CHAPTER 1

Problem, aim, methodology and course of the research

1.1 1NTRODUCTION

In South Africa and all over the world, people with disabilities as some individuals are labelled, have been and are still being discriminated against. The model that explicates the discrimination requires that these people be removed from society and during the exclusion receive treatment for the disability until such time that normality has been restored to such a level that they will be accepted and their integration into society will be tolerated. Even in education learners who have been classified as disabled in some way, (for example, learners who do not cope with English as the medium of instruction) are not likely to find an escape route to avoid this system of segregation and exclusion from the general education system. Learners with so-called disabilities are placed in special education settings, as it is believed that they do not have the potential to benefit from education in the mainstream.

Treatment in these exclusive educational settings is focused on "rectifying" the "wrong" in an artificial environment, dislodged from reality. The potential these learners possess to contribute to the authenticity of education for real life where the demands are fierce and the challenges high - even for ordinary people – is not recognised.

Although there might be different considerations when dealing with severe and multiple disabilities, the concern remains with the overwhelming majority of cases where valuable human potential is lost forever because of persisting perceptions and counterproductive treatment and segregation of so-called disabled learners. This obviously constitutes a problem consisting of two main aspects to be explicated.

1.2 THE PROBLEM

The following paragraphs will endeavour to explicate the two main aspects that constitute the problem to eventually arrive at a comprehensive definition of the problem to be investigated.

1.2.1 DISCRIMINATION BECAUSE OF PROBLEMS WITH ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AND READING IN PARTICULAR

In order to reflect on the problem of discrimination against learners who experience problems with English as a second language, it will be necessary to distinguish between a first, a second and a third language.

1.2.1.1 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FIRST, SECOND AND A THIRD LANGUAGE

English as a second language refers to a language that is not acquired under ideal circumstances in the home environment as is the case with a first language. It is important to realise that the first language has already been acquired by the time the learner enters primary school but a second language has to be learned under controlled circumstances such as a school (Askes, 1993:16-19). Wickham (1995:10) points out that a second language should not be seen as a less perfect form of the first language, but that it is a totally separate phenomenon on its own, as indicated by Bernhardt (1991:2). A third language is also not part of either the first or the second language. A third language is usually acquired for a specific purpose, such as coping in overseas countries, for economic reasons, or to be able to read references in other languages (Askes, 1993:1). A third language can therefore also be a foreign language.

The following distinction of Littlewood (1988:2) between a second and a foreign language leads to more clarity:

> *Briefly, a "second" language has social functions within the community where it is learnt (e.g. as a lingua franca or as the language of another*

social group), whereas a "foreign" language is learnt primarily for contact outside one's own community.

It should however be realised that in a South African context, because of our diversity, many individuals are fluent in their first language and quite proficient in more than one "second" language, such as English and Afrikaans, and are able to understand several "third" languages. Many black South African newsreaders, who received their training overseas, are good examples of the above. The majority of South Africans are unfortunately not that proficient in English.

Because English is the medium of instruction in many schools many learners who have struggled with English as a second language without receiving assistance have either dropped out of school or have repeated grades for a number of times. This can be viewed as a major problem in South Africa. When these learners are tested in English test scores cannot be reliable. In many cases problems with English have led to segregation and discrimination as will be clear from the next paragraphs.

1.2.1.2 THE SEGREGATION OF LEARNERS WHO DO NOT COPE WITH ENGLISH AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

In the Northern Province, it is not exceptional to find that learners who, for some reason were unable to acquire the basic literacy skills in English resulting in poor scholastic performance, were referred to special education, as the principal of the school was convinced that the learners would no longer be able to benefit from regular education. This problematic situation can most probably also be found in remote areas of other provinces. In many cases a history of the learner having failed his grade two or three times are motivators for the principal's perceptions. In most cases the broader issue of barriers to learning and development, which cause learning breakdown, would be found not to have received enough consideration. The factors that caused learning breakdown should have been considered in the process of planning to assist such a learner. In many cases it seems that the emphasis is still on what the learner cannot do, and not on how to assist the learner. Limited English proficiency (LEP) can be seen as a huge

contributor to poor scholastic performance, and referrals to special education. Donald (1993:145) supports this argument when saying that:

> *Despite intact ability however, the need for special educational support is very real. In almost all cases the learners who are being considered here have, for one reason or another, not acquired adequate basic educational skills - related essentially to literacy and numeracy - at a time in their development when this should normally have occurred...*

Stanovich (1991, 1993) has cautioned against the practice where the results of IQ tests are misinterpreted to conclude that a learner has dyslexia by saying that:

> *... an IQ test score is not properly interpreted as a measure of a person's potential (1991,p10), and that defining dyslexia by reference to discrepancies from IQ is an untenable procedure (1991, p 22)* (Carver and Clark, 1998:453).

As far as assistance with literacy is concerned, Donald (1993:145) points out that learners with LEP can be assisted in the regular classroom, but that they will acquire these skills in a much different way than younger children might. Assistance will however not be possible in overcrowded classrooms with under-qualified teachers and no resources. The fact that these learners need intensive individual assistance is realised when Clay (1993) gives a description of learners who did for some reason not have seemed to master the skill of reading:

> *Characteristically, these children demonstrate confusion about the literacy process and seem to have abandoned productive approaches to dealing with print. The records of these children show that they have been sick and absent for long periods, demonstrate wide fluctuations and variances in response to the complex task of learning to read and write, and often seem to take longer to learn* (Boehnlein, 1995:70).

As the skill of reading is one of the pillars on which the whole education process is built, these learners will have to be assisted appropriately. They cannot all be

referred to special education and, as it has already been pointed out, they should not unfairly be labelled as "dyslectic". The focus should be on the needs of these learners and not on test results.

1.2.2 THE MISCLASSIFICATION OF LEARNERS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

The concept of intelligence as a static construct does not make sense when being applied to English second language or foreign language learners. This aspect can closely be related to the problem that learners who experience difficulties with the understanding and communicating of English as a second or foreign language have. They have a high risk of being viewed as mentally retarded, due to the results of tests that do not take Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and cultural diversity into consideration. In many cases learners who do not understand English as the medium of instruction and who do in fact experience it as a barrier to learning and development have been misclassified as mildly mentally retarded and sent to special schools. Many teachers are very relieved when these learners who simply cannot keep up with the rest of the learners are removed from their classes to be placed elsewhere. Christison (1998:6) believes that learners have different strengths and weaknesses and that these should be developed. The Multiple Intelligences theory of Gardner (1995) supports the argument by indicating that humans have different intelligences that need to be developed. She (Christison, 1998:6) adds that second language teachers should:

> *... get away from defining intelligence in terms of tests and correlations among tests and begin more seriously to look how people around the world develop skills important to their lives*

With a broad description of the problem above, it will at this stage be necessary to define the problem more closely.

1.3 DEFINING THE PROBLEM

The problem can be defined as follows:

The exclusion of LSEN from the mainstream has been caused by widespread problems. Two main problems are:

- Many South African learners have problems with the understanding of English as the medium of instruction.
- The misclassification of learners who do not cope with English as the medium of instruction as special education candidates.

The above problems have resulted in the need for the development of educational programmes to assist learners with the understanding of the medium of instruction (English reading) and therefore in the realisation of their potential.

1.4 THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the research is to dynamically assist all learners through developing a cooperative paired reading programme to understand the medium of instruction and therefore to achieve growth in the realisation of the human potential of senior phase learners in inclusive education settings.

1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question can be formulated in the following way:

What is the best possible way to achieve growth in the understanding of the medium of instruction (English reading) and therefore also in the realisation of the human potential of learners in inclusive education settings and what method should be used?

In order to address the main research question, which should be kept in mind throughout the research, a number of sub-research questions have been identified. These are discussed in the section about the course of the research, in order to gain more clarity of focus.

1.6 THE METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

It is important to realise that the methodology of this research is unique. Schurink (1998:253) echoes a significant statement that was made by Morse (1994:223) by indicating that qualitative researchers use a wide range of strategies to conduct their research and that each set of strategies will be unique, depending on certain aspects. This is evident in the following statement:

> *The various strategies of enquiry used by qualitative researchers will differ depending on the purpose of the study, the nature of the research question and the skills and resources available to the researcher.*

The above statement is specifically relevant when emphasising the fact that the research methodology of this study may not have been implemented in its purest form, owing to the above considerations. The research is however still recognisable by the different methodologies that were utilised.

As far as utilising the different strategies of enquiry is concerned, it should briefly be stated that a process of triangulation (De Vos, 1998:359) was used whereby different strategies of enquiry are used to obtain data, to increase the reliability of the data. It is therefore positive to use many strategies of enquiry and consequently different methodologies.

The overall design of this research is grounded theory methodology, as the aim of the study is to develop a programme to assist learners with their understanding of English as the medium of instruction and therefore to achieve growth in the realisation of the human potential of learners in inclusive education settings. The grounded theory methodology was, in an overall sense of the study, conducted in an action research format. Before providing an overview of the methodology in each chapter, including the course of the study, it will be necessary to brief the reader on grounded theory methodology and action research.

1.6.1 GROUNDED THEORY METHODOLOGY

Grounded theory methodology (a term first used by Glasser and Strauss, 1967) is defined in the following way by Babbie (1992:61):

> *Very often, social scientists begin constructing a theory by observing aspects of social life, seeking to discover patterns that may point to more or less universal principles.*

De Vos & Van Zyl (1998:265) refer to Strauss and Corbin (1990:24), who explain the grounded theory methodology as:

> *... a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon.*

In order to reach a clear understanding of grounded theory methodology, the above definitions should be kept in mind with the following points taken from De Vos & Van Zyl (1998:265-276):

- Grounded theory methodology is a qualitative research method. It utilises a systematic set of procedures with the aim of developing a grounded theory about a specific phenomenon. The theory is inductively derived. The term 'induction' is clarified by Babbie (1992:G4) as: [the] *logical model in which general principles are developed from specific observations.*

  The following example is given by Babbie (1992:64) to explain induction further:

  Having noted that Jews and Catholics are more likely to vote Democratic than Protestants are, you might conclude that religious minorities in the United States are more affiliated with the Democratic Party and explain why. That would be an example of induction.

- Grounded theory is concerned with generating theory. The central purpose of using the grounded theory methodology is discovery.

- Grounded theory, in the form of substantive theory, has a descriptive character, for example, describing a specific kind of social setting, such as hospital wards. The following statement of Glasser and Strauss, referred to by De Vos & Van Zyl (1998:267) is significant in this regard:

  ... the theory must be clear, the informant's social world must be so vivid that readers 'can almost literally see and hear its people', ...

- The research questions in grounded theory studies are statements that identify the phenomenon that will be studied. De Vos & Van Zyl (1998:268) add that *grounded theory questions also tend to be oriented towards action and process.*

- Theoretical sensitivity is an important quality that must be part of the researcher. In this regard De Vos & Van Zyl (1998:268) say:

  Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand and the capacity to separate the pertinent from that which is not pertinent.

  Theoretical sensitivity is enhanced by the following resources:

  1 *Literature:*

  By studying readings on theory, research and documents, the researcher is sensitised by background information to comprehend the specific phenomenon that is being studied.

  2 *Professional experience:*

  A researcher's experience in a specific field over time leads to an understanding of what is happening in a specific field and how things will work under specific conditions.

3 *Personal experience:*

Personal experience with regard to a specific experience leads to a greater sensitivity towards such an experience.

- Grounded theory methodology utilises specific coding procedures whereby data are broken down, conceptualised and put back in new ways to build new theories.

With a better understanding of the concept of grounded theory methodology, it will be necessary to briefly discuss action research.

1.6.2 ACTION RESEARCH

Action research methodology is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Schurink (1998:406) mentions that *...action research is recognised in the literature as an alternative system of knowledge production...*
The following definition by Cohen and Manion (1994) has been referred to by Hodgkinson and Maree (1998:52):

... action research is a small scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention.

The following aspects of the above definitions should be emphasised:
The researcher uses action research to gain an understanding of a specific situation. He\she becomes involved in the situation and plans interventions that will improve the situation. Interventions are planned and implemented while the whole process is monitored by the researcher. Modifications to the interventions are made, leading to the implementation thereof. Throughout the research the steps of observation, evaluation, planning and implementation can be identified. The steps do not occur in a fixed order.

With a better understanding of action research, the next paragraphs will explain the research methodology with reference to the course of the research.

1.6.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY WITH REFERENCE TO THE COURSE OF THE RESEARCH

In the section that follows the research methodology of each chapter is discussed and an indication is given of the course of the research. The specific sub-research questions that are addressed in each chapter are briefly indicated in this section, to indicate the course of the research.

Chapter one deals with a description of the problem, the problem statement, the aim of the research, and the methodology and course of the research.

Chapter two utilises grounded theory methodology by means of a qualitative literature study to generate theory about inclusion as a viable means of meeting the needs of LSEN (including learners who struggle with English as the medium of instruction). The following sub-research questions are addressed in this chapter:

- What problems related to the system of separate special education necessitate the need for a new paradigm?
- What new paradigm is proposed as a viable means to meet the needs of all learners (including learners who struggle with English as the medium of instruction)?
- How did the concept of inclusion develop and how can it be defined?
- What forms of legislation are in place to support inclusion?

Chapter three provides a theoretical educational background about the process of maximising human potential. Theory is generated through grounded theory methodology, in the form of a qualitative literature study. The following sub-research questions are addressed in the chapter:

- How can the concept of maximising human potential be described?
- What is the role of the learning task?
- How can human potential be maximised through metalearning?
- What is the connection between metalearning and reading?

- What is cooperative learning and how can human potential be maximised through it?

A research background to reading is presented in chapter four. Through grounded theory methodology (a qualitative literature study) theory is generated for the development of a cooperative paired reading programme (in chapter five). The aim of the chapter is therefore to generate theory for programme development.
The following sub-research questions are addressed in this chapter:

- What educational theory about teaching/learning in general can be applied when teaching reading in English?
- What theory about the teaching of English as a second language is important?
- How can the concept of reading be clarified?
- What main approaches to the teaching of reading can be identified?
- What is the relation between the different approaches to teach reading and maximising human potential in inclusive education settings?
- What effective method can be used to assist struggling readers?

The overall aim of chapter five is programme development. Grounded theory methodology is utilised to develop a cooperative paired reading programme for LSEN in inclusive settings. The actual programme is presented in this chapter. The sub-research questions that address the main focus of the chapter are the following:

- What programme can be used as a model to assist learners in inclusive education settings with English reading and how can the programme be used?
- What foundation skills and behaviours are necessary for later reading success?
- What three phases should be present in the cooperative paired reading programme?
- How can the programme achieve growth in the realisation of human potential?
- What important strategies can be used by the teacher/tutor?
- How can typical poor readers be assisted?

- How should reading material for English second- or foreign language learners be selected?

Chapter six deals with the implementation and evaluation of the cooperative paired reading programme. The methodology that is described in this chapter is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research in the form of action research. Grounded theory methodology, with the aim of generating theory is still utilised. The following sub-research questions are addressed within this chapter:

- What data- collection methods are common to quantitative research paradigms?
- What data- collection methods are common to qualitative research paradigms?
- What is action research?
- How can action research be used to determine growth in the realisation of human potential (including a better understanding of English) of learners with Limited English Proficiency through cooperative paired reading?
- What are the findings of the quantitative and qualitative research?

Chapter seven can be seen as a reflection on the grounded theory that had been generated from the literature study and empirical research. The accomplishments as well as the deficiencies in this research process and product are recognised. Recommendations for improvement are made. Even though this chapter is the conclusion of the study, it can be seen as qualitative research. The direction of future research is also indicated in this chapter.

Apart from the methodology of the research it is necessary to briefly reflect on the resources that were used. The next paragraphs focus on this aspect.

1.6.4 RESEARCH RESOURCES

The research resources utilised to increase the standard of acceptability of the knowledge claims of this research are the following:

- Literature research, mainly focusing on research executed in the past.

- Praxis research, which focuses mainly on present research. In this study it involves:

  - Quantitative research, measuring the effectiveness of the cooperative paired reading programme in quantitative forms, such as reading speed and practical comprehension.
  - Qualitative research, measuring the effectiveness of the programme in qualitative terms such as to what extent growth in the realisation of human potential was achieved.
  - Action research, to improve a situation while taking action.
- Future research: The recommendations and conclusions of this research anticipate the future in terms of the relevance of constructed concepts and theoretical models for the future.

As the place of these resources in this study has already been indicated in previous paragraphs, it will not be dealt with in more detail at this stage. The last aspect in this section to be discussed is the clarification of concepts.

1.7 THE CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Terminologies and concepts are not explained in a separate section, as it was found to be more comprehensible to explain concepts when occurring, keeping the specific context in mind.

