IMPROVING READING LITERACY: THE ROLE OF SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by

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The dissertation is dedicated to

my late dad, Lutchmana Sreeram Naidoo, and

my mum, Subbamah Naidoo.

I sincerely thank them for being the sources of my inspiration and

encouragement throughout my life to reach great heights

in completing this study.

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For me,
He is the manifestation that generates divine vibrations to all
and have a positive effect on the thoughts and feelings
for He is the principle of Oneness
in the entire diversity
of the creation.

CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

To whom it might concern

This is to certify that I have edited the dissertation, "School-based professional development of educators to promote the improvement of reading literacy of learners" by Dheenadayala Sreeram Naidoo, in terms of language usage, style, grammar, idiomatic expression and consistency.

I also offered suggestions to the candidate concerning issues of logic, concept clarification and meaning but did not insist on my suggestions being accepted.

The list of references was checked for formatting and was cross checked with the sources cited in the body of the dissertation.

My congratulations go to the candidate and I wish him success with his final submission and his future career.

Beverley M. Malan

(Electronically signed)

Beverley M Malan (D.Ed)

Independent Consultant

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AL	Additional Language
CEA	Centre for Evaluation and Assessment
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPTD	Continuous Professional Teacher Development
DoE	Department of Education
HBDI	Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
LSI	Learning Style Inventory
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
PD	Professional Development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SACE	South African Council for Educators

ABSTRACT

The focus of this research is on the professional development of educators responsible for teaching reading literacy to learners. This focus forms the core of this case study. Case studies investigate cause and effect and one of their strengths is the acknowledgement that context is a powerful determinant of both cause and effect. A qualitative research approach is used to collect data by means of semi-structured interviews, observation and questionnaires at three primary schools. This study is aimed at exploring whether educators gained and applied the knowledge and skills from departmental workshops and other professional development intervention to the facilitation of reading literacy. The study investigated and interpreted the participants' perspectives in order to gain insight and understanding into the professional learning experiences of educators.

Proficiency in reading literacy gives learners access to information, broadens their general knowledge, increases their vocabulary and develops their language skills. The improvement of reading literacy commences at the primary level because learners at this stage develop and acquire fundamental attitudes and approaches to learning.

Data was collected by means of interviews, observation of lessons and questionnaires on the teaching of reading literacy. Findings indicate that, although the focus of teaching and learning is on the learner, the strategies and criteria are determined by the educator. This could have a negative impact on learners' acquisition of knowledge and educators' ability to improve learners' reading literacy levels.

This dissertation recommends that the *whole brain learning and reading model,* which represents an integration of the literature study, my practical experience and the findings of my empirical study with inputs from principals and educators, should be used as basis for the transformation of reading literacy facilitation in South African schools.

Key words

Achievement

Assessment

Curriculum

Innovative

Interaction

Observation

Performance

Proficiency

Reading Literacy

School-based professional development

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1.1   Orientation and background

School-based professional development initiatives encourage educators to continuously develop their professional competence so that they will be able to cope with the challenges posed by globalization and the Communication Age. Unless they are literate and numerate the chances that educators will be able to overcome these challenges are slight. Also, unless they are sufficiently literate they will find it difficult, if not impossible, to develop the literacy and numeracy levels of learners in their care. It is important, therefore, that initiatives aimed at the professional growth of educators should take into account the educational challenges generated by globalisation. My stance is that, given the nature of these challenges, professional development interventions should focus specifically on the improvement of educators' reading proficiency and on the knowledge and skills they would need to develop the reading literacy of the learners in their care.

The benefits to the education system of a corps of highly literate educators are many. In the first instance an increase in educators' reading proficiency could result in the creation of one or more professional learning communities. In the second instance, the more literate educators are, the better able they would be to develop the reading proficiency of school learners. Improving learners' reading proficiency is crucial given the prominence of reading as medium of learning in schools. In the third instance, according to Rose (2005:1), school learners will only achieve the educational outcomes needed to build a democratic South Africa if classrooms are democratized, something that necessitates high levels of literacy.

According to Rose (2005:133) a minority of learners are consistently able to engage actively in classroom activities, to respond successfully to educator questions (the primary means by which educators interact with their learners), and to perform well in assessment tasks. Another group is sometimes able to engage actively, to respond to questions and to achieve average success, while a third group is often unable to participate in activities,

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rarely respond and are frequently unsuccessful in completing tasks. In other words, relations among learners within every classroom and school are unequal. As a result the learner identities emerging from classroom activities are stratified as successful, average or unsuccessful.

Considering the benefits accrued by those who are sufficiently literate, it seems logical that the teaching of reading literacy not only has to be prioritized, but that all those involved in education, be they professional educators, education managers or departmental officials, should urgently search for innovative methods to improve reading literacy all round. Such methods, according to Skinner (2005:7), should be aligned to learners' reading literacy needs while also giving educators the opportunity of applying their theoretical knowledge and insights to classroom practice.

Old ways of teaching might not accomplish this. According to Rose (2005:1), the use of innovative literacy pedagogies are imperative, not only to improve reading proficiency but also to democratize classrooms. In using such methods, according to Rose (2005:1), educators should commit to spending some time every day teaching *all* learners in a class how to read the texts required at their level and in their area of study. In doing so, Rose (2005:1) claims, educators would be helping learners with differing capacities not only to overcome their reading difficulties but also to learn by reading (Rose 2005:1). According to my observations, this is not currently happening in South African schools. My sense is that, while the majority of educators are primarily engaged in the preparation of lessons that focus on the development of learners' academic ability, they are neglecting the development of those same learners' reading proficiency.

Based on these observations and on the theoretical insights I gained from my literature review I would argue for the prioritization of reading literacy in all subjects. I would argue, moreover, that all those involved in education, be they professional educators, education managers or departmental officials, should urgently search for innovative methods to improve reading literacy. In doing so, I believe, it is not only learners' reading literacy that will improve but also their ability to expand their individual and collective knowledge and skills bases. Consequently, their attitudes to learning and life might eventually reflect the positive attitudes that South Africans should have if they are to contribute to the development of their country.

1.2   Exposition of the problem

In 2008 the South African Department of Education, taking cognizance of the importance of literacy and numeracy in school education, announced its intention to roll out the *Foundations for Learning Campaign* in schools across the country. Published in Government Gazette No.30880 of 2008 (DoE 2008), this campaign had the improvement of school learners' performance in reading, writing and numeracy as purpose. Its goal, as stated in the Gazette, was to ensure that, come 2011, school learners would all be able to demonstrate age appropriate levels in literacy and numeracy.

The campaign documents clearly indicated what the Department of Education's expectations of schools and educators were – an increase of the average learner performance in literacy/language of no less than 50% with an improvement of between 15% and 20% in the four years of campaigning. According to these documents, the required support needed to achieve these goals would be provided as and when this was needed (DoE 2008:4). Testing and assessments procedures were subsequently developed to monitor learner progress towards the achievement of the ultimate goal of the campaign, namely that all learners would be able to read to the standards expected of them by 2011.

The visionary nature of this goal was intended to provide energy, direction and inspiration not only across all levels of the education system but also in the public domain. I would argue that, even if the whole nation were 'energized', the goal itself is idealistic given the reality of the variable literacy levels of school learners at present. While it is possible that some learners might achieve this goal the majority would not. Also, while it is theoretically possible that educators could, through repeated practice, support learners in their classes to operate at the required levels (Rose 2005:12), this would not manifest in practice due to the large number of learners who are currently under-performing and the extent of the support needed to effectively address this situation.

My claims are informed not only by my own observations. A systemic evaluation of learners reading proficiency, carried out by the Quality Assurance Chief Directorate (DoE 2003: ix), indicates that, while learner performance in listening comprehension is quite good, their performance in reading and writing is not. Put differently, learners did not perform well when required to produce their own written responses (DoE 2003:ix). Analysts suggested that the disjuncture between oral and written literacy might be caused

by the use of English as the 'test' language, since this is not the home language of the majority of the learners being assessed (DoE 2003:ix). Other factors mentioned as possible causal factors were home environments without resources (like reading materials), the quality of teaching in classrooms, and/or the way/s in which educators utilized available contact/teaching-learning time (DoE 2003:69).

My claims are also informed by educators' views on learners' reading levels. According to them, school learners' literacy levels are dropping, and this at a time when they should be rising rapidly (Rose 2005:6), a time when, according to Skinner (2005:4), the goal should be to ensure that all learners are able to participate successfully in a reading literacy-based, global economy. Even the Department of Education has expressed concern about this tendency, indicating that it needs to be investigated as a matter of urgency (DoE 2003:69).

Could it be that the fault is a systemic one? After all, if the system has not been able to ensure that even Grade 3 learners achieve the required outcomes it might not be effective. Perhaps, but it is my contention that the achievement of *Foundations for Learning* goals are dependent on the quality of the educators tasked with the development of learners' literacy. In order to ensure that these educators have the requisite knowledge and skills to do so, the Department should do what it necessary, not only to ensure that this is the case but also that the systemic factors which currently hinder the achievement of these goals are eliminated as a matter of urgency. This then, is the thrust of my research argument.

1.3   Research Questions

The overarching research problem can be reformulated by means of a single research question, namely:

How can school-based professional development of educators teaching Grade 5 intermediate school learners be used to promote the improvement of reading literacy?

In order to answer this question in the context of my study, I have broken it down into four sub-questions, namely:

- What is the current status of school-based professional development in the area of reading literacy at three primary schools in the Umhlali Ward of the Lower Tugela Circuit in the Ilembe District of KwaZulu-Natal?

- What is the current knowledge base of intermediate phase educators as regards the development of learners' reading literacy?

- What role can action research play in the school-based professional development of intermediate phase educators involved in reading literacy?

- How can school-based continuous professional development bring about changes in the current intermediate educator practice of reading literacy development?

1.4   Aim of study

The aim of the study is to develop a better understanding of educators' reading literacy development and the impact it has on their implementation practices. It aims to identify the methods and motivating factors for learning practices adopted within the learning environment to promote reading literacy. It aims to determine if professional growth of educators relate to the educational challenges generated by professional development interventions specifically on the improvement of educators' reading proficiency and on the knowledge and skills they would need to develop the reading literacy of the learners in their care.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The following set of objectives adds towards the main aim of the study and is linked to the research sub-questions with some degree of overlap.

- Have a better understanding of the current status of school-based professional development in the area of reading literacy

- Find out the current knowledge base of intermediate phase educators as regards to the development of learners' reading literacy?

- Determine what mechanisms educators use in practice to promote reading literacy and provide a description on the role action research plays in the school-based professional development of intermediate phase educators involved in reading literacy?

- Determine if school-based continuous professional development can bring about changes and influence learner performance in the current intermediate educator practice of reading literacy development?

1.6 Rationale for the study

An investigation by the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) (2006:7) in 2005/6 indicated that approximately six million South African adults over the age of 16 years have never attended school and can neither read nor write. This, according to a document produced by the World Bank, translates to an illiteracy rate of almost 15% among South Africans aged 16 and above. Implied here is that this 'functionally illiterate' group would be unable to contribute markedly to the South African economy. The document also indicates that South Africa has been undergoing radical social, political, economic and cultural change since 1994. On the education front these changes included the introduction of a new outcomes-based education system and curriculum which, coupled with the rationalisation of the civil service, drained the teaching profession of thousands of valuable, experienced teachers.

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A number of researchers, including Geske and Ozola (2008:71), have established a correlation between learner achievement and a love of reading. According to these researchers, learners who love reading not only gain access to a world of knowledge and conceptual development but are also exposed to vocabulary and syntactic structures not typically encountered in other types of social interaction and communication. Pretorius and Machet (2004:129), too, argue that the reason why good readers tend to perform well academically lies in the fact that their reading proficiency gives them access to information, broadens their general knowledge, increases their vocabulary and develops their language skills. These opportunities are closed to learners with poor reading skills. By implication, they would experience difficulties in the learning of other subjects and their overall performance would be poor. The learning problems of learners who move from grade to grade without due attention having been paid to their literacy development, particularly to reading for learning, would therefore increase each year, leading to a self-perpetuating spiral of inequality that handicaps them throughout their schooling careers (Pretorius & Machet 2004:17).

It is findings like these that motivated me to embark on this study. I believe it has become absolutely necessary to promote reading literacy as set out in the Government Gazette (Vol. 513 No. 30880 *Foundation for Learning Campaign*: 2008 – 2011). Because of the focus this gazette placed on the improvement of *all* learners' reading skills, many schools have already restructured their timetables to include reading literacy across the curriculum and to make room for school-based professional development in this areas. These changes already indicate a greater commitment to the development of the human resource base, auguring well for South Africans' capacity to respond to future challenges brought about by globalisation.

I would suggest, however, that the impact of the campaign might be greater if these changes are accompanied by new vision for the professional development of educators, one which addresses the challenges of systemic educational reform. More specifically, my stance is that school-based professional development should equip educators with the knowledge and skills they need to develop learners' reading ability in new ways. Not only would this raise learners' literacy levels but it might, in the long run, improve their academic performance. How this could perhaps be done is addressed in my study and, according to me, is where my research findings will be of greatest significance.

1.7   Research approach

As indicated earlier, the professional development of educators in the area of reading literacy development is the primary focus of my study. I decided to use a case study approach in my investigation of this phenomenon because cases study investigations enable researchers to construct in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon being investigated (Mouton 2001:149). In my study the phenomenon I wish to describe is the ability to facilitate the development of school learners' reading literacy of a small number of educators. Case study approaches and designs are typical of qualitative research, with researchers focusing on the causes and effects of specific phenomena in real life contexts. This being one of the greatest strengths of qualitative case studies (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2001:253), I decided, moreover, to frame my case studies in the qualitative research paradigm.

The three 'cases' I studied as part of my research are schools with intermediate classes in the Umhlali Cluster of the lower Tugela Circuit, in the Ilembe District of the KwaZulu-Natal Province for confidentiality reasons I shall refer to them as Schools A, B, and C. My decision to use schools with an Intermediate Learning Phase was informed by the results of a range of reading assessments, examinations and tests conducted in this phase. Most of these results indicate problems in the progression of learners from the Foundation to the Intermediate Phase and ascribe them to reading difficulties encountered by learners.

Reading difficulties stem from the increase in learning areas, from three in the Foundation Phase to eight or more in the Intermediate Phase. The reading demands placed on learners are therefore much more, sometimes resulting in the development of reading phobias in those learners who are already experiencing reading problems. Also, the change from primarily mother-tongue teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase to English only as the only medium of instruction in the Intermediate Phase creates additional reading problems. Learners with limited English proficiency do not always understand what they read and, because of this, perform poorly in all learning areas, including the languages.

1.8   Outline of study

This chapter served as an introduction and orientation to my study. In it I provided the background to the literacy problem in South African schools, highlighting the relationship between reading proficiency, academic performance and educator competence as presented in literature on the topic. I indicated why it is important to investigate ways in school-based continuous professional development initiatives could empower educators to improve learners' reading proficiency and, by implication, their academic performance.

Having presented my research problem and the rationale informing my study I described my research approach, indicating the design I planned to use, and the methods and instruments I would use to collect and analyze data. I concluded the chapter with a discussion of professional development in general and educator professional development in particular, indicating how the latter ought to change if South Africa is to achieve the goals set out in the *Foundations for Learning Campaign*.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the theoretical framework for my study, in Chapter 3, I describe my research methodology, and in Chapter 4, I present my research findings. I use Chapter 5, the last chapter of this report to reflect on these findings but also to indicate how my model could contribute to reading literacy development in schools.

2.1 Introduction

The primary focus of this study is on the development of educators, with specific reference to their professional development in the area of reading literacy development. As a researcher I was particularly interested in determining how educators facilitate the development of reading literacy development. I wanted to observe firsthand what and how they did it, and find out what challenges they had to overcome in the process of doing so, and what impact their actions had on learners' literacy levels.

Using the *National Policy Framework for Teacher Education (DoE 2000),* the *National Curriculum Statement* (NCS) (*DoE 2002*), and the *Foundations for Learning Campaign (DoE 2008*) as frames of reference, I wanted to observe educators' efforts to develop learners' literacy in their natural setting - the school environment. Since I would have direct access to the teaching and learning procedures, resources and methods used for literacy development, I would be collecting first-hand data on what was happening in the learning context.

2.2 Literature Review

In its 1991 study, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) coined the term, 'reading literacy' to convey the notion that literacy is more than simply reading: it includes the ability to reflect on what is read and to use   reflection as a tool to achieve personal and societal goals. Thus, according to the *Progress in International Reading Literacy* (PIRLS) *Framework for Literacy* (CEA 2006:4 citing Campbell et al), reading literacy was defined as:

"... the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and (or) valued by the individual. Young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers and for enjoyment" (CEA 2006:4 citing Campbell et al. 2001:3).

In defining reading literacy thus, the PIRLS Framework takes the stance that reading is a constructive and interactive process which requires interaction between the reader and the text in the context of a particular reading experience. Context, in terms of this framework, determines not only *how* readers create meaning but also *which* skills and strategies they use to do so. In short, the PIRLS Framework is informed by the notion that reading is effective only if the reader *understands* what the text is about, *thinks* about the text, and is able to *read* a variety of texts for different purposes.

Put differently, the PIRLS Framework, (CEA 2006:4), citing Brinkley and Kelly (2003), regards a literate reader as someone who knows and uses a range of effective reading strategies to actively construct meaning. Implied in this definition is the assumption that such a reader brings with him/her a repertoire of knowledge, skills, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies that s/he has a positive attitude towards reading and that s/he reads not only for purposes of recreation but also for information acquisition.

2.2.1 Reading literacy and academic performance

The improvement of reading literacy should start at the primary level, simply because learners at this stage need to develop and acquire positive attitudes to and fundamental techniques required for school and lifelong learning. According to Pretorius and Machet (2004:16), this can best be done by involving learners in meaningful reading activities, i.e. by spending time on the reading and discussion of stories. Reading, coupled with discussion, provides learners with the opportunity to develop the kind of language skills that support literacy development.

According to Moore and Hart (2007:18) most school systems provide explicit teaching of reading only in the first three years of junior primary school, by the end of which learners are expected to be *independent* readers. Learners from highly literate backgrounds are likely to reach this stage in the time provided, while learners from oral, working class backgrounds are not. In the senior primary stage the literacy curriculum operates on the assumption that all learners are independent readers and are thus able to develop the ability to *learn from reading*. Learners who have not developed these abilities by the end of the intermediate stage are likely to be increasingly disadvantaged from the senior phase onwards since dependency on the ability to learn from reading escalates through secondary schooling.

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Moore and Hart (2007:18) point out that children from literate, middle-class families receive about 1000 hours of parent-child interaction relating to texts before they go to school while children from oral and working class backgrounds are likely to get little or none. These children are thus immediately placed at a disadvantage because they do not have the necessary orientation to written text that the schooling system assumes. Moore and Hart (2007:18) further cite the argument of Rose that the ability to read with comprehension, and to learn from reading, is the basis for most other activities in schooling. Therefore it is necessary to improve and sequence the literacy curriculum in the quality of education in disadvantaged primary schools.

According to Pretorius and Machet (2004:17), an awareness of the link between literacy accomplishment and poverty should alert educators to those factors that militate against the development of age appropriate literacy skills in high-poverty schools. They argue that, while schools cannot change the socio-economic status of their learners they can change the opportunities for literacy learning within their premises (Pretorius & Machet 2004:17). If learners are to achieve the levels of performance indicated in the *Foundations for Learning Campaign,* schools should at least take cognizance of the need to create an environment that stimulates learning and encourages learners to read. In such an environment there would be libraries, parental involvement, additional tuition and, most importantly, a learning culture. By implication, this would require the prioritization of reading literacy, which is the grounding for all processes of learning.

School efforts to encourage reading and literacy development are especially critical if learners do not have easy access to literacy-based activities outside the parameters of formal schooling. Last, but not least, schools should try to involve the family members of learners in school educational activities. In rural areas, especially, where the quality of education is a challenge for all concerned (Maphutha 2006:3), schools should become the centre of community and family activities which promote literacy and/ or give community members access to scarce resources.

2.2.2   *Professional development*

Changes to the South African Government since 1994 have necessitated new education policies to cater for the development all partners in education. Sectors closely linked to the State are affected by policies which require them to respond to challenges brought about by globalisation. Educators are required to adopt new roles and to facilitate learning in previously

unfamiliar ways. By implication they need to continuously update their knowledge and skills bases, especially in the areas of inclusive education, curriculum development and delivery, but also in the development of reading literacy. In other words, they must develop themselves professionally. Steyn and Van Niekerk (2005:129) are of the opinion that all professions – including education - require continuous updating of knowledge. Consequently, an educator's professional development does not end at the stage of initial pre-service training but continuous until the day they leave the profession.

Congo (2004:4), citing the *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development* defines professional development as any activity that develops an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics. In South Africa, the imperative to help educators cope with these challenges, through continuous professional development (CPD), has resulted in the emergence of a range of new forms and methods of development, including workshops and mentoring. Research has, for example, indicated that longer-term, team-orientated learning approaches are replacing passive workshops and lectures by experts. Focusing on continuous reflection and changing knowledge, skills and attitudes these innovative approaches should, according to Steyn and Van Niekerk (2005:130), enable educators to better assist learners in performing at higher levels.

Some of these alternate development approaches have been very effective, some less so. My stance is that, in order to be effective, CPD should discard outdated and/or ineffective teaching and/or learning facilitation in favour of approaches that focus on the development of skills through independent and self-regulated learning. By implication, CPD should focus not only on the expansion of educators' professional knowledge and the development of their teaching skills but on their values and attitudes (Steyn & Van Niekerk 2005:126). In other words, professional development should create in educators a sudden awareness or realisation of their inability or incompetence to perform according to their own and others' expectations or criteria (Steyn & Van Niekerk 2005:126).

There is, however, no 'one size fits all' solution to CPD. Its very nature, and the purposes it serves imply the need for a wide range of CPD programmes that cater for the divergent needs of all professionals - experienced and inexperienced – from different backgrounds and contexts. This is currently the case in South Africa. Educators now have a wider choice of opportunities to further their professional qualifications. For example, institutions have extended their tuition models and are offering programmes through distance education

(Mashile 2002:174). Also, many schools are showing signs of turning into professional learning communities, with educators and education managers working together to improve the quality of teaching and learning and, by implication, the achievement of academic outcomes.

Professional development in a climate of educational reform is a long-term process with a dual focus. Its ultimate aim, according to Steyn and Van Niekerk (2005:128), should not only be to increase learner performance but to achieve broader individual learning outcomes (such as acquiring knowledge, information, skills, attitudes and values). The changes effected to the South African education system and the prescribed Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS 2003) lend themselves to the use of professional development opportunities as a means of translating national goals into reality.

According to Steyn and Van Niekerk (2005:130), professional development is most effective when it is an ongoing process that includes well planned programmes followed by individualized supportive observation and feedback, staff dialogue and peer coaching. Educators would then develop a greater sense of collaboration, face common problems together, and assume greater responsibility for their own professional development. Professional development is even more powerful when it occurs often and/or place over a longer period so that gains in self-confidence, knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and principles are continuous.

Finally, the impact of professional development on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment depends on the quality of the education system and the viability of educational goals. Government authorities responsible for education in South Africa have created a framework that has changed the focus in schools from inputs (such as funding, quality and size of the teaching force, readiness of learners for learning, education policies and external support) to outcomes (the measurable manifestations of the effects of schooling), such as improved learner achievement, higher progress rate, improved learner and educator attendance, increased learner and parental satisfaction with the school (Skinner 2005:2). Skinner (2005), quoting Darling-Hammond, questions the logic of this move, maintaining that "the single most important determinant of success for a learner is the knowledge and skill of the educator".

It would seem, therefore, that 'input' and 'output' are equally important in the development of learner ability. In terms of my study, this would mean that simply teaching the mechanics of reading would not be enough to turn learners into skilled readers they need extensive exposure

to varied print-based activities that provide opportunities for extended discourse. To meet this challenge school-based professional development should ideally be embedded in school improvement plans that oblige the school management team and educators to work together towards the achievement of developmental goals. In turn, school management teams should accept responsibility for achieving the goals set out in their school development plans and be held accountable for failure to do so. It should also be their responsibility to identify and address teacher-identified needs; to create opportunities for continuous and ongoing professional development, follow-up support and mentoring; to provide sufficient time for lesson and assessment planning; to ensure the availability of required resources, and to monitor educator effectiveness and efficiency.

2.2.3 Systems to facilitate improvement and development

Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) activities should of necessity engage educator in maintaining the quality and relevance of professional services linked to a particular organisation (Mashile 2002:174). According to Lessing and De Witt (2007:55), professional development does not only require the informal and spontaneous learning of educators from one another; it also assumes prior knowledge, and a wealth of potential and experience of each participant that can be built upon and incorporated into further initiatives. Educators need feedback, monitoring, follow-up, coaching, classroom assistance and assessment, supported by action research-driven professional development (Du Toit 2007) to grow and to remain committed to lifelong learning. All of these activities should form part of professional development to cater for changes in and the improvement of all concerned (Lessing & De Witt 2007:55; Mashile 2002:174).

All South African educators need to enhance their skills, not necessarily their qualifications, for the delivery of the curriculum. To this purpose South African education authorities have, in fact, released three documents, namely *Gazette No. 29832, The design of the CPTD system* (DoE 2007), and *the Integrated Quality Management System* (IQMS) (Weber 2005) (ELRC 2003). Together, they have brought about some positive improvements in educator development but these have proved insufficient to address the need for improved learner achievement.

According to *Government Gazette No. 29832* (DoE 2007), which deals with Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD), the State commits itself to:

- Ensuring that current initiatives devoted to the professional development of educators contribute more effectively and directly to improving the quality of teaching;

- Emphasizing and reinforcing the professional status of teaching;

- Providing teachers with clear guidance on the Professional Development (PD) activities that will contribute most to their professional growth;

- Protecting educators from fraudulent providers, and

- Expanding the range of activities that contribute to professional development of educators.

The world, life and the demands on education change all the time hence educator development should not terminal; rather, it should be on-going throughout an educator's life. As Mashile (2002:175) reminds us, the *White Paper on Education and Training* (DoE 1995) emphasizes the need for an education system that facilitates lifelong learning because a culture of lifelong learning encourages participation in CPTD and maximizes individual and collective benefits. Embedding lifelong learning in a profession such as the teaching profession remains a challenge, however (Mashile 2002:175).

The IQMS, a new system of appraisal for educators and schools, is a strong incentive for continuous educator professional development in that it combines professional development with the monitoring of educator performance. The main features of the IQMS model are educator self-appraisal (for developmental purposes), classroom observation, peer appraisal, self-appraisal by the school for during Whole School Evaluation, and External Whole School Evaluation (Biputh 2008:6; ELRC 2003:3; Weber 2005:64). Educators have responded to these initiatives by taking additional courses or earning CPD points by participating in various in-service activities.

2.3   Significance of the study

In considering both CPTD and the *Integrated Quality Management System* (IQMS), I have come to the conclusion that they have brought about some positive developments in educator development. However, these are insufficient in terms of addressing learner under-performance. Current professional development initiatives seem to focus primarily on curriculum knowledge and skills, assuming that detailed working knowledge can be converted

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to practical classroom knowledge for learners (Green 2008:131). Based on my experience as an educator, the development of a classroom professional depends on more than content alone.

A range of school frameworks and contexts contributes to educators reconstructing their conceptualisation of learning area methodology, something I argue for in my study. If the goal of school-based professional development is to improve learner achievement it must include address the causes of under-performance. One cause, I would argue in this study, is educators' inability to develop the reading proficiency of learners in their care hence learners struggle to understand the learning materials that are meant to support their learning. Because of this their academic performance is below standard.

The significance of my study lies in the contribution it could make to the development of educators' ability to facilitate literacy development. Not only do my findings clearly indicate the impact that poor reading ability has on learner performance but it also highlights the importance of educator competence, or the lack thereof, in this area. Having identified what I regard as the problem, I present an alternative model for the continuing professional development of educators, one which could, I believe, equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to improve the reading proficiency of learners in all subjects.

2.4   Reading literacy and academic performance

Reading is crucial to learning, not only because it affords readers independent access to information in an increasingly information-driven society but, more importantly, because it is a powerful learning tool, a means by which people can construct meaning and acquire new knowledge. In fact, reading could be regarded as the very essence of learning.

Pretorius and Machet (2004:128), being more specific, argue that it is not reading *per se* but literacy, specifically reading literacy, that forms the backbone of scholastic success at primary, secondary and higher education levels. According to them, research findings consistently indicate that learners who are good readers also tend to perform well academically: proficiency in reading literacy gives them access to information, broadens their general knowledge, increases their vocabulary and develops their language skills.

According to Martin and Rose (2005:6), fluent readers are able to recognize and predict meanings unfolding through all structures. Without the ability to do so, they would be unable to make sense of the written text. Given the extraordinary complexity of the reading task, which requires continual recognition, prediction and recall of patterns, the facilitation of reading literacy development must somehow help to simplify the task itself. Phonics and related approaches attempt to do so by treating the language system as though it were a 'bricks-and-mortar' construction, built up from the smallest to the largest unit, from letters to blends to words, then through hierarchies of 'basal' reading books, and from single words to word groups and sentences (Martin & Rose 2005:6).

Research conducted by Rose (2005:138) focused on the effects that each stage of the reading development curriculum has on learners - from parent and child reading prior to pre-school, to the junior primary / foundation phase where learners are equipped with the skills needed for the next stage. Based on his research findings, Rose concludes that evaluations of learners' reading proficiency in the Foundation Phase are typically based on the reading orientations they experienced at home. In the Intermediate Phase evaluations are based on the reading skills acquired in the Foundation Phase, and so on. Learners who managed to acquire the requisite reading skills in each preceding stage are continually affirmed as 'able' or 'competent' in the next phase, while learners who have not acquired the requisite skills are graded as 'unable' or 'not yet competent'. At no stage, though, except perhaps in the Foundation Phase, are reading skills explicitly taught.

According to Moore and Hart (2007), this is the root of the reading literacy problem. The ineffective teaching of reading in schools results in learners' subsequent inability to independently learn from reading. The problem cannot be ascribed to the use of any one method of facilitating reading literacy development or to the combination of different methods which, according to some researchers, is quite effective. The factor that has the greatest impact on reading development, though, is the extent to which an educator manages to integrate, in a scholarly way, various programmes, materials and methods in accordance with situational/contextual requirements. Conversely, since it is the educator who decides what and how to teach, the blame for learners' poor reading ability should be laid at the educators' door. More specifically, the problem lay at the door of educators who cannot adapt or integrate the range of different reading methods, programmes, and/or materials available to suit a particular context, situation or need.

Duffy and Hoffman 1999:11), citing Garrison (1997), concur with this view, pointing out that excellent educators do not rely on a single programme or method because they know that good teaching requires "doing the right thing in the right way and at the right time in response to problems posed by particular people in particular places on particular occasions". The Duffy and Hoffman analysis (1999:11) indicates that explicit explanations are most effective when adapted to the instructional situation. Since it is the educator's thinking that makes the difference explicit explanations cannot be packaged and applied uniformly in all situations. Also, these two theorists argue, no two situations and no two days are the same hence practices that work one day may not work the next; methods that worked on Tuesday with John may not work later the same day with Mary. Therefore, instead of using a single, 'one size fits all' method or programme for all learners, educators should combine methodological techniques and/or adapt programmes and materials to the particular needs of specific learners, situations, purposes, and contexts if they want to be effective.

According to Rose (2005:139), it is possible for all learners to acquire skills in reading literacy rapidly, at any stage of the curriculum, if the relevant skills are explicitly taught instead of leaving them to tacit acquisition. It takes successful learners six years each of primary and secondary schooling to acquire these skills, precisely because they are not taught explicitly. By explicitly teaching the application of reading strategies, educators can help even the weakest of learners to acquire these skills in a single year. This could be achieved with a mere two or three learning opportunities per week in the reading development sequence, either as remedial work or as part of ordinary teaching practice.

Rose (2005:131) argues, moreover, that the basis of inequality in the classroom, and hence in society, can be found in learners' differing capacities to learn independently from reading, with those who are less proficient have limited access to sources of knowledge provided by print-based materials or reading materials in the learning context. Moore and Hart (2007), mentioning the growing body of research and debates on reading literacy, argue that the deepening crisis in our schooling system is inextricably linked to low levels of literacy at all levels of the education system. Whether teaching practices are therefore promoted as 'learner-centered' or 'teacher-centered' is irrelevant to the central problem, namely learners' differing capacities to engage in and benefit from reading. This problem could be overcome if the focus in classrooms is primarily on teaching all learners to read and write the texts expected at their level in the subject or learning area concerned.

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According to Pretorius (2002:169), writing specifically about South African learners, it is especially the many additional language (AL) learners who have serious reading comprehension problem. Pretorius (2002:174) does not, however, ascribe poor reading ability or poor academic performance to poor additional language proficiency. While acknowledging that it might contribute to poor academic performance, he argues that the relationship between language proficiency and academic performance is more complex than this. Also, according to Pretorius (2007:174), reading problems often get masked as language problems, especially in multi-lingual societies like the South African where the language of learning differs from the learners' primary language.

