and development outcomes, learning outcomes, assessment standards, the differences

between an assessment standard and a learning outcome, the learning area, a learning programme, the work schedule, a lesson plan and the theoretical foundations of READ's approach to language acquisition, were discussed.

OBE is a paradigm shift in the way people think about teaching and learning. The 'old paradigm' and the 'new paradigm' differ extensively, as was indicated in Figure 4.3.1. Outcomes-based education and training is meant to enable each learner to acquire knowledge and skills as well as mastering processes necessary to accept the challenges and opportunities of the world (Olivier, 1998:72). In a nutshell, OBE implies that the curriculum design process starts with the intended learning outcome, followed by the knowledge, skills and processes that learners must demonstrate for the achievement of an outcome, as well as the processes that were followed.

The concept of writing was clarified in terms of READ's model. The importance of writing in formal education was also discussed. Furthermore, a discussion of educational implications of the READ model was presented. This led to the realization that there is a close relationship between READ's language programmes and outcomes-based education as conceived by the national Department of Education in South Africa.

The next chapter deals with research strategies and data collection methods applied in the investigation.