CHAPTER 2

A background to the study: The need for inclusion in South Africa

2.1 1NTRODUCTION

In South Africa in the past many disadvantaged learners received little or no support while special education was mostly provided for the minority of learners within special schools and classes. The result was that the general education system was unable to meet the diverse needs of all learners. The unfortunate consequences were that vast numbers of learners dropped out of school. (Booyse, 1995:52; Botha, 1994:1; Donald, 1993:139; White Paper on Education Support Services and Education for Learners with Special Educational Needs, 1995:21; NCSNET and NCESS report, 1997:i; as well as Hay and Hay, 1997:12 agree with this statement.
In the light of the above it will be necessary to review the past special education system to determine the necessity for change. The sub research questions that will be addressed within this chapter are the following:

- What problems related to the system of separate special education necessitate the need for a new paradigm?
- What new paradigm is proposed as a viable means to meet the needs of all learners?
- How did the concept of inclusion develop and how can it be defined?
- What forms of legislation are in place to support inclusion?

The first sub- research question will be addressed within the next section.

2.2 PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE SEPARATE SPECIAL EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT NECESSITATE THE NEED FOR CHANGE

According to the White Paper on An Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:5) many learners in South Africa were discriminated against and excluded from society because of negative attitudes about them:

> *South African society still regards children with disabilities as incapable, ill and a burden on society. In other words, they represent a 'problem' to be dealt with separately from other children's issues.*

From this excerpt it is clear that the severity of the discriminatory position of disabled learners cannot be underestimated. A problem that cannot be separated from negative perceptions about the disabled is the use of discriminatory terminology. The next paragraph gives more clarity about this problem.

2.2.1 THE USE OF DISCRIMINATORY TERMINOLOGY

According to the medical model of disability (which is discussed elsewhere) a learner who did not cope with his or her schoolwork would probably have some kind of "deficit" or "disability". The administering of different tests was used to determine what was wrong with the learner; for example, a learner who performed poorly on an IQ test could be classified as "mildly mentally handicapped". The learner would then fit into a specific category of the categorisation system that would be used by the particular education department. The next step would be the exclusion of the learner from the mainstream of education. Labelling such as "retarded" would in many cases be unavoidable.

A term, which was used for many years to refer to these learners, is the term "handicap" or "learners with handicaps". From national and international literature, it seems however that this particular term is not favoured anymore, due to the negative connotations and stigmatisation that were caused by such a term.
Booyse (1995:52) gives a description of the most popular terms in South Africa during the past few years. The term that has been favoured until recently to refer to learners who struggle at school, and which is still being used is "learners with special educational needs" (LSEN). According to Booyse (1995:52) the term has been used in different documents about education, for example the "National Education Policy Investigation" (NEPI), (1992: 129-130), the "Policy Framework for Education and Training" of the African National Congress (ANC) (1994:104), the Draft White Paper on Education and Training (Government Gazette 1994:16)

and the "Report of the International Commission on Open Learning and Distance Education in South Africa" of the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) (1994:64). The concept of special educational needs is defined in the following way by the ANC (1994:104) as documented by Booyse (1995:52):

> *Special educational needs include: special academic and learning problems, physical health problems, emotional concerns and particular social needs (which are often related).*

It has recently been suggested that the term learners with special educational needs (LSEN) be replaced by another term. The Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and The National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) (1997:2) suggests the use of a new term in the following way:

> *Acknowledging that 'special needs' often arise as a result of barriers within the curriculum, the centre of learning, the system of education, and the broader social context, it is suggested that instead of referring to 'special needs' we should refer to barriers to learning and development.*

In this regard Donald (1993:140-141) has made a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic factors, or a combination of both, which might lead to this impediment. Intrinsic factors lie within the learner, for example, sensory impairments such as blindness and deafness. On the other hand extrinsic factors lie in the learner's environment, such as the home, school and social environment. These often lead to deficiencies as far as literacy and occupational skills are concerned (Botha, 1994:1; Donald, 1992:9 and Booyse, 1995:52).

Donald (1993:140) believes that in South Africa the incidence of intrinsic "disability" in the majority of current LSEN can be questioned. It is even doubtful whether they have any intrinsic "disability" at all. He claims that impoverished conditions of many learners are the cause of their "disability". Pianta and Walsh (1996:1-3) agree with this statement.

It is clear that the emphasis of the perceptions of learners who do not learn effectively has shifted from deficiencies inside the learner, which need to be remedied, to a broader perception of certain aspects, which impair effective learning. These barriers should be removed to ensure that learning is effective. The terms 'disabled' or 'learners with disabilities' are terms that are used widely in the general public, but can have negative connotations. For the purposes of this research this term will be avoided as far as possible, depending on the context. The more acceptable term, 'learners with special educational needs' (LSEN) will therefore be preferred. The use of discriminatory terminology has only been introduced briefly, but is a much more complicated issue that is given more attention elsewhere. The move away from the use of terminology, which is related to the medical model to classify learners as 'disabled', is also related to the unavoidable issue of categorisation.

2.2.2 CATEGORISATION AND ITS PROBLEMATIC CONSEQUENCES

One of the consequences of stereotyped perceptions about LSEN was to develop a system through which these learners could be placed in certain categories that would describe their 'disability'. The different categories were given specific names with the result that LSEN were labelled.

In order to give more clarity about the process of categorisation, the development of the categorisation system that was and is still being used in parts of South Africa will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

In South Africa the shift from the medical model according to which learners with special educational needs are classified on the basis of their medical diagnosis, 'deficits' and 'disabilities', to a model which describes their educational needs and abilities, is suggested by Nell (1996:30). Unfortunately the categorisation system, which is still being used in some circles in South Africa, contains many terms which refer to diagnostic categories of LSEN.

The use of diagnostic categories to classify LSEN is not supported or encouraged by the most recent documents about LSEN, for example the report of the National

Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) (1997:55), and the White Paper on An Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:9). These documents clearly indicate a move away from segregation due to classifying learners according to the medical model to inclusion, where education makes provision for the needs of a diversity of learners.

The following model of categorisation is at present being used by many Departments of Education in South Africa (Nell, 1996:31). The outdatedness of this system and its relation to the medical model can easily be noticed, for example when the use of terminology such as "handicaps", which has already been accepted as an unwelcome term in South Africa and overseas is still being used!

The categories are:

- Learners with sensory deficiencies
- Learners with hearing impairments
- Deaf
- Hard of hearing (partially hearing)
- Learners with visual impairments
- Blind
- Partially/weak sighted
- Learners with central nervous system disorders
- Learners with cerebral palsy
- Learners with epilepsy
- Learners with mental handicaps
- Mild mental handicap
    - Severe mental handicap
    - Profound mental handicap
- Learners with brain damage
- Learners with specific learning disabilities
- Physically disabled and chronically ill learners
- Learners with emotional and behavioural problems
- Learners with comprehensive development disturbances

- Learners with autism
- Learners with speech disabilities
- Environmentally handicapped/disadvantaged/deprived
- Marginalised learners
- Learners with multiple handicaps
- Mentally gifted and talented learners (Nell, 1996:31)

Engelbrecht, Eloff and Newmark (1997:83) explain how Down's Syndrome learners were perceived:

> *Until recently most of the information on the education of children with Down's Syndrome was based solely on a medical model, where the emphasis was on weaknesses or on general social stereotypes (Vlachou, 1993:75).*

The way in which Down's Syndrome children were perceived, through the lens of the medical model, seems to support the idea that the medical model should be replaced by something else.

Townsend (1998:132) warns against the overemphasis on individual causes for learning problems, especially in reading, without keeping other factors in mind, when saying:

> *So many influences are at work interacting and contributing to children's reading problems. Whilst home background and early experiences are very important, an overemphasis on individual causes is not necessarily helpful in enabling teachers to 'switch on readers'.*

On the other hand, Dyson & Millard (1994) in Townsend (1998:132) point out that unfortunately in countries where facilities for special education are enough, the classification of learners according to the medical model is encouraged.

From what has been said it is obvious that the current categorisation system has major deficiencies and causes many problems. It may be fruitful to briefly reflect on some of these problems.

2.2.2.1 THE EXCLUSION OF MANY LSEN FROM ASSISTANCE

Many learners in South Africa have not been able to receive special assistance because of a deficiency in the categorisation system according to this model. LSEN may not receive special assistance because they are sometimes excluded by a definition. Kriegler (1990:27) explains that definitions which define specific learning disabilities usually exclude learning problems which are caused by emotional, environmental, cultural or socio-economic barriers. These criteria seem to be the most difficult to apply, as it can be almost impossible to determine precisely what factors cause the learning problem (Lerner, 1985). The consequence has been the misclassification of LSEN in many cases.

A very important question which should be asked at this stage is asked by Kriegler (1990:27): Can the classification of learners according to traditional categories be defended, as neither the problems nor the learners who are excluded by the definition can be made to disappear? In classrooms all over South Africa there are millions of learners who cannot cope because of emotional, intellectual or socio-economic factors. These learners are excluded from special assistance because the reasons for their problems do not fit into the traditional classification system. The following example relates to the problem of coping with ESL as medium of instruction that was mentioned in the previous chapter. A learner might not cope with his/her schoolwork because he/she struggles with English as a second language as it is never used in his/her community, and support is not available as the parents are illiterate. Another factor that can make things worse is that the teacher might also struggle with English even while it is the language of instruction. In such a case the teacher might also not have support, as there is no money to buy materials. A learner such as the above, who fails because of the fact that he/she has never received appropriate instruction to be able to understand, read and write English, would not traditionally have been able to receive special education services. Because he/she falls out of the range of special education the learner could not expect any additional assistance to enable him/her to develop his/her full potential in school. On the other hand, if special education services were available, the learner could be misclassified as "mentally retarded" and excluded from the mainstream. The Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in

Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) (1997:i) describes the past situation regarding special assistance for learners as follows:

> *Specialised education and support has predominantly been provided for a small percentage of learners with disabilities within 'special' schools and classes. Most learners with disability have either fallen outside of the system or been 'mainstreamed by default'. The curriculum and education system as a whole has generally failed to respond to the diverse needs of the learner population, resulting in massive numbers of drop-outs, push-outs and failures.*

Kriegler (1990:27) agrees with the above statement. Vaughn and Klingner (1998:86) mention in this regard that according to studies learners who are classified to attend special education did not even know why they were placed in special education. In cases such as the above, the problematic nature of the categorisation system that excludes learners from assistance because of a dysfunctional system should be noted. The system was also found to be ineffective in other ways.

In the past it was possible to find a large percentage of learners who were misclassified as speech and language impaired who were declassified from special education and later, after having been declassified, they were identified as having other learning disabilities. In such cases Carlson and Parshall (1996:96) viewed academics as a primary stumbling block.

The process of trying to identify the causes of learning problems is not always easy and straightforward. According to the above statement it is quite possible for the specialist to make mistakes or overlook important factors leading to the learning problem.

Kriegler (1990:26-27) continues by addressing the problem of testing. This problem, according to her is more serious in South Africa than in the United States of America. She asks whether anybody could claim that today we have

psychometric tests that can guarantee a correct and reliable identification and classification of black learners. Very few intelligence, achievement or diagnostic tests are available that can be used for all the different population groups and still be applicable as far as language and culture are concerned. The application of tests to groups for which they were not standardised is not desirable. Spolsky (1995:1) agrees that language testing specifically and testing for other purposes as well, can be problematic.

The use of intelligence tests as main measure to classify learners can be a very problematic issue that needs to be investigated further.

2.2.2.2 THE PROBLEM OF IQ AS CATEGORISATION INSTRUMENT

The testing of intelligence played a major role in the process of discriminating against individuals. When learners were classified for special education for example, the IQ score had to appear with the test results and was heavily relied upon in many cases.

When one studies the Point of Departure for Special Education of the Manual for Special Education, it is disheartening to find that there was indeed widely discriminated against these learners in South Africa.

The Manual for Specialized Education (1985:1) describes learners who need special education as:

> *... mentally handicapped pupils who, in the opinion of the Director of Education differ mentally from the majority of pupils to such an extent that they:*
> *should not attend a normal class in a normal school because they cannot derive sufficient benefit from the usual teaching in the normal provision of education, but who are nevertheless educable; ...*

The criteria which were (and still are) used to identify such learners according to the manual are in fact very discriminatory, especially when an IQ test score can

determine whether a learner will be included or excluded from regular education. The Manual for Specialized Education (1985:1) lists the following criteria for identifying learners for Special Education (The learners are referred to as "mentally handicapped"):

- Scholastic progress (the first and most important criterion)
- Achievements in standardised scholastic tests
- Socio-economic background
- Medical information
- Personality structure as determined through assessment
- Results of aptitude tests
- Intellectual ability (In the normal distribution curve of the intellectual ability of the **white** school population of the RSA, this category of pupil falls more or less within the IQ group between 50 & 80)

The criteria focus mostly on the learner, without attempting to provide information about the history and quality of education that the learner received. Another area that causes concern is the fact that the criteria only cater for the white population. During the previous educational dispensation it was not uncommon to find that a learner would be taken from the regular education system and be placed in a special class or school due to poor scholastic performance and a low IQ score. If a learner had 'committed these crimes' the road to segregation was one that the learner would inevitably have to face. The manual for Specialized Education (1985:2) gives us a vivid picture of the process:

> *Apart from classified mentally handicapped pupils, pupils whose parents or guardians have obtained expert advice, and who request admission to special education on the grounds of deficient intellectual ability and poor scholastic progress in a normal school may also be admitted to special education.*

In the past until quite recently the placement of a learner was thus strongly determined by psychometric testing, especially IQ tests. The learners did

unfortunately not have much protection against these measurements. The problem of using IQ as categorisation instrument is even intensified further when other forms of discrimination that are associated with the use of IQ scores to classify learners are pointed out.

I DISCRIMINATION ASSOCIATED WITH IQ SCORES

When administering IQ tests it is important that that the learner's cultural background is considered. In cases where this aspect is ignored, learners can be unfairly discriminated against. This problematic practice is discussed next.

i The practice of not taking the learner's cultural background into consideration

Kriegler (1990:39) points out that the value of conventional IQ tests is being questioned strongly, especially when learners from culturally diverse backgrounds are tested and their cultural backgrounds are not accommodated during the test procedure. The IQ scores, which are obtained in such cases, are inaccurate reflectors of the learner's true learning potential. The IQ scores only reflect what the learners have already learned. It is impossible to derive from the information, which opportunities the learners have had to learn the aspects that are evaluated in the IQ test. The purpose of an IQ test is to predict scholastic achievement - often a prediction that fulfils itself. For the purpose of assisting the child, it is more important to determine how the child learns than to know what he/she has already learned. It is more important to know how he/she can be educated in order to know the things which he/she doesn't know yet.

In the United States problems are experienced with instruments to assess Native American Students. In this regard Lipsky and Gartner (1997:25) refer to Duran (1988, 1989) in Dodd, Nelson and Sprint (1995) to emphasise that in America some tests have been biased until recently and that these tests should be replaced by criterion-referenced instruments.

ii Personal setbacks because of poor IQ scores

It is justifiable to wonder how a learner as a person would feel (and how thousands have felt in the past) when dozens of tests had to be conducted because something in the learner was not quite up to standard. When the experiences of a learner who had to undergo many tests is studied, the feeling which is conveyed is one of a total loss of dignity, when being stripped of one's very own identity by a total stranger who knows best - ironical as it may sound! The experience of a student whose name is Julie Farar was documented by the National Council on Disability in the United States (1995:43) as follows:

> *I can't tell you how many IQ tests and psychological evaluations I went through every year with someone I had never met before. In an hour, they were going to decide my psychological status, my IQ and abilities, and that was used for my educational plan* (Lipsky and Gartner 1997: 27).

The consequences of such a testing process and everything that surrounds it, can possibly never be put into words by an outsider and even the learner might not be able to verbalize the feelings which flowed from his/her heart due to a wounded identity. There must indeed be a burden - some emotional baggage that an individual who has been classified as 'disabled' in some way and who has been removed from regular education because of this 'inadequacy', will have to carry for the rest of his or her life. The truth of this argument is supported when the opinion of Archer, Green and Pooler (1992:11) is explicated in this regard:

> *Most children with special educational needs believe themselves to be incompetent and inadequate and have learned to be either fearful or resentful in any educational setting. This has to be addressed before any learning can take place. Moreover, scholastic failure also distresses parents, siblings, teachers, all of whom may be in need of support.*

Learners should not be discriminated against because of a low IQ score, which is in many cases not much helpful without considering the factors which surround the whole process of education.

Learners are often regarded as not having the intellectual ability to cope at school while external factors are the main causes for poor scholastic performance and low IQ scores. The next paragraphs will shed more light on this topic.

iii Unfavourable home environments causing poor scholastic performance and low IQ test results leading to discrimination

The research of Barclay (1986); Pollard, et al. (1983); Rapport (1982) and Lambert (1988) is referred to by Healy (1995:47) to emphasise the negative influence that an unfavourable home environment has on a learner's concentration.

Schaefer Zener (1995:15) as well as Cohn (1998:515) support the correlation between disorderliness and deviations in development. If one considers the fact that in many households in South Africa where parents are either divorced or absent for various reasons, or are illiterate, learners are in many instances left to fend for themselves. The consequences are sometimes disorganised lifestyles at home, which are continued at school, with poor outcomes at school as the result. It would be unwise to classify these learners as learning disabled, as the core of the problem should rather be addressed where learners should be exposed to situations in which they could learn to live a more organised lifestyle.