An example of the 'masking' of reading problems as language problems can be found in the claim that the comprehension problems experienced by learners who find reading to learn difficult stem from limited language proficiency. Informing this claim is the assumption that language proficiency is basically 'the same thing' as reading ability. If this were so, then all mother-tongue speakers should automatically be good readers of texts in their mother tongue, something which is not the case. Moreover, if there was no difference between language proficiency and reading ability, any improvement of a learner's language proficiency would automatically bring about improvements in his/her reading comprehension. Indications from research are that this does not readily happen (Hacquebord 1994). Instead, it is attention to reading that improves reading proficiency, and in the process language proficiency also improves.

2.5   Concept clarification

The four concepts most critical to an understanding of my research argument are *'classroom teaching practice', 'active learning', 'asset-based approach',* and *'mentoring'*. I thought it important, therefore, to clarify these concepts at the beginning of my theoretical framework chapter.

2.5.1 Classroom practice

The term, 'classroom teaching practice' is used to refer to a blending of whole-class, group and individual instruction utilised by educators in a physical classroom setting which, so it is

assumed, also has an effect learner motivation and performance. According to Hall (2002:5), classrooms and classroom practice ought to reflect the diversity of learners' varying background knowledge, readiness, language ability, learning preferences and interests. To ensure that this is the case, educators should vary the way they manage their classrooms, doing all that is necessary to ensure that all learners have an equal chance to succeed regardless of the curriculum being followed. By implication, educators should be flexible in their teaching approaches, adjusting the way they present and assess subject matter to the needs of learners rather than expecting learners to modify themselves to fit in with the curriculum.

2.5.2 Active learning

One of the ways in which educators could give learners the chance to engage with the curriculum in different ways is to incorporate active learning approaches into their normal classroom routine. A key requirement of active learning is that learners have to actively participate in lessons, working with manipulative materials, using a range of skills to solve practical problems, and/or doing hands-on projects of their own choice. Most of these activities require cooperative work which, by implication, improves learners' communication skills and their ability to get along with others. A positive spin-off of approaches like these is that they strengthen learners' intrinsic motivation – an intra-personal attribute, according to the Herrmann (1995) model – thereby contributing to their transformation. Active learning is, therefore, a particularly powerful learning approach.

The role of the educator in an active learning approach is to identify from the curriculum those concepts and skills that should be developed during the course of a particular lesson or set of lessons and then to select instructional and active learning activities that focus on these. Also, although the way in which learners engage with the learning content within their groups is not explicitly controlled by the educator in charge, it is up to the educator to resolve difficulties and/or conflicts as and when they occur. Ideally, the educator should use an appropriate problem-solving approach in doing so, thereby creating a positive social climate (or interpersonal climate according to Herrmann, 1995) in which each learner is valued and respected. Educators should, moreover, document learner progress, assessing each learner's performance while s/he is engaged in active learning activities. Learner competence should, however, be assessed at culminating points, preferably using standardised achievement tests (Hall 2002:5).

It should be clear from the above that active learning is not a free-for-all, uncontrolled process. The schedule learners have to follow should be consistent. Teaching and learning activities should be carefully planned not only to include individual, small-group and large-group experiences but also to maintain a balance between educator-planned and learner-planned activities. Not all educators have the natural ability to manage a classroom in this way, though hence the need for some or other form of professional development that will enable them to do so. I would argue that the development of classroom management should be an ongoing process, starting with pre-service teacher preparation programmes, following up with induction experiences and mentoring, and continuing by means of in-service professional development. Only then will educators be able to stay at the cutting edge of new approaches to teaching, learning and classroom management.

2.5.3 Asset-based approach

A core concept in the study of professional learning in education is the 'asset-based approach'. An alternative to the needs driven approach (Eloff & Ebersöhn 2001; Ebersöhn et al. 2003, citing Emmett 2000), the asset-based approach is a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach (Eloff & Ebersöhn 2001). Its most distinguishing characteristic is its emphasis on development that *empowers* rather than *services* the professionals being targeted. In contrast to the service approach, according to Paek, 2008:3), the asset-based approach builds on educators' strengths, helping them to see how they can use the same techniques in engaging the learners for whom they are responsible. In other words, asset-based approaches accept that professionals already possess certain capacities, skills and social resources, and that professional development activities should therefore build on these, not ignore them. The preparation and delivery of professional development programmes is therefore a collaborative, participatory process, one in which 'service providers' take cognizance of the authentic practitioner needs of the group being targeted for development.

Applied to educator professional development developers who use an asset-based approach would acknowledge the personal and professional experience of the target group. They would also consider the kind of decisions that educators have to make when planning and delivering lessons – decisions on objectives/learning outcomes, content, and assessment activities to be included in a lesson and/or the teaching-learning materials to be used – and focus their development activities on addressing gaps in these areas (Magano 2009:31). In an asset-based approach educators are expected to refer to a variety of resources when designing their own learning programmes, programmes that outline learning activities which address prescribed

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content and relevant learning outcomes (Magano 2009:32). The acquisition of the requisite knowledge and skills in a learner-centred environment is therefore of the utmost importance. This would have a marked influence on their decision- making process. Decisions like these, according to Du Toit (2011) are influenced not only by the knowledge and skills embedded in the learning outcomes and assessment standards of school curricula but also by educators' attitudes to professional development.

Paek (2008:4) points out that the asset-based approach is derived from literature outside of education. Informed by asset-based thinking, it encourages learners to focus their thoughts on what is currently available rather than on what is missing. According to Paek (2008:4), asset-based thinking is a way of life; it is "based on direct, systematic observation: of the ways in which "a growing minority of highly effective and satisfied people think, feel and act. While positive thinking calls for a positive *attitude* to life and the future, asset-based thinking calls for positive *action* in the present moment" hence it is particularly useful in the development of educators. Not only does it encourage them to focus on their own strengths but also on those of others' strengths when they have to choose in choosing the most experiences most appropriate to transformation.

In order to meet policy demands, educators typically use the core knowledge or content to develop plans that will guide their actions. Because an asset-based approach encourages educators to focus on strengths rather than deficits (Paek 2008), those involved in educator development model the asset-based approach by highlighting instructional experiences that would enhance educators' understanding and competence and, by implication, would help them turn their policy ideals into reality, right from the planning phase to the enactment stage.

2.5.4 Mentoring

Mentoring is a powerful, emotional two-way process in which the mentor has as much to gain as the mentee but the quality and development of this relationship is crucial to a successful outcome. Because a mentoring relationship is built on mutual trust and respect, openness and honesty, it allows both the mentor and the mentee to be him- or herself, ensuring that learning and growth occurs in a safe and protected environment. In the early stages the mentee will be relatively dependent and the mentor will need to be supportive, helpful, friendly and encouraging to nurture the mentee to learn and grow. As the mentee becomes more confident and independent, the mentor will need to challenge, stimulate and encourage reflection in order to sustain and deepen the mentee's learning (McKimm et al. 2003:6).

According to McKimm et al. (2003:1), a mentor is a more experienced and established professional who raises awareness of learning gaps and has the ability to up-date someone else's organisational and professional knowledge. The mentor is seen as a trusted friend, counsellor, guide, advocate, role model, information provider and door opener. Mentoring is a process in which learning and experimentation occur through analysis, examination, re-examination and reflection on practice, situations, problems, mistakes and successes to identify learning opportunities and gaps. This implies the existence of a relationship of trust between the mentor and mentee/s.

Entering any profession is a new experience and poses a major challenge to newly qualified practitioners. It is a formative period where the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired during workshops and professional learning have to be applied in practice. It is during the initiation stage in particular that mentoring could be used as a professional development tool. Mentoring is, however, also very effective during transition periods, when practitioners have to cope with an unfamiliar situation, like professional learning, a new curriculum or a major change in development or growth (McKimm et al. 2003: 2). Transition periods can be challenging and stressful, with new demands being made on individuals who are seeking to consolidate their skills. It is then that they need the guidance and support that mentors can give in order to help them develop confidence and competence. S/he could support mentees by giving them technical assistance, clarifying roles and responsibilities, identifying and analysing learning experiences, opportunities and gaps, encouraging analysis and reflection, and challenging mentees with questions and constructive feedback (McKimm et al. 2003:4).

According to Kolb (1994), an individual gains experience in embarking on an activity but s/he only learns from the experience when s/he reflects on it in an attempt to understand its impact or significance. Reflection requires analysis and conceptualisation. The individual has to makes choices based on his/her analysis of the implications of alternative options, has to decide on the next steps to take, and then has to embark on the next experience. Learning is thus cyclical and never ending (Kolb 1994; McKimm et al. 2003:12).

2.6   Policy frameworks

What educators should be teaching and assessing and how they go about doing it is determined by a range of policies developed at national and provincial levels. Since observation of

educators' classroom practice is one of the ways in which I planned to collect data on their competence as reading development facilitators I needed to acquaint myself with those policies that had a direct relevance to the foci of my study. More specifically, I had to determine what the policies require educators to do, with specific reference to the facilitation of reading proficiency and the professional development of educators in this regard.

The policies most explicitly relevant to my study fell into one of three categories, namely professional development, curriculum, and assessment. Each of these policies is briefly discussed below.

2.6.1 The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education

The *National Policy Framework for Teacher Education* (DoE 2000) had the clarification of the complex range of educator roles as purpose. To this purpose the knowledge and skills educators needed to perform these roles are specified in the document. Assessments of teacher competence would be informed by this policy and the standards associated with each competence would be used as assessment criteria.

The list of roles and their associated competences specified in this policy serve as a description of what it means to be a competent educator. Competence will be inferred from an educator's ability to consider and decide on particular actions. His/her ability to do so would indicate the extent to which the educator's knowledge and understanding underpin the action taken or the changes made. Professional development programmes should be informed by the policy and should, as a matter of course, include the development of relevant role competencies if and when applicable.

For the purposes of my study it would suffice to say that the roles specified in this document belong in one of four categories – *specialist*, *professional*, *general*, and *academic* roles.

In order to be regarded as a *specialist*, educators would have to specialize not only in a particular learning area, subject or phase but also in teaching and learning, and in assessment. One would assume that such specialization would be part of pre-service training, usually at a higher education institution. In order to keep up with the latest developments in their specialist area educators would, however have to study further, read up on their specialization area, attend 'refresher courses' and/or attend conferences and seminars on their area of specialization.

In addition to these specialized roles, all classroom educators would, at some time or other, be required to perform not only a number of professional roles *(curriculum developer, leader, administrator and manager)* but also community, citizenship and pastoral roles. The knowledge and skills required for the competent performance of these roles, one would assume, would be acquired in the workplace and/or by means of in-service or school-based professional development initiatives.

Implied in all these roles is the need for educators to become *scholars*, *researchers* and *lifelong learners*. These 'academic' roles cannot be imposed on educators. Rather, the competencies associated with these roles can only be developed if educators have a thirst for knowledge, accept responsibility for their own learning, and are committed and disciplined enough to do what is necessary to develop their professional and/or academic ability as a matter of course.

I would argue that all of the mandated educator roles are also applicable to the facilitation of reading literacy development but that they should be contextualized and, where applicable, be adapted to the teaching of reading. How this could be done is illustrated below.

2.6.1.1 The role of learning mediator

Implied in this role is the notion that educators have to mediate reading literacy in a manner which is sensitive to the diverse needs of learners and which takes cognizance of possible barriers to learning. They, that is, the educators, are also obliged to construct learning environments that are appropriately contextualised and inspirational and should, in communicating with learners, acknowledge and respect differences among learners. In the case of my study, the specific focus is on learning style differences, translated into reading style differences. In all cases, educators also have to demonstrate not only a sound knowledge of content but also of a range of reading literacy principles, strategies, appropriate resources, and relevant values or attitudes.

2.6.1.2 The role of interpreter and designer of learning programmes

In terms of this role educators have to understand and interpret existing learning programmes, design original learning programmes, identify the requirements for learning in a specific context, and select and prepare suitable textual and visual resources. Applied to the teaching of

reading literacy, this would mean that educators would have to understand and interpret different reading programmes, design their own reading literacy programmes, identify the requirements for specific reading literacy contexts, and select and prepare textual and visual resources suitable for the development of reading literacy. Finally, educators would have to sequence and pace teaching and learning in a manner sensitive to the differing reading levels and needs of learners.

2.6.1.3 The role of scholar, researcher and lifelong learner

Implied in this role is the assumption that educators have to engage in ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth by pursuing reflective study and research. With regard to my study this has to happen in the domain of reading literacy; in other, related, fields, and in broader professional and educational areas. More specifically, in terms of my study, the focus of professional development in the areas of reading literacy should be on the use of action research as a means of information gathering, reflection and other activities related to the development of learners' reading literacy.

2.6.1.4 The role of assessor

Educators need to understand that assessment is an essential feature of the teaching and learning process. In terms of reading literacy development they should know how to integrate assessment into the process of reading literacy development. Not only should they have a clear understanding of the purpose, methods and effects of assessment of reading competence, but they should be able to provide constructive feedback to learners on their progress, strengths and areas in need of development. Educators involved in reading literacy development have to design and manage both formative and summative assessments in ways that are appropriate to the level and purpose of the applicable reading literacy programme. By implication they have to keep detailed records of assessment results, and be able to interpret these for diagnostic and other developmental or transformational purposes.

2.6.1.5 The role of learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist

It is imperative that all educators should be well grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, principles, methods, and procedures of their subject, learning area or phase. In the case of reading literacy this means that, while their broad specialization might be in other subjects, they should also know what reading literacy is, know how to develop it and be able to apply this knowledge in the development of reading literacy in their subject or learning area. By

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implication, educators should be *au fait* with different approaches to teaching and learning and know how to use these in ways that are appropriate to the learners and the reading literacy context concerned. In addition, they should have a sound understanding of the knowledge appropriate to reading literacy.

2.6.2 The National Curriculum Statement

The reason for the focus on educator roles, as set out in the *National Policy Framework for Teacher Education,* is provided in the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* for schools. According to the latter document, the most recent educator development theories and practices focus increasingly on the professional roles of educators and specialists in the development and implementation of effective teaching, learning and assessment practices, and learning materials (DoE 2003:1). This emphasis is also the reason why educators are encouraged, in the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (2003:1), to structure, develop, design and implement their own learning programmes, provided that this is done in accordance with the curriculum policy framework.

Guidelines for the development of learning programmes is contained in the *National Curriculum Policy Guidelines,* a policy which has effective teaching, learning and assessment practices as purpose. Informing this document is the imperative to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment enable learners to achieve the learning outcomes spelt out in the RNCS. The *National Curriculum Statement*, too, emphasizes the need to make assessment an integral part of teaching and learning at all levels of planning and implementation. According to the RNCS (2003:1), assessment is a process which requires the gathering and organising information in order to review what has been achieved. In the first instance assessment helps educators to establish whether learners are performing to their full potential and are making progress towards the achievement of the outcomes relevant to the subject and/or grade concerned (RNCS 2003:1). In this regard educators are reminded of the barriers to learning highlighted in *White Paper 6* (2001), which deals with *Special Needs Education* (RNCS 2003:1).

The final report (2009:15) of the team tasked with the implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement* (NCS) indicates that the intensive curriculum reform processes over the past ten years, specifically the challenges associated with the change from *Curriculum 2005* to the *National Curriculum Statement*, have led not only to systemic uncertainty and confusion but has also generated a fair amount of criticism regarding curriculum implementation.

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Focusing primarily on implementation challenges and the lack of clarity these have caused amongst educators regarding their classroom mandate and authority, the writers of the report argue that it is not just curriculum documents which hindered implementation. According to the report writers (2009:12), the curriculum was never researched or properly piloted. Also, there was inadequate preparation and consideration of whether educators, learners and the system in general were prepared for such a fundamental change over such a short space of time. Finally, problems with the delivery of curriculum documents, curriculum resourcing and support by departments of education, as well as the contexts in which the curriculum had to be implemented also undermined its effectiveness.

According to Nsibande (2005:10), the new outcomes-based curriculum assumes not only a change in the way children should learn but also a change in their motives and attitudes. Like all other post-Apartheid education policy reforms, the curriculum is informed by and promotes the principles of equity and redress as a means of overcoming past inequities. Critical thought and more active styles of learning are therefore central features of this post-apartheid curriculum, changes that required teachers to abandon traditional approaches (DoE 1996a) in favour of new ones. By implication, they had to be retrained.

Concurring with the task team report on the challenges associated with the implementation of the new curriculum, Nsibande (2005:11) claims that the professional development of educators for implementation was probably the greatest challenge. Most of the programmes designed to improve the ability of school to implement the required changes, including management training, staff development and organizational development, proved to be ineffective. This was mostly due to poor coordination at national, provincial and/or district level. Consequently, despite the revision of the national curriculum in 2001 and interventions such as staff development workshops, educators still find outcomes-based education overwhelming and confusing (Nsibande 2005:11).

2.6.3 Assessment policies and frameworks

Assessment, as a form of evaluation, compares and aggregates information about achievement so that it can be used to assist in development and evaluation (DoE 2003). Since the democratic transformation of the national system of education a great deal of attention has been paid to assessment, not only to the assessment of learner performance but also to the assessment of educator competence and systemic effectiveness. According to Bottani and

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Favre (2001:467), assessment has become a front-line political issue: the emphasis is now on schools, systems, and development policies rather than on learners and educators.

To help educators in their efforts to effectively assess and improve learner performance in literacy and numeracy, the Department of Education has since 1994 developed various assessment policies and frameworks. These documents should be read in conjunction with other policies that promote and support education transformation to ensure the attainment of the learning outcomes concerned (DoE 2008:C) to ensure their effective implementation.

Favre (2001:520) argues that it is difficult to see the relevance of assessing a school's contribution to learners' performance levels when there appears to be little that is 'real' about the school apart from its material aspects. Informing a school that the performance of its learners is equal to or considerably lower than that of other schools does not help to improve the *status quo* if all the factors involved have not been taken into account (Favre 2001:520). However, if the school context and the level of teaching concerned are taken into account, the use of performance indicators in assessment is imperative, and the processes to be followed in applying them must be elucidated beforehand (Favre 2001).

Favre, citing Bressoux (1993), acknowledges though, that the individual educator is crucial to the reading performance of learners in primary schools and that the more autonomous the school, the greater the possibility that it would emphasize the co-operation and commitment of educators to foster learners' reading development. Nsibande (2005:25), quoting Kerka (1995), argues that organizations – schools included - do not learn; individuals do, and individual learning occurs all the time. A learning organization, which is the same as a community of learners, would, however, promote a culture of learning, thereby ensuring that not only individual learning is enriched but also the organization as a whole.

Regardless of what is being assessed, however, assessment should be *reliable, valid*, *fair,* and *meaningful.* Schools assessments would, therefore, be regarded as *valid and reliable* if they are educator initiated, with both the learner and educator understanding the assessment practices concerned, and management approved. Assessments would be regarded as *fair* if the way in which they are structured provides all learners with equal opportunities to succeed regardless of the individual's age, gender, physical or other disability, culture, language, socio-economic status or geographic location (Vandeyar & Killen 2003:121). Finally, assessments would be regarded as *meaningful* if educators have explained the assessment purpose to learners, if

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learners regard the assessment tasks as realistic and worthwhile, and if the assessment task is related to one or more learning outcomes.

The *National Curriculum Statement* (DoE 2008:1), focusing on the purposes to be served by assessment, indicates that it has a role to play in developing learners' knowledge, skills and values; identifying learner needs; enabling educators to reflect on their practice; identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses; providing additional support to learners'; revisiting or revising certain sections where learners seem to have difficulties; motivating and encouraging learners; providing information or data to a variety of stakeholders, and demonstrating the effectiveness of the curriculum or a teaching strategy. In short, in curriculum terms, assessment is a process aimed at the collection of information on performance (evidence of learning), the establishment of a basis for decision-making (on progress, promotion or remediation), and facilitation (reviewing what has or has not been effective).

In December 1998 The National Department of Education released an *Assessment Policy* as well as a *National Protocol for Assessment* in Grades R to 12, 2011. *The National Protocol for Assessment Grades R – 12* (DoE 2011:1) standardises the recording and reporting processes for Grades R – 12 within the framework of the *National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12*. It also serves as a policy framework for the management of school assessment, school assessment records (including basic requirements for learner profiles, teacher files, report cards, record sheets and schedules) for Grades 1–12. The requirements for, as well as examples of, learner profiles, teacher files, report cards, record sheets and schedules are included in the document.

The *Protocol* document, which deals with external, end-of-year examinations as well as internal school-based assessment and practical assessment tasks, demands changes in all assessment practices. In assessing reading proficiency, for example, educators need to use clearly defined learning outcomes as the basis for assessing learners' reading ability, define what learners have to read, make the purpose of assessment clear and use multiple assessment tools, techniques and methods. Assessment must, moreover, be continuous and authentic in order to ensure its objectivity, validity, manageability and sensitivity to gender, race and disability. All these criteria suggest that learners should demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, skills and values through assessment opportunities (Hariparsad 2004:1).

When assessing learner competence in reading literacy, educators typically use comprehension questions, observation, the retelling of stories, written responses to texts, discussions, and oral reading. Although these questions require responses that may be informed by individual opinions and experiences, they can be used to measure literacy growth and achievement. Also used for assessment purposes are reading literacy tasks focusing on print material, phonemic awareness, word recognition, oral reading accuracy and fluency, listening and reading comprehension and decoding skills and strategies that can be used to construct meaning.

I would argue that whatever the assessment instrument or method used, the focus should be on learners' understanding of what they read, not simply on their ability to recognize words. Since understanding develops over time, reading assessment has to be a continuous process rather than a once-off event. Moreover, reading assessment should include the reading of a 'seen', a 'prepared', and an 'unseen' passage at the level of the learner (DoE 2008:25).

In recent years the education department has also started to encourage the use of assessment measures to focus, guide and document educators' development of specific competencies towards specific standards of performance. Informing this move, so it seems, is the assumption that there is an interrelationship between learners' academic performance and educators' academic standards, professional preparation and monitoring accountability. Acceptance of this notion has led to significant educational initiatives that focus on the teaching and learning experiences of both learner and educator in order to foster higher achievement in relation to learning outcomes (Hambrick-Dixon 1999:3).

Table 2.1: Comparison of learner and professional learning assessment purposes

SCHOOL LEARNING & ASSESSMENT (*LEARNERS*)	PROFESSIONAL LEARNING & ASSESSMENT (*EDUCATORS*)
• Baseline assessment is used at the beginning of a learning experience to establish what is already known. A questionnaire on knowledge and skills regarding facilitating reading literacy can be used (DoE 2003). Results could assist with the planning of programmes and activities.	▪ Diagnostic assessment takes place at any time to determine strengths, weaknesses and barriers experienced. Results could be used to adjust teaching methodology (DoE 2003), or as basis for an intervention, remedial action or programme.
• Formative assessment is developmental in the sense that it is used to inform educators about learner progress. Results reflect learner progress towards the achievement of outcomes. Formative assessment therefore gives direction to and suggestions on ways of adapting activities to suit learner needs, thereby enhancing both teaching and learning.	• Formative assessment is developmental in the sense that it is used to inform professional learners about their progress. In giving direction to and suggestions on ways of adapting activities to suit professional learning needs, Formative assessment therefore enhances both teaching and learning.
• Formative assessment is interactive by nature: it uses questions that are designed to stimulate thinking and promote discussion, which guide educators in the plan follow-up learning experiences (DoE 2003).	▪ Formative assessment is interactive by nature: it uses questions designed to stimulate thinking and promote discussion. These create opportunities for educators to use self- and peer assessment for subsequent professional development purposes (DoE 2003).
• The ongoing formative assessment recommended in Curriculum 2005 monitors learner progress, identifies their strengths and weaknesses and provides them with constructive feedback (Vandeyar & Killen 2003:125).	▪ Formative assessment is also known as 'assessment for learning when discovering and reviewing'. An essential feature of this type of assessment is the involvement of educators in a process of sustained reflection and self-assessment.
• Summative assessment is used to collect information on overall achievement, thereby indicating not only the extent of a learner's progress at a particular point in time (at the end of a learning programme of phase, for example) but also how successful the learning program has been in facilitating progress towards the achievement of outcomes. Summative assessment results usually form the basis for judgments on performance and encourage learners to reflect on their own thinking and to develop the ability to express their thoughts verbally (DoE 2003).	▪ Summative assessment gives an overall picture of progress at a particular point in time (at the end of a professional development intervention, for example). Summative assessment results usually form the basis for judgments on performance, often demonstrated in the compilation of a professional development portfolio which encourages professional learners (educators) to reflect upon their own thinking (DoE 2003).

It is my contention, moreover, that the purposes served by assessment in school learning could, with minor changes, also be served in the assessment of professional learning, as indicated in Du Toit's (2007) synchronous model *(see Table 2.1).* Assessment, as an integral part of the

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development process, could then be used to monitor the professional development process as well as the professional growth of educators. Du Toit's (2007) comparison of learner and educator assessment clearly indicates that the integration of assessment into professional learning could enhance the professional learning process while simultaneously serving as an instrument to monitor educator growth and progress over time. It could also, as indicated in the Table, contribute to the development and delivery of well designed professional learning plans.

Applied to my study, which focuses on the development of educators as reading literacy facilitators, proper assessment could make a valuable contribution to educators' acquiring not only theoretical knowledge on reading literacy but also the ability to apply this knowledge in developing learners' reading proficiency (Steyn & Van Niekerk 2005:130)

2.7   Educator professional development

In terms of the *National Policy Framework for Educators* (2007), all educators need to improve their skills, not necessarily their qualifications, to ensure effective delivery of the new curriculum. The majority of educators need to strengthen their subject knowledge base, pedagogical content knowledge, and teaching skills.

The South African Council for Educators (SACE), a statutory body for professional educators, is serious about enhancing the status of the teaching profession, promoting professional conduct and development as well as the professional competence of educators. One of the divisions of SACE is the Professional Development Section, whose sole purpose it is to support the ongoing professional development of educators and the enhancement of their professional practice (SACE 2003).

2.7.1 *Continuous professional development*

Informed by policy requirements and the position taken by SACE, educators are increasingly enrolling for courses that will improve either their academic knowledge and skills or their professional expertise. In addition, they are collecting *Continuous Professional Teacher Development* (CPTD) points by participating in various in-service activities. The collection of CPTD, as promulgated in Gazette No. 29832, ensures that all initiatives contributing to the professional development of educators have as purpose an improvement of the quality of

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teaching, by indicating clearly which activities would contribute to their professional growth (DoE 2007).

Informing the decision to institute a new system of Continuing Professional Teacher Development is the assumption that it will:

- ensure that current initiatives aimed at the professional development of educators will result in more effective and direct improvement of the quality of teaching;
- emphasize and reinforce the professional status of teaching;
- provide educators with clear guidance on the professional development (PD) activities might contribute to their professional growth;
- protect educators from fraudulent providers, and
- expand the range of activities that contribute to the professional development of educators.

2.7.2 School-based professional development

According to Knapp (2003:109), improvement in teaching and learning requires an initiative that prioritizes high-quality professional development which reflects the latest consensus and research evidence concerning "best practice". The primary purpose of professional development, according to Knapp (2003:113), is to effect changes in the thinking, knowledge, skills and instructional approaches that form part of practicing teachers' repertoire (Knapp 2003:113). In the broadest sense, therefore, the boundaries of "professional development" include the full range of activities, formal and informal, that engage educators in new learning about their professional practice.

When people talk about student learning, according to Knapp (2003:114), they usually think of either the process of learning or the presumed outcomes or results of this process as measured through tests, assessments and other means that capture the extent of students' knowledge or skills at a particular time. If, therefore, the aim of a professional development initiative or programme is to improve teaching and learning, it should take cognizance of the assessment standards and curriculum goals of school learning and teaching. In this case the programme should therefore include, information on learning and performance standards, the latest approaches to assessment, standards-orientated practice, and student learning in the context of standards-based reform.

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Decisions about the kind of activities that should be included in professional learning programmes are often influenced by policies and policy-making at different levels of the system since these are meant to guide, direct or support the improvement of practice. Policies most likely to influence professional learning initiatives are those developed at school district, State (including state educational agencies, legislature and related policy actors), and school levels (Knapp 2003:112).

Professional learning can only be effective, however, if the requisite support bases are in place: targeted resources, aligned professional development curricula, and competent facilitators to nurture and cultivate development are crucial to the raising of performance standards (Knapp 2003:109). The task team for review (2009:12), citing Fullan, makes the point that, unless curriculum reform initiatives are preceded by a thorough analysis of its possible implications for educators and their classroom practice, these initiatives are likely to result in a collision of very different understandings. This, in turn, could lead to systemic insecurity and instability.

A great deal of attention is currently devoted to the role of the person at the top of current hierarchical school structures, that is, the school principals (Nsibande 2005:15). In accordance with the devolution of power principles, the principals of schools are increasingly tasked with the responsibility to create conditions which ensure the continuous professional development of their own staff. In this sense they have been allocated the role of change agents. If they were to perform this role effectively, according to Nsibande (2005:17), school principals should have a thorough understanding of current thinking about professional learning and how they can nurture it as they take schools through the 21st century. Such understanding, coupled with a thorough knowledge of school realities and discords would enable them to discover new ways of influencing people's responses to a changing environment and the need for them to change their own ways of thinking and doing.

Knapp (2003:115) equates professional learning to changes in practice, in other words, to what happens when educators enact their new knowledge or skills in their daily work with learners or with one another. For obvious reasons the latter conception represents the meaning that matters most to policymakers and policy audiences, especially in a standards-based reform context which includes getting up to date on the latest approaches to assessment, standards-orientated practice and approaches to student learning (Knapp 2003:115). In the context of this study, in particular, educational reformers are likely to care most whether educators:

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- acquire the requisite skills and knowledge required to teach the subject matter implied in the ambitious content, context, and standards prescribed;
- are able to engage diverse learners in learning the subject matter, thereby displaying and using appropriate pedagogical content, context, knowledge or skill;
- show commitment to standards-based practice and to doing whatever is necessary to bring their practice up to the required standard;
- make the effort to regularly ascertain whether their learners are attaining (and learning to recognize) a high standard of work in the subject areas targeted by reform.

A holistic model for educator professional development in the area of reading literacy development is presented in Figure 2.1. The model considers what educators would need from a professional development initiative if it were to support their professional competence to implement what they learn in classroom practice. The model defines the basic processes which enable educators to visualise the future, to use their understanding in the construction of lessons which involve cognitive thinking, and in making decisions that promote teaching and learning. In this sense, it serves as a framework for decisions on the selection of knowledge, skills and guidance that would improve educators' ability to construct interventions that will transform and promote reading literacy development.

Figure 2.1: Holistic framework for educator professional development regarding reading literacy

2.7.3 Mentoring as a professional development activity

Mentoring, according to Braimoh (2008:16), is a highly effective and proactive means of educator professional development. On the one hand, mentoring enhances educators' pedagogical effectiveness and increases their scholarly productivity, ensuring that they satisfy global academic standards. On the other hand, it supports the development of inexperienced staff, especially if educators in senior positions, with relevant track records, act as mentors to their peers.

Mentoring should be seen as a process which benefits both the mentor and the mentee: it offers both parties the opportunity to discover new things during mentor-mentee dialogues, challenging questions posed by mentees, and critical analyses of these by both parties. The end result of such a relationship is the emergence of reflective, responsible leaders who are able to understand and capably cope with the challenges of their daily life and profession. In short, mentoring helps educators overcome isolation, facilitates development of work-based competencies, helps to bridge theory and practice, and ensures higher flexibility.

Kakoma (2006:20), citing Johnson (2002), argues that traditional educator in-service courses are often ineffective because educators usually have to attend workshops at the end of a long teaching day. They then have to listen to some or other expert describing an approach or a methodology that often does not relate to their classroom situation or is not aligned with their teaching styles. A better option, according to Kakoma, still citing Johnson, is the use of action research as a professional development strategy. Kakoma justifies his claim with reference to mentor educators whose action research into their own classroom practice or teaching practicum supervision, helps them and their mentees to construct new knowledge directly related to their work in the classroom. The result is reflective teaching and thinking, an activity which, according to Johnson (2002), provides educators with the "time and incentives to engage in professional dialogue with peers". This enhances their professional growth and

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development, something which, in turn, "moves the field of education forward" (Kakoma 2006:21).

2.7.4 Theoretical learning models

In terms of experiential learning theory, learning occurs when learners participate in an activity, reflect on the observations, use their conceptualization skills to gain experiential understanding, and then use this understanding to create new activities or to incorporate old ones into new situations (Sahin 2008:125).

Grosser and De Waal (2006:19), referring to Grosser (2001), Maja (2006) and Kolb et al., point out that the term, learning styles' refer to orientations towards learning tasks and to the processing of information in different ways. One of the central ideas informing outcomes-based education (OBE) is that learners learn differently and that one cannot expect all learners to achieve learning outcomes in the same way. A broad understanding of learning styles will help educators to understand and support learners in their efforts to master learning content and skills. Learning styles are also relevant in the context of reading literacy because they can be translated into reading styles. The adaptation of one of the learning style theories, namely the whole brain theory of Herrmann (1995) has, in fact, lead to the development of a flexible reading style model that informs some of the recommendations made in the final chapter of this study.

Learners have unique learning preferences hence they might prefer different reading styles for different reading purposes. The danger of teaching according to a single learning style is that it could create a situation where some learners enjoy classroom learning and do well, while others struggle and feel uncomfortable. Over time some learners would then be categorized as good, dedicated and talented, while others could be labeled 'slow', 'bored' or 'difficult'. This does not augur well for the need to address the different pedagogical needs of learners. Understanding how to effectively accommodate different learning styles will enable educators to avoid the aforementioned problems, promote learner performance and competence and accommodate the pedagogical needs of all learners.

According to Coffield et al. (2004:146), the Herrmann whole brain model has been applied in many contexts and for many purposes, including personal growth, counseling, group processes, teaching and learning, decision-making and management. It is this model, according to Du Toit et al. (2007:37), which led to the identification of the specialised functions associated with the

left and right brain hemispheres listed in Table 2.2. The left hemisphere is logical, analytical, quantitative, rational and verbal, whereas the right hemisphere is conceptual, holistic, intuitive, imaginative and non-verbal. Although each hemisphere is specialized in a different way, physical connections secure integrated brain activity (Herrmann, 1996:42).

Table 2.2: Specialized functions associated with each brain hemisphere (adapted from Trotter, 1976:219)

LEFT HEMISPHERE	RIGHT HEMISPHERE
Speech/verbal	Spatial/music
logical, mathematical	holistic
linear	artistic,
detailed	symbolic
sequential	simultaneous
controlled	emotional
intellectual	intuitive, creative
dominant	minor (quiet)
wordly	spiritual
active	receptive
analytic	synthetic, gestalt
reading, writing, naming	facial recognition
sequential ordering	simultaneous comprehension
perception of significant order	perception of abstract patterns
complex motor sequences	recognition of complex figures

The Herrmann model represented in Figure 2.2 illustrates the four thinking structures of the brain. The left and right hemispheres represent cerebral processes while the two halves of the limbic system represent the more visceral (feeling-based) processes. Each quarter is associated with very distinct clusters of cognitive functions. Preference for the A-quadrant (left cerebral mode) means that a person favours activities that involve logical, analytical and fact-based information. A preference for the B-quadrant (processes of the left limbic mode) implies a linear approach to activities. Individuals with a B-quadrant preference favour organised, sequential, planned and detailed information are conservative in their actions and like to keep things as they are. A preference for the C-quadrant (processes of the right limbic mode) indicates an inclination towards information that is interpersonal, feeling-based and involves emotion, whereas a preference for the D-quadrant (processes of the right cerebral mode) indicates a holistic and conceptual approach to thinking. Although an individual may favour cognitive activities associated with a specific quadrant, "both hemispheres contribute to everything, but contribute differently" (Du Toit et al. 2011:81).

Academic Results — **WHOLE BRAIN TEACHING AND LEARNING MODEL** — **Futuristic Opportunity**

A
Logical
Rational
Quantitative
Theoretical

D
Visual
Conceptual
Simultaneous
Experimental

UPPER

Intellectual

Structured

LEFT

Experiential

RIGHT

FACT BASED OPEN-MINDED

CONTROLLED FEELING

Organised
Sequential
Procedural
Methodical

Emotional
Expressive
Interpersonal
Kinaesthetic

LOWER

B

C

Task-driven Traditional — **Feelings-driven Humanistic**

Figure 2.2: A whole brain teaching and learning model (Du Toit 2011:84; Herrmann 1995:155)

Herrmann's model is concerned with thinking, feeling and doing in individual and social contexts. It addresses long-established habits and personality traits as well as situationally dependent preferences. As it is concerned with process rather than products, it is largely independent of cognitive ability. It is possible to envisage considerable benefits to be derived from its use by policy-makers, course designers and organizations concerned with education and training. In using it, these and other parties could design and deliver lifelong learning experiences which may more effectively promote 'whole person' and 'whole organization' balance.

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	Kolb Learning Style Inventory (LSI)	Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI)
General	Learning styles are not fixed personality traits, but relatively stable patterns of behaviour. 30 years of critique have helped to improve the LSI, which can be used as an introduction to how people learn.	The HBDI and new ways of using it effectively have been developed over more than 20 years. The 'whole brain' model is compatible with several other models of learning style.
Design of the model	Learning styles are both flexible and stable. Based on the theory of experiential learning which incorporates growth and development.	Based on theory this, although originally brain-based, incorporates growth and development, especially in creativity. Learning styles as defined by the HBDI are not fixed personality traits, but, learned patterns of behaviour.
Reliability and validity	Changes to the instrument have increased its reliability.	Internal evidence suggests that the HBDI is psychometrically sound, and new analyses can draw on an enormous international database.
Implications for pedagogy	In general, the theory claims to provide a framework for the design and management of all learning experiences. Teachers and students may be stimulated to examine and refine their theories of learning; through dialogue, teachers may become more empathetic with students. All students are to become competent in all four learning styles (active, reflective, abstract and concrete) to produce balanced, integrated learners.	HBDI-based feedback does not seek to attach permanent labels to the individual. Provides rich accounts of how people think and learn, valuing diversity and arguing for mutual understanding. Teachers, students, managers and workers may be stimulated to examine and refine their ideas about communication and learning. Argues that all learners need to develop stylistic flexibility and, where appropriate, extend their range of competence.
Overall assessment	One of the first learning styles, based on an explicit theory. Problems about reliability, validity and the learning cycle continue to bother this model.	A model although largely ignored in academic research, offers considerable promise for use in education and training. It is more inclusive and systemic than many others, taking an optimistic, open and non-labelling stance towards the development of people and organisations.

Table 2.3: Comparison of strengths in Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (LSI) and Herrmann's Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI)

(Coffield, Moseley, Hall, & Ecclestone 2004).

According to Coffield et al. (2004), it is clear from Kolb's views (see Table 2.3) that, rather than confining learners to their preferred style; their learning capabilities in other learning modes should be stretched. Kolb states that a skill is a combination of ability, knowledge and experience that enables a person to do something well. Kolb clearly believes that learning takes place in a cycle and learners should use all four phases of the cycle to be effective.

A comparison of the two models indicates that Herrmann's model pre-supposes the inclusion of all four brain quadrants in teaching and learning activities. Coffield et al. (2004) agrees that Herrmann's assumption, namely that every classroom represents a complete spectrum of

learning style preferences, is reasonable. His recommended solution is 'whole brain teaching and learning', with key learning points being taught in three or four different ways, while peripheral matter is removed. He encourages change and growth, whether for short-term adaptive purposes or for the longer term, on the basis of more mature values and attitudes.

In my opinion the Herrmann model is better suited to accommodate and utilise teaching activities that are aligned to learners' preferred modes of thinking/learning in reading literacy hence I used it in my observation of educators' lessons on reading literacy to analyze and explain the mode/s of questioning used by educators teaching reading literacy.

Beneventi et al. (2002:27) agree that there is not one correct way to teach but argue that, just as there are multiple reasons why learners cannot read, there are multiple ways of teaching reading. While some factors are out of educators' control, they can keep an open mind to new methods and apply new ideas to meet success. Citing Lyon (1998), Beneventi et al. (2002:27) argue that reading is not a natural process. It must be taught by thoughtfully adapting the knowledge of many methods and materials and applying one method or a combination of methods in one situation and something else in another situation (Duffy et al. 1999:12).

Duffy et al. (1999:13), citing MacGinitie (1991) and Sfard (1998), also argue that focusing on a single good idea or method leads to theoretical distortions and undesirable practices. Distortion takes place when educators develop such loyalty to a method that they refuse to switch to other methods even if learners need them to. The notion that any method is 'perfect' inhibits innovation in teaching because it promotes the idea that good educators simply follow directions. Educators have to be exposed to a variety of methods and approaches so that they can thoughtfully orchestrate and adapt these to their learners' needs. Professional development initiatives and/or programmes could assist in this regard, guiding educators to new ways of thinking about methods they can use for reading literacy development purposes.

According to Du Toit (2011:83) it has been documented (Knowles 1990; Buzan 1991; Jensen 1996; Ornstein 1997) that effective learning takes place if the whole brain is involved in learning. Interpreted in terms of Herrmann's model, effective learning presupposes the utilization of all four brain quadrants in teaching and learning activities. Informed by this notion, Lumsdaine and Lumsdaine (1995) have identified what they regard as four modes of learning compatible with the notion of whole brain learning, namely external, internal, interactive and procedural learning.

- External learning occurs when learning content is presented by an authoritative source. This could be in the form of teaching, lectures and/or text books and is predominantly an A-quadrant learning process or activity.

- Internal learning can be described as an insight, a visualisation, a synthesis of data or the holistic or intuitive understanding of concepts. This is a predominantly D quadrant learning process or activity.

- Interactive learning occurs through discussion, hands-on activities and sensory based experiments where learners can try, fail, and retry with an opportunity for verbal feedback and encouragement being available. Interactive learning is a predominantly C-quadrant learning activity or process.

- Procedural learning is characterised by a methodical step-by-step testing of what is being taught, as well as by constant practice and repetition as a way of improving improve skills and competence. It is a predominantly B-quadrant learning activity or process (Du Toit 2011:83).

Although learners may have a preference for a particular learning style, educators should expose learners to different styles as well. This is important because the successful achievement of learning outcomes depends on learners being able to see, feel, think and do (Grosser & De Waal 2006:20). Educators should be flexible enough to accommodate all the different learning styles when teaching reading. Numerous methods that can be used to do so and the educator who implements a variety of materials, programmes and methods targets the individual leaner's needs, thus allowing development to be most beneficial (Duffy & Hoffman 1999:29).

According to Du Toit (2007:41), educational activities that are structured to incorporate the expectations of learners in all four quadrants facilitate the development of the full potential of a learner. Not only does it accommodate learners' thinking preferences but it also gives them practice in the use of learning styles typically avoided. For example, if the learning content contains fact-based data and research results in a logical order, a learner with a thinking preference for the A-quadrant will feel comfortable reading the content presented in text books. A learner with a C-quadrant thinking preference would, however, need to learn the same

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content in a way that also involves him/her at an emotional level. Both these types of learners need to practise the uses of their less preferred learning styles, strengthening the learning skills in which they are weak and enabling them to flexibly adjust their learning style to the task on hand.

Rose (2006:8), citing Feez (1988), points out that, in general terms, reading and writing should be an integral part of all classroom teaching at all levels of schooling, in all curriculum areas. Teaching reading literacy should not cease after junior primary, should not be separate from the curriculum content that is being studied, and should be aimed at engaging all learners equally. This means that educators at all levels of schooling must be developed to teach reading and writing as part of their normal classroom practice and to teach slow learners to read the full range of class texts.

Rose (2006:8) supports the notion that all curriculum activities need to be planned around texts that learners need to read and write for homework and assessment. According to Rose (2006), at least 25% of class time should be devoted to the development of reading skills, including the intensive reading of key texts, note taking and writing. These activities must involve all learners equally and must be led by the educators, not left to individual learners or groups to struggle or succeed on their own. The practice of 'peer teaching' in groups should be limited to activities that educators have already shown all learners how to do. Learners could then support one another to practise reading and writing tasks in groups.

Educator thinking profiles, learning and teaching styles are not the same either. As is evident from Figure 2.3, some educators may be fact-oriented, with little or no emotional inclinations while another may be creative and holistic. Each person has a unique profile and automatically teaches in accordance with that profile, without considering the fact that learners may have a different profile. Professional development should, therefore enable educators to adjust their own style to accommodate the styles of the learners in their care. They should also challenge one another in order to expand their teaching repertoires in such a way that they utilize and stimulate the utilization of all four the brain quadrants in themselves and their learners. I would argue that knowledge and understanding of Herrmann's model will enable them to do so.

Fact-based reading | Holistic/visual reading

Sequential reading | Emotional reading

Figure 2.3: Thinking Preferences and Brain Profiles

Educational activities that implement all the modes of Herrmann's model will ensure that learners' preferred thinking styles are accommodated and that less preferred thinking modes are utilised. Herrmann's model for teaching necessitates that educators become aware of their own thinking preferences and the implications thereof for their teaching/training practices (Du Toit et al. 2007:41).

2.8   Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the theoretical frameworks which served as parameters for my study. More specifically I presented and discussed the factors that inhibit or promote reading literacy, indicating that the latter requires the combined support of all stakeholders. I pointed out that, in order to achieve the aims and objectives of professional development it was necessary to design proper development programmes and strategies that would enable educators to improve learners' reading proficiency.

Having provided an overview of literature on these topics, I used the insights I gained as basis for my argument. I claimed that, on the one hand there is a correlation between learners' reading proficiency and their academic performance while, on the other hand, there might be a correlation between educators' ability to facilitate the development of learners' reading proficiency and learners' reading performance. Based on these claims I argued that educator professional development activities should include development in the area of reading development facilitation.

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Having presented my argument, I presented a holistic model for that could equally well be applied to the development of learners' reading proficiency and the professional development of educators. This model also served as basis for the analysis and interpretation of my data on the reading facilitation competence of educators in the three schools that served as my research sites. The research findings emerging from this analysis are presented and discussed in Chapter 4.

2.1   Introduction

The primary focus of this study is on the development of educators, with specific reference to their professional development in the area of reading literacy development. As a researcher I was particularly interested in determining how educators facilitate the development of reading literacy development. I wanted to observe firsthand what and how they did it, and find out what challenges they had to overcome in the process of doing so, and what impact their actions had on learners' literacy levels.

Using the *National Policy Framework for Teacher Education (DoE 2000),* the *National Curriculum Statement* (NCS) (*DoE 2002*), and the *Foundations for Learning Campaign (DoE 2008*) as frames of reference, I wanted to observe educators' efforts to develop learners' literacy in their natural setting - the school environment. Since I would have direct access to the teaching and learning procedures, resources and methods used for literacy development, I would be collecting first-hand data on what was happening in the learning context.

2.2   Literature Review

In its 1991 study, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) coined the term, 'reading literacy' to convey the notion that literacy is more than simply reading: it includes the ability to reflect on what is read and to use reflection as a tool to achieve personal and societal goals. Thus, according to the *Progress in International Reading Literacy* (PIRLS) *Framework for Literacy* (CEA 2006:4 citing Campbell et al), reading literacy was defined as:

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"... the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and (or) valued by the individual. Young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers and for enjoyment" (CEA 2006:4 citing Campbell et al. 2001:3).

In defining reading literacy thus, the PIRLS Framework takes the stance that reading is a constructive and interactive process which requires interaction between the reader and the text in the context of a particular reading experience. Context, in terms of this framework, determines not only *how* readers create meaning but also *which* skills and strategies they use to do so. In short, the PIRLS Framework is informed by the notion that reading is effective only if the reader *understands* what the text is about, *thinks* about the text, and is able to *read* a variety of texts for different purposes.

Put differently, the PIRLS Framework, (CEA 2006:4), citing Brinkley and Kelly (2003), regards a literate reader as someone who knows and uses a range of effective reading strategies to actively construct meaning. Implied in this definition is the assumption that such a reader brings with him/her a repertoire of knowledge, skills, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies that s/he has a positive attitude towards reading and that s/he reads not only for purposes of recreation but also for information acquisition.

2.2.1 Reading literacy and academic performance

The improvement of reading literacy should start at the primary level, simply because learners at this stage need to develop and acquire positive attitudes to and fundamental techniques required for school and lifelong learning. According to Pretorius and Machet (2004:16), this can best be done by involving learners in meaningful reading activities, i.e. by spending time on the reading and discussion of stories. Reading, coupled with discussion, provides learners with the opportunity to develop the kind of language skills that support literacy development.

According to Moore and Hart (2007:18) most school systems provide explicit teaching of reading only in the first three years of junior primary school, by the end of which learners

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are expected to be *independent* readers. Learners from highly literate backgrounds are likely to reach this stage in the time provided, while learners from oral, working class backgrounds are not. In the senior primary stage the literacy curriculum operates on the assumption that all learners are independent readers and are thus able to develop the ability to *learn from reading*. Learners who have not developed these abilities by the end of the intermediate stage are likely to be increasingly disadvantaged from the senior phase onwards since dependency on the ability to learn from reading escalates through secondary schooling.

Moore and Hart (2007:18) point out that children from literate, middle-class families receive about 1000 hours of parent-child interaction relating to texts before they go to school while children from oral and working class backgrounds are likely to get little or none. These children are thus immediately placed at a disadvantage because they do not have the necessary orientation to written text that the schooling system assumes. Moore and Hart (2007:18) further cite the argument of Rose that the ability to read with comprehension, and to learn from reading, is the basis for most other activities in schooling. Therefore it is necessary to improve and sequence the literacy curriculum in the quality of education in disadvantaged primary schools.

According to Pretorius and Machet (2004:17), an awareness of the link between literacy accomplishment and poverty should alert educators to those factors that militate against the development of age appropriate literacy skills in high-poverty schools. They argue that, while schools cannot change the socio-economic status of their learners they can change the opportunities for literacy learning within their premises (Pretorius & Machet 2004:17). If learners are to achieve the levels of performance indicated in the *Foundations for Learning Campaign,* schools should at least take cognizance of the need to create an environment that stimulates learning and encourages learners to read. In such an environment there would be libraries, parental involvement, additional tuition and, most importantly, a learning culture. By implication, this would require the prioritization of reading literacy, which is the grounding for all processes of learning.

School efforts to encourage reading and literacy development are especially critical if learners do not have easy access to literacy-based activities outside the parameters of formal schooling. Last, but not least, schools should try to involve the family members of learners in school educational activities. In rural areas, especially, where the quality of education is a challenge for all concerned (Maphutha 2006:3), schools should become the centre of community and family activities which promote literacy and/ or give community members access to scarce resources.

2.2.2   *Professional development*

Changes to the South African Government since 1994 have necessitated new education policies to cater for the development all partners in education. Sectors closely linked to the State are affected by policies which require them to respond to challenges brought about by globalisation. Educators are required to adopt new roles and to facilitate learning in previously unfamiliar ways. By implication they need to continuously update their knowledge and skills bases, especially in the areas of inclusive education, curriculum development and delivery, but also in the development of reading literacy. In other words, they must develop themselves professionally. Steyn and Van Niekerk (2005:129) are of the opinion that all professions – including education - require continuous updating of knowledge. Consequently, an educator's professional development does not end at the stage of initial pre-service training but continuous until the day they leave the profession.

Congo (2004:4), citing the *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development* defines professional development as any activity that develops an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics. In South Africa, the imperative to help educators cope with these challenges, through continuous professional development (CPD), has resulted in the emergence of a range of new forms and methods of development, including workshops and mentoring. Research has, for example, indicated that longer-term, team-oriented learning approaches are replacing passive workshops and lectures by experts. Focusing on continuous reflection and changing knowledge, skills and attitudes these innovative approaches should, according to Steyn and Van Niekerk (2005:130), enable educators to better assist learners in performing at higher levels.

Some of these alternate development approaches have been very effective, some less so. My stance is that, in order to be effective, CPD should discard outdated and/or ineffective teaching and/or learning facilitation in favour of approaches that focus on the development of skills through independent and self-regulated learning. By implication, CPD should focus not only on the expansion of educators' professional knowledge and the development of their teaching skills but on their values and attitudes (Steyn & Van Niekerk 2005:126). In other words, professional development should create in educators a sudden awareness or realisation of their inability or incompetence to perform according to their own and others' expectations or criteria (Steyn & Van Niekerk 2005:126).

There is, however, no 'one size fits all' solution to CPD. Its very nature, and the purposes it serves imply the need for a wide range of CPD programmes that cater for the divergent needs of all professionals - experienced and inexperienced – from different backgrounds and contexts. This is currently the case in South Africa. Educators now have a wider choice of opportunities to further their professional qualifications. For example, institutions have extended their tuition models and are offering programmes through distance education (Mashile 2002:174). Also, many schools are showing signs of turning into professional learning communities, with educators and education managers working together to improve the quality of teaching and learning and, by implication, the achievement of academic outcomes.

Professional development in a climate of educational reform is a long-term process with a dual focus. Its ultimate aim, according to Steyn and Van Niekerk (2005:128), should not only be to increase learner performance but to achieve broader individual learning outcomes (such as acquiring knowledge, information, skills, attitudes and values). The changes effected to the South African education system and the prescribed Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS 2003) lend themselves to the use of professional development opportunities as a means of translating national goals into reality.

According to Steyn and Van Niekerk (2005:130), professional development is most effective when it is an ongoing process that includes well planned programmes followed by individualized supportive observation and feedback, staff dialogue and peer coaching.

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Educators would then develop a greater sense of collaboration, face common problems together, and assume greater responsibility for their own professional development. Professional development is even more powerful when it occurs often and/or place over a longer period so that gains in self-confidence, knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and principles are continuous.

Finally, the impact of professional development on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment depends on the quality of the education system and the viability of educational goals. Government authorities responsible for education in South Africa have created a framework that has changed the focus in schools from inputs (such as funding, quality and size of the teaching force, readiness of learners for learning, education policies and external support) to outcomes (the measurable manifestations of the effects of schooling), such as improved learner achievement, higher progress rate, improved learner and educator attendance, increased learner and parental satisfaction with the school (Skinner 2005:2). Skinner (2005), quoting Darling-Hammond, questions the logic of this move, maintaining that "the single most important determinant of success for a learner is the knowledge and skill of the educator".

It would seem, therefore, that 'input' and 'output' are equally important in the development of learner ability. In terms of my study, this would mean that simply teaching the mechanics of reading would not be enough to turn learners into skilled readers they need extensive exposure to varied print-based activities that provide opportunities for extended discourse. To meet this challenge school-based professional development should ideally be embedded in school improvement plans that oblige the school management team and educators to work together towards the achievement of developmental goals. In turn, school management teams should accept responsibility for achieving the goals set out in their school development plans and be held accountable for failure to do so. It should also be their responsibility to identify and address teacher-identified needs; to create opportunities for continuous and ongoing professional development, follow-up support and mentoring; to provide sufficient time for lesson and assessment planning; to ensure the availability of required resources, and to monitor educator effectiveness and efficiency.

2.2.3 Systems to facilitate improvement and development

Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) activities should of necessity engage educator in maintaining the quality and relevance of professional services linked to a particular organisation (Mashile 2002:174). According to Lessing and De Witt (2007:55), professional development does not only require the informal and spontaneous learning of educators from one another; it also assumes prior knowledge, and a wealth of potential and experience of each participant that can be built upon and incorporated into further initiatives. Educators need feedback, monitoring, follow-up, coaching, classroom assistance and assessment, supported by action research-driven professional development (Du Toit 2007) to grow and to remain committed to lifelong learning. All of these activities should form part of professional development to cater for changes in and the improvement of all concerned (Lessing & De Witt 2007:55; Mashile 2002:174).

All South African educators need to enhance their skills, not necessarily their qualifications, for the delivery of the curriculum. To this purpose South African education authorities have, in fact, released three documents, namely *Gazette No. 29832, The design of the CPTD system* (DoE 2007), and *the Integrated Quality Management System* (IQMS) (Weber 2005) (ELRC 2003). Together, they have brought about some positive improvements in educator development but these have proved insufficient to address the need for improved learner achievement.

According to *Government Gazette No. 29832* (DoE 2007), which deals with Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD), the State commits itself to:

- Ensuring that current initiatives devoted to the professional development of educators contribute more effectively and directly to improving the quality of teaching;
- Emphasizing and reinforcing the professional status of teaching;
- Providing teachers with clear guidance on the Professional Development (PD) activities that will contribute most to their professional growth;
- Protecting educators from fraudulent providers, and

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- Expanding the range of activities that contribute to professional development of educators.

The world, life and the demands on education change all the time hence educator development should not terminal; rather, it should be on-going throughout an educator's life. As Mashile (2002:175) reminds us, the *White Paper on Education and Training* (DoE 1995) emphasizes the need for an education system that facilitates lifelong learning because a culture of lifelong learning encourages participation in CPTD and maximizes individual and collective benefits. Embedding lifelong learning in a profession such as the teaching profession remains a challenge, however (Mashile 2002:175).

The IQMS, a new system of appraisal for educators and schools, is a strong incentive for continuous educator professional development in that it combines professional development with the monitoring of educator performance. The main features of the IQMS model are educator self-appraisal (for developmental purposes), classroom observation, peer appraisal, self-appraisal by the school for during Whole School Evaluation, and External Whole School Evaluation (Biputh 2008:6; ELRC 2003:3; Weber 2005:64). Educators have responded to these initiatives by taking additional courses or earning CPD points by participating in various in-service activities.

2.3 Significance of the study

In considering both CPTD and the *Integrated Quality Management System* (IQMS), I have come to the conclusion that they have brought about some positive developments in educator development. However, these are insufficient in terms of addressing learner under-performance. Current professional development initiatives seem to focus primarily on curriculum knowledge and skills, assuming that detailed working knowledge can be converted to practical classroom knowledge for learners (Green 2008:131). Based on my experience as an educator, the development of a classroom professional depends on more than content alone.

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A range of school frameworks and contexts contributes to educators reconstructing their conceptualisation of learning area methodology, something I argue for in my study. If the goal of school-based professional development is to improve learner achievement it must include address the causes of under-performance. One cause, I would argue in this study, is educators' inability to develop the reading proficiency of learners in their care hence learners struggle to understand the learning materials that are meant to support their learning. Because of this their academic performance is below standard.

The significance of my study lies in the contribution it could make to the development of educators' ability to facilitate literacy development. Not only do my findings clearly indicate the impact that poor reading ability has on learner performance but it also highlights the importance of educator competence, or the lack thereof, in this area. Having identified what I regard as the problem, I present an alternative model for the continuing professional development of educators, one which could, I believe, equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to improve the reading proficiency of learners in all subjects.

2.4   Reading literacy and academic performance

Reading is crucial to learning, not only because it affords readers independent access to information in an increasingly information-driven society but, more importantly, because it is a powerful learning tool, a means by which people can construct meaning and acquire new knowledge. In fact, reading could be regarded as the very essence of learning.

Pretorius and Machet (2004:128), being more specific, argue that it is not reading *per se* but literacy, specifically reading literacy, that forms the backbone of scholastic success at primary, secondary and higher education levels. According to them, research findings consistently indicate that learners who are good readers also tend to perform well academically: proficiency in reading literacy gives them access to information, broadens their general knowledge, increases their vocabulary and develops their language skills.

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According to Martin and Rose (2005:6), fluent readers are able to recognize and predict meanings unfolding through all structures. Without the ability to do so, they would be unable to make sense of the written text. Given the extraordinary complexity of the reading task, which requires continual recognition, prediction and recall of patterns, the facilitation of reading literacy development must somehow help to simplify the task itself. Phonics and related approaches attempt to do so by treating the language system as though it were a 'bricks-and-mortar' construction, built up from the smallest to the largest unit, from letters to blends to words, then through hierarchies of 'basal' reading books, and from single words to word groups and sentences (Martin & Rose 2005:6).

Research conducted by Rose (2005:138) focused on the effects that each stage of the reading development curriculum has on learners - from parent and child reading prior to pre-school, to the junior primary / foundation phase where learners are equipped with the skills needed for the next stage. Based on his research findings, Rose concludes that evaluations of learners' reading proficiency in the Foundation Phase are typically based on the reading orientations they experienced at home. In the Intermediate Phase evaluations are based on the reading skills acquired in the Foundation Phase, and so on. Learners who managed to acquire the requisite reading skills in each preceding stage are continually affirmed as 'able' or 'competent' in the next phase, while learners who have not acquired the requisite skills are graded as 'unable' or 'not yet competent'. At no stage, though, except perhaps in the Foundation Phase, are reading skills explicitly taught.

According to Moore and Hart (2007), this is the root of the reading literacy problem. The ineffective teaching of reading in schools results in learners' subsequent inability to independently learn from reading. The problem cannot be ascribed to the use of any one method of facilitating reading literacy development or to the combination of different methods which, according to some researchers, is quite effective. The factor that has the greatest impact on reading development, though, is the extent to which an educator manages to integrate, in a scholarly way, various programmes, materials and methods in accordance with situational/contextual requirements. Conversely, since it is the educator who decides what and how to teach, the blame for learners' poor reading ability should be laid at the educators' door. More specifically, the problem lay at the door of educators who

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cannot adapt or integrate the range of different reading methods, programmes, and/or materials available to suit a particular context, situation or need.

Duffy and Hoffman 1999:11), citing Garrison (1997), concur with this view, pointing out that excellent educators do not rely on a single programme or method because they know that good teaching requires "doing the right thing in the right way and at the right time in response to problems posed by particular people in particular places on particular occasions". The Duffy and Hoffman analysis (1999:11) indicates that explicit explanations are most effective when adapted to the instructional situation. Since it is the educator's thinking that makes the difference explicit explanations cannot be packaged and applied uniformly in all situations. Also, these two theorists argue, no two situations and no two days are the same hence practices that work one day may not work the next; methods that worked on Tuesday with John may not work later the same day with Mary. Therefore, instead of using a single, 'one size fits all' method or programme for all learners, educators should combine methodological techniques and/or adapt programmes and materials to the particular needs of specific learners, situations, purposes, and contexts if they want to be effective.

According to Rose (2005:139), it is possible for all learners to acquire skills in reading literacy rapidly, at any stage of the curriculum, if the relevant skills are explicitly taught instead of leaving them to tacit acquisition. It takes successful learners six years each of primary and secondary schooling to acquire these skills, precisely because they are not taught explicitly. By explicitly teaching the application of reading strategies, educators can help even the weakest of learners to acquire these skills in a single year. This could be achieved with a mere two or three learning opportunities per week in the reading development sequence, either as remedial work or as part of ordinary teaching practice.

Rose (2005:131) argues, moreover, that the basis of inequality in the classroom, and hence in society, can be found in learners' differing capacities to learn independently from reading, with those who are less proficient have limited access to sources of knowledge provided by print-based materials or reading materials in the learning context. Moore and Hart (2007), mentioning the growing body of research and debates on reading literacy,

argue that the deepening crisis in our schooling system is inextricably linked to low levels of literacy at all levels of the education system. Whether teaching practices are therefore promoted as 'learner-centered' or 'teacher-centered' is irrelevant to the central problem, namely learners' differing capacities to engage in and benefit from reading. This problem could be overcome if the focus in classrooms is primarily on teaching all learners to read and write the texts expected at their level in the subject or learning area concerned.

According to Pretorius (2002:169), writing specifically about South African learners, it is especially the many additional language (AL) learners who have serious reading comprehension problem. Pretorius (2002:174) does not, however, ascribe poor reading ability or poor academic performance to poor additional language proficiency. While acknowledging that it might contribute to poor academic performance, he argues that the relationship between language proficiency and academic performance is more complex than this. Also, according to Pretorius (2007:174), reading problems often get masked as language problems, especially in multi-lingual societies like the South African where the language of learning differs from the learners' primary language.

An example of the 'masking' of reading problems as language problems can be found in the claim that the comprehension problems experienced by learners who find reading to learn difficult stem from limited language proficiency. Informing this claim is the assumption that language proficiency is basically 'the same thing' as reading ability. If this were so, then all mother-tongue speakers should automatically be good readers of texts in their mother tongue, something which is not the case. Moreover, if there was no difference between language proficiency and reading ability, any improvement of a learner's language proficiency would automatically bring about improvements in his/her reading comprehension. Indications from research are that this does not readily happen (Hacquebord 1994). Instead, it is attention to reading that improves reading proficiency, and in the process language proficiency also improves.

2.5 Concept clarification

The four concepts most critical to an understanding of my research argument are *'classroom teaching practice', 'active learning', 'asset-based approach',* and *'mentoring'*. I thought it important, therefore, to clarify these concepts at the beginning of my theoretical framework chapter.

2.5.1 Classroom practice

The term, 'classroom teaching practice' is used to refer to a blending of whole-class, group and individual instruction utilised by educators in a physical classroom setting which, so it is assumed, also has an effect learner motivation and performance. According to Hall (2002:5), classrooms and classroom practice ought to reflect the diversity of learners' varying background knowledge, readiness, language ability, learning preferences and interests. To ensure that this is the case, educators should vary the way they manage their classrooms, doing all that is necessary to ensure that all learners have an equal chance to succeed regardless of the curriculum being followed. By implication, educators should be flexible in their teaching approaches, adjusting the way they present and assess subject matter to the needs of learners rather than expecting learners to modify themselves to fit in with the curriculum.

2.5.2 Active learning

One of the ways in which educators could give learners the chance to engage with the curriculum in different ways is to incorporate active learning approaches into their normal classroom routine. A key requirement of active learning is that learners have to actively participate in lessons, working with manipulative materials, using a range of skills to solve practical problems, and/or doing hands-on projects of their own choice. Most of these activities require cooperative work which, by implication, improves learners' communication skills and their ability to get along with others. A positive spin-off of approaches like these is that they strengthen learners' intrinsic motivation – an intra-

personal attribute, according to the Herrmann (1995) model – thereby contributing to their transformation. Active learning is, therefore, a particularly powerful learning approach.