In the previous paragraphs problems associated with the incorrect use of IQ tests to classify learners was discussed. It was indicated that these learners were then classified according to categories related to the medical model of disability. It will be necessary to investigate the use of the medical model of disability and its consequences in more detail, as these will shed more light on the practise of separate special education placements and the quest for a new paradigm.

2.2.3 THE PROBLEM OF THE MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABLIITY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The medical model of disability, referred to in this research as the medical model, was concerned with creating a more "caring" environment for different groups of disabled people. Their aim was usually to provide treatment to the disabled. The philosophy of this model was that the disabled were not to be treated in a hostile manner, but they rather had to be pitied or helped as part of the "deserving poor". Unfortunately, the organisations which managed the affairs of the disabled, did not give the disabled any say in the aims, objectives and management of their condition. Dependence and the nature of dependence was the focus. The ways in which the disabled were helped, were based on assessment, diagnosis and labelling. The labelling automatically placed the learner in a specific category, for example, "ineducable". Therapy programmes were developed separately through alternative services. The fact that disability was seen as an issue that involved health and welfare, lead to certain social attitudes of society. It resulted in a situation where disabled people and their families were isolated from their communities and activities of the mainstream. People with disabilities became dependent on state assistance and they believed that they could not be productive members of society.

In a nutshell, it can be said that the medical model lead to dependence on others, disempowerment, isolation from society and the violation of the fundamental social, political and economic rights of the disabled. Segregation was inevitable for these people because of the medical model towards disability (White Paper on An Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997:9).

The good intentions of the advocates of the medical model cannot be questioned, because the medical, physical and clinical treatment itself is generally very good. Unfortunately it still had negative side effects for learners. What can be questioned therefore is the approach of the treatment and its consequences that learners with special educational needs (LSEN) had to endure.

Nell (1996:33-34) also acknowledges that in the past schools for specialised education had done excellent work as far as the didactic needs of these learners are

concerned, but that some crucial aspects of the system had to be criticised. The first is that LSEN are isolated from interaction with their non-disabled peers when attending separate facilities. Some in residential care are even isolated from parents and the community. The isolation from the community does not grant the community the opportunity to get to know these learners and therefore many misunderstandings and misconceptions exist about them. The isolation of these learners from the community results in the fact that many LSEN who have the potential to be productive members of society become "welfare cases" who believe that the community has to carry them without much input from their side. They believe that they are unable and inadequate to fill their place in the community. Cohn (1998:514) agrees with this statement.

The most important consequence of the medical/clinical approach is the exclusion of learners with disabilities from general education. This approach believes that exclusion benefits LSEN and that separate education settings are necessary.

2.2.3.1 THE PRACTICE OF SEPARATE EDUCATION SETTINGS

When one reads what some of the prominent supporters and defenders of the medical model in South Africa say, very little criticism could be lodged on a superficial level. One such example is that of Pieterse (1993:21). The length of this abstract is qualified by the fact that it contains many problematic issues that need to be addressed.

> *The disabled person requires more than medical care, the hope of a possible cure and the possibility of a job. He/she needs to accept his/her disability, to be happy and to be an integral part of the community. For the disabled child, the possibilities of fully utilising available services and of attaining all potential skills and successes depend to a large degree on competent services, but also on effective parenting and on the quality of inter-family relationships. This can be made possible by those close to the disabled person, i.e. teachers, parents, doctors, nurses, therapists, psychologists, social workers, hostel staff, administrative personnel and general assistants.*

These people, who are directly or indirectly involved in schools for specialised and special education, strive to serve the needs of the child as a whole and each of them can be regarded as an "educator". These are the people who have been instrumental in shifting the emphasis regarding the education of disabled pupils.

- *From the disability to the pupil with a disability*
- *From generalization to individualization and*
- *From charitable involvement to a scientific approach* (Pieterse, 1993:21).

When one examines the quotation with a little more critical approach, several questions could be justly asked with regard to the result of separation:

- How easily and how well would a learner who has been taken from the community for a length of time adjust in the community and find an occupation while having to compete with non-disabled peers who have not been taken from the community? (This issue is also problematic according to Rylance (1998:184) and Carlson and Parshall (1996:89-90). In this regard Bassett and Smith (1996:164) as well as Doren, Bullis and Benz (1996:17) stress the importance of transitional services for these learners.
- How easily and how well will LSEN become an integral part of their community while they have been isolated from their community for an amount of time because they are not well?
- How effectively can inter- family relationships be maintained and enhanced when the learner is placed in a hostel sometimes very far from the family?

When a learner is removed from his/her family and community to be placed in a hostel, it is inevitable that his/her life will be filled with new people who are perceived by Pieterse (1993:20-21) as being "close" to the learner, while in reality he/she has left all the "close" people behind and is being thrust into a community of strangers.

The people 'close to' the learner are described by Pieterse (1993:20-21) as *teachers, parents, doctors, nurses, therapists, psychologists, social workers, hostel staff, administrative personnel and general assistants.* One of the most important components in a learner's life is relationships and community with friends. This

very important aspect has been totally ignored.

The following questions regarding the emphasis of the education for LSEN need to be asked to determine whether a learner who has been placed in special education is in fact in a better position or not:

- Is the terminology, which has shifted from a disability to a pupil with a disability, not still labeling or stigmatising the learner?
- The shift from generalisation to individualisation seems to segregate the learner and does not see the learner in relation to others in the community as Burden (1995:55) beautifully quotes the words of Kauffman and Hallahan (1994):

  Umntu ungumntu ngabantu! (A person is a person through other persons or a human being is a human being only in relation to other human beings)

  Potts, Armstrong and Masterton (1995:188) portray the same idea when they say:

  All persons are formed, sustained and strengthened by the quality of relationships with others.

  Archer, Green and Pooler (1992:8) realise the importance that the community plays in this regard to recognise the achievements of individuals. Heal, Khoju and Rusch (1997:297) indicates that being with their peers enhances the quality of life of LSEN.
- The last aspect that can be questioned is the movement from a charitable approach to a scientific approach.

Although it is not meant to happen, the institutionalisation – or mere separation – of LSEN from ordinary community tends to increase the likelihood of a learner becoming a patient, a client or a statistic with an added dehumanisation as a consequence. Human beings do not want to be approached in an impersonal manner. All human beings were created with the need to be loved, cared for and accepted by others as human beings. We are all different in some way and need to be acknowledged for our strengths and weaknesses and not excluded from society because some weaknesses are regarded as detrimental if maintained in society.

The practice of separate education settings prevents LSEN from properly and appropriately experiencing the real world in which they will have to live, rendering them with a false impression of an unsustainable 'artificial world', causing increased difficulty in adjusting to real life. Secondly it inevitably leaves society with a discriminatory perception towards LSEN aggravating the difficulty of their adjustment to real life.

Apart from the problems, which have been discussed above, a few other problems are related to separate placements and will briefly be discussed in the next paragraphs.

I PROBLEMS RELATED TO SEPARATE PLACEMENTS OF LEARNERS

Two main problems related to separate placements that have been reported in the literature are the fact that many learners who have been taken out of the mainstream have brief contact with their peers from the mainstream and secondly, expectations of learners in special education are sometimes limited. The first issue that will briefly be addressed is brief contact with peers.

i Brief contact with peers due to segregation

One aspect that learners who were segregated to receive special education experienced as negative was the fact that they did not have much contact with their peers who did not need special assistance (Klotz, 1995:282). Because LSEN were seen as different, it was believed that they had to be kept apart and needed "different" education.

On the other hand it should be mentioned that some advocates of separate special education placements, such as Pieterse (1993:21) feel that these learners find new peers to socialise with. The question that still remains to be answered by the supporters of exclusion is how it feels to be kept apart. As it is not the purpose of

this discourse to investigate this specific aspect further it will not be discussed further at this stage.

The next problem related to separate special education placements is the fact that many times the expectations for these learners are limited.

ii Limited expectations of learners in special education

Lipsky and Gartner (1997:9-11) stated that according to research the outcomes for learners in special education have not been as favourable as was expected. Expectations for LSEN are both limited and defined by negative attitudes toward people with "disabilities" (Klotz, 1995:202; Moberg, 1997:38; Carlson and Parshall, 1996:90). Special education practices and placement patterns are influenced by this tendency. These attitudes and practices are amongst a variety of factors, which have been contributors to the limited outcomes for learners served in separate special education facilities.

One would not be wrong to assume that the other learners might be afraid of being taken away never to return again. The process of declassification (returning to regular education after having been placed in special education because of academic or behavioural improvement) is one that has been puzzling researchers for some time. McNulty, Connolly, Wilson and Brewer (1996:160) say in this regard that:

> *Traditionally, students were routinely pulled out for special services or had to* ***earn their way*** *back into general education, which few were able to do.*

Researchers such as Lipsky and Gartner (1997: 4) as well as Carlson and Parshall (1996:60) seem to agree with this statement.

On the contrary Richardson, Kline and Huber (1996:302-303) indicate that high expectations of learners can motivate them to achieve what was thought by others to be impossible. They give an example of the successes of a Down's syndrome learner to support their argument.

It might be interesting at this stage to briefly mention a few positive reports in the literature about outcomes of learners in inclusive settings.

Mcleskey and Waldron (1995:301), Roach (1995:295), Farrell (2000:157) and Lederer (2000:91) have reported positive academic outcomes for LSEN in the mainstream. Higgins and Ballard (2000;176) reported in this regard that according to studies of Bodgan and Taylor (1992) LSEN were socially accepted in the mainstream. A number of researchers, such as Engelbrecht, Eloff and Newmark (1997:83-84); Vaughn and Klingner (1998:79); Schaefer (995:137) as well as Farrell (2000:157) have reported positive social and behavioural gains for LSEN in inclusive settings.

On the other hand Staub (1996:76-78) has reported that the inclusion of LSEN has not revealed any slowdown in learners without special educational needs, for example, they did not receive less teacher time and attention. She also found that as far as relationships are concerned, both LSEN and learners without special needs benefited from mutual relationships.

From the above it seems desirable to have high expectations for all learners.

When considering all the above problematic issues that are rooted in the past system of segregating LSEN from the mainstream it becomes clear that a paradigm shift away from exclusion is needed in South Africa. Burden (1995:55) explains it in the following way:

> *It supposes a total and radical mindswitch based on specific value systems and provides for a systematic plan of action to reach its goals, namely to fight all forms of exclusion in society*

Thousand and Villa (1995:291); Moberg (1997:30); Bowers (1989:4) as well as Kovach and Gordon (1997:247) support the idea of moving away from exclusion to inclusion.

In order to gain an understanding of what inclusion implies, this issue will be dealt with in the next section. In order to understand the concept of inclusion it will first be important to investigate the context in which it developed.

2.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSION

Before it becomes possible to conduct a specific investigation into any field of concern, it is necessary to make sure that the field is clearly understood. Normally a research report like this would attempt to clarify some terminology in the first chapter to provide the appropriate perspective. But since there still remains considerable confusion around the concept of inclusion, the broad field of investigation of this study, it was deemed necessary to devote a more substantial effort towards such clarifying. At the same time, this chapter will then also be a contribution to the very crucial conceptualisation underpinning this investigation.
In order to understand the concept of inclusion, the context in which it originated needs to be scrutinised as the concept is not easily grasped in isolation.

2.3.1 THE CONTEXT OF THE WIDER SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF INCLUSION

Inclusion did not reach the shores of South Africa in the same way as many new trends do but has a history of its own that developed because of certain changes in society at large. The fact that South Africa is part of the globe and has traded its isolation of many years for a much more integrated place in the international community, resulted in a new receptivity towards changes in the rest of the world. Specific changes across the world that would in the end give birth to the concept of inclusion are described by Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999:5-6). Changes in the wider social context would inevitably influence the educational arena. This was the place where different terminologies that are related to inclusion in some way have developed. These concepts developed in a specific chronology.

2.3.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF TERMINOLOGIES RELATED TO INCLUSION IN THE EDUCATIONAL ARENA

Changes in society brought about changes in schools as schools reflect society. Special education and mainstream education were affected profoundly (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht, 1999:7).

Certain periods in the history of education of leading Western countries are characterised by particular trends in special and mainstream schools. During these periods different terms were used by specific education systems.
According to Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999:7-8) the following periods can be identified:

- Developments in education systems during the 1960's to the 1980's
- Developments in education systems in the late 1980's

It should be pointed out that these time periods are not clear cut but that they give broad indications of developments. These periods will be discussed briefly, in order to place the terminologies in a specific chronological context. It will also be necessary to reflect upon the period before 1960.

2.3.2.1 THE PERIOD BEFORE 1960

During this period LSEN were segregated from the mainstream and placed in separate special schools. It was a time of considerable confusion regarding the use of terminology to refer to the education of learners with special educational needs. Terms that were discriminatory in many ways were used and the medical model was followed to classify learners as 'disabled' in a variety of ways. The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of the situation.

I SPECIAL EDUCATION AND ITS CONFUSING TERMINOLOGY

According to Nell (1996:27) the terms that were used in the field of Special Education (and are still being used in some circles) were not very clear, for example:

> *...Education for Learners with Special Education Needs, Special Education and Special Needs Education. The emphasis on inclusive education also has great implications for the task and field of LSEN and terminology involved.*

Despite Nell's attempts to explain some of the above terminologies, confusion remains. The abbreviation of Specialised Education as ELSEN, for example is not

clear. Other researchers such as Dyson and Millard (1994) in Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty (1997:53) have also encountered problems with terminologies.

Nell (1996:28) further explains the situation by suggesting that the distinction made by some ex-departments in South Africa, between "Special Education" (for learners with mild mental "retardation" who are accommodated in special classes in mainstream schools) and "Specialised Education" (for all other types of LSEN who are accommodated in separate schools) is not acceptable because of the lack of logic in it. He asks why the term for education offered to learners with "mild mental retardation" should be different from the education offered to learners with all other types of special educational needs.

During this period of separate special education before the 1960's a further problem with terminology was encountered. Many terms related to the medical model were highly discriminatory and had to be replaced. In some circles these terms are still causing problems today.

II DISCRIMINATING TERMINOLOGY OF THE MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABLITY AND REPLACED TERMINOLOGY

There seems to be a movement away from discriminatory terms with negative connotations such as 'handicapped' or 'disabled', which form part of the medical model that was found in the field of Special Education. The terms 'disabled' and 'handicapped' had the connotation that the person referred to had some kind of abnormality that had to be rectified through segregation. Donald (1993:140) points out that definitions of LSEN that are based on the concept of disability are problematic in the South African context. Such definitions normally match the common notion that special educational needs are created where there is a disability within or intrinsic to the learner, but that is often far from the truth in South Africa (The White Paper on An Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997:9).

With the shift away from the medical model, leading to other perceptions of LSEN, it was therefore inevitable that some discriminating terms had to be left out. Other terminologies (mainly focusing on describing learners who have special needs) that are common in the literature and are non-discriminatory are the following:

- ELSEN (Education for learners with special educational needs)
- LSEN (Learners with special educational needs) - this term is preferred in this research.
- SEN (pupils with Special Educational Needs) - mostly used in the UK.
- Learners with barriers to learning and development

These terms were replacements for the discriminatory terms of the medical model and were therefore terms used mostly after the 1960's until today.

2.3.2.2 THE PERIOD OF THE 1960's TO THE 1980's

This period is characterised by the questioning of the system of separate special education placements. Ainscow, Farrell and Tweddle (2000:211) indicate that in an attempt to provide better education, many countries have pursued integration. 'Integration' and 'mainstreaming' are two terminologies that came from this period. A unitary education system for all learners was pursued and the emphasis was no longer on 'disabilities' but on 'abilities'. The focus was on social justice and equity, rather than isolation and neglect, according to Engelbrecht, Naicker, Green and Engelbrecht (1999:7).

The arrival of the terms 'integration' and 'mainstreaming' set the stage for considerable confusion about describing the education for LSEN. The matter would even further be complicated by the use of a new term in the late 1980's, which was the term of inclusion. As the terms inclusion, integration and mainstreaming can easily be misunderstood, the clarification thereof needs to be treated separately, as it remains an issue of concern on its own. The purpose so far was the identification of these terms in relation to their chronology. The last period of developments in education systems that will be discussed is the period of the late 1980's and further.

2.3.2.3 THE LATE 1980's AND FURTHER

A distinctive feature of this period is that the placement of learners in the mainstream is seen as a human right. Inclusion as opposed to segregation is pursued. The White Paper 5 on Special Needs Education (2000:6) gives a vivid picture of the direction that education would be following. The obligation of

Government to meet the needs of all learners through an education system that includes all is very significant and the aim of achieving growth in the realisation of the human potential of each learner is of considerable value.

At this stage it should be clear that various terms have been used to refer to the education of LSEN and that these terms developed during specific periods in the history of developments in education systems. It is however still necessary to clarify the term 'inclusion'. In the process of searching for a definition for inclusion the other two problematic terminologies of 'mainstreaming' and 'integration' that have been encountered will also be clarified, as all these terms are closely related to each other.