The role of the educator in an active learning approach is to identify from the curriculum those concepts and skills that should be developed during the course of a particular lesson or set of lessons and then to select instructional and active learning activities that focus on these. Also, although the way in which learners engage with the learning content within their groups is not explicitly controlled by the educator in charge, it is up to the educator to resolve difficulties and/or conflicts as and when they occur. Ideally, the educator should use an appropriate problem-solving approach in doing so, thereby creating a positive social climate (or interpersonal climate according to Herrmann, 1995) in which each learner is valued and respected. Educators should, moreover, document learner progress, assessing each learner's performance while s/he is engaged in active learning activities. Learner competence should, however, be assessed at culminating points, preferably using standardised achievement tests (Hall 2002:5).

It should be clear from the above that active learning is not a free-for-all, uncontrolled process. The schedule learners have to follow should be consistent. Teaching and learning activities should be carefully planned not only to include individual, small-group and large-group experiences but also to maintain a balance between educator-planned and learner-planned activities. Not all educators have the natural ability to manage a classroom in this way, though hence the need for some or other form of professional development that will enable them to do so. I would argue that the development of classroom management should be an ongoing process, starting with pre-service teacher preparation programmes, following up with induction experiences and mentoring, and continuing by means of in-service professional development. Only then will educators be able to stay at the cutting edge of new approaches to teaching, learning and classroom management.

2.5.3 Asset-based approach

A core concept in the study of professional learning in education is the 'asset-based approach'. An alternative to the needs driven approach (Eloff & Ebersöhn 2001; Ebersöhn et al. 2003, citing Emmett 2000), the asset-based approach is a bottom-up rather than a top-

down approach (Eloff & Ebersöhn 2001). Its most distinguishing characteristic is its emphasis on development that *empowers* rather than *services* the professionals being targeted. In contrast to the service approach, according to Paek, 2008:3), the asset-based approach builds on educators' strengths, helping them to see how they can use the same techniques in engaging the learners for whom they are responsible. In other words, asset-based approaches accept that professionals already possess certain capacities, skills and social resources, and that professional development activities should therefore build on these, not ignore them. The preparation and delivery of professional development programmes is therefore a collaborative, participatory process, one in which 'service providers' take cognizance of the authentic practitioner needs of the group being targeted for development.

Applied to educator professional development developers who use an asset-based approach would acknowledge the personal and professional experience of the target group. They would also consider the kind of decisions that educators have to make when planning and delivering lessons – decisions on objectives/learning outcomes, content, and assessment activities to be included in a lesson and/or the teaching-learning materials to be used – and focus their development activities on addressing gaps in these areas (Magano 2009:31). In an asset-based approach educators are expected to refer to a variety of resources when designing their own learning programmes, programmes that outline learning activities which address prescribed content and relevant learning outcomes (Magano 2009:32). The acquisition of the requisite knowledge and skills in a learner-centred environment is therefore of the utmost importance. This would have a marked influence on their decision-making process. Decisions like these, according to Du Toit (2011) are influenced not only by the knowledge and skills embedded in the learning outcomes and assessment standards of school curricula but also by educators' attitudes to professional development.

Paek (2008:4) points out that the asset-based approach is derived from literature outside of education. Informed by asset-based thinking, it encourages learners to focus their thoughts on what is currently available rather than on what is missing. According to Paek (2008:4), asset-based thinking is a way of life; it is "based on direct, systematic observation: of the ways in which "a growing minority of highly effective and satisfied people think, feel and

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act. While positive thinking calls for a positive *attitude* to life and the future, asset-based thinking calls for positive *action* in the present moment" hence it is particularly useful in the development of educators. Not only does it encourage them to focus on their own strengths but also on those of others' strengths when they have to choose in choosing the most experiences most appropriate to transformation.

In order to meet policy demands, educators typically use the core knowledge or content to develop plans that will guide their actions. Because an asset-based approach encourages educators to focus on strengths rather than deficits (Paek 2008), those involved in educator development model the asset-based approach by highlighting instructional experiences that would enhance educators' understanding and competence and, by implication, would help them turn their policy ideals into reality, right from the planning phase to the enactment stage.

2.5.4 Mentoring

Mentoring is a powerful, emotional two-way process in which the mentor has as much to gain as the mentee but the quality and development of this relationship is crucial to a successful outcome. Because a mentoring relationship is built on mutual trust and respect, openness and honesty, it allows both the mentor and the mentee to be him- or herself, ensuring that learning and growth occurs in a safe and protected environment. In the early stages the mentee will be relatively dependent and the mentor will need to be supportive, helpful, friendly and encouraging to nurture the mentee to learn and grow. As the mentee becomes more confident and independent, the mentor will need to challenge, stimulate and encourage reflection in order to sustain and deepen the mentee's learning (McKimm et al. 2003:6).

According to McKimm et al. (2003:1), a mentor is a more experienced and established professional who raises awareness of learning gaps and has the ability to up-date someone else's organisational and professional knowledge. The mentor is seen as a trusted friend, counsellor, guide, advocate, role model, information provider and door opener. Mentoring is a process in which learning and experimentation occur through analysis, examination, re-examination and reflection on practice, situations, problems, mistakes and successes to

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identify learning opportunities and gaps. This implies the existence of a relationship of trust between the mentor and mentee/s.

Entering any profession is a new experience and poses a major challenge to newly qualified practitioners. It is a formative period where the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired during workshops and professional learning have to be applied in practice. It is during the initiation stage in particular that mentoring could be used as a professional development tool. Mentoring is, however, also very effective during transition periods, when practitioners have to cope with an unfamiliar situation, like professional learning, a new curriculum or a major change in development or growth (McKimm et al. 2003: 2). Transition periods can be challenging and stressful, with new demands being made on individuals who are seeking to consolidate their skills. It is then that they need the guidance and support that mentors can give in order to help them develop confidence and competence. S/he could support mentees by giving them technical assistance, clarifying roles and responsibilities, identifying and analysing learning experiences, opportunities and gaps, encouraging analysis and reflection, and challenging mentees with questions and constructive feedback (McKimm et al. 2003:4).

According to Kolb (1994), an individual gains experience in embarking on an activity but s/he only learns from the experience when s/he reflects on it in an attempt to understand its impact or significance. Reflection requires analysis and conceptualisation. The individual has to makes choices based on his/her analysis of the implications of alternative options, has to decide on the next steps to take, and then has to embark on the next experience. Learning is thus cyclical and never ending (Kolb 1994; McKimm et al. 2003:12).

2.6   Policy frameworks

What educators should be teaching and assessing and how they go about doing it is determined by a range of policies developed at national and provincial levels. Since observation of educators' classroom practice is one of the ways in which I planned to collect data on their competence as reading development facilitators I needed to acquaint myself with those policies that had a direct relevance to the foci of my study. More

specifically, I had to determine what the policies require educators to do, with specific reference to the facilitation of reading proficiency and the professional development of educators in this regard.

The policies most explicitly relevant to my study fell into one of three categories, namely professional development, curriculum, and assessment. Each of these policies is briefly discussed below.

2.6.1 The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education

The *National Policy Framework for Teacher Education* (DoE 2000) had the clarification of the complex range of educator roles as purpose. To this purpose the knowledge and skills educators needed to perform these roles are specified in the document. Assessments of teacher competence would be informed by this policy and the standards associated with each competence would be used as assessment criteria.

The list of roles and their associated competences specified in this policy serve as a description of what it means to be a competent educator. Competence will be inferred from an educator's ability to consider and decide on particular actions. His/her ability to do so would indicate the extent to which the educator's knowledge and understanding underpin the action taken or the changes made. Professional development programmes should be informed by the policy and should, as a matter of course, include the development of relevant role competencies if and when applicable.

For the purposes of my study it would suffice to say that the roles specified in this document belong in one of four categories – *specialist*, *professional*, *general*, and *academic* roles.

In order to be regarded as a *specialist*, educators would have to specialize not only in a particular learning area, subject or phase but also in teaching and learning, and in assessment. One would assume that such specialization would be part of pre-service training, usually at a higher education institution. In order to keep up with the latest developments in their specialist area educators would, however have to study further, read

up on their specialization area, attend 'refresher courses' and/or attend conferences and seminars on their area of specialization.

In addition to these specialized roles, all classroom educators would, at some time or other, be required to perform not only a number of professional roles *(curriculum developer, leader, administrator and manager)* but also community, citizenship and pastoral roles. The knowledge and skills required for the competent performance of these roles, one would assume, would be acquired in the workplace and/or by means of in-service or school-based professional development initiatives.

Implied in all these roles is the need for educators to become *scholars*, *researchers* and *lifelong learners*. These 'academic' roles cannot be imposed on educators. Rather, the competencies associated with these roles can only be developed if educators have a thirst for knowledge, accept responsibility for their own learning, and are committed and disciplined enough to do what is necessary to develop their professional and/or academic ability as a matter of course.

I would argue that all of the mandated educator roles are also applicable to the facilitation of reading literacy development but that they should be contextualized and, where applicable, be adapted to the teaching of reading. How this could be done is illustrated below.

2.6.1.1 The role of learning mediator

Implied in this role is the notion that educators have to mediate reading literacy in a manner which is sensitive to the diverse needs of learners and which takes cognizance of possible barriers to learning. They, that is, the educators, are also obliged to construct learning environments that are appropriately contextualised and inspirational and should, in communicating with learners, acknowledge and respect differences among learners. In the case of my study, the specific focus is on learning style differences, translated into reading style differences. In all cases, educators also have to demonstrate not only a sound knowledge of content but also of a range of reading literacy principles, strategies, appropriate resources, and relevant values or attitudes.

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2.6.1.2   The role of interpreter and designer of learning programmes

In terms of this role educators have to understand and interpret existing learning programmes, design original learning programmes, identify the requirements for learning in a specific context, and select and prepare suitable textual and visual resources. Applied to the teaching of reading literacy, this would mean that educators would have to understand and interpret different reading programmes, design their own reading literacy programmes, identify the requirements for specific reading literacy contexts, and select and prepare textual and visual resources suitable for the development of reading literacy. Finally, educators would have to sequence and pace teaching and learning in a manner sensitive to the differing reading levels and needs of learners.

2.6.1.3   The role of scholar, researcher and lifelong learner

Implied in this role is the assumption that educators have to engage in ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth by pursuing reflective study and research. With regard to my study this has to happen in the domain of reading literacy; in other, related, fields, and in broader professional and educational areas. More specifically, in terms of my study, the focus of professional development in the areas of reading literacy should be on the use of action research as a means of information gathering, reflection and other activities related to the development of learners' reading literacy.

2.6.1.4   The role of assessor

Educators need to understand that assessment is an essential feature of the teaching and learning process. In terms of reading literacy development they should know how to integrate assessment into the process of reading literacy development. Not only should they have a clear understanding of the purpose, methods and effects of assessment of reading competence, but they should be able to provide constructive feedback to learners on their progress, strengths and areas in need of development. Educators involved in reading literacy development have to design and manage both formative and summative assessments in ways that are appropriate to the level and purpose of the applicable reading

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literacy programme. By implication they have to keep detailed records of assessment results, and be able to interpret these for diagnostic and other developmental or transformational purposes.

2.6.1.5 The role of learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist

It is imperative that all educators should be well grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, principles, methods, and procedures of their subject, learning area or phase. In the case of reading literacy this means that, while their broad specialization might be in other subjects, they should also know what reading literacy is, know how to develop it and be able to apply this knowledge in the development of reading literacy in their subject or learning area. By implication, educators should be *au fait* with different approaches to teaching and learning and know how to use these in ways that are appropriate to the learners and the reading literacy context concerned. In addition, they should have a sound understanding of the knowledge appropriate to reading literacy.

2.6.2 The National Curriculum Statement

The reason for the focus on educator roles, as set out in the *National Policy Framework for Teacher Education,* is provided in the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* for schools. According to the latter document, the most recent educator development theories and practices focus increasingly on the professional roles of educators and specialists in the development and implementation of effective teaching, learning and assessment practices, and learning materials (DoE 2003:1). This emphasis is also the reason why educators are encouraged, in the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (2003:1), to structure, develop, design and implement their own learning programmes, provided that this is done in accordance with the curriculum policy framework.

Guidelines for the development of learning programmes is contained in the *National Curriculum Policy Guidelines,* a policy which has effective teaching, learning and assessment practices as purpose. Informing this document is the imperative to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment enable learners to achieve the learning outcomes spelt out in the RNCS. The *National Curriculum Statement*, too, emphasizes the need to make

assessment an integral part of teaching and learning at all levels of planning and implementation. According to the RNCS (2003:1), assessment is a process which requires the gathering and organising information in order to review what has been achieved. In the first instance assessment helps educators to establish whether learners are performing to their full potential and are making progress towards the achievement of the outcomes relevant to the subject and/or grade concerned (RNCS 2003:1). In this regard educators are reminded of the barriers to learning highlighted in *White Paper 6* (2001), which deals with *Special Needs Education* (RNCS 2003:1).

The final report (2009:15) of the team tasked with the implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement* (NCS) indicates that the intensive curriculum reform processes over the past ten years, specifically the challenges associated with the change from *Curriculum 2005* to the *National Curriculum Statement*, have led not only to systemic uncertainty and confusion but has also generated a fair amount of criticism regarding curriculum implementation.

Focusing primarily on implementation challenges and the lack of clarity these have caused amongst educators regarding their classroom mandate and authority, the writers of the report argue that it is not just curriculum documents which hindered implementation. According to the report writers (2009:12), the curriculum was never researched or properly piloted. Also, there was inadequate preparation and consideration of whether educators, learners and the system in general were prepared for such a fundamental change over such a short space of time. Finally, problems with the delivery of curriculum documents, curriculum resourcing and support by departments of education, as well as the contexts in which the curriculum had to be implemented also undermined its effectiveness.

According to Nsibande (2005:10), the new outcomes-based curriculum assumes not only a change in the way children should learn but also a change in their motives and attitudes. Like all other post-Apartheid education policy reforms, the curriculum is informed by and promotes the principles of equity and redress as a means of overcoming past inequities. Critical thought and more active styles of learning are therefore central features of this post-apartheid curriculum, changes that required teachers to abandon traditional approaches (DoE 1996a) in favour of new ones. By implication, they had to be retrained.

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Concurring with the task team report on the challenges associated with the implementation of the new curriculum, Nsibande (2005:11) claims that the professional development of educators for implementation was probably the greatest challenge. Most of the programmes designed to improve the ability of school to implement the required changes, including management training, staff development and organizational development, proved to be ineffective. This was mostly due to poor coordination at national, provincial and/or district level. Consequently, despite the revision of the national curriculum in 2001 and interventions such as staff development workshops, educators still find outcomes-based education overwhelming and confusing (Nsibande 2005:11).

2.6.3 Assessment policies and frameworks

Assessment, as a form of evaluation, compares and aggregates information about achievement so that it can be used to assist in development and evaluation (DoE 2003). Since the democratic transformation of the national system of education a great deal of attention has been paid to assessment, not only to the assessment of learner performance but also to the assessment of educator competence and systemic effectiveness. According to Bottani and Favre (2001:467), assessment has become a front-line political issue: the emphasis is now on schools, systems, and development policies rather than on learners and educators.

To help educators in their efforts to effectively assess and improve learner performance in literacy and numeracy, the Department of Education has since 1994 developed various assessment policies and frameworks. These documents should be read in conjunction with other policies that promote and support education transformation to ensure the attainment of the learning outcomes concerned (DoE 2008:C) to ensure their effective implementation.

Favre (2001:520) argues that it is difficult to see the relevance of assessing a school's contribution to learners' performance levels when there appears to be little that is 'real' about the school apart from its material aspects. Informing a school that the performance of its learners is equal to or considerably lower than that of other schools does not help to improve the *status quo* if all the factors involved have not been taken into account (Favre

2001:520). However, if the school context and the level of teaching concerned are taken into account, the use of performance indicators in assessment is imperative, and the processes to be followed in applying them must be elucidated beforehand (Favre 2001).

Favre, citing Bressoux (1993), acknowledges though, that the individual educator is crucial to the reading performance of learners in primary schools and that the more autonomous the school, the greater the possibility that it would emphasize the co-operation and commitment of educators to foster learners' reading development. Nsibande (2005:25), quoting Kerka (1995), argues that organizations – schools included - do not learn; individuals do, and individual learning occurs all the time. A learning organization, which is the same as a community of learners, would, however, promote a culture of learning, thereby ensuring that not only individual learning is enriched but also the organization as a whole.

Regardless of what is being assessed, however, assessment should be *reliable, valid*, *fair,* and *meaningful.* Schools assessments would, therefore, be regarded as *valid and reliable* if they are educator initiated, with both the learner and educator understanding the assessment practices concerned, and management approved. Assessments would be regarded as *fair* if the way in which they are structured provides all learners with equal opportunities to succeed regardless of the individual's age, gender, physical or other disability, culture, language, socio-economic status or geographic location (Vandeyar & Killen 2003:121). Finally, assessments would be regarded as *meaningful* if educators have explained the assessment purpose to learners, if learners regard the assessment tasks as realistic and worthwhile, and if the assessment task is related to one or more learning outcomes.

The *National Curriculum Statement* (DoE 2008:1), focusing on the purposes to be served by assessment, indicates that it has a role to play in developing learners' knowledge, skills and values; identifying learner needs; enabling educators to reflect on their practice; identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses; providing additional support to learners'; revisiting or revising certain sections where learners seem to have difficulties; motivating and encouraging learners; providing information or data to a variety of stakeholders, and demonstrating the effectiveness of the curriculum or a teaching strategy. In short, in curriculum terms, assessment is a process aimed at the collection of information on

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performance (evidence of learning), the establishment of a basis for decision-making (on progress, promotion or remediation), and facilitation (reviewing what has or has not been effective).

In December 1998 The National Department of Education released an *Assessment Policy* as well as a *National Protocol for Assessment* in Grades R to 12, 2011. *The National Protocol for Assessment Grades R – 12* (DoE 2011:1) standardises the recording and reporting processes for Grades R – 12 within the framework of the *National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12*. It also serves as a policy framework for the management of school assessment, school assessment records (including basic requirements for learner profiles, teacher files, report cards, record sheets and schedules) for Grades 1–12. The requirements for, as well as examples of, learner profiles, teacher files, report cards, record sheets and schedules are included in the document.

The *Protocol* document, which deals with external, end-of-year examinations as well as internal school-based assessment and practical assessment tasks, demands changes in all assessment practices. In assessing reading proficiency, for example, educators need to use clearly defined learning outcomes as the basis for assessing learners' reading ability, define what learners have to read, make the purpose of assessment clear and use multiple assessment tools, techniques and methods. Assessment must, moreover, be continuous and authentic in order to ensure its objectivity, validity, manageability and sensitivity to gender, race and disability. All these criteria suggest that learners should demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, skills and values through assessment opportunities (Hariparsad 2004:1).

When assessing learner competence in reading literacy, educators typically use comprehension questions, observation, the retelling of stories, written responses to texts, discussions, and oral reading. Although these questions require responses that may be informed by individual opinions and experiences, they can be used to measure literacy growth and achievement. Also used for assessment purposes are reading literacy tasks focusing on print material, phonemic awareness, word recognition, oral reading accuracy

and fluency, listening and reading comprehension and decoding skills and strategies that can be used to construct meaning.

I would argue that whatever the assessment instrument or method used, the focus should be on learners' understanding of what they read, not simply on their ability to recognize words. Since understanding develops over time, reading assessment has to be a continuous process rather than a once-off event. Moreover, reading assessment should include the reading of a 'seen', a 'prepared', and an 'unseen' passage at the level of the learner (DoE 2008:25).

In recent years the education department has also started to encourage the use of assessment measures to focus, guide and document educators' development of specific competencies towards specific standards of performance. Informing this move, so it seems, is the assumption that there is an interrelationship between learners' academic performance and educators' academic standards, professional preparation and monitoring accountability. Acceptance of this notion has led to significant educational initiatives that focus on the teaching and learning experiences of both learner and educator in order to foster higher achievement in relation to learning outcomes (Hambrick-Dixon 1999:3).

Table 2.1: Comparison of learner and professional learning assessment purposes

SCHOOL LEARNING & ASSESSMENT (*LEARNERS*)	PROFESSIONAL LEARNING & ASSESSMENT (*EDUCATORS*)
• Baseline assessment is used at the beginning of a learning experience to establish what is already known. A questionnaire on knowledge and skills regarding facilitating reading literacy can be used (DoE 2003). Results could assist with the planning of programmes and activities.	▪ Diagnostic assessment takes place at any time to determine strengths, weaknesses and barriers experienced. Results could be used to adjust teaching methodology (DoE 2003), or as basis for an intervention, remedial action or programme.
• Formative assessment is developmental in the sense that it is used to inform educators about learner progress. Results reflect learner progress towards the achievement of outcomes. Formative assessment therefore gives direction to and suggestions on ways of adapting activities to suit learner needs, thereby enhancing both teaching and learning.	• Formative assessment is developmental in the sense that it is used to inform professional learners about their progress. In giving direction to and suggestions on ways of adapting activities to suit professional learning needs, Formative assessment therefore enhances both teaching and learning.
• Formative assessment is interactive by nature: it uses questions that are designed to stimulate thinking and promote discussion, which guide educators in the plan follow-up learning experiences (DoE 2003).	▪ Formative assessment is interactive by nature: it uses questions designed to stimulate thinking and promote discussion. These create opportunities for educators to use self- and peer assessment for subsequent professional development purposes (DoE 2003).
• The ongoing formative assessment recommended in Curriculum 2005 monitors learner progress, identifies their strengths and weaknesses and provides them with constructive feedback (Vandeyar & Killen 2003:125).	▪ Formative assessment is also known as 'assessment for learning when discovering and reviewing'. An essential feature of this type of assessment is the involvement of educators in a process of sustained reflection and self-assessment.
• Summative assessment is used to collect information on overall achievement, thereby indicating not only the extent of a learner's progress at a particular point in time (at the end of a learning programme of phase, for example) but also how successful the learning program has been in facilitating progress towards the achievement of outcomes. Summative assessment results usually form the basis for judgments on performance and encourage learners to reflect on their own thinking and to develop the ability to express their thoughts verbally (DoE 2003).	▪ Summative assessment gives an overall picture of progress at a particular point in time (at the end of a professional development intervention, for example). Summative assessment results usually form the basis for judgments on performance, often demonstrated in the compilation of a professional development portfolio which encourages professional learners (educators) to reflect upon their own thinking (DoE 2003).

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It is my contention, moreover, that the purposes served by assessment in school learning could, with minor changes, also be served in the assessment of professional learning, as indicated in Du Toit's (2007) synchronous model *(see Table 2.1)*. Assessment, as an integral part of the development process, could then be used to monitor the professional development process as well as the professional growth of educators. Du Toit's (2007) comparison of learner and educator assessment clearly indicates that the integration of assessment into professional learning could enhance the professional learning process while simultaneously serving as an instrument to monitor educator growth and progress over time. It could also, as indicated in the Table, contribute to the development and delivery of well designed professional learning plans.

Applied to my study, which focuses on the development of educators as reading literacy facilitators, proper assessment could make a valuable contribution to educators' acquiring not only theoretical knowledge on reading literacy but also the ability to apply this knowledge in developing learners' reading proficiency (Steyn & Van Niekerk 2005:130)

2.7   Educator professional development

In terms of the *National Policy Framework for Educators* (2007), all educators need to improve their skills, not necessarily their qualifications, to ensure effective delivery of the new curriculum. The majority of educators need to strengthen their subject knowledge base, pedagogical content knowledge, and teaching skills.

The South African Council for Educators (SACE), a statutory body for professional educators, is serious about enhancing the status of the teaching profession, promoting professional conduct and development as well as the professional competence of educators. One of the divisions of SACE is the Professional Development Section, whose sole purpose it is to support the ongoing professional development of educators and the enhancement of their professional practice (SACE 2003).

2.7.1 Continuous professional development

Informed by policy requirements and the position taken by SACE, educators are increasingly enrolling for courses that will improve either their academic knowledge and skills or their professional expertise. In addition, they are collecting *Continuous Professional Teacher Development* (CPTD) points by participating in various in-service activities. The collection of CPTD, as promulgated in Gazette No. 29832, ensures that all initiatives contributing to the professional development of educators have as purpose an improvement of the quality of teaching, by indicating clearly which activities would contribute to their professional growth (DoE 2007).

Informing the decision to institute a new system of Continuing Professional Teacher Development is the assumption that it will:
- ensure that current initiatives aimed at the professional development of educators will result in more effective and direct improvement of the quality of teaching;
- emphasize and reinforce the professional status of teaching;
- provide educators with clear guidance on the professional development (PD) activities might contribute to their professional growth;
- protect educators from fraudulent providers, and
- expand the range of activities that contribute to the professional development of educators.

2.7.2 School-based professional development

According to Knapp (2003:109), improvement in teaching and learning requires an initiative that prioritizes high-quality professional development which reflects the latest consensus and research evidence concerning "best practice". The primary purpose of professional development, according to Knapp (2003:113), is to effect changes in the thinking, knowledge, skills and instructional approaches that form part of practicing teachers' repertoire (Knapp 2003:113). In the broadest sense, therefore, the boundaries of "professional development" include the full range of activities, formal and informal, that engage educators in new learning about their professional practice.

When people talk about student learning, according to Knapp (2003:114), they usually think of either the process of learning or the presumed outcomes or results of this process as measured through tests, assessments and other means that capture the extent of students' knowledge or skills at a particular time. If, therefore, the aim of a professional development initiative or programme is to improve teaching and learning, it should take cognizance of the assessment standards and curriculum goals of school learning and teaching. In this case the programme should therefore include, information on learning and performance standards, the latest approaches to assessment, standards-orientated practice, and student learning in the context of standards-based reform.

Decisions about the kind of activities that should be included in professional learning programmes are often influenced by policies and policy-making at different levels of the system since these are meant to guide, direct or support the improvement of practice. Policies most likely to influence professional learning initiatives are those developed at school district, State (including state educational agencies, legislature and related policy actors), and school levels (Knapp 2003:112).

Professional learning can only be effective, however, if the requisite support bases are in place: targeted resources, aligned professional development curricula, and competent facilitators to nurture and cultivate development are crucial to the raising of performance standards (Knapp 2003:109). The task team for review (2009:12), citing Fullan, makes the point that, unless curriculum reform initiatives are preceded by a thorough analysis of its possible implications for educators and their classroom practice, these initiatives are likely to result in a collision of very different understandings. This, in turn, could lead to systemic insecurity and instability.

A great deal of attention is currently devoted to the role of the person at the top of current hierarchical school structures, that is, the school principals (Nsibande 2005:15). In accordance with the devolution of power principles, the principals of schools are increasingly tasked with the responsibility to create conditions which ensure the continuous professional development of their own staff. In this sense they have been allocated the role of change agents. If they were to perform this role effectively, according to Nsibande

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(2005:17), school principals should have a thorough understanding of current thinking about professional learning and how they can nurture it as they take schools through the 21st century. Such understanding, coupled with a thorough knowledge of school realities and discords would enable them to discover new ways of influencing people's responses to a changing environment and the need for them to change their own ways of thinking and doing.

Knapp (2003:115) equates professional learning to changes in practice, in other words, to what happens when educators enact their new knowledge or skills in their daily work with learners or with one another. For obvious reasons the latter conception represents the meaning that matters most to policymakers and policy audiences, especially in a standards-based reform context which includes getting up to date on the latest approaches to assessment, standards-orientated practice and approaches to student learning (Knapp 2003:115). In the context of this study, in particular, educational reformers are likely to care most whether educators:

- acquire the requisite skills and knowledge required to teach the subject matter implied in the ambitious content, context, and standards prescribed;
- are able to engage diverse learners in learning the subject matter, thereby displaying and using appropriate pedagogical content, context, knowledge or skill;
- show commitment to standards-based practice and to doing whatever is necessary to bring their practice up to the required standard;
- make the effort to regularly ascertain whether their learners are attaining (and learning to recognize) a high standard of work in the subject areas targeted by reform.

A holistic model for educator professional development in the area of reading literacy development is presented in Figure 2.1. The model considers what educators would need from a professional development initiative if it were to support their professional competence to implement what they learn in classroom practice. The model defines the basic processes which enable educators to visualise the future, to use their understanding in the construction of lessons which involve cognitive thinking, and in making decisions that promote teaching and learning. In this sense, it serves as a framework for decisions on the

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selection of knowledge, skills and guidance that would improve educators' ability to construct interventions that will transform and promote reading literacy development.

Figure 2.1: Holistic framework for educator professional development regarding reading literacy

2.7.3 Mentoring as a professional development activity

Mentoring, according to Braimoh (2008:16), is a highly effective and proactive means of educator professional development. On the one hand, mentoring enhances educators' pedagogical effectiveness and increases their scholarly productivity, ensuring that they satisfy global academic standards. On the other hand, it supports the development of inexperienced staff, especially if educators in senior positions, with relevant track records, act as mentors to their peers.

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Mentoring should be seen as a process which benefits both the mentor and the mentee: it offers both parties the opportunity to discover new things during mentor-mentee dialogues, challenging questions posed by mentees, and critical analyses of these by both parties. The end result of such a relationship is the emergence of reflective, responsible leaders who are able to understand and capably cope with the challenges of their daily life and profession. In short, mentoring helps educators overcome isolation, facilitates development of work-based competencies, helps to bridge theory and practice, and ensures higher flexibility.

Kakoma (2006:20), citing Johnson (2002), argues that traditional educator in-service courses are often ineffective because educators usually have to attend workshops at the end of a long teaching day. They then have to listen to some or other expert describing an approach or a methodology that often does not relate to their classroom situation or is not aligned with their teaching styles. A better option, according to Kakoma, still citing Johnson, is the use of action research as a professional development strategy. Kakoma justifies his claim with reference to mentor educators whose action research into their own classroom practice or teaching practicum supervision, helps them and their mentees to construct new knowledge directly related to their work in the classroom. The result is reflective teaching and thinking, an activity which, according to Johnson (2002), provides educators with the "time and incentives to engage in professional dialogue with peers". This enhances their professional growth and development, something which, in turn, "moves the field of education forward" (Kakoma 2006:21).

2.7.4 Theoretical learning models

In terms of experiential learning theory, learning occurs when learners participate in an activity, reflect on the observations, use their conceptualization skills to gain experiential understanding, and then use this understanding to create new activities or to incorporate old ones into new situations (Sahin 2008:125).

Grosser and De Waal (2006:19), referring to Grosser (2001), Maja (2006) and Kolb et al., point out that the term, learning styles' refer to orientations towards learning tasks and to the processing of information in different ways. One of the central ideas informing

outcomes-based education (OBE) is that learners learn differently and that one cannot expect all learners to achieve learning outcomes in the same way. A broad understanding of learning styles will help educators to understand and support learners in their efforts to master learning content and skills. Learning styles are also relevant in the context of reading literacy because they can be translated into reading styles. The adaptation of one of the learning style theories, namely the whole brain theory of Herrmann (1995) has, in fact, lead to the development of a flexible reading style model that informs some of the recommendations made in the final chapter of this study.

Learners have unique learning preferences hence they might prefer different reading styles for different reading purposes. The danger of teaching according to a single learning style is that it could create a situation where some learners enjoy classroom learning and do well, while others struggle and feel uncomfortable. Over time some learners would then be categorized as good, dedicated and talented, while others could be labeled 'slow', 'bored' or 'difficult'. This does not augur well for the need to address the different pedagogical needs of learners. Understanding how to effectively accommodate different learning styles will enable educators to avoid the aforementioned problems, promote learner performance and competence and accommodate the pedagogical needs of all learners.

According to Coffield et al. (2004:146), the Herrmann whole brain model has been applied in many contexts and for many purposes, including personal growth, counseling, group processes, teaching and learning, decision-making and management. It is this model, according to Du Toit et al. (2007:37), which led to the identification of the specialised functions associated with the left and right brain hemispheres listed in Table 2.2. The left hemisphere is logical, analytical, quantitative, rational and verbal, whereas the right hemisphere is conceptual, holistic, intuitive, imaginative and non-verbal. Although each hemisphere is specialized in a different way, physical connections secure integrated brain activity (Herrmann, 1996:42).