2.4 PERSPECTIVES ON DEFININITIONS FOR INCLUSION, MAINSTREAMING AND INTEGRATION

According to Yell and Shriner (1996:101) and Murphy (1996:471) it seems difficult to find a single definition for the term inclusion. In the literature a variety of definitions for inclusion are found, with the emphasis ranging from certain philosophies, rights, values and needs of the human race. Other definitions focus on the role of society, the importance of support, the accommodation of diversity and even the fact that inclusion is not concerned with a particular place. These different perspectives of inclusion will briefly be reflected upon with a clarification of the terms "mainstreaming" and "integration" thereafter, to arrive at a conclusive definition of inclusion.

A few views about inclusion are the following:

- Roach (1995:295-296) believes that inclusion is not about a place or a specific instructional method, but *holds that all children can learn.* Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty (1997:1) points out that an educational system should differentiate education to meet diversity. In this regard Slabbert (1997:59) feels that the potential of man needs to be fulfilled.
- Nell (1996:34-35) bases his views about inclusion on the following assumptions:
  - The social rights of children, to be part of the normal society are stressed by the inclusion model.

- The classification of learners according to their disabilities and emphasising what they cannot do, is unacceptable.
- Separate classes and the grouping of children according to their disabilities are rejected.
- Children are not dumped in the mainstream without necessary support, but will receive differentiated education where they will progress at their own levels.

- Keefe (1996:4) believes that support for learners in inclusive settings is very important and that it *adapts curriculum when necessary; and it combines the resources of special education with general education.*

- Burden (1995:44) goes a step further when she describes inclusion. The theme that is interwoven throughout her definition is one of unconditional acceptance, compassion and an approval of our universal state of being human. She sees inclusion as an educational approach in assisting people with 'disabilities'. It calls for a paradigm shift in education. The term implies that children who were not allowed to attend regular schools with their peers because of some kind of 'disability' are included in schools in the mainstream. Inclusion, according to Burden (1995:54) is concerned with the way in which individuals are valued:

  > *The principles of inclusion presuppose a warm and embracing attitude towards all human beings. Inclusion is based on a live and let live approach ... It supposes a total and radical mindswitch based on specific value systems and provides a basis for a systematic plan of action to reach its goals, namely to fight all forms of exclusion in society.*

- The White Paper on An Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:79) emphasises the obligation of society to include all.

The above views about how inclusion can be described all emphasise important aspects of inclusion, but a definition that makes room for the most important inherent components of inclusion is still searched for in the next paragraphs. The issues of mainstreaming and integration have to be clarified before such a definition can be finalised.

Burden (1995:47) indicates that both approaches have the aim of including each individual in the mainstream (normal society), but do it in different ways. Inclusion tries to change the system in order to let the ones who were excluded, fit in. Mainstreaming on the other hand uses certain strategies to change the person to eventually fit in:

> *In mainstreaming children are treated differently because they are considered to be different themselves and their problems must be solved in a top-down manner by others. Thus society prescribes (medics, therapists, teachers, etc.) what should be done (has the answers), transfers knowledge and trains people to conform with pre-set aims* (Burden, 1995:48).

With a better understanding of the differences between mainstreaming and inclusion, it is clear that the term 'inclusion' is more acceptable as it does not have any pre-requirements before a learner can be included. The philosophy of inclusion also accepts every person unconditionally, while catering for different needs. Inclusion can also be easily confused with the term 'integration'. The next paragraphs will discuss the differences between these terms.

Referring to integration, Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty (1997:203) comment that the context in which the term inclusion is used is wider than that of integration. Integration, according to Jordan and Powell (1994) and Söder (1989, 1991) can often be interpreted as re-integration after a period of segregation or as a way of avoiding segregation. Integration in its most negative sense implies integrating learners into a specific location, while providing instruction according to the regular curriculum, which has been watered-down. Hegarty (1991) points out that integration should not imply a specific placement, but that schools should be equipped to meet the needs of these learners. This notion seems broader and comes closer to the concept of inclusion. The terms integration and inclusion are however sometimes used according to the preferences of authors and the habits of countries (Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty, 1997:2-3).

What is important to realise at this stage, is that the term inclusion is preferred to that of mainstreaming, which implies that a learner who has a deficit or problem, is

placed with other normal learners to become more normal. Integration is not a favourable term to use either, because as the case is with "mainstreaming", many negative connotations have been found to be associated with it, for example being referred to as a measure to avoid exclusion in which instruction is watered down. Inclusion has indeed been found to have a much broader scope. Farrell (2000:153) also prefers the term inclusion by saying that integration had shortcomings:

> *It is quite possible for pupils to be placed in a class in a mainstream school (i.e. 'integrated') but to spend the whole day completely isolated from their peers. Such children are in fact quite segregated. The alternative term 'inclusion' was introduced as a more accurate way of describing the quality of education offered to pupils with SEN...*

The fact that inclusion is associated with attempts to provide quality education for all is a significant aspect that should be present in a definition for inclusion. The next section will attempt to provide a comprehensive definition for inclusion.

2.5 DEFINING INCLUSION

It is a well-known fact that one is able to comprehend a situation better when one has had first hand experience. If one reads the definition of inclusion, which was written by a parent who had to struggle in order to let their son receive the best possible education in an inclusive setting, one realises that it is indeed very comprehensive, as it developed out of experience. The following definition of Klotz (1995:286) seems to give a lot of clarity to some questions that arose during the terminology debate:

> *Inclusion is a process of meshing general and special education reform initiatives and strategies in order to achieve a unified system of public education that incorporates all children and youths as active, fully participating members of the school community, that views diversity as the norm and that ensures a high-quality education for each student by providing meaningful curriculum, effective teaching, and necessary supports for each student.*

One does not find any trace of discrimination, segregation or a focus on what learners cannot do in the definition of Klotz (1995:286). Instead it does actually seem as if such a definition of inclusion is in fact nothing but a *warm and embracing attitude towards all human beings*, as Burden (1995:54) put it earlier on. The truth was indeed spoken about inclusion in the definition of Klotz. Even when one measures such a definition to the spirit of the Salamanca Statement which was adopted by 92 countries, which attended the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Spain in 1994, one finds that it does comply with the spirit of the statement, which was summarised by Nell (1996:36) in the following way:

> *... every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning,*
> *... every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs,*
> *... education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs,*
> *... those with special education needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs,*
> *... regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the entire education system.*

Definitions about inclusion should be measured against the spirit of the Salamanca Statement. As the above abstract is self-explanatory and will not be discussed further at this stage. It should however be pointed out that inclusion does not imply that all learners should be "dumped" in the mainstream without support.

The main aim of inclusion in a South African context would be to cater for the needs of most learners in the mainstream, including vast numbers of learners that would in the past have dropped out of school or been misclassified as mentally retarded, with consequent segregation from the mainstream. The policy of inclusion does however also make provision for certain learners who require more support. The Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (2001:45) has addressed the fears of many who are concerned about certain groups of LSEN by indicating that support will indeed be provided for all:

> *In an inclusive education and training system, a wider spread of educational support services will be created in line with what learners with disabilities require. This means that learners who require low-intensive support will receive this in ordinary schools and those requiring moderate support will receive this in full-service schools. Learners who require high-intensive educational support will continue to receive such support in special schools.*

From the above it should be clear that the policy of inclusion has not come to replace special education as a service, but that it is a new paradigm of including all learners in a **system** of education that provides for the needs of all by utilising a range of services. This range of services aims at changing education to fit the needs of all in order to develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society (Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education, 2001:5-7). Two main points should be emphasised in this regard:

- It is specifically relevant to this study, for one to realise that inclusion does not equal mainstreaming, but that it opposes the misclassification and exclusion of vast numbers of learners from the mainstream, such as learners who could not cope with the medium of instruction, (Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education, 2001:7), who should actually be in the mainstream. This problem has affected many learners and attempts are being made to rectify the situation.
- As far as learners with severe physical and mental problems are concerned, such as the blind, deaf and learners with certain medical conditions, the policy of inclusion will still provide in their needs. This will either take place in special

schools/resource centres, full service schools or in the mainstream, as pointed out above. What is of great importance, however, is that in contrast to the previous policy of separate special education placements, serious attempts will be made to include these learners as far as possible by making sure that they are integrated in the community in various ways. The policy of inclusion:

> ... *emphasises the need for including persons with disabilities in the workplace, social environment, political sphere and sports arenas.* (Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education).

Even though some learners will receive education in different places, attempts will be made to provide contact with their peers from the rest of the education system, such as full-service and mainstream schools. It is therefore clear that inclusion is not about a specific place, but it is a policy that believes that all learners can learn within an inclusive education system that consists of a range of services.

From the above it seems clear that inclusion will cater for learners with diverse needs ranging from learners who require minimum support to learners who require intense levels of support. The emphasis is however not to isolate them from society.

Within the above section the concept of inclusion has been explained. The question that inevitably comes to mind at this stage is whether inclusion is supported by South African legislation. This question is briefly answered in the next paragraphs.

2.6 SOUTH AFRICAN LEGISLATION THAT SUPPORT INCLUSION

A number of South African policy documents support the idea of inclusion. These will not be discussed in detail, but are briefly listed below:

- Education White Paper 6. Special Needs Education. Building an inclusive education and training system. (2001)
- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996:14)
- The Green Paper on 'Special Needs' and 'Education Support Services' (1998:45)
- The Disability Strategy of the Government of National Unity (1996) (Hay and Hay, 1997:10-14)

- The Initial Country Report On The Convention On The Rights Of The Child (1997:84)
- The National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996, Section 3 (4)
- The White Paper on An Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:39)
- The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, Section 1

With support from South African legislation the road has already been paved for inclusion to be implemented.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Within this chapter an attempt has been made to provide answers to the following sub- research questions:

- What problems related to the system of separate special education necessitate the need for change?
- What new paradigm is proposed as a viable means to meet the needs of all learners?
- How did the concept of inclusion develop and how can it be defined?
- What forms of legislation are in place to support inclusion?

Regarding the first research question it was found that the system of separate special education placements discriminated against LSEN in a number of ways. Firstly, discriminatory terminologies were used to refer to these learners when the categorisation system was used to classify LSEN. The categorisation system that was used caused the misclassification and exclusion of LSEN from the mainstream in many cases. The inappropriate use of IQ scores to categorise LSEN caused discrimination, especially when cultural background and unfavourable home environments were not taken into consideration. Many learners who struggle to understand English as the medium of instruction have been segregated or have dropped out of school. The medical model of disability was found to be problematic in itself, especially when it was used as measure to motivate the exclusion of LSEN from the mainstream.

The whole issue of separate education settings for LSEN was scrutinised and it was found that it separates learners and places them in an artificial world. LSEN had

brief contact with their peers from the mainstream and expectations for them were in many cases limited.

The next three sub- research questions were addressed by proposing inclusion as new paradigm to meet the needs of all learners. It was found that inclusion and related terminologies developed during three main periods:

- The period before 1960
- The period of the 1960's to the 1980's and
- The late 1980's and further

In order to find a definition for inclusion the terms "mainstreaming" and "integration" were first clarified. Different perspectives about a definition for inclusion were briefly reviewed before a comprehensive definition of inclusion was given. It was also briefly explained how the policy of inclusion aims at meeting the needs of all, including learners in need of intense levels of support. In this regard it was pointed out that the policy of inclusion aims at meeting the needs of most learners in the mainstream such as those who require low levels of support, but that learners who require moderate support will be educated in full-service schools. Learners who require intensive support will receive it in special schools. Even though separate facilities are used, learners are included in a whole education system, consisting of a range of services.

As far as legislation is concerned, it was found that various South African policy documents support the policy of inclusion and that it has already paved the way for its implementation.

With regard to the contribution of the study to educational research, the following can be stated:
Through the use of grounded theory methodology (a qualitative literature study) theory was generated to provide a theoretical educational background to problems created by the system of separate special education placements for LSEN (including for learners who do not cope with English as the medium of instruction) and the need for change in order to propose inclusion as a viable solution to meet the needs of all learners.

Theory was generated about the origin of inclusion in order to reach an understanding about the context and to arrive at a comprehensive definition of inclusion. In short, the chapter has generated theory to provide a solution to exclusion in the form of inclusion.

In order to focus on the aim of the research, which is to develop a cooperative paired reading programme to assist learners in understanding English as the medium of instruction, and therefore to achieve growth in the realisation of the human potential of learners, it will be necessary to explore the theoretical concept of maximising human potential. The next chapter will focus on this issue.

CHAPTER 3

The connection between maximising human potential and reading: a theoretical educational background

3.1 INTRODUCTION

It can be said that one of the main purposes of man on earth is to grow and maximise his potential. During their lives children are exposed to various situations, through which they are expected to maximise their potential. One such experience is the privilege of attending school, which stimulates the process of maximising human potential. If one considers the Grade 12 results of recent years, the question that inevitably comes to mind, is why many South African learners are not maximising their potential. The following remarks from an author in a well-known newspaper may shed some light on the nature of the problem:

> *A large proportion of pupils fail their matric examinations because they don't have adequate reading and writing skills. This is the opinion of a ministerial committee appointed by the Department of Education to investigate last year's matric exams. In a recently released report, the committee states: 'There is evidence that a large proportion of our schools do not give students enough practice in reading'* (Pretorius, 1999:1).

The connection between poor grade 12 results and an inability to derive sufficient meaning from print is clear. Reading can in many regards be seen as a doorway to maximising one's potential. Through reading one encounters many situations and experiences that would not have been possible without print. The learner who is unable to reconstruct meaning from print – especially in English as a second language, which is in many cases the medium of instruction, is facing a closed door. Educators have to facilitate a process – whereby the door of literacy is unlocked to enable each individual to maximise his/her full potential. Learners

with special educational needs are also special enough to be included in such efforts.

The main focus of this chapter is to provide a theoretical educational background about the concept and process of maximising human potential and reading, as the overall aim of the study is to develop a reading programme to maximise the human potential of learners.

In order to achieve this goal, the following sub-research questions will be addressed during this chapter:

- How can the concept of maximising human potential be described?
- What is the role of the learning task?
- How can human potential be maximised through metalearning?
- What is the connection between metalearning and reading?
- What is cooperative learning and how can human potential be maximised through it?

The term 'maximising human potential' is a term that is used within a theoretical context, such as chapter four and five. In practice, however, the term 'achieving growth in the realisation of human potential' is used to describe the same process, as only growth in the realisation of human potential is reported by the findings in chapter seven. It will however be necessary to describe the theory of maximising human potential before moving on to practice. The next section focuses on theory and starts with a description of maximising human potential and facilitating lifelong learning.

3.2 MAXIMISING HUMAN POTENTIAL AND FACILITATING LIFELONG LEARNING

Maximising human potential is a concept that is described in detail in Slabbert (1997:58-59) who points out that man has been created with potential and that our quest in life is:

> *To rediscover and maximise the potential within us through an unended quest for learning. This includes everyone, even those with special needs (World Conference on Special Needs Education, 1994).*

It is also mentioned that it can be devastating to man if he/she fails to maximise his/her potential.

The definition that Slabbert (1997: 60) uses to clarify the concept of maximising human potential, is the following:

> *Maximising human potential is the process whereby the human being continually exceeds him/herself in every possible way: Expanding the senses, cultivating the mind, developing the body, exploring consciousness, deepening relationships, and serving others, through which the divine spirit is manifested.*

It is crucial to know how maximising human potential can be achieved. It is achieved through a process of lifelong learning, which is a continuous process of change:

> *Lifelong learning is the effortful process of continuously discovering our potential and fulfilling our purpose in life as long as we live* (Slabbert, 1997:64).

Lifelong learning in turn is achieved through facilitating learning. Slabbert (1997:64-65) explains it as follows:

> *Since maximising human potential is a consequence of effortful lifelong learning, it is the latter which has to be facilitated. [The nature of facilitating lifelong learning is:] creating such a challenging environment which compels the learner to become engaged in a totally absorbing spontaneous learning activity which will force the dormant potential of the unconscious into the living world of reality.*

Slabbert (1997:65) continues by explaining facilitating learning further:

> *Facilitating learning is a deliberate, conscious intervention in the life of a human being caused by activating learning through challenging obstacles*

which necessitates exploration into the unknown, and by ensuring the continuation of that learning which results in the maximising of the potential of the human being through conquering the obstacles.

The concept of "challenging obstacles" needs to be clarified at this stage. It refers to challenging and compelling learning tasks that have to be designed by the teacher. The role of the learning task is clarified in the following paragraphs.

3.2.1 THE ROLE OF THE LEARNING TASK

Slabbert (1997:98-127) discusses important aspects of the learning task that are fundamental to the process of constructing meaning and ultimately maximising human potential. In the first place, the learning task should contain a problem setting, which refers to the incentive for constructing meaning. All relevant material should be studied about a topic by making an inventory. This is important when designing a learning task. Resources such as the following should be studied:

- Authoritative learning area resources such as textbooks, journals and electronic multimedia software on the topic.
- Popular learning resources, such as periodicals and electronic multimedia.
- General resources, for example papers and magazines as well as electronic network resources.
- Institutional, prescribed textbooks, as well as other electronic media software.