Table 2.2: Specialized functions associated with each brain hemisphere (adapted from Trotter, 1976:219)

LEFT HEMISPHERE	RIGHT HEMISPHERE
Speech/verbal	Spatial/music
logical, mathematical	holistic
linear	artistic,
detailed	symbolic
sequential	simultaneous
controlled	emotional
intellectual	intuitive, creative
dominant	minor (quiet)
wordly	spiritual
active	receptive
analytic	synthetic, gestalt
reading, writing, naming	facial recognition
sequential ordering	simultaneous comprehension
perception of significant order	perception of abstract patterns
complex motor sequences	recognition of complex figures

The Herrmann model represented in Figure 2.2 illustrates the four thinking structures of the brain. The left and right hemispheres represent cerebral processes while the two halves of the limbic system represent the more visceral (feeling-based) processes. Each quarter is associated with very distinct clusters of cognitive functions. Preference for the A-quadrant (left cerebral mode) means that a person favours activities that involve logical, analytical and fact-based information. A preference for the B-quadrant (processes of the left limbic mode) implies a linear approach to activities. Individuals with a B-quadrant preference favour organised, sequential, planned and detailed information are conservative in their actions and like to keep things as they are. A preference for the C-quadrant (processes of the right limbic mode) indicates an inclination towards information that is interpersonal, feeling-based and involves emotion, whereas a preference for the D-quadrant (processes of the right cerebral mode) indicates a holistic and conceptual approach to thinking. Although an individual may favour cognitive activities associated with a specific quadrant, "both hemispheres contribute to everything, but contribute differently" (Du Toit et al. 2011:81).

Academic Results — **WHOLE BRAIN TEACHING AND LEARNING MODEL** — **Futuristic Opportunity**

A

Logical
Rational
Quantitative
Theoretical

UPPER

Intellectual

D

Visual
Conceptual
Simultaneous
Experimental

FACT BASED — OPEN-MINDED

Structured

LEFT

Experiential

RIGHT

CONTROLLED — FEELING

Organised
Sequential
Procedural
Methical

LOWER

Emotional
Expressive
Interpersonal
Kinaesthetic

B

C

Task-driven Traditional — **Feelings-driven Humanistic**

Figure 2.2: A whole brain teaching and learning model (Du Toit 2011:84; Herrmann 1995:155)

Herrmann's model is concerned with thinking, feeling and doing in individual and social contexts. It addresses long-established habits and personality traits as well as situationally dependent preferences. As it is concerned with process rather than products, it is largely independent of cognitive ability. It is possible to envisage considerable benefits to be derived from its use by policy-makers, course designers and organizations concerned with education and training. In using it, these and other parties could design and deliver lifelong learning experiences which may more effectively promote 'whole person' and 'whole organization' balance.

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	Kolb Learning Style Inventory (LSI)	Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI)
General	Learning styles are not fixed personality traits, but relatively stable patterns of behaviour. 30 years of critique have helped to improve the LSI, which can be used as an introduction to how people learn.	The HBDI and new ways of using it effectively have been developed over more than 20 years. The 'whole brain' model is compatible with several other models of learning style.
Design of the model	Learning styles are both flexible and stable. Based on the theory of experiential learning which incorporates growth and development.	Based on theory this, although originally brain-based, incorporates growth and development, especially in creativity. Learning styles as defined by the HBDI are not fixed personality traits, but, learned patterns of behaviour.
Reliability and validity	Changes to the instrument have increased its reliability.	Internal evidence suggests that the HBDI is psychometrically sound, and new analyses can draw on an enormous international database.
Implications for pedagogy	In general, the theory claims to provide a framework for the design and management of all learning experiences. Teachers and students may be stimulated to examine and refine their theories of learning; through dialogue, teachers may become more empathetic with students. All students are to become competent in all four learning styles (active, reflective, abstract and concrete) to produce balanced, integrated learners.	HBDI-based feedback does not seek to attach permanent labels to the individual. Provides rich accounts of how people think and learn, valuing diversity and arguing for mutual understanding. Teachers, students, managers and workers may be stimulated to examine and refine their ideas about communication and learning. Argues that all learners need to develop stylistic flexibility and, where appropriate, extend their range of competence.
Overall assessment	One of the first learning styles, based on an explicit theory. Problems about reliability, validity and the learning cycle continue to bother this model.	A model although largely ignored in academic research, offers considerable promise for use in education and training. It is more inclusive and systemic than many others, taking an optimistic, open and non-labelling stance towards the development of people and organisations.

Table 2.3: Comparison of strengths in Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (LSI) and Herrmann's Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI)

(Coffield, Moseley, Hall, & Ecclestone 2004).

According to Coffield et al. (2004), it is clear from Kolb's views (see Table 2.3) that, rather than confining learners to their preferred style; their learning capabilities in other learning modes should be stretched. Kolb states that a skill is a combination of ability, knowledge and experience that enables a person to do something well. Kolb clearly believes that learning takes place in a cycle and learners should use all four phases of the cycle to be effective.

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A comparison of the two models indicates that Herrmann's model pre-supposes the inclusion of all four brain quadrants in teaching and learning activities. Coffield et al. (2004) agrees that Herrmann's assumption, namely that every classroom represents a complete spectrum of learning style preferences, is reasonable. His recommended solution is 'whole brain teaching and learning', with key learning points being taught in three or four different ways, while peripheral matter is removed. He encourages change and growth, whether for short-term adaptive purposes or for the longer term, on the basis of more mature values and attitudes.

In my opinion the Herrmann model is better suited to accommodate and utilise teaching activities that are aligned to learners' preferred modes of thinking/learning in reading literacy hence I used it in my observation of educators' lessons on reading literacy to analyze and explain the mode/s of questioning used by educators teaching reading literacy.

Beneventi et al. (2002:27) agree that there is not one correct way to teach but argue that, just as there are multiple reasons why learners cannot read, there are multiple ways of teaching reading. While some factors are out of educators' control, they can keep an open mind to new methods and apply new ideas to meet success. Citing Lyon (1998), Beneventi et al. (2002:27) argue that reading is not a natural process. It must be taught by thoughtfully adapting the knowledge of many methods and materials and applying one method or a combination of methods in one situation and something else in another situation (Duffy et al. 1999:12).

Duffy et al. (1999:13), citing MacGinitie (1991) and Sfard (1998), also argue that focusing on a single good idea or method leads to theoretical distortions and undesirable practices. Distortion takes place when educators develop such loyalty to a method that they refuse to switch to other methods even if learners need them to. The notion that any method is 'perfect' inhibits innovation in teaching because it promotes the idea that good educators simply follow directions. Educators have to be exposed to a variety of methods and approaches so that they can thoughtfully orchestrate and adapt these to their learners' needs. Professional development initiatives and/or programmes could assist in this regard,

guiding educators to new ways of thinking about methods they can use for reading literacy development purposes.

According to Du Toit (2011:83) it has been documented (Knowles 1990; Buzan 1991; Jensen 1996; Ornstein 1997) that effective learning takes place if the whole brain is involved in learning. Interpreted in terms of Herrmann's model, effective learning presupposes the utilization of all four brain quadrants in teaching and learning activities. Informed by this notion, Lumsdaine and Lumsdaine (1995) have identified what they regard as four modes of learning compatible with the notion of whole brain learning, namely external, internal, interactive and procedural learning.

- External learning occurs when learning content is presented by an authoritative source. This could be in the form of teaching, lectures and/or text books and is predominantly an A-quadrant learning process or activity.

- Internal learning can be described as an insight, a visualisation, a synthesis of data or the holistic or intuitive understanding of concepts. This is a predominantly D quadrant learning process or activity.

- Interactive learning occurs through discussion, hands-on activities and sensory based experiments where learners can try, fail, and retry with an opportunity for verbal feedback and encouragement being available. Interactive learning is a predominantly C-quadrant learning activity or process.

- Procedural learning is characterised by a methodical step-by-step testing of what is being taught, as well as by constant practice and repetition as a way of improving improve skills and competence. It is a predominantly B-quadrant learning activity or process (Du Toit 2011:83).

Although learners may have a preference for a particular learning style, educators should expose learners to different styles as well. This is important because the successful achievement of learning outcomes depends on learners being able to see, feel, think and do

(Grosser & De Waal 2006:20). Educators should be flexible enough to accommodate all the different learning styles when teaching reading. Numerous methods that can be used to do so and the educator who implements a variety of materials, programmes and methods targets the individual leaner's needs, thus allowing development to be most beneficial (Duffy & Hoffman 1999:29).

According to Du Toit (2007:41), educational activities that are structured to incorporate the expectations of learners in all four quadrants facilitate the development of the full potential of a learner. Not only does it accommodate learners' thinking preferences but it also gives them practice in the use of learning styles typically avoided. For example, if the learning content contains fact-based data and research results in a logical order, a learner with a thinking preference for the A-quadrant will feel comfortable reading the content presented in text books. A learner with a C-quadrant thinking preference would, however, need to learn the same content in a way that also involves him/her at an emotional level. Both these types of learners need to practise the uses of their less preferred learning styles, strengthening the learning skills in which they are weak and enabling them to flexibly adjust their learning style to the task on hand.

Rose (2006:8), citing Feez (1988), points out that, in general terms, reading and writing should be an integral part of all classroom teaching at all levels of schooling, in all curriculum areas. Teaching reading literacy should not cease after junior primary, should not be separate from the curriculum content that is being studied, and should be aimed at engaging all learners equally. This means that educators at all levels of schooling must be developed to teach reading and writing as part of their normal classroom practice and to teach slow learners to read the full range of class texts.

Rose (2006:8) supports the notion that all curriculum activities need to be planned around texts that learners need to read and write for homework and assessment. According to Rose (2006), at least 25% of class time should be devoted to the development of reading skills, including the intensive reading of key texts, note taking and writing. These activities must involve all learners equally and must be led by the educators, not left to individual learners or groups to struggle or succeed on their own. The practice of 'peer teaching' in groups

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should be limited to activities that educators have already shown all learners how to do. Learners could then support one another to practise reading and writing tasks in groups.

Educator thinking profiles, learning and teaching styles are not the same either. As is evident from Figure 2.3, some educators may be fact-oriented, with little or no emotional inclinations while another may be creative and holistic. Each person has a unique profile and automatically teaches in accordance with that profile, without considering the fact that learners may have a different profile. Professional development should, therefore enable educators to adjust their own style to accommodate the styles of the learners in their care. They should also challenge one another in order to expand their teaching repertoires in such a way that they utilize and stimulate the utilization of all four the brain quadrants in themselves and their learners. I would argue that knowledge and understanding of Herrmann's model will enable them to do so.

Figure 2.3: Thinking Preferences and Brain Profiles

Educational activities that implement all the modes of Herrmann's model will ensure that learners' preferred thinking styles are accommodated and that less preferred thinking modes are utilised. Herrmann's model for teaching necessitates that educators become aware of their own thinking preferences and the implications thereof for their teaching/training practices (Du Toit et al. 2007:41).

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2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the theoretical frameworks which served as parameters for my study. More specifically I presented and discussed the factors that inhibit or promote reading literacy, indicating that the latter requires the combined support of all stakeholders. I pointed out that, in order to achieve the aims and objectives of professional development it was necessary to design proper development programmes and strategies that would enable educators to improve learners' reading proficiency.

Having provided an overview of literature on these topics, I used the insights I gained as basis for my argument. I claimed that, on the one hand there is a correlation between learners' reading proficiency and their academic performance while, on the other hand, there might be a correlation between educators' ability to facilitate the development of learners' reading proficiency and learners' reading performance. Based on these claims I argued that educator professional development activities should include development in the area of reading development facilitation.

Having presented my argument, I presented a holistic model for that could equally well be applied to the development of learners' reading proficiency and the professional development of educators. This model also served as basis for the analysis and interpretation of my data on the reading facilitation competence of educators in the three schools that served as my research sites. The research findings emerging from this analysis are presented and discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Educators are the backbone of their profession. It is their duty and responsibility to teach others, using their unique individual traits and teaching styles, skills, ideologies, perspectives and experiences to do so. My study presents a real-life example of people involved in the practice under investigation, namely educators facilitating reading literacy development. As indicated in Chapter 1, my study has a dual focus: in the first instance it focuses on the manner in which South African educators in sampled schools develop and assess the reading literacy of learners in their care; in the second instance it focuses on the kind of professional development that would equip them to facilitate reading development effectively.

My research purpose was to collect data from participants that could be used to improve the skills of all educators in reading literacy. More specifically, my aim was to use this data to promote a school-based professional development programme. I assumed that, in describing selected educators' individual and collective professional actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions I would gain a better understanding of educator professional development in the area of reading literacy from research participants' perspectives. More specifically, I wanted to explore how school managers – principals, deputy principals, and heads of departments - use mentoring for professional development purposes in their particular school contexts.

Informed by my research purpose, I decided to frame my investigation in a qualitative research paradigm. A qualitative approach would allow me to collect data on the phenomenon in question by interacting with selected participants in their natural settings. In addition, it would give me the opportunity of also analyzing relevant documents provided to me by the educators whose reading literacy practices I would be studying.

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In order to answer the research questions I posed in Chapter 1, I not only had to observe educators in action in their classrooms but I also had to collect data on their materials development, facilitation and assessment methods and the reasons for the choices they made in this regard. The data I needed had to lend itself to an analysis of individual and collective professional actions, views, assessments, reflection, observations and feedback, all of which would, so I assumed, enhance the manner in which educators develop their own and their learners' reading proficiency. To do this properly I had to move beyond mere consultation into authentic interaction with research participants. In other words, I had to adopt an action research approach to the collection and analysis of data.

I decided to conduct my study in three schools in the Ilembe District in the KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa. Since the schools I identified as research sites would serve as 'cases' to be investigated (Mouton 2001:149), the use of a case study design seemed particularly appropriate. According to Magano (2009:35), case study designs create opportunities for researchers to obtain additional data on a situation from written records and/or documents, thereby gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Moreover, case study designs lend themselves to the detailed study of professional development interventions at schools, over time, employing multiple sources of data found in the setting. In my case a case study design would give me the opportunity of observing and analysing classroom practice and mentoring as professional development activities first-hand.

Case studies are typically used in research studies which have the analysis and interpretation of participants' actions or behaviour as purpose. They also lend themselves to the use of questions and answers concerning human experiences. I asked questions about the manner in which educators facilitated the development of reading literacy in their classrooms. The answers I received gave me an indication of the kind of knowledge and support educators need to improve the facilitation of reading literacy in their respective classrooms.

I am of the view that the most reliable data on educator competence is obtained by observing educators in action in their classrooms. The action research approach I adopted allowed me not

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only to observe how educators facilitated and assessed learners' reading proficiency but also to determine why they do what they do in the way they do it. In making them reflect and, by implication, evaluate their own practice, I hoped to contribute to their self-development and to encourage them to embark on a journey of lifelong learning.

In this chapter I clarify key concepts, justify my research approach and design, describe in some detail the methods and instruments I used to collect and analyse data, and explain the steps I took to ensure the trustworthiness of my research findings.

3.2   Action research

Action research is implemented with the participation of the target group, usually with their help. It refers to ways in which professional experiences could be investigated, thereby merging practice and its analysis into a single, productive, and continuously developing sequence that results in new thinking about familiar experiences (Smith 2006:21). In my study action research is used as a professional development tool. It can be used in almost any setting, such as mentoring, where a problem involving people, tasks and/or procedures cries out for solutions, or where some change or feature could result in a more desirable outcome (Cohen et al. 2007).

Action researchers gain understanding of a phenomenon or situation by analysing the context within which the participants operate, and by narrating the meanings that participants attach to specific situations or events. In addition, action research makes one face situations head on in order to understand or improve them. In the context of this study the situation that has to be faced is the inadequate facilitation of reading literacy at schools. Since action research has self-improvement as purpose all those affected by the situation must be actively involved in addressing it. If not, the chances that either their understanding of their own practice will improve are slight (Smith 2006:8). According to Smith (2006:22), the development of understanding and the process of transforming practice are two important results of action research.

According to Hord (1997:53), action research stimulates educators to reflect on what is happening in their schools in order to determine whether they could make it a better place - by changing the curriculum, instruction and the relationships of the educators with learners; by assessing the results, and, in terms of the focus of this study, by continuing the cycles of peer mentoring to improve reading literacy. This might require a rearrangement of the ways in which school educators relate to one another because their newly-acquired skills should change them into effective problem-solvers and facilitators who are committed and able to support learner achievement within the school.

3.2.1 Action research cycles

Action research is a cyclical process. Since it is "research in action while the practitioner is in action", the process of reflecting on what one does could start at any time. One could for example start by experimenting with a new idea. Should one encounter a problem during the course of such an 'experiment' one would be forced to give it immediate attention. This might require a continuation of the initial spiral of action research, namely experimentation, while another spiral has already started, in the middle of the initial spiral, taking the action researcher concerned in an entirely different direction" (Du Toit 2011:15).
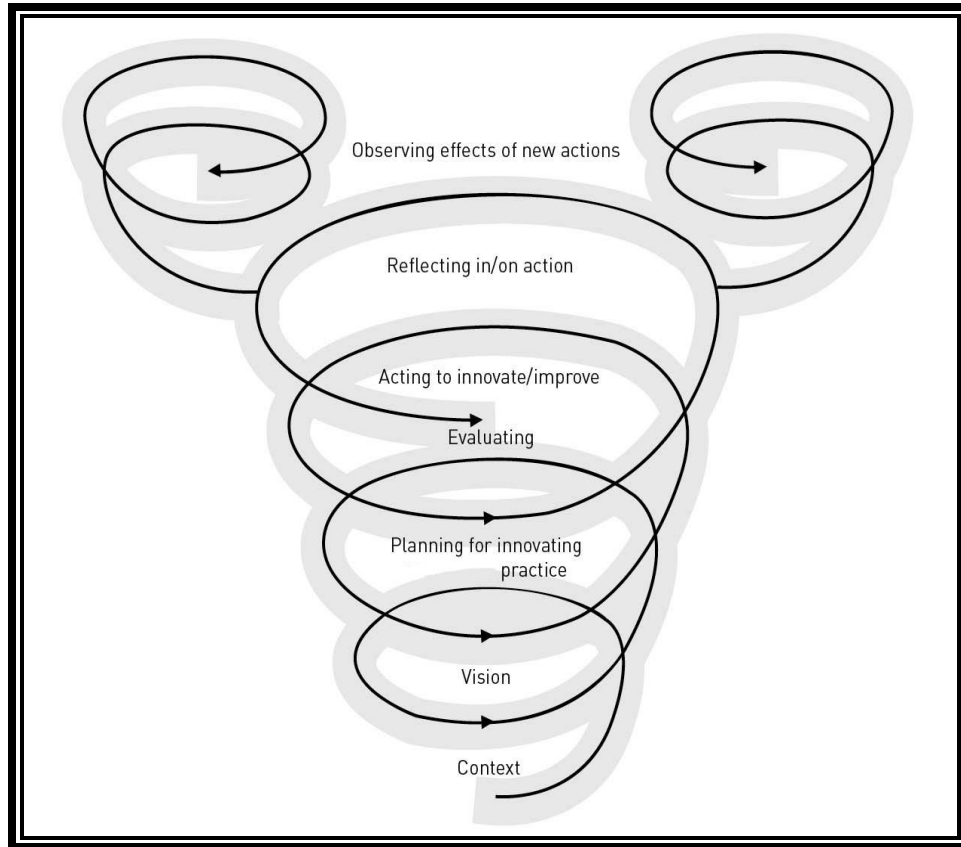
Figure 3.1: A visionary action research model for transforming

Reading Literacy Practice (adapted from Du Toit 2011:16)

The multiple cycles typical of most action research projects are graphically represented in Figure 3.1. This model, based on the work of Hodgkinson and Maree (cited in Du Toit 2007:7), clearly indicates that action research is not the clear and neat, one-way cyclical process usually depicted in the work of action research scholars. Rather, it is more often than not a complex and quite messy process (Du Toit 2011:16). An in-depth study of relevant literature should therefore form the basis for any responsible action research undertaking (Du Toit 2007: 7).

The model illustrated in Figure 3.1 is particularly useful for education practitioners since it can be easily adapted to a specific education practice and/or to the actions of a typical education practitioner. What makes it so useful is the self-explanatory nature of the steps to be followed in this sequential, cyclic model *(depicted by the thick line of the process in the middle).*

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The first step of a full action research cycle *(see Figure 3.1),* is planning for innovation/transformation. Subsequent steps, in the prescribed, would be 'acting to innovate / transform', 'observing the effects of new actions', 'reflecting in/on action', and 'evaluating the outcome / results / impact'.
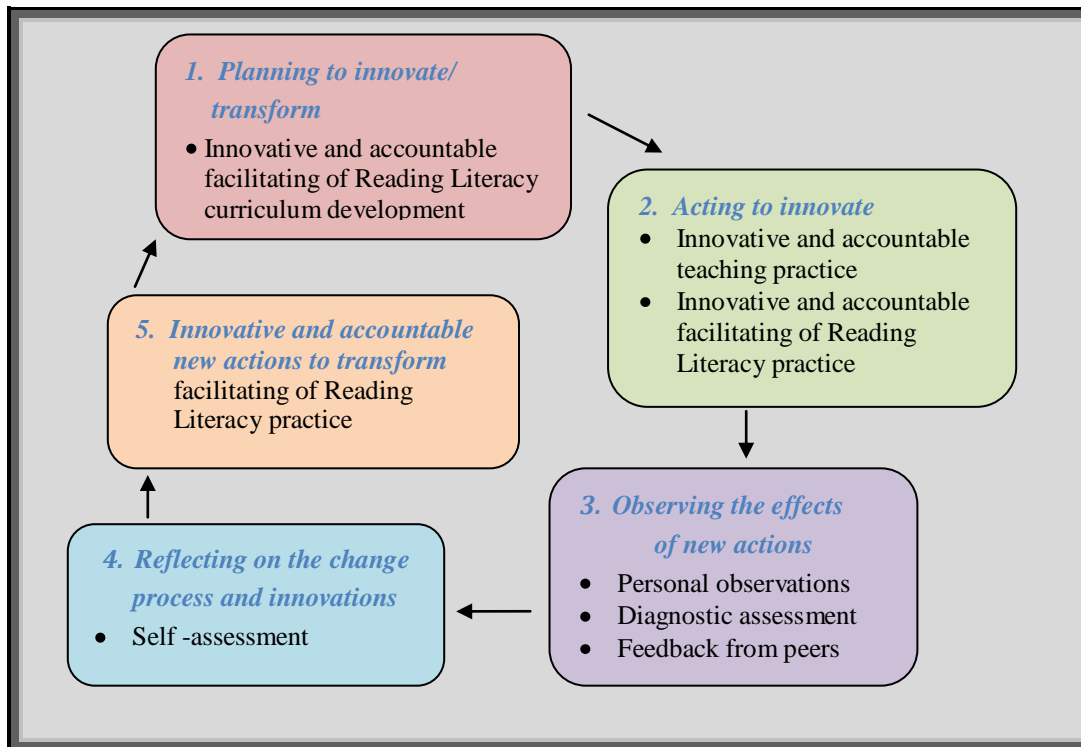
Figure 3.2: Action research model for investigating reading literacy

Cycles need not be discussed or explained either since their application is outlined as contextual exemplars. De-routing spirals, each with its own cycles, are included to indicate the complexity of the action research process. An educator involved in the development of reading literacy, for example, might have started his/her action research process with a focus on a single aspect while, in a de-routing spiral, consisting of different cycles, the need might be to focus on the formulation of a more desirable outcome.

Although this model has assessment as focus, it is an adequate representation of action research in general. I have therefore used it as basis for my own action research study on reading literacy facilitation *(see Figure 3.2).*

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As indicated earlier, one of the foci of my study is the role of mentors in the professional development of reading literacy facilitators. A mentor would usually be part of the school management team whose responsibility it is to guide and implement correctives procedures in the development of the educator in their own school. A mentor's job is to help educators overcome problems by guiding them in the construction of new knowledge related to their teaching style so that they, in turn, can help learners achieve the relevant learning outcomes. This process is graphically represented in Figure 3.3.
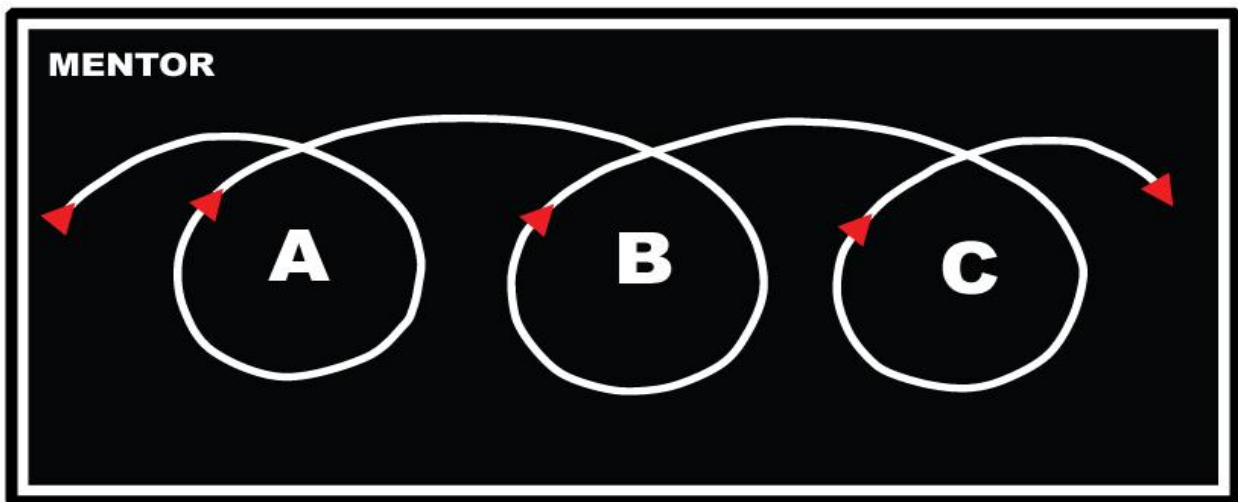
Figure 3.3: Action Research Model for Professional Development

In this figure *(Figure 3.3)* a single mentor is responsible for the development of three educator participants, each with its own action research spiral. Each mentee plans, acts, observes, reflects on and adjusts his/her approach to reading literacy facilitation, with a view to transforming the way s/he has always gone about it. The mentor guides and supports the educator throughout, encouraging him/her to implement his/her plan and to determine what does or does not work. The mentoring process provides guidance and support structures - planned meetings or workshops on reading literacy, for example – that have educator development and experimentation as purpose. Workshops are structured to develop educators' work-based competencies and/or to provide feedback on the mentor's observation of their classroom practice.

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3.2.2 Effective development and learning opportunities

A mentor must have a well designed plan if s/he wants to effectively motivate participating educators to learn and develop the professional knowledge and skills required to facilitate reading literacy. In terms of the focus of my study I identified a number of factors that I consider crucial to the effective development of reading literacy facilitators. These factors are discussed below.

3.2.2.1 Planning

If mentoring is to be of a high quality, planning and innovative thinking are imperative. Without a well designed plan that takes cognizance of participating educators' background and teaching-learning contexts and accommodates their different learning styles and 'assets', the chances of transformation taking place are slim.

The planning of learning opportunities traditionally involved the design of one or more structured lessons. In the new paradigm the tendency is to rather design a broad framework, with learners making inputs regarding the way a learning opportunity could be structured to ensure effective learning. This, more open, type of situation creates an environment conducive to flexible learning and creative thinking. Planning and/or preparing for the learning opportunity must therefore be thorough in terms of what participants should do *(the learning process)* and should demonstrate *(learning outcomes or competencies).* Creating new learning opportunities and a willingness to improve the techniques for learning facilitation will interest and motivate participants to master new methods and/or acquire new competencies (Cohen et al. 2008:287; Maphutha 2006:66).

What is important to remember is that all teaching and learning activities should be aimed at the achievement of curriculum outcomes. With regard to my study, the curriculum stipulates which reading outcomes have to be achieved and assessed at each level of the schooling system. The outcomes to be achieved and assessed determine the form of reading, be it formative or summative, and the types of reading that have to be covered. Reading literacy development, for example, if based on the principles of action learning, is reflective and very personal (Du Toit

2011:17). These characteristics should therefore be reflected in the activities, materials used, and methods used to facilitate and assess learning.

Reading is a sequential, developmental, process which needs thorough planning (Du Toit 2011:17). If an educator decides to effect changes to reading practice, s/he should therefore ensure that the changes are in line with the philosophy underpinning the new practice, the way in which the curriculum was developed, and the manner in which learning should be facilitated. None of these three areas can be transformed in isolation. Also, the processes by means of which new reading instruments are introduced, whatever they may be, must always be appropriate to the development of literacy, and the focus should always be on the end product.

This being the context, educators are obliged to make changes to their practice as a whole. An educator who accepts responsibility for the quality of his/her classroom practice could decide to improve, innovate or transform a current practice that is not conducive to learning. It might, for example, be that a written examination paper (comprehension) should be changed from being content-based to being outcomes-based or from being too focused on assessing lower level thinking (*knowledge and comprehension*) instead of higher level thinking (*synthesising and evaluating*). It might also be that the questions being asked are not appropriate to the assessment purpose.

Reading assessment is particularly appropriate to the development of higher order thinking skills hence readers should, inter alia, give proof of their ability to think visually and holistically (Du Toit 2011:17). Instead of their reading proficiency being assessed by means of written examinations, learners could sometimes be required to compile a literacy learning portfolio which includes reflection reports, or even evidence of action research. In such an instance assessment would serve as a tool for critical reflection and deep learning (Du Toit 2011:17). This is a radical change to the way reading used to be assessed and educators who want to use it for assessment purposes need to have a thorough knowledge of the philosophy by which this approach is underpinned before they try to introduce it.

Another innovation in the area of reading assessment, which might or might not be more effective than current practice, is the use of peer and group reading activities for assessment

purposes. This innovation would be in line with action learning, which advocates the use of learners to monitor the learning process. Similar to action research in the sense that the same steps are followed, action learning differs from action research in that it does not use the same rigorous research methods. Instead, it uses critical reflection on learning to transform practice (Du Toit 2011:17).

3.2.2.2 Transformation

Formative assessment opportunities should take place simultaneously with the continuous development of learners' reading proficiency, as well as with other learning opportunities complementing the learning process. This includes the assessment of group work. Proof of peer assessment could be included, as well as evidence of improvement/innovation/transformation, based on peer feedback. In all these cases rubrics should be used as a means of standardizing assessment. The use of rubrics would also eliminate subjectivity, thereby ensuring that assessment results are valid and reliable. It is up to the educator to monitor the implementation of all these new ideas (Du Toit 2011:18).

3.2.2.3 Observation

The primary focus of observation is on teaching practice. The educator who is being observed should get as much feedback from as many stakeholder observers as possible. Specialist observers could include an external examiner/moderator as well as colleagues at cluster and/or regional levels. It is other educators' observations, however, that are most useful and easiest to arrange because the educators are on site and are familiar with the teaching-learning context and challenges (Du Toit 2011:17) of the person being observed.

In the case of reading development practice educators could, for example, obtain feedback from learners by asking them to complete different types of questionnaires. One such questionnaire, relevant to action learning, asks learners to give feedback on their experience of reading development activities and processes. A different questionnaire could be used for general feedback on a course/programme/module as a whole.

My own observation of educators' literacy lessons was multifaceted. In my capacity as researcher I monitored curriculum delivery during lessons that focused on reading literacy. I used various purpose-focused observation sheets and check lists (*frequency and nature of questions in relation to Bloom's Taxonomy)* to observe educator and learner activities *(Appendices 4, 5 & 6).* The voice recorder I used during my interviews with participants assisted me greatly later on when I had to review and transcribe the interviews for purposes of narrative analysis.

I also used the visual material *(texts used for reading comprehension)* offered to learners during the course of the lessons in my qualitative analysis of learning opportunities. My focus during observations was to determine how the educator concerned used the formative assessment process and how the manner in which s/he integrated the different learning opportunities affected learners' reading proficiency development.

The instruments I used provided me with different kinds of data. Being in a prime position to observe and monitor research participants' growth first hand, I rigorously recorded the questions that educators asked learners, the answers learners gave to these questions, and the extent and manner of their participation in the lesson. The kind of questions that educators asked, and the way in which they framed these, reflected their knowledge of, as well as their skills and experience in, teaching. The observation sheets and checklists I used for this purpose served as written records of my observation. In conjunction with the data collected during educator interviews, they served as basis for any deductions on educator competence and effectiveness in the area of reading literacy facilitation.

I used a checklist to tabulate aspects that could facilitate an analysis of the pattern/s and enactment of the teaching and learning process. The checklist comprised three categories; namely, *The Facilitative Nature of Questioning*, *Bloom's Taxonomy* and *Whole Brain Thinking* (*see Appendices 4, 5 & 6*). My analysis of learner responses during the reading literacy lessons I observed was informed by the assumption that questions which focus learner attention on important elements of a lesson result in better comprehension. My analysis of data in this regard therefore focused on the manner in which learners applied specific principles of higher order

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thinking *(such as open-ended, interpretive, evaluative, inquiry, inferential and synthesis questions)* in the questioning process, and the extent to which educators participated actively in the monitoring of learners' engagement with the learning content (Cohen et al. 2008:287; Maphutha 2006:66; Du Toit 2011:20).

3.2.2.4   Critical reflection

Critical reflection implies/assumes scholarly thinking, that is, thinking which slows down while the person observes and reflects on some or other action or series of actions. Consequently s/he becomes more aware of the corrective actions that could be used in monitoring and development. Critical reflection, also in the context of reading literacy and/or the monitoring of implementation, could therefore occur *in* action and/or *after* action.