When considering the above types of resources that should be studied, it becomes necessary to take the following aspects into consideration when compiling learning tasks for English second language readers in order to facilitate the process of learning to read:

- The latest authoritative and expert resources about how learners lean to read in general, and suggested learning tasks that assist learners to become skilful readers should be studied and incorporated in the reading programme which includes learning tasks.

- As far as the level of competence of the learners is concerned, it should be kept in mind that learners who are totally illiterate in English should start with learning tasks that are on their level, even though it might seem to be very elementary. It should be realised that these "elementary" learning tasks help learners to acquire the skills necessary to become independent readers. These skills should be seen as necessary building blocks in the process of becoming skilful in reading. The level of competence required by the learning tasks is an important aspect that is addressed in the next paragraphs.

3.2.1.1 The level of competence required by the learning tasks

The construction of meaning (content) requires competence on different levels and dimensions. Three different dimensions of competence have been identified by Slabbert (1997:104-105):

a The level of abstraction is described as the:
cognitive distance between the real objects or events and the required competencies to be implemented for the construction of meaning.

b The level of complexity is described as being:
determined by the quality and/or quantity of the units of information (content) on which the learning task has a bearing.

c The level of effectiveness includes the time, accuracy and input that are required to complete the learning task:
The effective use of sources is a necessity and the focus is primarily on the learning process and not so much on the product of learning (Slabbert, 1997:105).

Regarding the level of competence of learning tasks for reading in English second language, the following should be kept in mind. The quantity and quality of learning tasks for reading will differ in accordance with the level of competence of each individual reader. The levels of complexity will therefore also differ. While the beginner reader will have to get to know the basic sounds in English, for

example a more advanced reader can be exposed to more complex reading material.

The focus which is on the process of reading and not so much on the product, is highly significant as far as learning tasks for reading are concerned as products are impossible without successfully engaging in the process of reading. It is significant to find that the process of executing a learning task has different phases.

Slabbert (1997:105) points out that relationships have to be established with that which constitutes the problem in order to implement the required competencies.
The following three main phases in any learning task execution have been identified by Slabbert (1997:105-106):

i *The reception phase*
A reception of stimuli from the environment will be necessary to construct meaning. The relationship is a subject–object relationship.

ii *The processing phase*
During this phase observations are processed. The relationship is intra-subjective and involves interplay between the short-term and long-term memories.

iii *The expression phase*
The outcome of the construction of meaning is exhibited and any person can observe it. The relationship is inter-subjective.

The implications of the three main phases of task execution for the execution of a reading task are the following:
The reception, processing and expression phases are all present in the process of reading. During the reception phase, the reader becomes aware of the material that is presented. The stimuli are visual.

The processing phase involves the selection of different strategies to reconstruct meaning. The long-term and short-term memory play an important role in the process and there is a continuous interaction between the two.

During the expression phase the meaning that was reconstructed from print becomes evident. The meaning is first shared with the self; thereafter it can be shared with others. It is significant that Slabbert (1997:103) shows that the code in which the content of the learning task is formulated can be very specific for a particular discipline. The codes can be figural, pictorial, numerical, symbolic, and verbal or a combination of any two or more codes.

When learners are confronted with the task of finding specific information in a magazine for example, all the mentioned codes can be present.
Slabbert (1997:110) points out that the problem setting or learning task plays a major role when learning is to be optimised. The purpose of the learning task is to initiate learning or the construction of meaning. Learning is initiated through:

- Creating a desire to know.
- Heightening expectations.
- Getting attention.
- Arousing curiosity.
- Tickling the imagination.
- Giving purpose and motivation.

Apart from the purpose of the learning task, it has to adhere to certain criteria.

3.2.1.2 Criteria for the learning task or problem setting

The following criteria for the learning task or problem setting have been listed by Slabbert (1997:112-118):

- It should be new, original and creative
- It must compel the learner to exceed him/herself in every way

- It has to claim complete personal involvement of the learner
- It has to compel learners to learn spontaneously
- It must be a problem in the life context
- It has to repeal the barrier between institution and reality
- It must be credible
- It has to be a problem for the learner
- It has to challenge, elicit and evoke learners into a peak experience

The above criteria for the learning task have certain implications for designing learning tasks to initiate the process of learning to read and to improve reading. The criteria will be discussed one-by-one by referring to their implications for designing learning tasks for reading in English as a second language.

3.2.1.3 The implications of the criteria for designing learning tasks in English second language reading

a It has to be new, original and creative

In order to stimulate the curiosity of the learner the learning task should be different from the ordinary. It also needs to stimulate creativity in the learner. As many learners experience reading as a boring activity, the challenge that the teacher has is to create new, original and creative learning tasks that are more exciting. The material that the learner is exposed to, should allow learning tasks to be new, original and creative. Old readers, which are of no interest to the reader, will fail to meet this criterion. DRUM, which was used in the reading programme, was an excellent vehicle to stimulate the learners' curiosity, and to attain their active involvement, which was a necessary prerequisite to maximise their human potential.

b The learning task has to compel the learner to exceed him/herself in every way

The learner should exceed him/herself in every way, by doing the learning task, in order for human potential to be maximised. The learner has to be

challenged above his/her current capabilities in order to achieve excellence as a result (Slabbert, 1997:113). As far as learning tasks in reading are concerned, the illiterate learner who has after some time acquired knowledge of the basic sounds in English, is compelled to reconstruct meaning from the letters on the pages of a magazine, and because of the compelling nature of the learning task the learner has to use the strategies which had already been acquired to open the door to a world of new information and enjoyment. It is a process that is difficult to the struggling reader, but "stretches" him/her to achieve beyond that which was ever thought possible.

c It has to claim complete personal involvement of the learner

The learner who is trying to reconstruct meaning from print, has to be totally involved in the process. The problem that needs to be solved should be of such interest to the learner that the whole human being is involved in reconstructing meaning. All competencies that are needed, ... *in all three domains of human existence,* as Slabbert (1997:113) puts it, namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor competencies, are used to solve the problem. In this regard reading is an activity that does not only speak to a person's eyes, but it speaks to the mind and heart - involving the total person.

d It has to compel learners to learn spontaneously

The learner, who is engaged in the process of finding information to solve a specific problem, has to read to find the necessary information. The teacher cannot take over the process of reconstructing meaning on behalf of the learner. In order to encourage the learners to read spontaneously without being forced, the problem which is set and the material that the learner is exposed to, should compel the learner to want to do it spontaneously on his/her own. Fortunately reading interesting material automatically brings about an urge to read on.

e It must be a problem in the real life context

One of the best ways of exposing learners to problems in real life situations is through magazines. Learners who identify with information in magazines experience that their humanness is being addressed. Automatically these learners become more open to the information which is presented. The task of reading, to find information to solve a problem, becomes an adventure in which the learner finds that his/her own existence is portrayed as if through a mirror. Almost any aspect of daily living can be found in magazines and reading magazines is a source of great enjoyment for learners.

f It has to repeal the barrier between institution and reality

Learners need to experience real life situations in the classroom without realising that they are in a classroom. Magazines have wonderful potential for transferring the learner from the here and now to other situations, time and space. The learning tasks that are constructed should help learners to experience real life and be able to solve problems in real life situations.

g It must be credible

Problems that are based on real life situations are more credible than fictional problems. Magazines with photographs of reality make it easier for the facilitator to compile credible learning tasks.

h It must be a problem for the learner

Many of the problems that learners experience in their day-to-day existence are portrayed in magazines. One problem that almost all adolescents struggle with for example, is acne. The learners would definitely find an article about pimples highly relevant. Finding out how to have a healthy skin would be a matter of urgency, rather than just another activity.

i It has to challenge, elicit and evoke learners into a peak experience

Slabbert (1997:116) says the following with regard to a peak experience:

> *Self-fulfilment or self-actualisation is achieved through creating a new order of consciousness. This can only happen through a peak experience from which flows happiness and self-fulfilment... It is the nature and quality of the learning task that produces a peak experience of happiness and self-fulfilment.*

A peak experience for a learner who is totally illiterate in English, would be the moment that he/she realises that he/she can reconstruct meaning from the letters of a page in a magazine, for example. A more advanced reader would for example have a peak experience when a problem is solved by applying information that was found through reading. Happiness and self-fulfilment flow from this experience.

The essential elements that create the peak experience of happiness and self-fulfilment (Slabbert, 1997:116) that were identified by Csikszentmihalyi (1991) also apply to designing learning tasks for English reading. The elements are discussed below:

3.2.1.4 Essential elements for creating the peak experience of happiness and self-fulfilment, with regard to designing learning tasks for English second language reading

a A challenging activity that requires the unique implementation of existing competencies (skills) or the appeal to acquire new ones

This element is highly significant when designing learning tasks for English reading. Reading is a very complex skill, which requires that many different competencies be used, such as sensory-motor skills, cognitive skills, the skill to understand language (English) and many more. The total person is compelled to use various existing competencies. It is sometimes necessary to acquire more

competencies to be able to solve the problem. The learner who cannot read a word in English for example, first has to grasp the basic sounds in English. Thereafter the letters of short words have to be put together to reconstruct meaning. Longer words with different blends in sentences can be tackled next. When the learner has mastered different strategies to reconstruct meaning, a lot of exposure to written material is necessary. The learner who realises that he/she is able to understand a piece of information in the magazine would want to read more. The topics that interest the learner most will be read first. The learner will also need additional skills such as interpreting other visual information like pictures maps, diagrams, etc. What is important is to realise that these skills are built upon each other and sometimes mastering one skill is a prerequisite for acquiring another. Reading can be seen as a process of simultaneously using different competencies and acquiring additional ones when necessary, such as the skill to use a dictionary. It can therefore be said that reading can be a challenging activity in itself provided that the problem the learner has to solve and the material the reader is confronted with, are compelling enough.

b The merging of action and awareness

The learner who becomes actively involved in the process of solving the problem through reading, is absorbed in the activity. The learner's full attention is directed to solving the problem, making very little room for distractions from outside. The learner becomes involved in the activity to such an extent that he/she forgets about him/herself. Because the learning task is compelling for the learner the outside world may fade away, while the learner is busy constructing meaning (reconstructing meaning in the case of reading). Incidences where one gets totally cut off from the outside world through the process of reading, is a well-known experience to many of us.

c Clear goals and feedback

The learner who is able to become completely involved in the learning task, has clear set goals. The learning task has to contain a measure whereby the learner is informed when errors have been made. A reader uses such measures by constantly

monitoring the reading process through metacognition. When the reader has read words that do not make sense in the context viewed in the light of the learner's prior knowledge and the accuracy of predictions that were made, the reader knows that he/she has to go back and re-read the phrase in order to correct the error. A learning task based on reading should also contain clear goals, which will guide the learner towards successfully solving the problem. The focus, as with reading itself, should be on the process, rather than the product. If the process is executed successfully, the product, which is the ultimate goal, will be achieved.

d Self-control

The learner who is able to set goals and decide on specific actions that will be followed, is in control of the situation. In the peak experience of happiness, self-control is a key element. The learner who is engaged in the process of reading, continuously has to exercise control over the reading process. The reader has to be in control by using different strategies to reconstruct meaning, depending on what strategy is needed. A reader who is not in control of his/her own reading will not be able to reconstruct meaning from print.

e The loss of self-consciousness and transformation of time

It has already been pointed out that the learner who is totally involved in a compelling learning task forgets about him/herself to such an extent that no energy is left to spend on anything else. The learner's energy is also not fixed on time. Time is measured and determined by the activity itself. The above is quite true regarding learning tasks for reading in English. A compelling learning task in reading totally absorbs the learner with a loss of self-consciousness as a result.

The requirements of designing learning tasks in English as a second language have been clarified. It is however necessary to point out the relationship between paired reading, which forms part of the reading programme, that is described in detail in later paragraphs, and the requirements for learning task design in English as a second language. Its purpose is to view the learning task of the reading

programme in perspective when it is presented. The next paragraphs will clarify this aspect.

3.2.1.5 The connection between requirements for learning task design in English as a second language and paired reading

Paired reading, which is described in more detail elsewhere, involves more than one reader, mostly a tutor and tutee, who read a specific piece of writing together with the aim of equipping the tutee to read on his/her own and to solve a problem (both tutor and tutee). Paired reading has three phases: pre-reading, reading together and reading alone. A compelling learning task can be given to the tutor and tutee. The passage with the information to solve the problem is firstly read by the tutor to the tutee. This first step is very necessary as far as mainly two aspects are concerned:

- It is important for an English second language learner to hear the correct pronunciation of the words.
- The reader who is still struggling to read in English is given a head start.

The second phase of paired reading, which is reading together, gives the tutee the opportunity to read with the tutor, while he/she could not have done it alone. The aim of reading, which is the reconstruction of meaning (to solve a problem of a specific learning task), should constantly be kept in mind.

During the last phase the tutee reads alone. The information that was gained in the process can be shared with the tutor or with other learners in a group.

Through the use of cooperative paired reading (where a more advanced reader reads with a weak reader) and the posing of a compelling learning task to both learners, the information that is obtained from reading is used to solve the problem. The learners first share the constructed meaning of how to solve the problem with themselves, whereafter it is shared with each other or in a group. In this process metalearning takes place, where mega life skills, such as self-confidence and motivation are acquired. Through sharing meaning with others cooperative life skills such as communication and leadership are acquired, which are the consequences of cooperative learning. The obtaining of mega and

cooperative life skills are indicators of human potential that has been maximised. As already pointed out, during paired reading some learning tasks are on a low level, depending on the level of competence of the learner. This aspect needs to be clarified specifically in connection with paired reading.

3.2.1.6 Perspective on learning tasks on a very low level

It is important to realise that the average learner in this particular study was totally illiterate in English (one of the first entries of the facilitator's diary - Chapter six - strongly supports this statement). These learners had to learn to read in English from scratch. The whole phonetic system in English had to be acquired. It is therefore obvious that some of the learning tasks they were exposed to would seem to be on a very low level with not much of a compelling character.
It should be kept in mind that the skills that are acquired from the lowest level (where learners had to become acquainted with the basic sounds in English) are building blocks for more complex skills which would be acquired later. Throughout the whole process however the aim was to compel the learners to start reading and to want to read more. As soon as the learners were able to reconstruct meaning from print, the process of posing compelling learning tasks which required more extensive reading, was focused on per se. Learning tasks that are given to learners at the lowest levels of literacy, such as looking for a word with a specific ending, have been compiled in accordance with the most recent and most authoritative resources about how learners learn to read. It should be realised that each task (how small and insignificant it might seem) has a specific purpose and forms part of a whole range of skills that a skilful reader uses.

It is necessary to understand the above background information about the Cooperative Paired Reading Programme, which is presented later in the chapter, in order to place in context the learning tasks that will be introduced later.

At this stage it is clear that learners need to be exposed to compelling learning tasks to be able to maximise their potential. Metalearning is a process that is highly significant when maximising human potential takes place, and needs to be dealt with in more detail.

3.2.2 MAXIMISING HUMAN POTENTIAL THROUGH METALEARNING

According to Slabbert (1997:142) maximising human potential requires that metalearning takes place. Maximising human potential implies that the learner constructs meaning and shares the constructed meaning with him/herself. The learner controls his/her own learning. Slabbert (1997:142) thus defines metalearning as follows:

> *The control activities of learning, where the learner plans, executes, monitors and evaluates his/her own learning, is called metalearning (Slabbert, 1988).*

When metalearning takes place the learner takes responsibility for his/her own learning to maximise his/her own potential (Slabbert 1997:155-158). Other responsibilities that the learner takes upon him/herself are that the learner controls his/her own learning through the use of a vast repertoire of learning strategies. The learner's learning strategies should contain metalearning activities, which include planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation enabling the learner to become an active, effective, independent, and lifelong autonomous learner. When the learner needs additional information to solve the problem, he/she has to find the relevant resources required and to acquire the knowledge.

Slabbert (1997:191) mentions that creativity should not be overlooked in the process of maximising human potential. The least that the teacher can do in this regard is to plan creative learning tasks. The issue of creativity will however not be discussed further, due to a lack of space.

It has already been mentioned that the human potential of learners is maximised when metalearning takes place, where the learner controls his/her own learning by planning, executing, monitoring and evaluating the learning. The consequence of metalearning is mega life skills or competencies. These competencies, according to Slabbert (1997:224) are *acquired through a highly conscious lived experience becoming an inseparable part of the human being*. The mega life skills (Slabbert, 1997:224-226) are discussed in more detail elsewhere and will therefore not be

elaborated upon at this stage. What has already been mentioned and which needs to be emphasised once more, is the fact that learning tasks should be designed in such a way that learners are compelled explicitly or implicitly to metalearn which means that they will plan, execute, monitor and evaluate their own learning (Slabbert, 1997:227). Apart from sharing constructed meaning with oneself, learners can also share it with others in groups. In this way learners also have access to the vast resources and potential of others (Slabbert, 1997:232). There are certain requirements for cooperative learning to take place. When cooperative learning has taken place the inevitable consequence thereof will be the acquisition of cooperative life skills. As these life skills are discussed in detail elsewhere, the topic will be concluded with a few important remarks by Slabbert (1997:243) about cooperative learning and maximising human potential:

> .... *unless learners first learn to cooperate, they will never efficiently cooperate to learn. ... [H]ave learners realise that the only way they will be able to maximize their full potential, is if they fully explore all the resources available – their own and those of others, emphasizing that cooperation is the only way to be able to achieve both individual and group visions or goals.*

When considering the relationship between cooperative learning and maximising human potential, it has to be realised that cooperative learning provides the vehicle through which metalearning takes place where the learner reflects on his/her learning and shares the constructed meaning with him/herself to maximise his/her potential.