Reflection in action forms part of the reading literacy facilitation and assessment processes since it occurs while facilitation and/or assessment are in progress. Its value lies in the opportunities it creates for the reflective educator or learner to change what and how s/he is doing things the moment s/he realizes that these 'things' are not working.

Reflection after action is a dualistic process, focusing as it does on the process as well as on the end product. Intentional in nature, reflection after action should focus on the interpretation of process outcomes, rather than on the process itself. Taking a retrospective view of the attitude/s and experience/s of other groups – after the fact - with a view to comparing them with the attitudes and experiences of their own groups could, however, also be regarded as reflection after action (Cohen et al. 2008:287; Maphutha 2006:66; Du Toit 2011:20).

3.2.2.5   Evaluation

Evaluation of the reading literacy process is imperative to ensure that the necessary changes have occurred. It – i.e. evaluation - must, however, be two-dimensional, in other words, both the structural and the affective elements should be evaluated. The structural dimension includes aspects like scientific accountability, administrative and organizational ability while the affective dimension is concerned with psychological and emotional elements/aspects.

With regard to reading literacy, the way classrooms are organized and managed to facilitate reading literacy would be regarded as structural while educator and learner attitudes towards and/or experiences of the reading literacy process and outcomes would constitute the affective aspect. The educator might be satisfied, dissatisfied or partially satisfied with his/her implementation of a reading innovation or idea *(affective dimension)* and, if not satisfied, might decide to draw up a new implementation plan *(structural dimension)* for each subsequent innovation until s/he is convinced that the specific use of reading assessment is accountable and of a sufficiently high quality (Du Toit 2011:21).
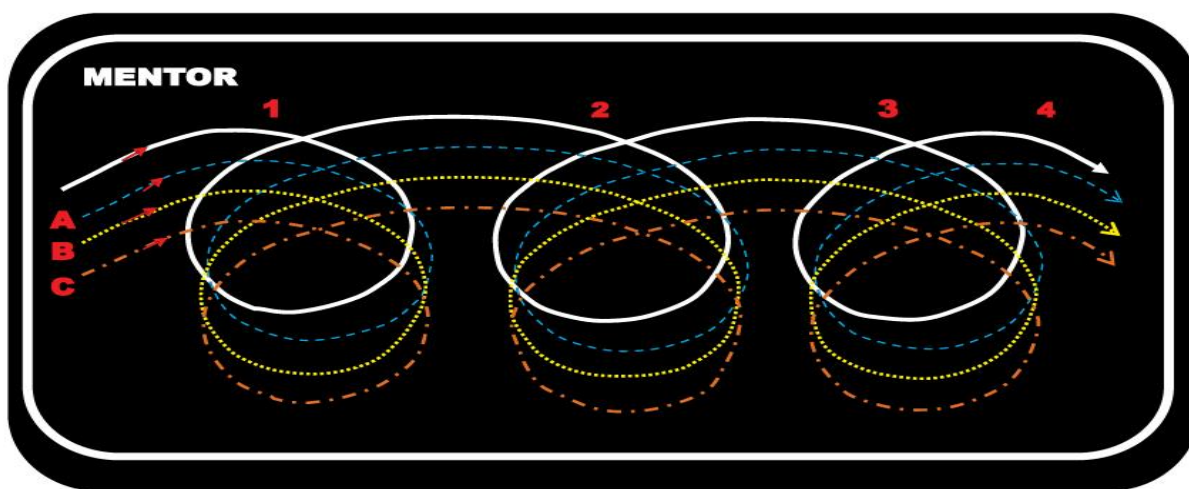
Figure 3.4: Participants' Cyclic Professional Development Spirals

A study of Figure 3.4 indicates that there is one spiral, with different cycles, for each participant. The first spiral is the mentor, an appointed member of the school management team. The other spirals - A, B, and C represent an educator each, each educator having his/her own action research cycle. Each participant develops professionally by planning and catering for innovation in his/her practice, using acquired knowledge and a growing understanding of reading literacy and its development to do so. Each educator also has to implement his/her lesson plan, reflecting on his/her own classroom practice in terms of what does or does not work. This should happen while the process of facilitating reading literacy development is in progress. Prepared lessons must be documented and kept on file to be checked by management or, as represented in the graphic illustration, by the management team member acting as mentor to these three educators.

As this description indicates, action research happens in cycles, or spirals, alternating action with critical reflection as the process unfolds. Reflection typically commences with a critical review of the situation and/or of past actions. It is followed by informed planning of the next action. In order for this process to effect the required transformation, the mentor-mentee relationship should resemble an active and interactive partnership. The 'partnership' should be characterised by open communication between the mentor and the mentee (educator) (Du Toit 2008:7), with both of them contributing fully the achievement of the desired learning outcomes for reading literacy.

The collaborating rapport between the mentor and mentee serves as foundation for the effective facilitation of learning and the transformation of learning opportunities. It is the cycles within spirals, and the sub-spirals emerging from spirals during the course of the facilitation/transformation process, that make this such a flexible and responsive process. When each cycle within a spiral includes a vigorous seeking out of disconfirming evidence, flexibility is also accompanied by research rigor. Both the mentor, or school management representative acting as mentor, and the educator/s being mentored are affected by the changes in learning opportunities and are involved in the action and critical reflection. Educators share their understanding of the outcomes as well as the ways in which they facilitate the development of reading literacy with one another. Consequently, educator motivation and commitment are high and everybody benefits from the innovations or adjustments made.

Using the above explanation as the basis for effective learning facilitation I, in my capacity as researcher, used the first cycle for interviewing and the second for lesson observation. In the 1st cycle the base line for my action research was established; in the 2nd cycle I started doing the actual research by observing lessons in order to monitor and record how educators' used their knowledge, skills and experience in teaching reading literacy. Feedback was derived through the educators' questioning of and contact with the learners as well as by learners' participation and answers to questions on the literacy content. The 3rd cycle was all about feedback. Educator participant information was obtained by means of a questionnaire while feedback from me, the researcher, consisted of information on the impact that proper, continuously monitored procedures could have on the teaching and learning of reading literacy. The 4th cycle involved

critical reflection, which resulted in progress towards the required transformation. In a subsequent professional learning opportunity, the focus might be on an explanation of other aspects of interest required for development.

3.3   Research design and methods

The significance of my study is that it presents a holistic interpretation of school-based professional development within the context of reading development. More specifically, it identifies the knowledge, skills and strategies required by educators to effectively facilitate the development of reading literacy.

In choosing a qualitative research paradigm I followed Swart and Oswald (2008:94), conceptualizing my investigation as an interpretive, qualitative action, the primary purpose of which was to get a better understanding of the meaning that people attribute to professional learning experiences and their experience of learning communities.

3.3.1 Sampling

My investigation was carried out in the intermediate phase classrooms of three primary schools in the Umhlali Cluster, Lower Tugela Circuit, Ilembe District, Ethekwini, KwaZulu-Natal. I specifically chose three schools with varied backgrounds, demographics and availability of resources so as to enrich my data. The knowledge and experience of principals were, however, the determining factors in the selection of these schools. The educators who would become research participants either volunteered or were persuaded by their principals to participate. One educator at each of these three schools participated in my research.

3.3.2 Data collection and analysis

I wanted to determine whether or not educators applied the knowledge and skills gained from departmental workshops and other professional development interventions focusing on reading literacy. To this purpose I decided to use multiple data collection methods. The instruments I used to collect data were carefully chosen to ensure that I would be able to answer my original research questions (see Table 3.1).

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First, I did a thorough review of relevant literature to determine how other researchers have gone about their investigations and what they discovered about reading literacy development and facilitation.

I then conducted semi-structured interviews with principals and educators respectively. The interviews had as purpose the uncovering of participants' awareness of reading literacy, facilitation methods, support programmes, learner behaviour, skills development, environment and assessment strategies. As professional development should be aligned to the school vision and objectives, language teachers and school principals were asked to respond to questions about reading and literacy activities in the school as well as to questions about the opportunities created for the professional development of staff members involved in reading literacy. General questions were also asked about participating schools' demography, characteristics, resources, and environment.

Table 3.1: Research questions and applicable methods

NO	QUESTION	METHOD	APPENDIX
1.	How can school-based professional development of educators teaching Grade 5 intermediate school learners be used to promote the improvement of reading literacy?	Qualitative approach, Literature study, case study.	
2.	What is the current status of school-based professional development in the area of reading literacy at three primary schools in the Umhlali Ward of the Lower Tugela Circuit in the Ilembe District of KwaZulu-Natal?	Semi-structured interviews, literature review, case study, questionnaire, Bloom's Taxonomy.	1 4,3
3.	What is the current knowledge base of intermediate phase educators as regards the development of learners' reading literacy?	Semi-structured interviews, literature review, case study, questionnaire.	1 4,3
4.	What role can action research play in the school-based professional development of intermediate phase educators involved in reading literacy?	Observation, literature study, case study.	3 4
5.	How can school-based continuous professional development bring about changes in the current intermediate educator practice of reading literacy development?	Semi-structured interviews, literature review, case study, questionnaire.	1 4

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Semi-structured interviews were conducted with one educator from each of the three schools with a view to obtaining data on the factors that influence their planning for, and experiences, perceptions and implementation of reading literacy development. The questions asked during interviews were meant to establish whether or not educators have a shared vision based on common beliefs and values. It was also aimed at determining to what extent the roles educators performed were in accordance with school and departmental policy.

More specific questions probed the extent to which educators adhered to the requirements of the curriculum, thus providing evidence of intention. In particular, these questions were aimed at determining to what extent the reading curriculum was emphasized in schools, what the situation was regarding the availability and use of materials to facilitate reading literacy, and whether or not the school offered programmes and services that involved the learners and their families. Informing these questions was the notion that educator leadership is required to implement the kind of instructional change that would result in positive achievement outcomes.

As the interviews were not formally structured, there were no predetermined questions. Rather, questions followed any direction of interest, permitting flexibility and allowing respondents to clarify and comment on their understanding of educators' perceptions of professional development and their attitudes regarding the improvement and capacity-enhancement of educators. The intention with this interview format was to gather opinions and information that could be used to improve the quality of learning activities and materials and to develop school-based professional learning initiatives.

In collecting data on these cases I focused primarily on the reading facilitation methods used by the educators I observed in action, trying to determine whether or not their sequencing of literacy development activities reflected the spiral model discussed earlier. More importantly, I wanted to determine whether or not they monitored their own professional development by means of action research. I also studied documentation provided by participating educators to determine how they planned their lessons and to what extent lesson preparations promoted the achievement of curriculum outcomes. Educators' decision-making processes - during lesson planning, lesson presentation and the propagation of reading literacy – were also analyzed.

The primary purpose of my observations was to verify whether or not educators enacted their lesson plans, that is, whether or not they presented the specified content, facilitated the specified activities and ensured that specified learning outcomes were achieved. Informing these foci was the intention to ascertain how reading instruction contributed to the achievement of the desired learning outcomes.

As indicated earlier, observation checklists enabled me to keep records of the manner in which educators engaged and interacted with learners in their efforts to improve reading literacy. The observation checklists comprised three categories - the facilitative nature of questioning, Bloom's taxonomy and whole brain thinking. The data captured on these lists provided me with information on changes in educators' reading literacy practice as well as on learner participation and progress in this regard. Field notes, which were written when a matter needed to be looked at later, enabled me to verify the accuracy of what I observed or heard, thereby decreasing the effect of possible bias on my side.

Audio-taped interviews, observation checklists and field notes were analyzed afterwards, with a view to identifying common or recurring themes. I used a narrative analysis approach for this because it allowed me to present my results in a storied form. I regarded the feedback on events and experiences collected by means of interviews as narratives of educators' experience. According to Riessman (2005), it is in the analysis of narratives like these that researchers uncover meanings hidden in individuals' factual accounts of events and experiences. He claims, moreover, that what typifies texts as diverse as the ones I collected in my research texts as "narrative" are the sequence and consequences that are valued by a specific readership.

Texts and documents used during reading literacy lessons were analysed to establish the feasibility of decisions taken during the planning process. Thereafter, using and applying the properties of Bloom's Taxonomy to the lesson output, I identified the ways in which questioning uncovered various knowledge aspects, comprehension abilities, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Finally, after a consolidation of the relevant categorical details in Bloom's Taxonomy, I constructed and compartmentalised educators' questioning preferences into the four quadrants of whole brain thinking (Herrmann1995:155; Du Toit 2011:84).

My study provides data on all these aspects (see Chapter 4), with educators indicating which programmes and strategies are in place to give learners the opportunity to become good readers. Educator responses also reflected their understandings of what it meant to develop evaluate the level of learners' reading literacy and why this was important.

3.3.3 Trustworthiness

For this study to be trustworthy, I had to ensure that my data collection and analysis procedures were rigorous and objective. To this purpose I arranged all my records in a manner appropriate to the ultimate goal, which was to determine how reading literacy was managed to proactively initiate research in schools where programme implementation fell short of expectations.

To ensure that my research results were valid and reliable, I transcribed, coded, categorised, analysed and compared the data collected at the three schools. I also transcribed and categorised the recorded interviews, using a narrative analysis approach. The results of this analysis served as basis for the formulation of answers to the research questions posed at the beginning of this report.

3.3.4 Ethical procedures

Prior to commencing my research, an application for ethics approval of confidential research involving human respondents was made to the university research ethics committee. This application gave details of the research in terms of data collection, sensitivity, vulnerability of participants' context and primary research settings. I had to declare that, as a researcher, I was cognisant of the goals of the research ethics committee. I further had to subscribe to the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, safety of human respondents, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:52) the principle of informed consent arises from the participant's right to freedom and self-determination. The subject has the right to refuse to participate, or to even withdraw during the research. When restrictions and limitations

are placed on that freedom they must be justified and consented to, in order to protect and respect the right of self-determination. This places some of the responsibility on the participant should anything go wrong.

I also had to declare that there would be no deception or betrayal of anyone involved in the research process. Finally, I had to indicate that I understood what plagiarism is and that the data collected in my studies would become the property of the university. Once I had made the necessary declarations and commitments, the application was signed by the researcher (being myself) and my supervisor, and submitted for approval.

The application was subsequently considered and approved by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee. The notification stated that I was allowed to continue with my fieldwork. Upon completion of my research I had to submit documentation to the Ethics Committee declaring that I adhered to conditions stipulated in the letter received and a clearance certificate would be issued.

Having been given ethical clearance I had to apply for permission from the Department of Education to undertake my research in the Ilembe district. Thereafter I had to obtain official permission from the school authorities to undertake research at the three primary schools. I corresponded with the principal and/or the chairperson of the school governing body, giving details of my research. Once I had permission to commence with the research, I contacted the responsible senior educator and/or class educator and requested him/her to ask teachers to volunteer as participants in my research and to obtain the necessary informed consent.

All participants were informed about the nature, aim, scope and practical applications of the research. It was my duty to treat them with respect and to see to it that information on their lesson was examined, that activities prepared by educator were observed during lessons, that interviews were completed on schedule and that there was no deviation from my appointment schedule and/or times. The confidentiality of data was protected, feedback was given to participants, and findings were disseminated respectfully and, where necessary, negotiated with stakeholders and participants.

In Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:52) informed consent is defined by Diener and Crandall (1978) as "the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions". This definition involves four elements: competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension. I was particularly careful to provide credible and meaningful explanations of how data would be collected and used so that each participant would have the competence to make correct decisions. Even though I, as the researcher, did everything I could to fully inform participants about all aspects of the study, it sometimes becomes impossible in practice, owing to circumstances, so the strategy of reasonably informed consent was applied. All participants were therefore free to voluntarily accept or reject my invitation to participate in my research and were assured that, in the event of an unfortunate occurrence, participation could be terminated.

I ensured that the participants fully comprehended and understood the nature of the research project they were committed to, even if procedures were complicated and entailed risks. I built into the research scheme a time lag between the request for participation and the time for participants to comprehend a decision. The presence of these four elements convinces me that I have conducted my research ethically and democratically.

3.4   Conclusion

In this chapter I indicated how I planned to collect and analyze data on educators' facilitation of reading literacy development and school managers' roles in guiding and supporting them in this endeavour. More specifically, I clarified concepts critical to an understanding of my research process and argument. I then provided arguments for my choices regarding the cases I chose to investigate, my research approach and design, and the manner in which I collected and analyzed data. I also indicated

The research findings emerging from an analysis of my data are presented in Chapter 4.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter expounds and acknowledges findings that materialised from data collected through interviews, observations and a questionnaire. As indicated in Chapter 3, a narrative analysis was done using the data collected in semi-structured interviews. Data was analysed and themes were extracted. This was followed by data collection through observations, meant to verify the enactment of educators' lessons. A questionnaire was utilised to collect data in the final stage. Data collected during this stage complemented the information required to resolve gaps not covered during preceding data collection stages.

Data emerging from the case studies and the teaching and learning practices in reading literacy at the three participating schools are interpreted in this chapter. Case study data studies provide an account of the school context, a brief history of the educator, development, practices, ways of coping with educational transformation, and knowledge acquired from classroom practices in the context of transformation. These accounts are intended to yield an understanding of how professional development in reading literacy and school development programmes contribute to achieving the learning outcomes and to indicate the role of school leadership in supporting the culture of transformation.

The analysis of data uncovered participants' understanding of professional development, highlighting the expectations they have of planning and decision-making processes in which they engage during the development of frameworks guiding their future actions. Moreover, the findings present a view of the manner in which professional development in reading literacy was undertaken by with three principals and three educators in three schools.

The names of the schools and research participants are presented as codes. The schools are identified as A, B and C. Participants that were interviewed are coded as follows:

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- The code for the principal of a specific school is identified by the code PrS A; PrS B; and PrS C, where the coding 'Pr' refers to Principal and 'S' to School.

- A post level 1 educator of a specific school is identified as EdS A; EdS B and EdS C where the code 'Ed' refers to educator and 'S' to School.

These codes were used to ensure the anonymity of participants but also to assist in the discussion of the research results presented in this chapter.

4.2   Educator history

Data on educator teaching experience and specialization is summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Data of participating educators

Educator	Age level	Teaching experience	Qualification	Years experience in teaching English	Specialisation in other subjects	Class size
EdS A	31-40	☐ 10	B. Ed. (Hons)	< 5	Mathematics, Natural Science Afrikaans, Life Orientation, Arts and Culture	40
EdS B	41-45	21-30	Master's in Education	16 - 20	Maths, Afrikaans, Life Orientation	38
EdS C	41-45	21-30	SPED, FDE	11 - 15	Natural Science, Technology	46

- Educator School A (EdS A) is male in the category 31-40 age level, has been teaching for under ten years with a qualification of B. Ed. (Hons) in Education, and has specialised in the teaching of English for under five years. Other learning areas taught are Mathematics, Natural Science, Afrikaans, Life Orientation, and Arts and Culture. There are approximately 40 learners in his class.

- Educator School B (EdS B) is a female in the 41-50 age level and has been teaching for between 21-30 years with a Master's degree in Education. She has specialised in the

teaching of English for over 15 years. Other learning areas taught are Mathematics, Afrikaans and Life Orientation. There are approximately 38 learners in her class.

- Educator School C (EdS C) is female, in the 41-50 age group, and has been teaching for between 21-30 years with a Senior Primary Education Diploma and a Further Diploma in Education. She has specialised in the teaching of English for over 11 years. Other learning areas taught are Natural Science and Technology. There are approximately 46 learners in her class.

4.3 Narrative of interviews with principals

During a review of the interviews conducted with the principals of three schools in the area a number of themes were extracted in response to the question posed. The tables in the sub-sections that follow present the results of this review. In terms of the response, a single or demarcated theme was extracted. The themes were extracted manually.

4.3.1 Findings of semi-structured interviews

In presenting the themes derived from the responses to each question, I first reiterate the question asked, then present the findings in tabular form and, finally, describe the essence of the emergent themes in narrative form.

Question 1: *In your role as coordinator of the school development plan, what do you find is important for educators to develop and become better educators at school?*

Table 4.2: Important aspects for educator development

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
1	Ethos	Curriculum	Improvement of educators' skills
	Ethics	Co-curriculum	Working towards success of teaching improvement
		Extra-curriculum	Maximum productivity involving stakeholders
		Sports found to be lacking	
		Staff development	
		Induction	

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PrS A remarked that the most important aspect was the ethos of the school, which has an impact on learning. She feels strongly about leadership and the interest and dedication shown by management in the education process, indicating that this attitude has a positive impact on staff development and work ethics, creating the right atmosphere for changes to be made.

PrS B mentioned that two aspects need to be developed, namely the curriculum and the co- or extra-curriculum. In the professional development of student educators at the various teacher education institutions sports were found to be lacking. In the context of reading literacy it would make sense to use the knowledge of body-kinaesthetic movement to promote reading through movement. This would accommodate learners who have a preference for being active.

PrS C felt that the educator is one of the most important resources in education. The improvement of the educator's skill is necessary in order to empower him/her to facilitate learning of the highest quality as prescribed by the curriculum. These skills would assist in managing and monitoring learners' progress. However, the educator needs to focus on other factors as well in order to be skilled and to make teaching a success. Factors that could have an impact are managing discipline and improving human relations by engaging with all relative stakeholders, educators, learners and parents in order to ensure maximum productivity and success.

Question 2*: Do you promote professional development for educators? If not, why not? If you do, what do you include for professional development?*

Table 4.3: Promoting educator professional development

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
2	**PrS A**	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
	Relevance of ELRC document	Workshops on professional development	Focus on qualifications as educator development
	Focus on professional issues for educator development	Involvement of NGOs	Classroom management by educator
	Role models from the community	IQMS	Update information Professional development
		Focus on professional conduct	

PrS A mentioned that the Educator Labour Relations Council (ELRC) document is totally relied upon as it focuses on professional issues that relate to educator professional development. In addition, role models from the community and education department regard educators as inspirational speakers because an educator is not only an intellectual person but an emotional and cultural individual who needs to enhance his/her total development.

PrS B emphasised that professional development is the key aspect at school, where practical workshops are conducted by educators themselves. In a professional workshop, criteria and mostly curriculum-related matters are included from time to time. There are also workshops conducted by outside bodies, which include NGOs. An informal partnership exists between schools and NGOs with the latter conducting reading literacy workshops over weekends and holidays. In promoting professional development PrS B looks at the IQMS very carefully. It becomes a way to identify educators who score 1's and 2's against certain criteria. These educators are identified and the IQMS is implemented for professional development purposes.

The focus for educators, according to PrS C, must be on renewing their qualifications from time to time as part of their ongoing professional development, either through in-service training or by enrolling in an institution. A management plan should be implemented where every educator has the opportunity to obtain new insight and knowledge for cascading to developing staff members. This includes classroom management and the honing of existing curriculum skills to develop themselves professionally. Keeping abreast of new information and developments, networking and workshops are some of the ways to improve quality teaching and encourage professional development.

Question 3: Are educators interested in developing professionally besides obtaining qualifications? Justify your answer.

The response of PrS A is a positive indication of educators' willingness to be a part of workshops, be they school- or department-related. This happens as educators are constantly looking for answers to keep abreast of their subject and to address the confusion caused by systemic changes. In addition there are many problems in terms of language teaching that they would contribute to solving.

Table 4.4: Educators' professional development besides obtaining qualifications

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
3	Willing to attend workshops	Unwillingness to attend holiday workshops	Reluctance; years of experience adequate
	Educators need to keep abreast	Monetary gain	Monetary gain
	Improvement of education system		ABET & ACE programmes Monetary gain

PrS B emphasised that some educators attend workshops to enrich themselves. Unwillingness occurs when workshops are held after hours. These are the better and more meaningful development workshops that take place that some educators do not attend because they need to pay for continuous professional development.

According to PrS C new educators are young and they want to pursue their studies. Those who have been in the profession for some time get into a rut, however, and feel that their years of experience are adequate hence they do not want to enrol at any institution to upgrade professionally. Some educators are actually of the opinion that they are professionally so advanced that they need to do only a basic ABET course, or an ACE programme of little relevance but they do it to get the diploma for monetary gain.

Question 4: *What knowledge do educators have to develop learner reading literacy?*

Table 4.5: Educators' knowledge of developing learner reading literacy

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
4	Review of performance Years of experience	Experience vs. new educator knowledge	Literacy learning area committee
	Find ways to improve Do not change system	Better understanding of teaching methods	Use workshops to disseminate information
	Background of colleges		

Responding to this question Principal A remarked that the knowledge educators have relates mostly to the background of their studies at colleges and universities. Furthermore,

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discussions about problems and the difficulties in class take place during meetings where each educator adds his/her years of experience when advising how best to improve reading literacy. They come up with certain methods that, when used in reading literacy, do not change the reading system.

The stance of Principal B was that experienced educators have a better understanding of reading literacy than the novices that are now being employed. Developing and selecting reading material and developing appropriate programmes for reading literacy present a problem as the bulk of staff are novice educators who do not have the knowledge to promote reading literacy. Newspaper articles, magazines, advertisements and even comics can be adapted as reading material resources. Educators are able to utilise these in a reading literacy or language lessons.

Principal C is of the opinion that every professionally qualified educator that comes out of college or university has to be able to teach English, which includes teaching reading literacy. Reading is the basis of and foundation for improvement in every other learning area. A literacy learning area committee was formed at this school to give educators the opportunity to attend workshops. On returning to school, they disseminated the information to other educators. All educators also attended a workshop on the foundations for learning which had the acceleration of reading speed and the improvement of reading levels as specific purpose although its general aim was to improve the proficiency and competency of learners overall.

Question 5: *Have educators attended any reading literacy programmes to develop learners?*

Table 4.6: Reading literacy programmes to develop learners

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
5	Workshops conducted in-house	Ongoing programmes conducted	Brainstormed foundation of learning programme
	Review strategies for reading	Facilitate development	Additional support
	Networking with Aston College		Enrichment programmes for slow learners

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Principal A indicated that this challenge was only addressed at school level, where workshops are held to develop the educators, using a literacy programme that they find suitable. Educators review different strategies to address reading literacy by focusing on peer and group reading as well as oral communication skills. Parents are urged to read to and with their children. *Networking with Aston College* is also a programme used to motivate learners to participate in peer reading with other learners.

Principal B mentioned that ongoing programmes are conducted by outside bodies. These programmes are run to facilitate developments that are not provided for by the Department of Education.

According to Principal C, the advantage of foundation learning programmes is that they indicate exactly how to engage in improving reading literacy. Educators have brainstormed and implemented these programmes to improve reading literacy in school. Slow learners or learners who needed additional support in reading literacy were identified and more intensive reading enrichment programmes were used to support their development.

Question 6: *What is the current status of professional development of educators to improve reading literacy at your school?*

Table 4.7: Current status of educators in professional development

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
6	Focus on status is work formally done at school	Answer given to question 4 & 5	Proficiency not achieved
	Develop through experience		Lack English proficiency
			Limitations
			Language barrier
			Limited vocabulary

Responding to this question, PrS A mentioned that the stance on the status of professional development was that the work that was formally done at school is where educators experientially developed to improve reading literacy.

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PrS B did not comment as he mentioned that he had given the same answer to previous question 4 and 5.

PrS C said that although educators are skilled, the desired improvement and the desired results in English proficiency or literacy are not attained because of the language barrier in teaching and learning, even though the learners are motivated and introduced to English in Grade 1 already. Educators find that learners speak in isiZulu because they are really comfortable and cannot speak in class or achieve the desired goals and desired results when their English vocabulary is limited.

Question 7: How do you incorporate reading literacy programmes in your curriculum?

Table 4.8: Incorporating reading literacy programmes in curriculum

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
7	Junior primary time allocated	Creation of an additional period	Group reading
	Record keeping of reading programme		Different methods
			Adjusted use of resources
			Newspaper articles Magazines
			Library

PrS A mentioned that in the junior primary phase a period is allocated for learners to engage in reading. A list of readers is provided, and the reading abilities of learners are tabulated on a chart to indicate which ones can read and which ones cannot. This helps to plan the way forward in order to monitor the learners' reading progress.

PrS B was unsure about the directive for creating an additional reading period but he has built reading lessons into the timetable by extending one day in the week where the entire group of learners and educators are engaged in reading.

PrS C stated that they motivate their learners by using different teaching methods in reading literacy and by using resources such as newspaper articles and magazines as reading materials. Reading sessions are followed by comprehension and vocabulary practice to improve literacy. All these activities take place in the English period set aside for reading.

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Educators have a specific period for reading. Cupboards have been installed within classrooms and are used as library where story books and other relevant reading material are stored because the library is being renovated. This classroom intervention gives learners access to at least a 'cupboard library'.

Question 8: *What criteria do you use to monitor, evaluate and review development in reading literacy progress of learners?*

Table 4.9: Criteria used to monitor, evaluate and review development

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
8	Monitoring of classroom visits on record sheets	Assessment criteria followed done per term	Reading programme caters for different levels of learners
	Files for records of reading quota	Junior vs. senior primary	Monitoring of educator and SMT
			Classroom visits

PrS A mentioned that various instruments are used, such as a record sheet for monitoring during classroom visits. These inform him how learning has progressed from the last lesson monitored to the present. The other instrument is the class chart, which is used to monitor each learner in terms of his/her progress. The educator also has a sheet in a file which indicates how many readers each learner has read in a term. This record sheet shows that the top achievers read most books and the average achievers fewer books. The weakest learners require the help of educators who teach word recognition and phonics.

According to PrS B the school's assessment criteria make provision for learners from Grade 1 to Grade 7. Assessment of reading fluency in the foundation phase is conducted in terms of set criteria where marks are used to show progress. In the Senior Primary phase two reading assessments are done per term, with marks being are allocated for reading and fluency. Comparisons of both sets of marks provide a better understanding of the learners' development and progress.

PrS C states that they do their assessment within the reading literacy programmes which cater for different levels of learners since inclusive education is compulsory. Monitoring is done first by the class educator and then by the SMT (school management team), who monitor the levels of reading and the implementation of programmes. The head of department evaluates the marks allocated to establish whether or not the reading literacy level is on par with the grade level and the assessment standards. The management team regularly conduct classroom visits and scrutinize learner scripts to justify the marks allocated and to monitor progress in different components of reading literacy.

Question 9: *What is your assessment of the reading abilities of your learners at school?*

Table 4.10: Assessment of the reading abilities of your learners

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
9	Not age or grade appropriate	Learners average	Room for improvement
		Steady decline in literacy	Reading levels not according to grade
			Average

PrS A mentioned that the assessments indicated that reading proficiency is not adequate in terms of learners' age. That is, learners are not reading according to their age level. In Grades 5 and 6 learners' reading levels are on par with what is expected from Grade 3 learners; and Grade 4 learners read at the level of Grade 2 learners. The need for major interventions as far as reading is concerned is therefore absolutely clear.

According to PrS B the learners are average in terms of their progress in reading. PrS B said, "Despite all that's happening, I've got learners who, when competing, can outclass learners just about anywhere, but I also have learners who, no matter where you go, will outdo nobody". The principal feels that there seems to be a steady decline in reading literacy as learners do not make the effort to improve.

PrS C states that there is room for much improvement. This principal has found that the reading level is below standard. Educators have to persist with the programmes very assertively for the majority of learners to ensure that the reading ability of learners improves.

At the moment the learners' reading level is average, which is not acceptable as other learning areas suffer as a result.

Question 10: *What do you think has been the most contributing factor for this performance in your school?*

Table 4.11: Factors contributing most to performance

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
10	Language barriers	Level of professional training, enthusiasm	Level, language of instruction
	Lack of interest from academics	Lack creativity	Lack of parent involvement
	Lack of parental involvement	Location of socio-economic condition	Good results as learner is attentive, receptive and motivated by parent

PrS A mentioned that there are a number of factors contributing to or undermining performance, the greatest challenge being the language barrier, with home languages not being used as languages of teaching and learning. Another contributing factor is the lack of interest shown by academics and parents, none of whom are involved in supporting learner reading progress. The socio-economic background of learners is also a contributory factor, with much negativity between school and home. This principal holds the view that the home does not acknowledge and complement the contribution of the school. Most learners come from poor backgrounds with very little access to reading material. Naturally these learners cannot read well and no development takes place at home. In most cases homework is not completed as learners or parents rely completely on the school for what; consequently their reading levels will always remain the same.

According to PrS B, the level of professional training and the enthusiasm of educators are also contributing factors. New teachers are simply not creative: they do not do enough, no matter how much development takes place, and they do not seem to be making progress. The second important factor is that households do not consider reading as being important. The reason for this situation, in many cases, is that the parents themselves are illiterate. This proves to be a challenge if the onus to motivate and assist children rests on the parents.

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PrS C stated that learners' low reading levels could be attributed to discrepancy/disjuncture between the language of instruction at school and the home language. Other factors are learner attitudes, which results from parents not being fully involved or supportive of their children. Learners are assisted and given guidance and motivation at school but when they go home, the context is entirely different. In the case of learners who achieve very good results their home language and the language of teaching and learning are the same. These learners are very attentive, receptive, motivated and want to improve. Their parents provide the support, they have set goals and they want to go somewhere.