It is however important to consider the link between metalearning and reading as the cooperative paired reading programme that is presented later focuses on reading. An explanation of this issue will follow.

3.2.2.1 The connection between metalearning and reading

As already pointed out, metalearning implies that the learner is in control of his/her own learning and continuously plans, executes, monitors and evaluates

his/her learning. When one considers the process of reading it implies that the reader will also plan, execute, monitor and evaluate his/her reading. The skilful reader utilises these phases without specifically being aware of it. The following example can be given to illustrate the statement:

The reader who is confronted with the text has to plan which strategies will be used to reconstruct meaning. The reader may use the strategy of scanning through a newspaper article to determine who was involved in an accident, for example. The specific strategy is executed and its effectiveness is monitored. If the desired information was found, the task could be evaluated as successful. It might also have happened that the strategy of scanning was executed, whereafter the reader found that while monitoring him/herself the desired outcome (information) had not been achieved. Another strategy could then have been selected from a vast repertoire of strategies (planning), whereby the desired outcome could have been achieved after its execution. The process could then have been evaluated as successful.

During the Cooperative Paired Reading Programme, learners are exposed to different learning tasks. During the process of metalearning learners have to plan, execute, monitor and evaluate their own learning processes. The learning tasks are a key in the process of metalearning (and maximising human potential). These learning tasks will be discussed later when dealing with the different stages of paired reading.

With an understanding of what the process of maximising human potential involves, and the place of reading in the process, it needs to be considered how learners can maximise their potential in education settings which include inclusive education, where learners with different levels of competence have to be catered for.

One of the problems that many teachers experience is the fact that they have to teach in large classes. The problem of large classes will be discussed in the next paragraphs, after which a possible solution to the problem is considered.

3.2.3 TEACHING IN LARGE CLASSES

One difficulty that many teachers in South Africa have to face is the problem of teaching in large classes. In the Northern Province teaching in large classes has become the norm and is not viewed as an exception anymore. Many large classes also include learners with special needs, which implies that the levels of competency of the learners vary, especially regarding English as a second language and literacy. These learners have to be catered for and ways have to be found to produce learners who are literate in English, especially as far as reading is concerned.

The problem of teaching in large classes is investigated in the next paragraphs. The South African situation is presented with a reflection upon some views of overseas researchers that are applicable to the South African context. The aim is to analyse the problem in detail to be able to find a solution. The issue of what exactly the term "large class" means, is dealt with after a discussion of the problems in order to avoid confusion, as many perceptions exist about what a large class is.

The fact that teaching in large classes can be problematic is expressed in the following way by the Curriculum 2005 Orientation Programme (1997:Session 3, Resource 3):

> *Many teachers in South Africa work in overcrowded classrooms. When there are large numbers of learners in a classroom, teaching can become difficult. Often teachers do not even notice that some learners are not developing any skills, or are absent. Large classes also mean that noisy learners are paid a lot more attention, while the quieter ones are ignored.*

Teaching in overcrowded classrooms is in fact not only a problem in South Africa. Coleman (1989a) as documented by Meyer (1996:132) has found that the phenomenon of teaching in large classes is a global concern. The outcome of a survey in which 46 language educators from Britain, Brazil, Jordan, Palestine and Burkina Faso completed an open-ended questionnaire, was the following:

> *... the findings of this questionnaire settled the doubts which we intended to tackle in the first cluster of research questions: that is to say (a) large classes **are** perceived by teachers to be troublesome, difficult, problematic ...*

Hayes (1997:106) comments that the situation in Thailand for example, does in fact not differ from the situation in the rest of the world as far as large classes are concerned. The issues raised by teaching in large classes do not seem to be addressed in teacher training courses and many teachers, who have to teach more than fifty learners in a class, often do not have the necessary skills to take control of the situation. General problems are encountered when teaching in large classes and these need to be scrutinised.

3.2.3.1 General problems encountered when teaching in large classes

Different researchers have succeeded in documenting various problems which are associated with teaching in large classes.

Prodromou (1994:41) emphasises the fact that when a teacher has to deal with learners of different ability levels in one class, it can be difficult. When Pomplun (1996:2) addresses the issue of including learners "with disabilities" in state assessments one realises that teaching large classes with different ability levels can be a nightmare. Prodromou (1994:3) provides a very vivid picture of what can actually go wrong in a large mixed-ability class when he says:

> *Because of the diversity of learners and learning styles, a mixed-ability class easily falls apart: a large mixed-ability class falls apart even more easily, and a badly managed large mixed-ability class not only falls apart very easily, but will probably find it difficult to come together again.*

Any persons considering a career in teaching might quickly decide to change their ideas about careers when considering the facts of what other aspects might also go wrong in a large mixed-ability class. Prodromou (1994:41) continues to point out the difficulties in a large mixed-ability class by saying:

Because of the different levels in the class, it is difficult to keep the attention of the pupils: what's interesting and challenging for one learner is boring and too easy for another. So, while the teacher's attention is fixed on one side of the class, the other side begins to slip away, switches off, gets increasingly noisy, and, before long the class is in fragments.

Apart from mixed ability classes, multicultural classes have become quite common in South Africa during the past few years. Slabbert (1992:441) warns that problems such as low self-esteem, poor language proficiency and prejudice can confront the teacher. It is obvious that if such classes are large the teacher will find it more difficult to cope without having been equipped with the necessary skills.

So far general problems that occur when teaching in large classes have been looked at but it is necessary to probe deeper into the issue of teaching in large classes by considering some of the more specific problems that are encountered, especially in connection with language teaching.

3.2.3.2 Specific problems encountered when teaching in large classes where English is taught

Meyer (1996b: 132-133) documented a study by McLeod (1989), which grouped the difficulties facing language teachers of large classes into three categories: affective factors, effort required from the teacher and effective teaching.
Regarding affective factors the following problems were listed:

- Rapport cannot easily be established with individual students.
- It is impossible to get to know the names of individual students, or to get to know them individually.
- Large classes make it difficult to make eye contact. Eye contact is highly important when people interact (Prodromou, 1994:45).
- When too much pair and group work has to be done it becomes boring.

Effort required from the teacher was the term used to group the second set of reasons for finding teaching in large classes difficult. These reasons included the following:

- In a large class the teacher has to speak with a louder voice, which can be hard work.
- It is difficult to do oral work. Pretorius (1999:1) reports that teachers also find it difficult to teach reading in large classes.
- Teachers would prefer to give tests on a regular basis and be able to mark the tests as soon as possible, which would enable them to hand them back quickly.
- The correction of homework takes long.
- Classroom management is a problem, including discipline and avoiding a lot of noise.

- *In some schools it is a joy to teach 44 students but in others it's absolute hell and demands so much mental and physical effort to 'police' the class* (Prodromou, 1994:45).

The third category of effective teaching included the following difficulties:

- It is impossible to evaluate the performance of each student.
- In a large class, the teacher can't move around, while having to face the pupils. Class management is a problem.
- Poor results in the teaching/learning process
- *I tend to avoid complicated but potentially exciting stuff because of the horrendous task of setting it up with a large class* (Meyer, 1996:133).
- The learners speak to each other and don't pay attention.

McLeod (1989) in Meyer (1996:133) documented a very appropriate conclusion of one teacher who remarked: *"I don't think I actually teach the largest class anything"*. McLeod (1989) mentions that the fact that teachers view teaching in large classes negatively, and the notion that some teachers have that it is their task

to teach (without being aware of the learners' responsibility to learn), prevent some of them from realising that:

> ... *learners can take some of the responsibility for their own learning or become more autonomous, more reliant on other learners and less on the teacher in a large class* (Meyer, 1996:133).

Hayes (1997:108-110) interpreted the problems associated with large classes in the following way:

Five areas were identified in which the problems were categorised: discomfort, control, individual attention, evaluation and learning effectiveness. Teachers in northeast Thailand, who made certain comments that are significant as far as each of the above areas are concerned, support the classification. (From the grammar of these comments it is clear that English is not the first language of these teachers).

a *Discomfort*

Many teachers felt that they could not easily move around to help their students to interact with each other because there was not enough room:

> *The students can't move easily and some students don't do the activities. I must speak very loud and make me sore throat. There's not enough room (space) to do the activity – overcrowded. Large size of class makes me very frustrated and tired and I feel hopeless to manage the class successfully.*

b *Control*

Discipline worries teachers. They experience that they are not in control and that the classes become too noisy:

> *If the students are too many, the teacher can't control them. When students do activity, they make a loud noise. Then the teacher can't control the class. It is noisy, some students who aren't interested in class will disturb the others ... when we have the activities in class, it will be difficult to control or solve their problems.*

c *Individual attention*

The concern of many teachers is that the needs of individual students are neglected:

> *I don't have time to help all students but only some. If it is a small class, I can give the attention to them well.*

d *Evaluation*

Because teachers feel responsible for checking all of their students' work, they feel unhappy when they can't:

> *Often I didn't have enough opportunity to listen to them all, for example when I want to practise speaking. I don't know whether their pronunciation is right or wrong. It takes a long time to check all of the students' exercises.*

In this regard Meyer (1996:144) also mentions that:

> *...the effect of large classes places enormous pressures on the assessment process ...*

e *Learning effectiveness*

The common goal of these teachers is that they want their students to learn English. If they can't determine who is learning what, it worries them:

> *I'm not sure that my students get what I've taught exactly. It [is] difficult to control the students and I don't know what they have learnt because there are a lot of students. Some maybe understand – but some maybe not understand and the teacher don't know what.*

With some clarity about the problems that can be caused by teaching in large classes in the words of many teachers themselves, it will be necessary to try and find a common understanding of what a large class is.

3.2.3.3 Clarifying the term "large class"

Meyer (1996:133-135) documented the research of Coleman (1989b) in which he tried to define the term "large class" from the perspective of some teachers. A questionnaire was submitted to 201 respondents from twelve different countries in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia. The following had to be indicated by the teachers:

- The size of the largest and smallest classes they teach.
- Their usual class size and their ideal class size.
- The point at which class size (both large and small) begins to become a problem.
- The point at which classes become intolerably large or small (Meyer, 1996:134).

Coleman (1989b:12) concluded the following after the survey:

> ..... *it is beginning to look as though it may be difficult to define large in terms of a single number.*

(According to the survey usual class size varied from 13 to 90 and the perception of the largest class from 15 to 140.) He continued by saying:

> *Thus, large classes, as the teachers themselves define them, are well within their experience. On the other hand, small classes, as the teachers define them, appear to be well outside their experience* (Coleman, 1989b:16-17 in Meyer, 1996:134).

The following points were emphasized by Coleman (1989) in Meyer (1996:135):

- *Large classes are problematic.*
- *The term **large classes** is interpreted in ways other than numbers involved.*
- *Class sizes vary from country to country.*

- *Perceptions of ideal, large and small classes vary considerably, and there is no universal conception of the **ideal, large** and **small** class.*
- *There is a positive correlation between their largest class and their perception of what constitutes a large class; and there is a positive correlation between their **largest** class and their perception of the **ideal** class size.*

3.2.3.4 Achieving quality in large classes

It seems clear that large classes in whatever way they are defined can cause many problems for both teachers and learners. On the other hand, education cannot be stopped because of these problems. Hayes (1997:106) comments in this regard that as:

> *...class size is most unlikely to be reduced in the foreseeable future, teachers need to be helped to come to terms with their problems.*

In fact, in spite of this education still has to be characterised by quality in order to achieve the maximising of the learners' potential. Slabbert (1992:439) mentions that learning quality is a topic that educationists have been struggling with for many decades, and lately with more and more schools becoming multicultural in South Africa, quality is still a concern amongst those involved in education.

Slabbert (1992:439) argues that in order to improve learning quality there should be a shift from learning 'what' to learning 'how' and from learning 'content' to learning 'competencies' (Slabbert, 1990b:70-71) in multicultural settings. This shift in emphasis is important, since the challenge that we face in education is to prepare learners for an unknown future, regarding content and structure. The competencies that Slabbert (1992:439) refers to include the following:

- Learners allowing themselves to be better equipped to compete effectively for jobs and recognition.
- Making themselves better citizens within societal demands.
- Improving their psychological well-being.

- Making effective decisions because free-market economies require decentralised decision-making, which is increasingly in demand from the average worker.
- Forming part of a workforce composed of autonomous learners, people who are capable of mastering new science and technology as it develops.
- Becoming 'entrepreneurs' who have finely developed critical thinking abilities because economic prosperity will increasingly depend on a country's capacity to develop and exploit new opportunities, products and services (Clark & Palm, 1990).

Slabbert (1992:439) continues by pointing out that the above competencies constitute learning quality and that students who want to obtain these competencies will have to become effective, independent, autonomous, life-long learners, who take responsibility for, and control over their own learning. Metalearning in which the metalearner plans, executes and continuously monitors the process and eventually evaluates the products of his or her own learning (Slabbert, 1988:107; 1989), serves as a solution to the problem of learning quality. Cooperative learning is suggested as a means to achieve the goal of learning quality.

Within a multicultural class one usually also finds a multilingual situation where the learners have different first, second and third languages. In many instances the language classes can also be large and the problems that are associated with large classes as having been identified above have a high probability of being part of large multi-lingual classes.

When one examines the outcome of a study by Senior (1997:3) in which the perceptions of a sample of experienced English language teachers, regarding the nature of "good" English language classes were documented, one tends to agree with Slabbert's (1988:107, 1989) solution for learning quality. The reason can be found if one scrutinises the following characteristics of good English language classes:

> *Surprisingly, the teachers in the study seldom identified classes of quiet, compliant, hardworking students as good classes. Rather, they judged the quality of their classes according to how far the students co-operated with each other to form single, unified classroom groups. They clearly perceived that any class with a positive whole-group atmosphere was 'good', whereas any class which lacked a spirit of group cohesion was unsatisfactory even if it was composed of high-achieving students.*

Classes with such characteristics will definitely have learners who are effective, independent, autonomous and in control of, and responsible for their own learning, which point in the direction of learning quality. With the realisation of the role that cooperative learning can play in establishing these qualities, the next question that needs to be answered, is: What is cooperative learning?

3.2.4 COOPERATIVE LEARNING: A VEHICLE THROUGH WHICH HUMAN POTENTIAL CAN BE MAXIMISED

Slabbert (1997:231-233) discusses man's interdependence in life and that the efforts of two persons working together can achieve much more than that of one person alone. Boughey (1997:133) reported that according to a study, this statement is true:

> *Many students commented on the amount of research the group had carried out, saying that, as individuals, they would not have been able to consult so many resources.*

We discover who we are through others and have opportunities to maximise our potential through interdependent efforts. According to Taylor (1991:244) cooperative learning as a form of compensatory education will indeed be necessary to fight negative consequences of modern technology, such as the isolation of man which may in turn cause serious socialisation crises.

Cooperative learning has a specific history and the concept has certain connotations. These issues are dealt with next.

3.2.4.1 The history of cooperative learning

Antil, Jenkins, Wayne, and Vadasy (1998:420) mention that the origins of cooperative learning can be found in the works of social scientists. Scientific work, including theoretical and applied research in the fields of social relationships, group dynamics, learning and instruction over thirty years, gave birth to the concept of cooperative learning. Meyer and Steyn (1989:782-783) agree with this statement and also emphasise the important role that motivation plays as a component of research.

In 1992 it was reported by Johnson & Johnson (in Antil, Jenkins, Wayne and Vadasy, 1998:420) that more than 550 experimental studies and 100 correlational studies had been done on cooperative learning by that time. The fact that textbooks on instructional methods, college and in-service offerings, teachers' journals, and instructional materials frequently refer to cooperative learning, shows that cooperative learning as an instructional approach is well established in the educational mainstream (Antil, Jenkins, Wayne & Vadasy, 1998:420). According to Coleman, Gallagher and Nelson (1993:23) the use of cooperative learning has rapidly increased.

Before cooperative learning will be discussed in more detail, it is necessary to explain the perception of learning in relation to cooperative learning. Hodgson and McConnell (1995:211) view learning as a social phenomenon, which does not only occur on one's own. It involves the following elements:

- *an understanding of our ontological position – this involves an awareness of our values and beliefs in relation to the nature of learning;*
- *the posing of a problem or issue which we would like to 'learn' about – this problem or issue may be related to our professional, personal or relational life;*
- *the possibility to work (communicate cooperatively) with others in a social context in order to address the problem or issue.*

Where the history of cooperative learning is now better understood, it will be necessary to probe deeper into the specific meaning of cooperative learning and what it involves.