Question 11: *What do you think is the reason for some learners' poor reading ability at school?*

Table 4.12: Reason for learners' poor reading ability

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
11	Parent not complementing the work	Educator ability	Language barrier
	Lack of practice	Environmental factors	Lack of resources
	Lack of resources		Encourage parental support
	No parent supervision		

PrS A responded that language ability and parents do not complement the work that is done at school; rather, they contribute to learners' poor reading ability. Learners come from homes where there is no reading material at all and even when reading material is sent home there is no guarantee that the learner is going to read it. Reading is something that one has to go on practising, a way of life which is sadly lacking in our learners. Experience has taught that the more you read the better you become.

PrS B stated that he had already mentioned aspects contributing to learners' poor reading ability and had covered educators' training and environmental factors.

PrS C mentioned that language is a barrier and that special reading programmes need to be enforced over and above what is done in normal language lessons. According to him, there is a need to make time to do these things. This principal said, "We need to encourage parental

support where they enrol their children at the public library besides the school library". The school can play a very pivotal role in providing this additional support system by motivating and encouraging the parents to be supportive in coming to school on open days to check on the progress of the child and follow it through.

Question 12: *What efforts have been made to change the situation and improve the reading ability of these learners at your school?*

Table 4.13: Efforts to change and improve reading ability

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
12	Get help from churches, Rotary Clubs, voluntary reading	SGB committee	Poor reading ability
	Try different strategies	Constant meetings	Introduce special programmes
	Resource library	Level of consciousness	Teaching methods reviewed

PrS responded that reading is taken very seriously as they have programmes within the classes where educators try different strategies to encourage reading literacy. They started these programmes because his school feels that the interest they show will rub off onto the learners. They have also enlisted the help of the church and the Rotary Club and both have brought in additional people to do voluntary reading at school. A reading programme will be launched in their school soon and they are hopeful that parents will buy into this idea. They do not have a very well equipped library but they encourage educators to visit the library class by class and to introduce the learners to the world of reading.

PrS B mentioned that the level of consciousness is what is important. Every learner should be an excellent reader because they cannot afford to have only one child being exceptional. In workshops and at meetings constant reinforcement of this point should be imparted to educators. Apart from phase and grade meetings they have a learning area meeting specifically held for reading. There is a committee meeting that takes place to handle the issues regarding reading. These kinds of measure were taken to ensure that reading enjoys this kind of consideration in educators' minds, making them realise that one cannot teach anything if there is an issue with learners' reading ability. The other important aspect that

has been addressed and was approved by the school governing body is a commitment to purchase whatever resources are required for the promotion of reading.

PrS C stated that educators accommodate learners with poor reading ability by providing work, worksheets and activities that are within their ability. In fact, management has, together with the educators, identified the need for a special additional reading programme, something which is an absolute necessity for learners with poor reading ability, expression problems and poor retention. The convenor for English utilised the knowledge of foundation phase educators to assist in the adoption of a learning strategy in senior primary reading literacy. Intermediate Phase educators now utilise phonics and flash words, and give repetitive work in order to overcome setbacks encountered in reading. They implement this strategy to get all the learners to read because they have different ways to teach reading skills. The method of sight vocabulary only was previously used to help learners memorise. Now educators use words through pictures, words through context, flash words, phonics, decoding and encoding in implementing the methods that are working in the foundation phase. Learners in this phase are now able to read but when they come to the senior primary some of their reading skills are neglected again.

Question 13: *What advice do you think is most important that you can communicate to other schools in your area that have problems?*

Table 4.14: Importance in reading literacy

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
13	Reading revolution	Educator to be creative	Focus on background
	Involve parents, stakeholders	SGB permission to make resource available	Bilingual educators
			Progression as importance of education

PrS A mentioned that starting a reading revolution is ideal, where one *thinks* reading, *breathes* reading and *spreads the message* around while reading all the time. This principal thinks churches can adapt part of the ordinary church session to become reading sessions. If the community starts a reading revolution it will be a solution to the reading problem. Inspirational people, role models and past students should be invited to convey the

importance of reading to the learners and to help to start a reading revolution. For this principal, using different ideas to communicate the importance of reading will bring about the needed change.

PrS B responded that the key idea that emerges regarding reading is the creativity of the educator. Educators must be creative enough to implement ways to help a child to read. How many teachers are able to take the label from a can of beans and turn it into a reading lesson? Educators are creative, proactive and can propagate reading competence not only in children but in parents as well. Parents must be encouraged to understand the importance of reading so that they can motivate the child to become a member of the local library. Libraries are there but parents do not take their children there.

PrS C stated that, especially when learners come from a background where they do not know English, which is the medium of teaching and learning, the school encounters a problem. It is advisable at the initial stage to have an educator who is bilingual as it gets very frustrating for the child not to comprehend what the educator says. In the primary phase the educator must switch between languages occasionally to explain or to make the learner understand concepts. Parents have a very important role to play in a child's education and it is really essential to get parents involved. PrS C and the staff give the parents really sound information that they can implement at home. They somehow find ways and means to get parents to come to school on occasions and open days to listen to motivational speakers talk on the importance of reading.

Question 14: Lastly, do you think that every child's reading ability will improve according to the implementation of the Government Gazette on the foundation of learning?

Table 4.15: Every child's reading ability will improve

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	PrS A	**PrS B**	**PrS C**
14	Disagreement on the Government Gazette	Clear directives	Correct implementation and monitoring
	Level of child	Introduce formal lessons	Improving reading ability depends on commitment
	Attitude	Assessment versus skill	Be positive
	Exposure, motivation		

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Responding to this question, PrS A remarked that children do face challenges in reading. Most educators have not been trained to identify reading disabilities. Knowledgeable professionals must therefore be invited to identify reading problems and to be of assistance to the learner. Since all learners are not at the same level there is a need for a specialised reading programme in which the learner is exposed to meaningful reading material. Although most children can cultivate an interest in reading they will not reach the same level.

PrS B disagreed, stating that not all foundations of learning are seriously flawed. The initiative taken in having a reading lesson every day is good but where educators fail is when they do not give clear directives on how to implement reading and how to allocate time. A reading lesson needs to be a formal lesson. Because there are many creative activities, and much energy goes into the lesson, it cannot be completed in thirty minutes. Reading development is a prolonged and deliberate process.

PrS C stated that, with perseverance, the correct implementation, monitoring and follow-up, every child's reading will improve. However, everything needs to be implemented with a great deal of commitment, determination and thorough planning if reading competence is to improve. This is a serious challenge: it is as if a learner coming to school to learn a foreign language. Motivation is certainly important for the educator and learner to achieve the desired goals. Reading is the foundation of all modes of learning so educators' focus should be on improving the learner's reading competence. Whether or not the reading ability of learners improves depends on the commitment of every departmental official, parent, community leader, management team, educator and learner. This kind of outlook must be present otherwise failure is eminent. Learners are entrusted to educators; therefore the latter must ensure that learning takes place. Success in achieving reading competence is not negotiable.

4.4 Educator interviews

During my research a group of educators were interviewed because educators play a pivotal role in the process of teaching and learning. Interview data was first tabulated and then written as narratives. The emerging themes are discussed below.

4.4.1 Findings based on semi-structured interview data

Question 1*: What is your role and responsibility as an educator in teaching English?*

Table 4.16: Role and responsibility as an educator

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
1	Level of group basic skills	Language barriers	Help children from disadvantaged areas
	Improve spelling and sentence construction	Help children converse in English	Overcome language barriers
	Improve English	Be able to read in English	Grasp English vocabulary

In response to question 1 EdS A mentioned that his role in teaching is basically to get the learners to a level where they are able to grasp basic skills that are needed in order for them to improve their English language usage. One of the basic skills used is word recognition, which allows the learner to be able to read fluently and to improve spelling and sentence construction.

EdS B stated that learners come from a background where English is not their home language and that this is regarded as a barrier. The greatest challenge is to have to converse with them in English, especially since she is IsiZulu-speaking herself.

EdS C responded that her priority is to ensure that the learners improve their reading competence, especially learners from disadvantaged areas. She stated that her responsibility as an English educator is to ensure that these learners are able to read and grasp English vocabulary.

Question 2*: How effective do you think you are in the teaching and learning process?*

EdS A responded by pointing out that policy acts as a guideline to help educators to be effective in the classroom. An English educator implementing these guidelines in class is quite effective when feedback is received from learners. Understanding the school set-up is quite unique as African learners do not learn in their mother tongue. They face many

challenges as they are unable to follow instructions that focus on the basic skills needed to improve their language proficiency.

Table 4.17: Effective teaching and learning process

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
2	Revise and implement policy	Adopt different methods of teaching.	Learners do not know English
	Strive to be effective in the classroom	Encourage learners to speak in English	Innovate ideas for teaching
	Understand the set up at schools	Build confidence – assure learners that they can fit into an English medium school	Try different methods

EdS B mentioned that most children are afraid of reading because they cannot speak the language. She utilises different methods in order to encourage reading in class. She encourages them to speak to build their confidence and to be fluent in English. This allows them to be able to read simple sentences, interpret and write stories that build their confidence and make them feel that they can fit into an English medium school.

EdS C stated that she is effective in planning and tries to be innovative by using different ideas and methods so that the learner can grasp, and benefit from, English language. There are learners who do not know English, so it is her duty to try different methods to teach basic vocabulary for them to grasp the English language. She also engages in assessment activities in order to ascertain whether listening comprehension helps them to retell what they have heard.

Question 3: What do you think is the reason for your performance?

EdS A mentioned that, in terms of effectiveness as an educator, she can cope if given the necessary support, such as attending workshops on teaching English, and learning area support sessions from subject advisors. According to her, learners have shown that they are able to grasp basic words from worksheets and this helps them in sentence construction. The difficulty arises when there is a lack of support from home with regard to basic reading.

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Table 4.18: Reason for your performance

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
3	Support from workshops and subject advisors	Innovate ways, creative methods,	Trying other methods to focus on pronouncing words
	Worksheets on basic concepts given	Peer reading, group sessions	
	Readers given to take home		

EdS B responded that she looks for innovative ways and creative methods to get learners to do different types of activity, such as peer reading and group sessions. Additional classes are held after school or during breaks to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved.

EdS C stated that she tries novel ways and methods in order to get the learners to read, with the emphasis on pronunciation.

Question 4: *Do you receive any professional development support? If not, what is the reason for not getting support? If you do, what kind of professional support do you get?*

Table 4.19: Professional development support received

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
4	Once support received from the principal and HOD	Support in the form of workshops	No support at school level
	Challenges identified but no solutions	No support from English supervisors	Externally – attend workshops
		National Curriculum Statement Workshop African Bank	
		Workshop African Bank	

In response to this question EdS A mentioned that for English they meet with the principal and HOD once per term. Management understands some of the challenges and discusses ways to counteract factors that undermine the achievement of learning outcomes. Some

challenges have been identified by management as being extremely difficult. These have been tabled for a meeting to resolve and find ways to help educators to improve the teaching of English in the classroom.

EdS B stated that professional support is received in the form of workshops presented by the Department of Education. There has been no support or visits from the English supervisor as yet.

The National Curriculum Statement workshops held helped to guide the educators in implementing the new curriculum. A workshop was presented by The African Bank during the December holidays as part of development. The NGOs of the African Bank, responsible for promoting the workshop, came to school to follow-up on their previous input.

EdS C responded that there was no development at school level. Workshops were attended out of school time. During the December holiday she attended an English workshop presented by the African Bank. Having attended it, she empowered her colleagues and learners by sharing the information and knowledge received.

Question 5: Is the professional development support that you are getting helping you to perform better in teaching? If yes, how? And if no, why do you say so?

Table 4.20: Professional development support to perform better

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
5	Workshop professional development	Streamline work	Work with other educators from other schools
	African Bank workshop		Engage in reading programmes individually

EdS A responded positively to attending a workshop on professional development as the use of the knowledge gained could help educators to improve their teaching of the English language. Other workshop programmes attended were those presented by the African Bank. Subject facilitators also did a follow-up and visited the school to give guidance to educators.

EdS B mentioned that streamlining their work made it easier to teach: educators are prepared, as they know exactly what to teach. The selected content within which educators work is very broad, and if an educator has trouble with something management is there to support and help.

EdS C stated that she always liaises with other schools and gets ideas from them on how they get learners to read. These schools are engaged in reading programmes where the approach is to use individual as well as shared and paired reading.

Question 6: Are you as an educator consulted or involved in the planning of professional development programmes? If no, what do you think is the reason?

Table 4.21: Educator consultation in the planning of professional development programmes

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
6	Did not answer the question	Regular workshops to keep abreast of current happenings	Consultation with the HOD
		Allows for professional development	Literacy workshops
			Attitude of learners

EdS A did not answer the question.

EdS B said that they have regular workshops within the school that the educators themselves conduct with the staff. She has been instrumental in quite a few of them. She always attends external workshops and keeps abreast of what is going on so that she can share this kind of information with the rest of the staff.

EdS C mentioned tha,t in consultation with her HOD, she was given an opportunity to come up with a reading programme. It dealt mainly with discipline and ethics. A literacy reading programme was presented with the help of the junior primary educators to show how they teach reading to learners in the senior primary phase. All educators have a problem at school

with the attitude of learners who come from a background where learners live with grandparents, and some learners simply cannot be motivated to learn.

Question 7: *Could you name some professional development programmes that you attended?*

Table 4.22: Professional development programmes attended

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
7	Mathematics workshops, Lurits Computer workshop,	SADTU workshop	Workshop on improving teaching English
	Coaching clinics (not all related to literacy)	Edgewood College course focusing on phonics, literacy, reading.	
		Shared ideas on how to help children with reading problems	

EdS A mentioned that he attended workshops on Mathematics teaching, the Lurits computer programme and coaching clinics for various modes of sports, but not for English.

EdS B stated that she attended workshops presented by SADTU and the Department of Education. A course was held at Edgewood College which focused on the teaching of reading, phonic literacy and on learners with special needs. These were beneficial because they presented ideas on how to help learners who have difficulty with reading and writing English.

EdS C responded that she had attended a workshop on Teaching English at Umhlali Preparatory School.

Question 8: Does the school have a plan for monitoring and the evaluation of educators' and learners' work? If no, how is monitoring and evaluation done in your school?

EdS A said her school does have a plan. The principal and SMT conduct class visits quite regularly and they have an assessment tool where they look at educators' performance, learners' books and lessons plans.

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Table 4.23: **Plan for monitoring and evaluation**

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
8	Monitoring done by the principal and SMT on regular basis	Monitored by HOD for support and guidance on weekly basis	Monitored (educators) IQMS is ongoing by HOD and the principal
	Evaluate teacher performance, assess learners' books and lessons planned	Review of record books, learner books, marks.	Principal reviews books, looks at quality, standards.
		Guidance given to focus on problem areas	Implementation of reading programme for 30 min.

EdS B pointed out that HODs are assigned a group of educators for whose support and guidance they are responsible. On a weekly basis all record books, learners' books, and a tally of marks are handed over to them for checking, to see if the work is up to standard. If anything needs attention guidance is given, focusing on problem areas.

EdS C said the monitoring of educators is done regularly because of IQMS, which is an ongoing process. The HOD and the principal constantly request books and monitor learners' work for quality and standard. A half an hour reading programme is incorporated into the time table for morning reading, which is a strategy to cultivate a love of reading.

Question 9: *What is your current knowledge base to improve reading literacy at your school?*

In response to this question EdS A mentioned that he is actually trying to instil in learners a love of reading. Reading stories is a method to broaden their understanding and imagination, as is getting them to read in groups and to do shared reading. He tries to implement new methods by reading up the policy document.

EdS B stated that an isiZulu educator helps learners who attend his bridging English class because they have no English background. The educator refers these learners to the isiZulu educator to help them with elementary English, developing them to a suitable level where the learner can read some words or converse in 'baseline' English. The isiZulu educator

commences by establishing what learners know and uses material from the lower grades. There is, moreover, a 30 minute daily reading session for every class during which time different forms of instructional media (such as stories, comprehension lessons or learner involvement in creative writing) are used. Learners identify some words and get actively involved in the entire process.

Table 4.24: Educator current knowledge base to improve reading literacy

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
9	Instil in learners a love of reading	Introduction of bridging English class	Not much knowledge to improve reading literacy
	Method is stories being read.	Seek help from other learners to help with elementary English	Two diplomas in English and generally teaches well
	Reading policy documents help	Establish what they know to give more attention to weak learners	
		Use material from lower grades for 30 minutes reading done every day, using different forms	
		Use different teaching media	

EdS C mentioned that she has completed two diplomas in English but does not have much knowledge and generally teaches well.

Question 10: How do you incorporate the reading literacy programme into your curriculum?

Table 4.25: Incorporation of the reading literacy programme in the curriculum

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
10	Reading programme in the morning	Integrate reading with other learning areas - Mathematics	Incorporate reading literacy programmes in reading session
	Learners do not cope as parents need to work with learners in the afternoons	Nature of questions allows for reading skills to be articulated	30 minute reading time cannot propagate reading in a class of 50

EdS A mentioned that a reading programme starts at 07:45 as soon as learners get to school in the morning. The learners know what they must do if they are early. Learners that are really struggling with reading and cannot cope are assisted by a parent who spends time in the afternoon helping them with reading.

EdS B said that she integrates reading into every learning area because "even when presenting Mathematics lessons there is something to read, whether it is in the form of problem-solving or whether it is a story that is used to create a sum". The more exposure the learners have to reading the better it is for them. The nature of questions also allows for reading skills to be articulated.

EdS C stated that she incorporates reading literacy programme into her reading session but that she needs more time. She encountered a problem - teaching time of half an hour was a factor because "reading literacy cannot be propagated in a class of 50".

Question 11: How can continuous professional development help you to bring about changes in your practice and in implementing programmes?

Table 4.26: Continuous professional development to bring about changes

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
11	Need for ongoing professional development	Keep abreast of what is happening in changes to curriculum, etc.	Reading to be incorporated in all learning areas
	Allows for inexperienced educators being developed	Know current trends, teaching methods	Lack of resources, space
	Focus on effective teaching	Focus on new happenings	Teaching difficult with large numbers

EdS A mentioned that there is a need for ongoing professional development. This helps an inexperienced educator, and teaching the language allows him/her develop and be more effective in class. The focus is on teaching learners.

EdS B said that it is important to focus on new happenings and keep abreast of changes, especially changes to the curriculum. In order to make things work it is important to know

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the current trends or the latest teaching methods required to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

In response to this question EdS C stated that it is better for the learner to "improve' different ways to read" as all other learning areas will benefit.   Reading must be incorporated in all learning areas and monitored regularly for development to take place.   This could yield results if more resources and space were provided since teaching becomes difficult with a large number of learners in a class.

Question 12: *What criteria do you use to monitor, evaluate and review development in reading literacy of learners?*

Table 4.27: Criteria used to monitor, evaluate and review development

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
12	Monitoring tool is record sheet	Learners placed in groups	Keep sheet to test pronunciation, audibility, meaning of words
	25 narratives , 25 poems to be done annually	Focus on level of learner in group	Marks /points allocated
	Test for spelling	Physical reading sessions conducted	
		Reading word list	

EdS A stated that the monitoring tool used to evaluate learners is a record sheet. Each learner is allocated about 25 books to read annually. In addition learners have to study 25 poems as well each year. When stories are introduced in class, ten words are identified and written on the board. These words then become spelling words, which have to be learnt. Learners focus on these words and this helps them with word recognition, enabling them to read fluently during reading lessons.   A monitoring sheet is used to record whether or not learners recognize the memorised words.

EdS B mentioned that learners are not placed in traditional groups, such as A, B and C, but in reading benefit groups.   The first group is for learners who need more assistance; the second group manages comfortably; the third group contains the fluent readers. Learners receive

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appropriate reading material for each level and once the learner has mastered the reading material, they get the next book. During reading sessions learners have to read aloud and their pronunciation of words must be correct. A word list is provided and as a learner masters a word it is ticked off on the list. Problem words are underlined.

EdS C responded that records are kept on a sheet showing pronunciation, audibility, voice control and knowledge of the meaning of words. Points are allocated and then converted into a mark for reading. This reveals the learners' progress per term.

Question 13: *What measures does management implement in monitoring the reading literacy progress of learners?*

Table 4.28: Measures implemented by management in monitoring reading literacy

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
13	Weak learners referred to management that works closely with learners	Managers identify learners to read which is done regularly on different levels selected	In the beginning of the year a reading literacy programme is introduced but not sustained
	Due to the large class size (40 learners per class) individual attention is not possible	Managers need explanation from educators when learners do not read well	No continuity
	Support given by peers regarding word meaning, phonics and pronunciation		

EdS A pointed out that there are some learners who are really struggling. They are referred to management who work very closely with them. Due to the large class size of 40 learners per class it is not possible to pay individual attention to learners who demand it. Management gives support and attention by assisting learners. They get volunteer learners that are good readers to supply peer support. This helps poor readers to do some reading and use phonics. Learners are assisted to pronounce a word by using phonics to break it down.

EdS B stated that management identifies learners to read during an impromptu lesson. This is done regularly, randomly selecting learners with different reading proficiency levels to

read. Should learners be identified as not being able to read managers converse with educators and request an explanation.

EdS C pointed out that there is no consistency concerning what is done by management. At the beginning of the year management informs educators that a reading literacy programme must be planned for the year. There is no continuity or follow-up in the course of the year: no one checks if it works so it just fizzles out.

Question 14: *What is your assessment of the reading ability of your learners?*

Table 4.29: Assessment of the reading abilities of learners

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
14	Handful of learners can read at the moment	Mixed groups: coping vs. struggling	Grading and testing done
	Others require much attention and need to work consistently with them to improve reading	Language barriers, no exposure to the language	10% can read 20% do not know
		No continuity as confined to what happens in the classroom vs. home	Worksheets and monitoring sheets used to score
			Comments given satisfactorily

EdS A mentioned that there is a small percentage of learners who can read well. This has resulted in other learners requiring much attention and the educator needs to work consistently with them in order to improve their reading.

EdS B stated that she has a mixed group of learners, some of whom manage their reading, comfortably but others struggle. The reason is the language barrier, as English is not their home language. English becomes difficult to reinforce when the language is not spoken at home. There is no continuity in reading because it is confined to what happens in classroom. It is the greatest challenge to teach in isolation as the learner goes back home and speaks a different language.

EdS C mentioned that assessment and testing of reading are done. Basically about 10% of learners can read a little and about 20% of the class do not recognise the words at all. A control sheet is used to monitor and score the learners when they read. Marks are entered on a score sheet, reflecting the learner's reading ability.

Question 15: *What do you think has been the most contributing factor to these performances or reason for some learners' poor reading ability in your school?*

Table 4.30: Factor contributing most to reading ability/ performance

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
15	Disadvantaged because of English medium vs. mother tongue	Lack of support from home	Parental care, guidance helps the cause
	Lack of support from parents	Illiterate parents	Disturbed learners do not cope because of lack of nutrition
	No continuity		No resources such as a library

EdS A emphasised the fact that English is the medium of teaching and learning, indicating that learners are disadvantaged because it is not their mother tongue. There is no continuity when learners go home: when they interact with their friends and family they speak isiZulu, so whatever communication of English work is done in the classroom is halted. There is also a lack of support and encouragement from parents.

EdS B pointed out that the greatest contributing factor to learners' poor reading ability is that they do not have support from home as their parents are illiterate themselves.

EdS C attributes good reading to many facts, such as help or assistance at home, parental care, parental monitoring and also grounding in the foundation phase, which helps promote reading literacy. When a learner cannot read or concentrate it could be due to a lack of nutrition. Currently the school is not well resourced as there is no library.

Question 16: *What efforts have you made to change the situation and improve the reading ability of learners at your school?*

Table 4.31: Changing and improving the reading ability of learners

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
16	Much focus on reading	Creation of groups	Introduction of singing method as reading, rhyme, telling, joke telling
	Point out to learners that if they cannot read they have no promising future	Create library corner for exposure to resources	Give additional work
		Ensure visits to the library	Use pictures
		Encourage discussion	Introduce different methods of testing reading skills

EdS A asserts that great deal of emphasis is placed on reading to convince learners that if they cannot read, they do not have a promising future. A reading programme has been initiated to get learners to become better readers. Learners are encouraged to love reading and become members of the school library and public library.

EdS B explained that learner groups were introduced: educators can now pair poor readers with learners who read better than they do. These pairs of learners listen to and help each other in the class. A library corner has been created to expose learners to resource material that they can use at any time after they have completed their work. Learners are also taken on regular visits to the school library, where stories are read to them. They are allowed to borrow books and are encouraged to discuss these with their friends.

EdS C alluded to the fact that she made an effort to introduce the singing method of reading, rhyming and telling jokes to see if learners could remember words. Extra and additional work is given to learners when they do not know certain words; they pick up a picture card and link words to pictures and write the words down. Different methods of testing reading skills are introduced, for example where a word with some letters missing needs to matched to a picture which provides the missing letters.

Question 17: *What advice do you think is most important to be communicated to other educators and schools in your area that have problems?*

Table 4.32: Importance of reading literacy

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
17	Barrier: teaching not done in mother tongue	Start a reading club, peer reading, group reading	Involvement in English Club and English Society to help other educators
	Build up basis	Set time frames	Get innovative ideas
	Long term process	Highlight and remind the learners of the importance of reading	How to improve learner ability
			Change education to use different teaching methods
			Go from simple to complex techniques
			Give additional work

EdS A mentioned that it is very difficult if learners do not learn in their mother tongue. This is a barrier which disadvantages the learner. Trying to get learners to start reading, understanding and comprehending is extensive. To see results is going to take a long time.

EdS B pointed out that some ideas for implementation are to start a reading club where learners can participate in peer and group reading. Reading is important and can be done at any time hence learners should be reminded of this.

EdS C suggested getting involved in an English club or an English society where learners can get help from educators who look for innovative ideas, grasp them and motivate them to improve their abilities. It is important that educators change education by using different teaching methods. Reading instruction should commence with basic and simple words and once the learners grasp these they can progress to the next level.

Question 18: *Lastly, do you think that every child's reading ability will improve by implementing the Government Gazette on the foundation of learning?*

Table 4.33: Every child's reading ability will improve

QUESTION	THEMES EXTRACTED		
	EdS A	**EdS B**	**EdS C**
18	Improve by being realistic to spend quality time with learner	High literacy levels are achievable	Timeline 2014
		Give adequate support at school and home	Implementation of foundations of learning
		Monitor children	
		Support helps the process	

EdS A responded in the affirmative. If the educator and parent spend quality time with the learners there should definitely be an improvement and signs of development.

EdS B agreed with the statement and is convinced that learners can reach literacy levels of a very high standard. In order for this to be achieved the educator gives adequate support at school. She mentioned that this must continue at home, with parents monitoring and reinforcing reading as a kind of home support, which will help the process.

EdS C stated that by the end of 2014 all learners in their primary school will be able to read. This is so because they have reached milestones and have implemented the foundations for learning.

4.5 Lesson observation

My realistic opinion is that it is the responsibility of the Department of Education, the SEM and school management team to perform their roles in terms of planning, checking and monitoring planned activities rigorously in cases where learner development is essential. If this is done according to the prescribed rules and policy, there will be learner reading literacy development.

Observation is a powerful tool to check what people report about themselves on paper, during interviews and when self reporting (IQMS). What people say about themselves and convince other colleagues of is often contradicted by actual observation. Lessons were observed by me, in my capacity as a mentor. I therefore had to be discreet about participants' activities and had to ensure that I did not disrupt the normal flow of classroom lessons.

Observation was used to collect data while the educator was engaged in a 30 minute reading literacy lesson. Having obtained permission to observe the lesson beforehand, I remained an "outsider", doing nothing but observe the behaviour being studied.

Monitoring curriculum development activities during contact sessions in reading literacy and learning opportunities could happen in different ways. I used a variety of checklists (consult Appendices 4, 5 and 6) to observe participant and learner activities during my class visits. Lessons were also recorded on a voice recorder so that I could review the data and procedures afterwards for cross referencing purposes.

The observed lessons presented findings that revealed the educators' knowledge, skills and experience in teaching and learning. Observation of participants took place in a school setting that had relevance to the research questions. I approached participants in their own classroom environment rather than having them come to me.

4.5.1 The aim of the technique

During the observation of participants' reading literacy lessons, educators' questioning and contact as well as learners' participation and answers to questions on the content of the learning materials served as data sources. I used a combined (nature of questioning, Bloom's Taxonomy and Whole Brain Thinking) checklist *(consult Appendices 4, 5 and 6)* to tabulate aspects that could provide a better analysis of the enactment of the teaching and learning process and/or suggest a particular teaching-learning pattern. My focus was to observe both the educator and the learners during the learning process in order to see how different learning opportunities were integrated and how they contributed to the improvement of reading literacy.

As indicated in Chapter 3, the combined checklist comprised three categories, namely, *the facilitative nature of questioning, Bloom's Taxonomy and Whole Brain Thinking (consult Appendices 4, 5 and 6)*. This data capturing technique provided detailed information on the extent of the educators' planning and preparation of the methods which were used to encourage learner participation in the lesson. My observation of learner participation focused specifically on the ways in which they implemented specific principles of higher order thinking and monitored their own learning processes. Questions that focused learner attention on important elements of a lesson resulted in better comprehension but they should be structured in such a manner that correct responses are given. Questions can be broken into lower cognitive questions *(fact, closed, direct, recall, and knowledge questions)* and higher cognitive questions *(open-ended, interpretive, evaluative, inquiry, inferential and synthesis questions)*.

4.5.2 Observation techniques used in lesson

Different observation checklists (consult Appendices 4, 5 and 6) were used in the observation of participant and learner activities. The checklist catered for three types of categories namely the nature of questions, Blooms Taxonomy and Whole Brain Thinking.

4.5.2.1 Questions

A question is an enquiry for information. The educators' questioning on the passage to be read brings stimulated discussion intended to facilitate thinking. During the interaction educators posed questions and learners replied. Questions can be asked to tap on different levels of cognitive ability. Answers to questions were related to Bloom's Taxonomy levels to establish correlation. The nature of questions, whether posed by the educator or learner, is shown in the episode numbers of rows 1 to 6 in Appendices 4, 5 and 6.

4.5.3 Findings

Applying Bloom's Taxonomy to the lesson provided an overview of the frequency with which cognitive levels featured during question setting while the Herrmann four quadrant model, discussed in Chapter 2, Table 2, represents the four thinking structures of the brain. Effective learning takes place if the whole brain is involved in learning. These four learning

modes indicate whether or not a learner is a whole brained person, therefore learning experiences ought to be constructed to accommodate and utilise the cognitive functions in all four quadrants of the Herrmann whole brain model. The higher the score in a quadrant, the stronger is the preference for thinking in that quadrant.

4.5.3.1 Educator: School A

The educator commenced by introducing the topic and reading the passage so that the learners could follow. At times he paused to make a point and get the learners' attention. He also clarified and explained what was in the text so that the learners understood what was happening. The educator asked questions on the passage and prompted learners to answer. There was a great deal of interaction between the educator and the learners, making the lesson interesting.

The questions posed on the comprehension passage covered focused mostly on factual content *(consult Appendix 4).* The educator used many lower level cognitive questions because the learners were aged level 10 to 12. Referring to *Appendix 4,* the *Episode Numbers 1 – 4* in educator column, which is timed for every 5 minutes of the lesson, shows that it was only the educator who asked questions. It was only in rows 5 and 6 of the Episode Numbers that learners asked questions. The questions they asked did not deal with the comprehension passage or lesson but with the written work which needed to be done in their books. Learners asked no questions in order to clarify doubts they might have had about any aspect on the passage. The learners were complimented or encouraged when they answered well. What was noticeable after they had answered was that they smiled at their classmates or showed thumbs up as an emotional response: This is indicated in the response column.

In *Response Row, Number 2* learners were asked to read. All six learners who participated in reading the passage made a good to medium effort to do so. The educator responded by giving a positive response to their reading. This response by the educator encouraged learners and they responded with smiles that lit up their faces.

In terms of Bloom's Taxonomy the questions asked during the lesson were mainly knowledge and comprehension questions. These types of question, although answered well, did not really make the learner think. When relating *Bloom's Taxonomy* to *Whole Brain Thinking*, these categories fall in the A-quadrant, that is, logical and fact-based thinking,

which is the category of thinking in which learners seem to feel most comfortable. It was only when the educator praised the learner that it resulted in a show of feelings that suggest emotional involvement. This is reflected in quadrant C that favours interpersonal, feeling based and emotions.

4.5.3.2   Educator: School B

The educator commenced the lesson by reading a passage titled, *The ant and the dove*, which the learners could follow in a copy of the text to enable them to participate in the lesson. The educator introduced the topic and explained what an ant is. During the course of her reading the passage she asked learners factual questions on an ongoing basis, in order to continuously assess their knowledge. She followed through with an explanation when learners' answers were inadequate. At times she assessed their comprehension skills with content-based questions to get their attention. She also clarified aspects of the text so that learners could distinguish and understand what was happening.