3.2.4.2 The concept of cooperative learning clarified

Hodgson and McConnell (1995:211) describe cooperative learning as process-driven. Each member is involved in a social process and attention should be paid to the process to enable him or her to reach the desired goals. At least two people, but usually more than two, work together in groups. Learners can work towards group 'products'. Through cooperative learning 'products' can be achieved that will not be easy for individuals to reach on their own. Other products can be individual products where members of the group help each other with their own individual learning. Cooperative learning tends to be enjoyable and developmental, due to the large social dimension involved in it. Therefore it leads to outcomes such as increased competence in working with others, self-assurance and personal insight, which are not usually considered to be academic, as well as academic outcomes.

Cooperative learning and traditional, curriculum-based learning can be contrasted in many ways, for example in traditional curriculum-based learning the learner works for him/herself and does not share his learning with others. The learner works in isolation while the learners who work cooperatively in a group, think about what they want to achieve through their learning. Learners in the group help others with their learning while they are also being helped by others.

Cooperative learning has many possibilities for achieving multiple educational goals. While academic learning goals are more prominent in most schooling efforts, the social and personal development of learners is also important to teachers. Teachers find the idea of cooperative learning appealing because it focuses on academic and interpersonal skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1991) in a single approach (Antil, Jenkins, Wayne & Vadasy, 1998:420).

Jacobs and Ball (1996:99) describe cooperative learning as a subset of group work methods, while Taylor (1991:247) describes cooperative learning by saying that:

> *Cooperative learning requires that the learning situation be structured so that the member of a group can only achieve his/her objectives if the others do likewise. Pupils in a group are therefore dependent on each other for the completion of the task.*

Slabbert (1997:233) provides a clear understanding of cooperative learning by explaining it in relation to metalearning:

> *In cooperative learning, small groups of learners share their constructed meanings with one another. They challenge each other's constructed meanings and negotiate one another back into the relationship for constructing meaning until meaning has optimally been constructed by each one in the group. It must be emphasised that the prerequisite for cooperative learning is that the learner must have constructed meaning available – which might have been constructed through metalearning – to share, if cooperative learning is to have any effect. ... In this way learners cooperate to learn by sharing their meanings with their peers to maximise their potential.*

Where the concept of cooperative learning is now better understood, some of its advantages need to be considered next.

3.2.4.3 The advantages of cooperative learning

From the description of Slabbert (1997:233) it seems that cooperative learning certainly has valuable benefits in the class situation. Hodgson and McConnell (1995:214) seem to agree with this statement when they point out further benefits of cooperative learning:

- Through discussion it helps to clarify ideas and concepts.

- It develops critical thinking.
- It provides opportunities for learners to share information and ideas.
- Communication skills are developed.
- Opportunities are provided for learners to take control of their own learning in a social context.
- It provides the validation of the ideas of individuals and ways to think through conversation (verbalising), argument conceptual conflict resolution), and multiple perspectives (cognitive restructuring) (McConnell, 1994).

Concerning written communication and writing in groups, Boughey (1997:133) reported the following comments by students:

> *In being able to interact in the group, your opinions and the way you interpret certain information is brought forward. Your fellow students then get the opportunity to see the issue from a different perspective, or to rectify you if you have misinterpreted the information.*

Wylie, Roberts and Botha (1999:64-65) listed some advantages of working in groups when implementing a literacy programme for the Foundation Phase. The advantages, (which are also significant when dealing with the Senior Phase) include the following:

- Group work provides an opportunity to concentrate on learners who need individual attention, while the rest of the class is working.
- Groups can accommodate learners with different abilities and their needs. Learners can work at their own pace and they do not have to be disrupted by each other.
- During the process of arriving at common conclusions, learners are trained in negotiation and conflict resolution, as well as leadership qualities.
- More learners can participate in a small group as compared to a whole class situation, where learners passively wait to receive information. In a group they take responsibility for their own learning.

- Peer learning can take place in groups where learners learn from each other, which is many times more successful than learning from an adult.
- In situations where resources are scarce, groups tend to use these resources more effectively.
- When learners are completing a task cooperatively, it is enjoyable and satisfying when everybody uses his/her talents and energy to achieve a common goal. They also learn the advantages of teamwork.
- Critical thinking is developed when learners have to give an opinion about their own work and the work of others. Objectivity must be learned in order to provide useful feedback to others and to edit and improve their own work.
- Assessment of individual group members is easier when the teacher can observe their skills and attitudes while they are working in groups.

It seems that cooperative learning has many benefits, which can also be experienced in inclusive education settings. The learning tasks that learners are exposed to when cooperative learning is taking place have to meet certain requirements. Those requirements implicitly seem to be in agreement with requirements for learning task design to enable learners to maximise their potential, which have been discussed earlier. The issue of learning tasks for cooperative learning to take place is discussed next.

3.2.4.4 Learning tasks for cooperative learning to be successful

The type of task, which the group has to execute, is important. Cohen (1994) in Pomplun (1996:3) suggested that when group members participate inconsistently, the type of task could be a problem. Participation by all group members is minimised when tasks with obvious answers and routine solution procedures are used. In order to maximise participation by all students, group members need to exchange ideas and information to successfully complete the task. Cohen (1994) recommended tasks with open-ended and non-routine solutions (Pomplun, 1996:3). It is interesting to find that, as far as the language classroom is concerned, Long (1990) proposed three types of tasks for groups: planned or unplanned, closed or open, and one-way or two-way (Jacobs & Ball, 1996:100). Planned tasks give learners the opportunity to prepare the language that they are

going to use, before they interact with other members of the group. The quality and quantity of the language generated by the learners can be improved by planned tasks. On the other hand, unplanned tasks do not give learners an opportunity to prepare before they interact with the group. Closed tasks are tasks that, as learners know, have one predetermined correct answer or small set of answers. In contrast, open tasks have no one correct answer. Long (1990), in contrast to Cohen (1994) believes that in a language class closed tasks lead to better negotiation of meaning (actions taken to be sure that communication has been successful) among group members. In these cases interaction would be stimulated when group members would try to find the best possible answer, rather than accepting a weaker alternative (Jacobs & Ball, 1996:100).

Jacobs & Ball (1996:100) do however comment that the artificiality of most classroom tasks is reflected by the distinction between closed and open tasks, and that learners who are allowed to choose topics or projects themselves, might be doing open tasks. What seems to be important to Cohen (1994) and Long (1990) is that tasks should stimulate maximum and equal participation. Slabbert (1997: 237) agrees with this statement and puts it in the following way:

> *However, a basic principle in designing learning tasks is that there should always be an opportunity for four individuals to participate* ***equally*** *– however subtle or explicit it may occur in the learning task itself.*

Long (1990) in (Jacobs and Ball, 1996:100) explains one-way and two-way tasks as tasks that involve an information gap. It is necessary that information flows between group members for the task to be completed. One-way and two-way tasks can be distinguished from each other when it has been identified whether each group member needs to send as well as receive information. It is hypothesised by Long (1990) that two-way tasks *are* better promoters of negotiating meaning (Jacobs & Ball, 1996:100). Effective participation by learners requires that "bonding" take place. It is specifically true in the case of language classes. An overview of this process is discussed next.

3.2.4.5 Effective participation through "bonding"

Senior (1997:3-4) uses the term "bonded class" when a language class has been identified by its teacher as functioning cohesively. The term "bonding" reflects an emotional attachment in the class and "bonding" refers to bonds of friendship, as learners in some classes relate to each other as friends. In the research of Senior (1997:4) it was documented that teachers constantly tried to establish a positive group feeling in their classes, and to maintain it. The reason for this general group development objective can be found in the following words of Senior (1997:4):

> *It seemed that the teachers had made the prior assumption that an atmosphere of classroom cohesion was a necessary precondition for the development of linguistic proficiency through oral practice.*

It is therefore important to realise that a feeling of mutual support and security is necessary, especially when opportunities are created where learners have to participate equally in a language, which is sometimes not their first language. Senior (1997:6-10) has identified eight facets of the bonding process specifically for language classes. They include the following:

a *Breaking down barriers*

Opportunities should be created where learners can get to know each other. Each member should be able to share information which he/she is proud of. When shared group knowledge is created the potential value of every learner to the group is acknowledged and each learner will feel fully integrated in the class.

b *Creating the climate*

Language teachers in particular should try to create an atmosphere of relaxation and safety. Learners should feel free to make mistakes and laugh about it. They should not feel ashamed or cringe when making mistakes.

c *Convincing the customers*

The competence of the teacher can easily be questioned by language learners in a newly formed group. The teacher will have to be able to

demonstrate a high level of professional competence, while at the same time modelling relaxed behaviour.

d *Defining directions*

For groups to function as a whole, each group member should strive towards a common goal. Language classes with different language levels, but having a common goal, will have a better chance of bonding than a class of learners with the same levels of English, but with different goals.

e *Harnessing the headstrong*

The functional approach to leadership claims that it is possible for every group member to either have a group-building, a group-maintenance, or a group-task role. Strong-willed students who do not act in ways that foster cohesion of the group, can be given roles that will direct their valuable energy towards positive group building.

f *Establishing expectations*

It is important that learners of language classes understand the expectations of teachers as far as classroom behaviour is concerned. For example, the feeling of relaxation that teachers might wish to create in their language classes can be confused by learners, causing them to think that high standards are not expected. The teacher has to demonstrate to the class what kinds of behaviour are acceptable and what not. Discipline will not be a problem once group norms for the whole class have been established, as learners will be inclined to regulate their peers' behaviour.

g *Recognising roles*

In a large language class learners who tend to be shy to speak because they might make mistakes, can easily be overlooked by the teacher. To solve this problem each member of the class should have a specific role which will help to maintain the class group. Learners who still seem to be quiet and shy after a few weeks, should with special effort be drawn into the group.

h *Maintaining momentum*

Most language teachers can easily identify a class that has reached a state of bonded equilibrium. The learners in such classes will tend to quickly form appropriate groups and start working on new tasks. They will productively work together to achieve the goals. A class that has bonded will not necessarily remain bonded. The teacher may realise that it has *gone off the boil*. Various strategies can be followed to rectify the situation. Goals can be renegotiated through asking learners to suggest new topics, themes or activities, to provide a new language focus. The roles of learners can also change in order to positively contribute to the functioning of the group as a whole.

Important suggestions have been made about how to facilitate better cooperation. As it has already been pointed out, cooperative learning involves more than only putting learners into groups. Specific requirements exist for cooperative learning to be successful. It will be necessary to discuss these requirements. The next section deals with this issue.

3.2.4.6 Requirements for cooperative learning to be successful

Although cooperative learning can be quite successful there are certain requirements for cooperative learning to be effective. Nevertheless, some teachers use the name of cooperative learning without making sure that certain elements are present.

Antil, Jenkins, Wayne and Vadasy (1998:446) refer to elements that have to be present when cooperative learning is used as an approach by a teacher. Taylor (1991:244) has also pointed out these basic elements. Teachers who do what Cohen (1994) calls "collaborative seat work" (i.e., tasks which are done in groups, while individuals could also have accomplished it by working alone, and call it cooperative learning, need to take note of the following necessities for effective cooperative learning):

a *Positive interdependence*

According to Johnson, Johnson & Smith (1991), in Jacobs & Ball (1996: 100-101) positive interdependence exists when:

> *... students perceive that they are linked with groupmates so that they cannot succeed unless their groupmates do (and vice versa) and/or that they must co-ordinate their efforts with the efforts of their groupmates to complete a task.*

An activity where learners work alone and then tell their group mates or show the product to them would not encourage positive interdependence (Jacobs & Ball, 1996:100-101).

b *Individual accountability*

Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1991) explain that individual accountability exists when:

> *... the performance of each individual student is assessed, the results given back to the individual and the group, and the student is held responsible by groupmates for contributing his of her fair share to the group's success* (Jacobs & Ball, 1996:101).

The importance of avoiding a process where individuals discourage others from participating by doing nothing or everything is emphasised by Jacobs & Ball (1996:101).

Senior (1997:5) comments on the role that goals play in working together as a group, by saying:

> *.... if any small group is to develop into a mature work group capable of functioning productively, all group members must share the same broad group goal.*

Although the broad goal in an English language class is to develop proficiency in English, time will however have to be spent to establish other broad goals for groups as well.

c *Promoting face-to-face interaction*

Learners should be placed with each other in order to complete the tasks assigned to them (Van der Merwe et al., 1999:37). Slabbert (1992:439) goes a step further when describing face-to-face interaction as follows:

> *...students must engage in helping, assisting, supporting and encouraging each other's efforts.*

d *Cooperative skills*

Slabbert (1992:439) mentions the following with regard to cooperative skills:

> *...students must learn to frequently use required interpersonal and small-group skills such as leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, respect, conflict-management, recognition, etc.*

e *Group processing/evaluation*

Slabbert (1992:439) provides more clarity about evaluation when referring to the perceptions of Johnson & Johnson (1990:103-106) and Sharan & Sharan (1987:22):

> *...periodic and regular evaluation of how the group functions should be done by describing which member actions are helpful and which are not and which behavior should continue and which should not.*

Senior (1997:5) points out that the development of norms of behaviour in small groups is important. Teachers should realise that learners have their own peer group norms and that problems can arise when the norms small groups adhere to, differ from the norms of behaviour that the teacher wishes to establish.

Hodgson and McConnell (1995:213) have interpreted the requirements necessary for cooperative learning to be successful in formal learning situations as follows:

- *a willingness by learners to participate in cooperative learning;*
- *an understanding by learners and tutors of the benefits of this form of learning;*

- *if the learning is accredited, then an assessment system that supports and rewards cooperation has to be in place. This also has to be one in which the learner is actively involved in assessing their own work and that of their peers, in association with the tutor or trainer;*

- *there has to be a distribution of power between tutor/trainer and learner, so that learners do actually have the power to control their own learning.*

The requirements for cooperative learning to take place do not imply that cooperative learning is a rigid process. On the contrary, cooperative learning can take many forms, as the next paragraphs will tell.

3.2.4.7 Cooperative learning methods

There are many cooperative learning methods. The methods that are chosen should however accommodate all the requirements for successful cooperative learning. Slabbert (1997:245) selected the most prominent cooperative learning methods, as described by Davidson and O'leary (1990:31) and Slavin (1981:655-656). These methods are the following:

i *Think-Pair-Share*

The facilitator asks a question whereafter the learners have to think of an answer on their own. They then form pairs with a partner and discuss the question and finalise the answer. The answer is then shared with the rest of the learners.

ii *Co-op*

The following elements are part of the method:

- Learner-centred class discussion.

- Selection of learning teams.

- Team building.

- Team-topic selection.

- Mini-topic selection, preparation and presentation.

- Preparation of team presentations.
- Team presentations.
- Evaluation.

iii *Jigsaw*

- A passage of text material or a task is divided into different components or topics.
- A specific topic is assigned to each group member who has to become an expert on the topic.
- Learners who share topics meet in expert groups. They discuss the topics, gain mastery over them and plan how it will be taught.
- When learners return to their original groups, they teach what has been learnt to their group members.
- An individual test or quiz is administered.
- Recognition is given to the team.

(Taylor, 1991:247) describes the Jigsaw as being developed during a time of racial crisis in Austin, Texas).

iv *Team learning*

After the facilitator has presented material to the learners, they join their teams where they try to master a set of worksheets. Individual quizzes on the material are taken by each member. Learners' scores represent the degree of improvement over the learners' own past average. Recognition is given to the team.

v *Learning together*

A single worksheet is completed in small groups whereafter praise and recognition are given to the group.

vi *Group investigation*

Learners from small groups make responsible decisions about what they will learn, how they will organise themselves to learn it and how the things that have been learned will be communicated to the members of the class.

The formation of groups is another aspect that was briefly mentioned and needs clarification.

3.2.4.8 The formation of groups

i Group size

Prodromou (1994:42) recommends that between four and six learners work together in a group. Slabbert (1997:234) adds that the size of groups may vary from two to six learners, but that it depends on the type of learning task and the method of cooperative learning which is used. Antil, Jenkins, Wayne & Vadasy (1998:432) found in their research that group sizes do indeed vary. In their study 57% of teachers reported that they sometimes facilitated the forming of pairs and sometimes small groups consisting of 4 learners. Jacobs & Ball (1996:99) point out that it is beneficial to work in pairs and in groups of three or four students:

> *This approach enhances the opportunities for each member to participate actively, and reduces the complexity of group management.*

They also point out that small groups are favoured, but that larger groups can produce more varied contributions from its members.

The Curriculum 2005 Orientation Programme for teachers (National Department of Education, 1997:Session 3, Resource 3) supports the idea of 4-6 learners working together: 4-6 learners can sit closely together, which makes participation and communication easier. A group consisting of too many learners, on the other hand, might have negative consequences, such as inputs given by a limited number of learners only while the rest of the group do not say anything and eventually lose interest.

Meyer and Steyn (1989:782) refer to the works of Slavin (1980a:252) to describe the formation of a group of 4-6 learners who worked together and are rewarded as

a group. The interdependence of the group members can clearly be noticed in such a situation.

3.2.4.9 The composition of groups

Heterogeneous, teacher-formed teams seem to be preferred by some researchers and others have referred to the heterogeneity of teams as a basic principle of cooperative learning. When forming heterogeneous groups, one high achiever, two middle achievers and a low achiever should be included. Each team should include males and females and be diverse as far as ethnicity is concerned. Reasons for preferring heterogeneous groups include the following:

- Opportunities for peer tutoring and support are greater.
- Cross-race relations and integration are improved.
- Classroom management becomes easier when having one high achiever, who can assist the teacher, in every group.

Antil, Jenkins, Wayne and Vadasy (1998:431) inquired about teachers' grouping strategies in a study. A variety of approaches were reported for forming co-operative learning groups:

- 62% of the teachers in their study described multiple strategies. Heterogeneous grouping was a favourite.
- 40% of the teachers allowed students to select their team-mates.
- 43% of teachers reported using random assignment and groups of convenience, e.g. students who sat near each other were reported as having been used by 23% of the teachers.
- 23% reported that they always structured learning groups to be heterogeneous.
- No teachers mentioned ability groups.
- A majority of teachers indicated that some of the time heterogeneous groups were deliberately formed, while at other times strategies that might not necessarily end up in heterogeneous groups were used (e.g. Random assignment, self-selected teammates, groups of convenience).

The Curriculum 2005 Orientation Programme for teachers, (National Department of Education, 1997:Session 3, Resource 3) provides the following suggestions for handling groups of learners:

A *Younger learners (up to age 9)*

a The class can be divided into small groups and each group can be given a different name. The learners can help the teacher to choose their group's name. The names of groups can be connected to different flowers, animals or birds.

b A wall chart for each group can be put up in the classroom. The wall chart, which would serve the purpose of profiling each group, can record the group's achievements and developments during a specific period of time.

c Each group should be allowed to have only one day in the week, which is their special day. On that specific day this group should receive special attention from the teacher. The learners in the group can wear something, for instance a ribbon, to identify them.

d The group that is having a special day should report the activities that they will be doing for the whole day at the beginning of their special day. They may also record their achievements at the end of the day.

e Different learners will have an opportunity to spend a little extra time with the teacher, when working in groups, for at least one day per week. Teachers are, however, cautioned not to neglect the other groups while giving special attention to one group.

B *Older learners (age 9 upwards)*

a Working in groups can be done in many ways. Learners can turn their desks to enable four of them to work together on a task or, without turning their desks, two learners can face each other and work together.

b Working in groups will cause some noise, as they will discuss what they are doing. The teacher should not be upset about this, as long as they do not disturb the rest of the school. While the groups are busy

with their activities, the teacher should be active by encouraging learners, asking questions or listening to what they are discussing.

Other researchers, however, such as Boughey (1997:128) tried to avoid a situation where groups were dominated by stronger members, by dividing the class into homogeneous groups, but the researcher did not make mention of the use of cooperative learning. The group members had different roles. One person was the chairman, who coordinated writing sessions and facilitated discussion. A gatekeeper checked that the group did not deviate from the specific schedule for each session, while the secretary acted as a scribe. The remaining two group members played the role of participants.

Slabbert (1997:236) also suggests that different roles and functions can manifest in cooperative learning groups. As far as learning task skills are concerned, the following roles and functions are identified:

- The problem restater analyses the learning task (problem) and represents it to the group.
- The relater/evaluator relates the problem to something familiar.
- The strategy suggester seeks and suggests alternative strategies to solve the problem.
- The function of the approximator is to determine the range, scope and quality of the expected answer.
- The reviewer or mistake manager manages mistakes and the execution of strategies with the aim of determining what can be learned in the process.

With cooperative learning skills in mind, the roles and functions are as follows:

- The encourager encourages all members.
- The praiser praises others for their efforts.
- The celebrator celebrates accomplishments.
- The gatekeeper equalises participation.
- The helper helps others.
- The help seeker asks for help.

- The checker checks for understanding.
- The taskmaster checks for staying on the task.
- The recorder records ideas.
- The reflector reflects on group progress.
- The silencer prevents the group from disturbing others.
- The materials monitor effectively distributes and collects materials.
- The mediator mediates conflicts.

Slabbert (1997:234-235) recommends a method of Kagan (1992:3-4) to easily assign groups if one is not very familiar with all the learners:

i All the learners in a particular group have to be ranked from highest to lowest ability.

ii In order to select the first group, the top, bottom and two middle ability learners have to be selected, forming the first group. It is important to note that these learners should not all be of the same sex or culture and that they should not be worst enemies or best friends. If a learner falls in this last category, the facilitator should go further down the list until a learner is found who is an appropriate candidate.

iii Step ii has to be repeated in order to select the second group and all the other groups that will follow, by using the reduced list each time.

Cooperative learning has already been found to be a solution for teaching in large classes. As pointed out earlier, cooperative learning is part of the process of maximising human potential. It must be remembered that in order to maximise a learner's potential, metalearning should take place. The consequence of metalearning is the acquiring of mega life skills, and an indication that cooperative learning has taken place is the presence of cooperative life skills. These life skills are discussed in the next section.

3.2.5 COOPERATIVE LIFE SKILLS

The following cooperative life skills are described by Slabbert (1997:239-243) as the "inevitable consequence" of cooperative learning. This requirement is seen as the most fundamental one in education and its rightful place needs to be restored. In fulfilling this requirement, as Slabbert (1997:239) puts it, *...learners are prepared for life in the most profound way, being confronted with experiencing* ***real interdependent life.***

The cooperative life skills will be discussed in the next paragraphs. It should be pointed out that cooperative life skills are built upon mega life skills, which are discussed hereafter.

3.2.5.1 Democratisation and humanisation - How do I see you?

The way in which individual learners see each other is an important prerequisite for cooperation. The realisation of the fact that all human beings contain the same basic biological and physical components is brought about by cooperative learning. Everybody has strengths and weaknesses and can grow into what we are supposed to become. All human being are unique as far as our biological makeup is concerned and the potential God invested in us. When I come to know myself through sharing meaning with myself in metalearning and the potential invested in me, I very highly view you and your potential, uniqueness and purpose. And I then realise that it is impossible to fulfil my potential without you.

3.2.5.2 Communication - How do I interact with you?

Interaction makes cooperative learning possible, but without verbal or non-verbal communication it is impossible to have interaction. When *recognising* the other person as a human being, *respecting* one another correspondingly, and *appreciating* what we can learn from one another through *listening* while *sharing*, interaction takes place. When *decision-making* is eminent through negotiation, where *conflict-management* and *conflict resolving* might become inevitable, interaction takes place.

The levels of communication are fundamentally important. Interaction requires that a person gets to know the real other. The following are the four levels of communication:

a *The level of acquaintance and trivialities*

This level is the lowest level of becoming acquainted. Interaction exists, but can easily be stopped. There is no personal involvement.

b *The level of sharing information*

In this level of communication involvement is for personal gain only and one can stop sharing at any moment as no personal risk is involved.

c *The level of personal interest and involvement*

At this level a real interest in the other person as a human being manifests. This is a risky level. Openness, with the corresponding vulnerability is prerequisite. This is the first step towards possible growth and maximising potential.

d *The level of sharing feelings*

At this level, the highest level of communication, the only way to penetrate understanding of interactive behaviour can be found. It is necessary to know the other person's feelings before there can be a real understanding of one another as well as of oneself, with maximising of potential as a consequence. Slabbert (1997:241) concludes his explanation in the following way:

> *Real interactive communication to maximise human potential as a nodal point of relationships in interdependence, needs communication to progress throughout to the highest level of communicating feelings always giving 'I' messages.*

3.2.5.3 Dealing with feelings - How do I react to you?

Communication always has to do with feelings. Our interrelatedness and interdependence is determined by the reaction towards feelings. Every person is responsible for how he/she will react towards feelings. The first important step in

dealing with feelings, before reacting to them, is to *analyse* the feelings to determine what he/she feels. The *source* of the feelings has to be reflected upon. The cause of the feeling and the justification thereof need to be verified. If the feeling is justified, a number of possible reactions and their consequences can be considered. In the end the choice, which has been made, should create a win-solution. We all have choices regarding the handling of feelings and we should never be victims thereof.

3.2.5.4 Justice and forgiveness - How do I want you to react to me?

Justice does not imply that I do to you what you do to me, but that I should unconditionally forgive you, keeping in mind how all of us want to be treated in certain circumstances. This unconditional forgiveness is applicable to everybody. The outcome of this will be the manifestation of qualities such as *honesty, truthfulness, sincerity, obedience, virtuousness, generousness, trustworthiness* and *candidness.*

3.2.5.5 Love - How do I ultimately care for you?

If we are interdependent and if I cannot fulfil my purpose without you - which is the case in cooperative learning - I have to ultimately care for you. This is manifested in being *available, courteous, tactful, flexible, humble, meek, gentle,* but also *concerned, considerate* and *compassionate.*

3.2.5.6 Leadership - How effectively can I lead you to maximise your potential?

Leadership should be earned when the character of the person reflects the competencies mentioned in the previous paragraphs. When one is determined to fulfil one's purpose and to fully express oneself through the character which is revealed in its potential glory - then leadership is born. The purpose of a leader (who has a sphere of influence which is awarded to him) is to produce leaders (Munroe, 1993 in Slabbert, 1997:242).

Concerning leadership Senior (1997:5) adds that various researchers have changed their perceptions about leadership during the past few years. The view that leadership is the prerogative of the group leader has been traded in for a perception that sees leadership wider, including the roles of individual group members.

In the language classroom it will be of particular importance to encourage learners to be leaders, even though the language that they have to use is not their first language, and might cause some learners who can contribute a lot regarding leadership, to be afraid of making mistakes while giving inputs. The learner should know that everybody makes mistakes from time to time and that by making mistakes, we grow.

In the classroom situation Slabbert (1997:242) suggests that a list of cooperative skills be made by the teacher and learners and that these skills should be dealt with individually until all of them have been mastered.

3.2.5.7 Evaluation

Evaluation should take place frequently and regularly to identify individual learners' behaviour that promotes cooperation and behaviour that does not promote cooperation. The non-conducive behaviour should be eliminated (Johnson and Johnson, 1992:103-106; Sharan and Sharan, 1987:10 in Slabbert, 1997:242).

Clear ground rules, which are conducive to cooperative learning, will have to be laid down. These ground rules will have to include the learners' expectations and teacher expectations. The rules will describe the preferred kind of learning environment. It is important that each learner should feel safe. Mutual respect should form the basis of the ground rules. Learners should also evaluate their cooperative behaviour at least once a week. A regular meeting may be held with the whole group in which any common problems can be discussed or ground rules can be changed (Slabbert, 1997:343).

3.2.6 MEGA LIFE SKILLS: THE INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCE OF METALEARNING

Slabbert (1997:224-227) explains life skills as "*lived* skills" and that these cannot be taught through an isolated crash course, but should be acquired by living. Mega life skills become the consequence of metalearning, which was discussed earlier,

when the learner constructs meaning, in other words, he learns. This happens when the learner is confronted by a problem, which has to challenge, evoke and elicit him/her into peak experiences, causing a new order of consciousness in the learner (happiness and self-fulfilment). The learner will be empowered to be in control of his/her life, to explore the wealth of his/her potential and to creatively maximise it. The mega life skills which follow have been compiled by Slabbert (1997:224-227) by combining the work of Rich (1992) with the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22,23).

3.2.6.1 Self-confidence - Feeling able to do it

Confidence implies that a person feels able to do. When metalearning takes place, the learner feels in control and becomes confident that he/she can do something him/herself. There is a very close connection between self-esteem, self-image and confidence. The manifestations of confidence are being decisive, fearless and courageous as well as the willingness to take risks. Confidence may also be seen as a manifestation of faith.

3.2.6.2 Motivation - Wanting to do it

The first motivator is the challenge of the learning task. When the learner has achieved success and after the result has been assessed, the learner will want to do more. Intrinsic motivation is acquired by a learner who has gone through a peak experience and has benefited from it. Such a learner knows that he/she can control the events and the outcome to learn more about him/herself.

3.2.6.3 Initiative - Moving into action

The metalearner who knows he/she is in control does not wait for another person to prompt him/her into taking action. A learner who realises that today is part of a new adventure in his/her life will not want to wait to take that action through which results are accomplished. Planning and organising are closely linked to initiative. Energy, viability, interest and activity are also closely associated with initiative.

3.2.6.4 Effort - Willing to work hard

Effort is required to maximise human potential. Metalearning requires control over effort and continuous correction, adjustment, modification and improvement

to get the best results. The metalearner knows that the harder he/she works, the deeper and more rewarding the outcome will be. Therefore the learner wants to work hard.

3.2.6.5 Perseverance - Completing what you started

The metalearner knows that he/she is in control and that he/she cannot expect someone else to complete the learning task on his/her behalf. He/she knows that there will be no rewards if the task is not completed. The learner is able to continue with the task because of the peak experience. Manifestations of perseverance are: not to be distracted from what one is doing and not giving in to temptations. Further manifestations of perseverance are tolerance and diligence.

3.2.6.6 Common sense - Making good judgments

Being in control implies that the metalearner has to make choices. The possibilities of making a good judgment of choice have to be assessed. In order to do this, it is necessary for the metalearner to be as versatile as possible, which implies that a vast array of information will have to be available. The metalearner will have to be able to find the required information and situations should be viewed from many different perspectives. The learner will then be able to be wise when making judgments.

3.2.6.7 Responsibility - Doing what is right

Responsibility forms an integral part of metalearning. The learner has to accept responsibility for learning and has to realise that it is no one else's responsibility. The metalearner who responds with the best possible action to specific judgement and justifies it, is able to make good judgements. That is a reason for the metalearner's relentless search for the right, the best and the ultimate. Extraordinary self-discipline and self-control which are produced by all the previous competencies (self-confidence, motivation, initiative effort, perseverance and common sense) are therefore necessary. Such a metalearner is consistent, dependable, thorough, punctual and reliable.

3.2.6.8 Independence - Doing it yourself

The metalearner who has accepted the responsibility through the level of self-discipline and self-control becomes independent. The learner knows not to look

for someone else to do the task for him/her. What needs to be done is therefore done by the learner him/herself. The metalearner who knows that someone else will not monitor his/her actions and that he/she has to do the tasks him/herself, becomes independent. Independence implies that the learner is independent to maximise his/her potential.

3.2.6.9 Peacefulness - To be content

The independent metalearner has realised that he/she is in control of his/her destiny. Such a realisation or knowledge enables the learner to come in touch with his/her potential. Being content and at peace with oneself flows from an awareness of being in control and, therefore, being able to maximise one's own potential. A peak experience is the reason for such a new order of consciousness and self-fulfilment that results from it. The realisation of the vast untapped and unfulfilled potential that is still remaining is also associated with self-fulfilment. It results in an appreciation of life in its fullness, uniqueness and abundance. The learner therefore, acknowledges that the journey has only started and, realising that he/she is in control of it, he/she is content, at peace and excited about tomorrow.

3.2.6.10 Joy - To be happy

A new order of consciousness resulting from a peak experience is the consequence of conquering an obstacle, such as completing a challenging learning task. The happiness flowing from such an experience cannot be equalled. The durable quality, which fills a life with joy, is happiness. Metalearning is the vehicle through which the learner realises that there is much more to be discovered in the challenging, adventurous journey of life that lies ahead, and this leads to becoming a joyful human being.

3.2.6.11 Love - To ultimately care for myself and everything around me

The metalearner who discovers that he/she is continuously growing and that every moment is developed into an unexpected fullness of power, peacefulness and joy, realises that the value of what is experienced becomes tangible. The result of this is that such an asset is respected and valued above all as a gift from God. The metalearner becomes eternally committed to maximise it and to ultimately care for it. An appreciation of all of creation, which also results in the ultimate care for it,

as a gift from God, flows from a discovery of everything around him/her in its broadest and deepest sense.

According to Slabbert (1997:227) the list of mega life skills is of fundamental importance but can still be expanded. It is emphasised that these competencies are the inevitable consequence of metalearning.

3.3 CONCLUSION

An overview of the chapter indicates that it has contributed to educational research by providing a theoretical educational background about a number of theoretical aspects related to maximising human potential. In the following paragraphs a summary is provided of the aspects that were addressed in order to answer the research questions that were stated at the beginning of the chapter.

Within this chapter the concept of maximising human potential has been described. The important role of the learning task was highlighted and the significance thereof with regard to learning task design for English Second Language reading was discussed. An account was given of how human potential can be maximised through reading. For this purpose the reader was briefly introduced to the concept of paired reading. The connection between metalearning (a vehicle through which human potential can be maximised) and reading was indicated. The concept of cooperative learning, which can also lead to the maximisation of human potential, has also been clarified. The chapter ends with a discussion of the consequences of cooperative learning (acquiring cooperative life skills) and of metalearning (acquiring mega life skills). The need for more theory about reading is met by the unfolding of the next chapter that deals with the issue.