Questions (consult Appendix 5) fell in the categories of probing, factual, content-based and opinion questions, with the majority being factual questions. The educator used many lower cognitive level questions because they were in Grade 5 and in the primary phase although some percentage should focus on higher order thinking. The educator used a routine in which she asked a question, and when there was no response from learners, she answered it herself. This did not give the learners much opportunity for thought, although sometimes, when the answer was easy, they participated.

The questions in *Episode Numbers 1 – 6* of the rows show that in every 5 minutes of the lesson it was the educator who asked questions in relation to the passage, with learners participating by answering. Although learners were enthusiastic to answer questions, a compliment or encouragement passed to learners who answered well would have boosted their spirit. This approach, if adopted by the educator, might have encouraged non-participating learners to try to give an answer.

The educator and the learners energized the lesson with participative discussions and their constant interaction.   In the *Response Column* of *Row 2* learners were asked to read. Every

learner made a medium to good effort when reading and the educator responded with a "Good" to two learners out of five.

According to Bloom's Taxonomy, the questions asked during the lesson were on the level of comprehension and application, with most questions falling in the knowledge category. Using my experience I think that the above-mentioned questioning evoked fairly accurate responses but the constraints were that the level of questioning also could have prevented learners from thinking. I mention this as comprehension demonstrates an understanding of facts and application is the applying of knowledge to actual situations. Simply asking a greater number of questions does not facilitate the learning of more complex reading material.

When relating responses and thinking capabilities to the Whole Brain model, it falls in quadrant D, which is holistic and conceptual thinking - where a learner with this particular thinking preference feels comfortable. In fact quadrant D takes into consideration initiative, exploring possibilities, self discovery which needs understanding. This kind of thinking did not really take place during my observation of the lesson as learners did not respond with spontaneity, free flow, showing understanding and applying knowledge by being involved in discussion. Educators must structure their questioning and activities to incorporate the expectations of learners in all four quadrants (Du Toit 2011) in order to achieve effective reading literacy. It was only when the educator praised the learner that this evoked feelings and emotional involvement, which is in Quadrant C. This quadrant favours interpersonal, feeling-based and emotional behaviour. In accordance with *Appendix 5*, the educator used all four quadrants during her lesson, giving learners an opportunity to develop their full potential. However, this was not done in a balanced manner, with all the quadrants being equally accommodated.

4.5.3.3   Educator: School C

In striking a balance between her teaching and learning approach, the learners and her classroom situation, this educator integrated her methods by using a comprehension passage from the learners' workbook, *Workbook 3*. The topic was *Seasons: Autumn and winter*, which they could follow to participate in the lesson. The educator commenced with the lesson by introducing the topic and asking learners, "What do these words mean to you?" Receiving no response from the learners, the educator gave a lengthy explanation and then read the passage, asking the learners to focus on the words and to follow as she reads. The

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educator posed questions prior to her reading the passage. While this strategy is effective, I am of the opinion that questioning on prior knowledge is not suitable for younger learners and poor readers, who tend to focus only on the material that will help them answer the questions.

At times the educator paused to explain a new word or to find out what learners' views on new words were or what it meant to them. This gave me – and the educator - a good idea of their thinking and resulted in positive feedback. She also stopped to clarify and explain the text in the simplest manner possible so that all learners understood what was happening.

The educator's questions on the reading passage covered the category of factual questions, most of which were content-based (*consult Appendix 6*). In many questions the educator played a dominating role by asking questions and answering them herself to bring about clarity when learners did not respond. This did not allow the learners much room for thought or allowed them to be active participants, thus showing their understanding of the passage.

A good method is to direct questions to the entire class. Unclear responses by learners must be reinforced by asking follow-up questions in order to provide clarity of an answer. When an educator finds learners not answering s/he must change the method of facilitating learning – I think that allowing learners some waiting time to think before using a randomized approach in asking other learners to answer. This allows all learners to think about both the question and the response, thereby increasing and integrating learner participation intellectually.

Although there was much interaction between the educator and the learners and, although discussions made the lesson interesting, no clarification questions were asked by learners. This did not give the learners much chance to contemplate but they showed enthusiasm in their responses because the educator complimented them when they answered well. It was during these times that I noticed the learners smile and reveal their feelings of achievement. In fact this encouraged them to respond and answer well thereafter. In actual fact my presence as observer could have influenced the responses of the learners and even the educators' facilitating of the lesson.

Learners were then asked to read - the 2nd row of the *Response Column*. Every learner made a good to medium effort in doing so, and the educator responded positively to some of their

reading. This response by the educator surely encouraged the learners: they responded with bright smiles, thus creating an atmosphere where learners are willing to take risks without fearing the consequences.

The majority of questions asked during the lesson belong to Bloom's *Knowledge* and *Comprehension* categories. This type of questioning, although evoking good answers, did not really make learners think since it does not stimulate their intellectual ability. When relating these types of questions and response to Whole Brain Thinking, it falls in Column A. Learners with a preference for A-quadrant learning would feel comfortable with this type of questioning since it involves logical and fact-based thinking.

The encouragement and compliments given by the educator, and which resulted in some emotional involvement on learners' part, falls in Quadrant C. This quadrant favours interpersonal, feeling-based and emotive qualities. Before concluding the lesson the educator wrote words on the board and asked learners to pronounce them. (Which quadrant would this be?). She then told them make five sentences with these words on the season, *Spring*, for homework.

4.5.4 Frequency of observation

The term, 'frequency of observation', is used to refer to the number of times I used a specific technique to collect data during my observation of educators' lessons

Table 4.34: Frequency of observation per item (Educators A, B and C) refer Appendices 4, 5 and 6

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Educator																							
A	-	4	16	-	-	-	9	7	4	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	9	-
B	5	52	7	8	2	-	4	52	-	14	-	1	-	6	-	1	-	-	-	67	6	5	-
C	-	64	16	2	-	-	14	18	-	16	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	24	1	15
Total	5	100	40	10	2	-	27	77	4	39	-	1	-	6	1	1	1	-	-	87	30	15	15

Table 4.35 reflects the combined frequency of the three techniques (*the facilitative nature of questioning, Bloom's Taxonomy and Whole Brain Thinking - Appendices 4, 5 and 6*) used in the collection of data during my observation of the reading lessons presented by the three participating educators *(consult Appendices 4, 5 and 6).*

In Table 4.35 the categories and items which appear as letters (Categories A, B, and C) and numbers (1- 23) are broken down into their composite parts, or elements. This was deemed necessary to my data analysis since it is the elements, rather that the categories, which indicate the brain quadrants and cognitive level/s reflected in the questions and/or answers of educators and learners respectively.

Table 4.35: Observation technique categories

CATEGORY	ITEM	ELEMENTS	
Nature of questions	Item 1	Probing questions	
	Item 2	Factual questions	
	Item 3	Content-based questions	
	Item 4	Inferential questions	
	Item 5	Opinion-based questions	
	Item 6	Complex questions	
Response	Item 7	Learner response	
Bloom's Taxonomy		**Cognitive level**	**Respondent**
	Item 8	Knowledge	Educator
	Item 9	Knowledge	Learner
	Item 10	Comprehension	Educator
	Item 11	Comprehension	Learner
	Item 12	Application	Educator
	Item 13	Application	Learner
	Item 14	Analysis	Educator
	Item 15	Analysis	Learner
	Item 16	Synthesis	Educator
	Item 17	Synthesis	Learner
	Item 18	Evaluation	Educator
	Item 19	Evaluation	Learner
Whole brain thinking	Item 20	Quadrant A	
	Item 21	Quadrant B	
	Item 22	Quadrant C	
	Item 23	Quadrant D	

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4.5.5 *Frequency of items collectively*

Having broken down the aspects of each category into its composite elements I calculated the frequency with which each element occurred if the observation data on the three educators' lessons were combined. The three educator observation tables *(consult Appendices 4, 5 and 6)* were combined with the transcribed categories and items to give a holistic view. What I discovered was that, in terms of Item 1 there were only five probing questions, an indication that the frequency of this type of question is low. In other words, when it comes to probing questions, educators ask too few of them. Asking probing questions is a strategy for finding out detail. Probing questions are important and are used to encourage conversation without influencing the answer. They are follow-up question used to get specific information that clarifies or extends an answer. Thus, probing for clarity is often a matter of asking for a more specific response, or an explanation of a term. It is as simple as asking for an example to help one understand a statement.

4.5.5.1   Nature of questions and responses

There is too much focus on factual questions, which are lower level cognitive questions, which require learners to recall a fact word for word. There is also a high frequency of content-based questions that are related to subject matter. Too few inferential questions – that is, questions propagating the process of reasoning from a premise to a conclusion – are asked. Questions like these stimulate higher level cognitive thinking and are crucial to cognitive development. Questions aimed at evoking learners' opinions were minimal: because they are based on learners' personal judgements, they have to be supported with logically reasoned evidence and are difficult to assess.

It is clear from this analysis of my case study data that an emphasis on lower level questions is common practice in the schools where I observed reading lessons. Educators have to strike a balance between lower and higher cognitive level questions. According to Alderson and lukmani (1989:268)   lower order questions measure language ability where as higher order questions measure something like cognitive skills and logical reasoning ability. The uses of

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cognitive skills are important as all individuals learn what they know or can do. Therefore, all cognitive skills must be taught, of which the following cognitive skills are the important such as concentration, logical thinking, perception and memory functions. It improves performance in reading, spelling, writing and maths. Moreover, skilled questioning needs to be matched by careful listening so that educators understand what learners really intend to communicate.

4.5.5.2   Bloom's Taxonomy

Simply asking a greater number of questions does not facilitate the learning of more complex material. The different strategies listed in Columns 8 to 19 (*consult Appendices 4, 5 and 6*) represent the levels of questions ranging from Level 1 to Level 6, that is, from lower to higher level cognitive questions. The questions asked during the three educators' lessons focused on the Bloom's *Knowledge*, *Comprehension* and *Application* categories, with little or no attention given to the other levels. Questions in the *Knowledge* and *Comprehension* categories evoked fairly accurate responses but the constraints were that they prevented learners from thinking. The more complex type of question is good practice as it stimulates learners to use their intellectual abilities.

4.5.5.3   Whole brain

When the points in Bloom's Taxonomy Column 8 are related to Whole Brain Thinking, Column 20, indications are that the questions asked by the three educators whose lessons I observed favoured Quadrant A. This would imply that these questions favoured learners with this type of thinking preference.

Item 20 has a combined total of 87 points (refer Table 4.35) that is too high for being Quadrant A; logical thinking is a process that involves taking the important ideas, facts, and conclusions involved in a problem and arranging them in a chain-like progression that takes on a meaning in and of itself. To think logically includes thinking in steps. Logical thinking is the process in which one uses reasoning consistently to come to a conclusion.

Item 21 has a combined total of 30 points (Refer table 4.35), which is too low for Quadrant B. This indicates the need for a realignment of questions to restore the balance of questions

that fall in Quadrants A and B respectively. Sequential memory requires items to be recalled in a specific order. Poor visual sequential memory, i.e. the inability to perceive things in sequence – in a specific order – leads to poor language construction and/or an inability to make sense of language constructions. Consequently reading ability is impaired.

In the four quadrants of Whole Brain Thinking the combined average is 35 points (refer to Table 4.35), but the total points in Columns 22 and 23 are 15 each, which is very low. The emotional aspects associated with Quadrant C and visual memory, associated with Quadrant D, relate to a person's ability to store and retrieve previously experienced visual sensations. Learners frequently experience difficulty in remembering the overall visual appearance of words, or the letter sequence of words, for reading and spelling and are therefore crucial to the development of reading proficiency.

According to Du Toit (2011), unless educators structure their activities to v activity in all four brain quadrants, learners will not develop the whole range of thinking skills they require when they have to use reading as a learning tool.

4.6   Educator questionnaire (Appendix 3)

A questionnaire, issued to the three educators concerned, was utilised as part of the research methodology. Its inclusion enabled me to triangulate data collected from the semi-structured interviews, observation and questionnaire, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of my data and research findings.

4.6.1 Findings

4.6.1.1   Educator School A (EdS A)

Professional development for this educator means professional growth or development to achieve one's growth goals, helping educators to overcome some of the challenges they face and providing them with solutions to problems encountered. The educator commented that the workshops he attended had equipped him with the tools he needed to teach reading.
In order to meet the challenges posed by learners' poor reading ability he prepares his lessons according to approved methods. Firstly, a work schedule for Grade 5, which details the

learning area programme or aspects to be taught, is completed for the whole term. Then, on a weekly basis, he prepares his daily focus sheet, which is a more detailed classification of the work schedule, for his lesson. The preparation shows evidence of his using various strategies to reach reading, utilising media and resources during his lessons, and that he gives learners written work as well as homework. The activities indicated in the lesson plan include learners reading together, learners reading alone, shared reading and the story method of teaching reading. The records indicate that preparation is approved and monitored by management.

During the lesson he first summarises work done previously, using various techniques. The actual presentation of the lesson includes questions and learner participation. The educator works with groups of learners according to their ability, giving the weakest group the most attention. He uses phonics, regular repetition and practice of breaking up words for pronunciation. He stresses that this approach helps him to establish a link with the learner. When supporting weak learners he also pronounces the word, pointing to it, which helps the learner to understand it in both written and auditory modes. He has come to realise that learning does not happen in a vacuum and that no meaningful learning can take place without learners being able to understand and comprehend a given text.

The educator views professional development as being necessary to promote reading literacy. He mentioned that educators acquire the knowledge and skills needed to teach reading. He would like to attend courses that deal with the development of the reading ability of learners. He pointed out that his school places much emphasis on the reading curriculum, as well as on the availability and use of reading material to facilitate reading literacy. He confirmed this by indicating that the school has equipped each classroom with a reading corner and that at his school they have an additional 30 minutes a day, from 07:30 to 08:00, prior to the commencement of school, to be spent on reading.

EdS A also gave evidence of feedback received on classroom practice from management's classroom observations. It was recommended to him that he needed to develop reading skills with learners by identifying unfamiliar words, using phonics, sight vocabulary and the exercises to develop correct eye-movement.

Regarding class participation he commented that learners lack confidence. The problem he identified is the language barrier: since learners do not learn in their mother tongue there are learning gaps. He mentioned that he tries to assist by involving parents or the family: he sends reading material home so that the learner can be groomed by shared reading.

With regard to the nature of reading literacy teaching his stance is that some learners require few exercises in a particular skill, while others need more and constant attention. His opinion is that educators must be prepared to continue with skill exercises as long as the learners require them. He added that continuous professional development brings about changes in educator practice: it prepares and develops the educator to promote effective reading among learners. This results in learners deriving joy from reading a range of material independently, fluently, and with understanding.

4.6.1.2   Educator School B (EdS B)

Professional development, according to this educator, includes the opportunities she gives herself to acquire the skills, knowledge and training she needs to progress personally and in her career. In her quest to improve, she attended courses offered by NGOs and sponsored by the African Bank.

In order to overcome her challenges, this educator prepares her lessons according to approved methods. Firstly a phase programme is completed for the four terms, detailing the topics/themes chosen. Thereafter a work schedule for Grade 5 is completed for the whole term, detailing the learning area programme or aspects to be taught. Then, on a weekly basis, she prepares her daily lesson plan, which is a more detailed classification of the work schedule. Her preparation shows evidence of resources employed and of learners being given written work. The record indicates that preparation is approved and monitored by management. Additional to this preparation, a plan of work for the term is done, showing content is to be covered, for example, spelling, comprehension, language, composition and reading, and literature and book education/oral communication.

The presentation of lessons is approached with details of work to be followed and learner activity. In teaching reading she adopts various strategies. The activities include word lists,

flash cards, paired reading, story corner and incentives for improved reading. The educator claims that she uses the knowledge and skills offered through training workshops and courses and that, according to her, learners have consequently taken ownership of reading. She accentuated that this approach not only helps her to improve but the learners' confidence levels have also risen.

This is actually her assumption, for which there is no actual proof or evidence, but in the data recorded on Appendix 5, *Response to the learners' reading,* there are indications that every learner made a medium to good effort in reading and that the educator responded with a "Good" to two learners out of five. This could be an indication of learners' growing confidence in their reading ability.

The educator views professional development as being necessary to promote reading literacy. She mentioned that the school has a reading policy and that educators are expected to keep abreast of new and innovative methods of teaching reading. She underscored the fact that her school places a great emphasis on the reading curriculum by making time available on the time-table for reading, and by having a fully functional library in place.

EdS B also gave evidence of feedback received on classroom observations conducted by management, and they call learners at random to assess their reading ability.

Regarding class participation she commented that the learners participate enthusiastically, as was observed during the lesson observation and the data on Appendix 5 of learners' responses. The problem she identified is the language barrier as learners are taught in English, which is not their home language. Learners cannot be given individual attention because of the large class numbers.

She stated that her view on the nature of reading literacy is that it is of crucial importance to all types of learning. For her, continuous professional development brings about changes in educator practice by making them engage in new and creative means to improve reading literacy.

4.6.1.3 Educator School C (EdS C)

Professional development to this educator means keeping abreast of new methods of teaching, and/or facilitating learning. Her current experience in professional development is the attendance of literacy programmes presented by NGOs of the African Bank aimed at the improvement of reading literacy.

This educator prepares her lessons on a daily basis, adopting a lesson plan from the *Spot On* text, the programme for the term, which is photocopied. Then, on a weekly basis, she prepares her daily focus sheet which comprises listening and speaking, phonics, reading, writing, assessment and resources employed. The preparation shows evidence of work done with learners during learning contact time in English. There is evidence recorded on the lesson plan that learners are given written work.

 The methods used in facilitating reading literacy are paired reading, shared reading and reading aloud. The educator stated that her current knowledge base to develop learners' reading literacy is excellent, that she is well versed in the teaching of reading literacy, and that she uses a one-minute reading chart. She mentioned that this works for her and that the learners understand the concepts. They are enthusiastic learners who constantly refer to the charts. Her understanding and facilitating of reading literacy influence classroom practice as the learners are able to understand and grasp concepts quickly. Bright colours, attractive pictures and drawings are used to capture learners' attention.

The educator has attended many development courses such as literacy workshops presented by the Department, phase meetings at school and literacy workshops conducted by the African Bank. She views professional development as being necessary to promote reading literacy, mentioning that it empowers educators. Networking with other schools helps educators to shoulder phase challenges and to overcome problems. She would like to attend courses that deal with discipline and literacy barriers to learning.

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According to the educator, her school places an emphasis on the reading curriculum and the availability and use of reading material to facilitate reading literacy. They have also received resources from the African Bank, which has led to improvements in reading literacy.

EdS C also gave evidence of feedback received on classroom observations conducted by management. They gave her advice on the effective use of resources. When it came to class participation she commented that wall charts are important as they can be as reading material, exposing learners to vocabulary which is classed as incidental reading.

The educator pointed out that the problems encountered in teaching reading literacy, which cause communication barriers communication, is the use of the second language, spelling and poor learner behaviour. She mentioned that the school does not provide programmes and services that involve learners' families. For her reading ability improves the learners in all aspects of learning since it helps them to understand what they are reading and/or learning. She also mentioned that for continuous professional development of reading literacy, workshops must take place, and educators must have new technology and continuous support from the Department of Education, school management team and subject advisors.

4.6.1.4   *Emerging themes*

The following themes emerged from the questionnaire. .A review of these themes in Table 4.36 indicates whether they contribute positively or negatively to the development of reading literacy/proficiency.

Table 4.36: Themes extracted from Questionnaire

Workshops	+	Effective reading	-
Approved methods	+	Resources	-
Advance lesson preparation	+	Innovative methods	+
Working with groups	+	New methods – Methods of facilitating learning	+
Professional development	+	Support – African Bank	+
Equipped classrooms	-	Literacy workshops	+
Language barrier	-		

4.7   Multiple Triangulation Model of Reading Literacy

According to Du Toit (2011:19), citing Zuber-Skerritt (1992), the idea of "multiple method triangulation" is used to gain a more holistic perspective on what happens in a practice – in the context of this study, reading literacy practice. A secondary way of learning about reading practice is to obtain feedback by means of interviews, questionnaires and observations.

Triangulation for the purpose of this study is substantial as different research methods, from different, complementary sources, brought different perspectives with them. For a schematic representation of triangulation in this study, see Figure 4.1, which follows. The principle of multiple triangulations represented in the model (Figure 4.1) indicates how the validity of data collected from one source or by means of a particular method/instrument could be confirmed by comparing it with data collected from other, sources or by other means. The sources of information in my case were school principals, educators and learners. I collected data from these sources by means of semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, questionnaires, and document analysis.

Figure 4.1: Multiple Triangulation model of reading literacy source
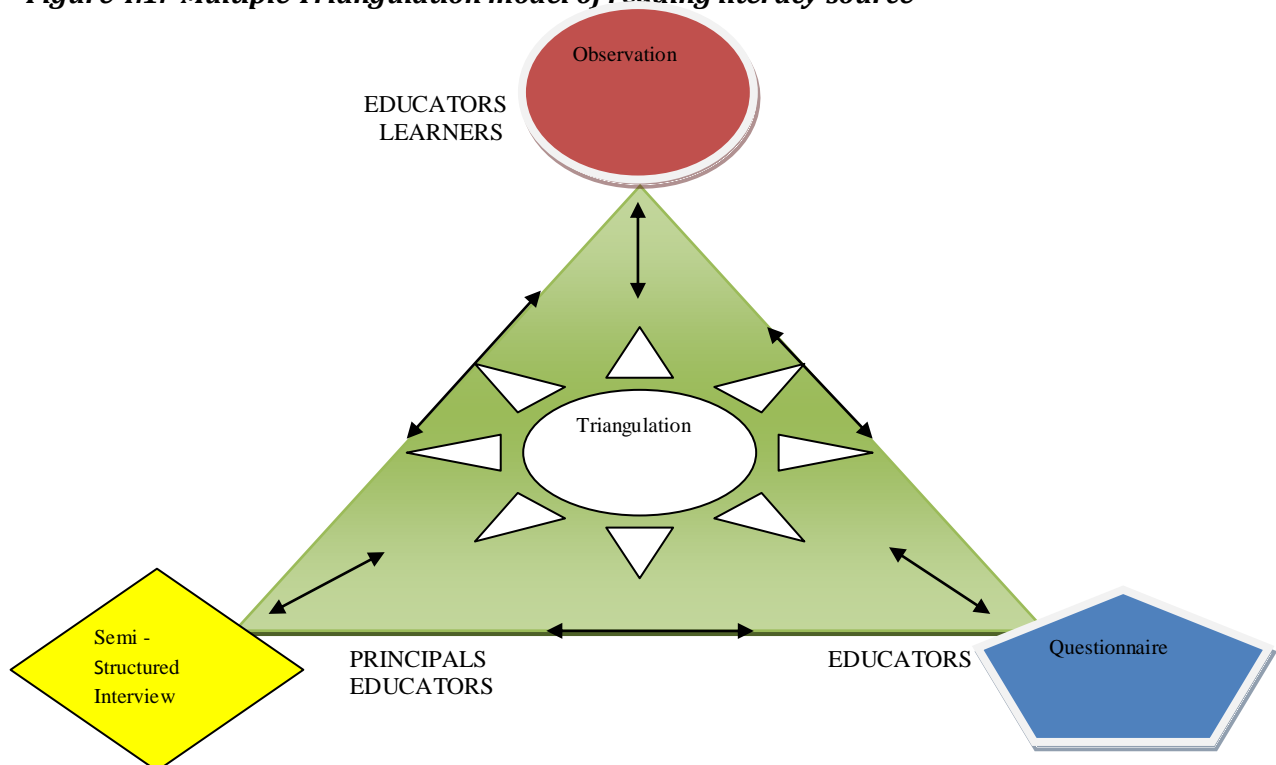
The analysis of integrated data collected by means of interviews, questionnaires and observation uncovered a number of themes that had either a positive or a negative impact on the actual teaching process. The schools, principals, educators, and learners included in my case sample provided me with data which indicate that there is a need for learners to develop and apply lower as well as higher level cognitive skills. Educators therefore have to ensure that the type of questions they ask stimulate the development of thinking at both these levels, not only those at the lower levels as is currently the case.

4.8   Conclusion

The findings presented in this indicate that those who participated in my study – principals and educators - understood that professional development is critical of primary importance for teaching and learning. Professional development programmes need to address educational challenges that are relevant in terms of knowledge and skills and to transform educational needs with effective utilisation of diverse support programmes and services.

The provision of support was hampered by problems with support structures, inadequate experience among personnel and lack of finance or funds and other resources to initiate courses, workshops seminars and learning opportunities. An improvement initiative must feature high-quality professional development, linked to standards, curricular goals and learning opportunities. To satisfy a higher standard of performance to meet demands, a system of support for professional learning with targeted resources must be set up with aligned professional development curricular and competent facilitators to nurture and cultivate development and follow-up with monitoring.

There are also indications that there needs to be stronger interaction between educators so that they can influence one another to address the needs of learners within the reading literacy context. District support for transformation needs to increase since schools currently seem to get more hands on assistance from non- governmental organisations than they do from the Department of Education.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

This chapter concludes my research. The conclusions presented in this chapter have been drawn from my empirical study hence specific recommendations are made in relation to the findings emerging from the empirical study. In addition to this, I recommend the use of the eclectic model for the teaching of reading literacy which I developed on the basis of the theoretical models I presented and referred to in the preceding chapters of my study.

The study has been quite challenging as the school principals and language educators participating in my study have different competencies, not all of which necessarily contribute positively to the improvement of reading literacy. Moreover, in the professional development of educators principals seem to find it difficult to determine educators' levels of performance since these are dependent on various factors.

5.2   Limitations of the study

In my capacity as researcher I acknowledge that, at the time of the study, I was teaching Grade 6 and 7 learners and may thus have been biased in the interpretation of the findings. I was also limited to three interviews with principals and three with educators. Furthermore, the interviewees were free to decide whether or not to respond to any questions being asked or issues being raised.

5.3   Priority for an effective reading literacy responsibility

Since the focus of this study is on educator professional development in the area of reading literacy facilitation, it is necessary to differentiate the various roles involved in the support of its implementation. The table below summarizes these roles.

Table 5.1: Responsibility for reading literacy

NO	COMPONENT	LEARNER	EDUCATOR	PRINCIPAL
1	Language	x	x	x
2	Development	x	x	x
3	Monitor		x	x
4	Clear guidelines and policy			x
5	Intervention programme		x	x
6	Commitment & test programme		x	x
7	Support		x	x

5.4 Consequences

A learner in the foundation phase who cannot read is very likely to repeat grades and eventually drop out of school. During the lesson observations I noted that learners have to assume a greater responsibility for their learning by participating actively in the process of teaching and learning. This is necessary to develop their critical thinking skills. They must also feel free to ask questions in order to better understand their learning needs.

Based on the research findings reported in Chapter 4 I concluded that the negative themes supersede the positive ones. Corrective measures are required to bring about progress in the teaching of reading literacy. On reviewing the findings, different corrective measures were identified, appropriate conclusions were drawn, recommendations were formulated, and interventions suggested. In all of these, the primary consideration is to promote quality and effective teaching and learning.

To t his purpose, i.e. to promote quality learning, I focused on three role players: the learner who is to confront the challenges associated with reading, the educator who has to facilitate reading development, and the principal who acts as the controller. None of these role players can perform the task of reading literacy improvement in isolation.

Major factors found to have a negative impact on the development of learners' reading literacy development and/or literacy levels are language barriers, a lack of parental involvement or support, and the negative behaviour and attitude of learners. Educators lack

development, resources and support while principals need to be updated with leadership knowledge, specifically instructional leadership, management skills in respect of monitoring learning skills in reading literacy development and evaluating strategies used by educators. All of these were clearly indicated during interviews, observation of lessons and in educator responses to questionnaires on the teaching of reading literacy. Each contributor had an impact on the three categories of role players.

Although the target of teaching and learning are learners, the selection of strategies and criteria are the responsibilities of the educator. The strategies adopted in the process of facilitating reading literacy must impact on the learners' acquisition of knowledge and ability to make development possible to improve reading. The focus on reading development implies the need for effective intervention by the educator, with constructive advice being given to learners. The principal and the educator can play a pivotal role to ensure that these actions result in successful reading development.

5.5   Proposed model for learning and reading

During the lesson observation of reading literacy I established that there was a lack of interaction between the learner and educator. The impact of this was that learners did not have the opportunity to ask questions. This resulted in educators not really being able to establish learner abilities skills and potential to develop. Reading is about interaction between educators and learners. Research data indicates that the learners not participating in queries or doubts in lessons are deprived of the development and promotion of quality learning. My own data shows that educators tend to focus on lower level thinking according to Bloom's taxonomy. This is not conducive to promoting reading literacy at a higher level of thinking. Apart from this, educator practices show that there is proof of accommodating different learning styles although to a minimal extent. Educators must know how reading is acquired by learners and facilitate their learning appropriately. For this reason it is important to design a learning style model that combines learning and reading styles.

My model *(see Figure 5.1)* is an adaptation of the Herrmann four quadrants model that represents the four thinking structures of the brain. Learning experiences are constructed to

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accommodate and utilise cognitive-reading functions in all four quadrants. This presupposes that all four brain quadrants are included in reading activities.
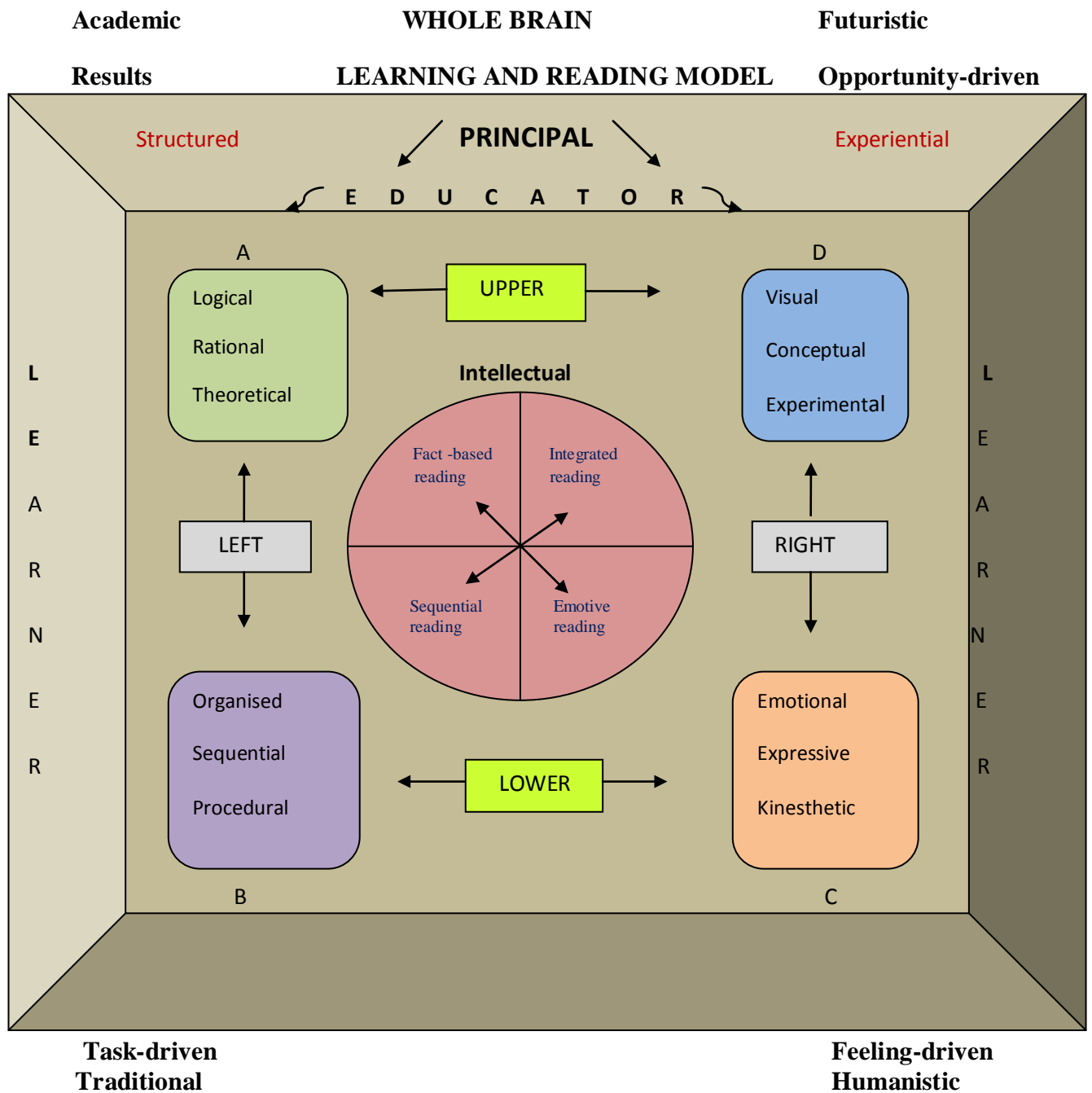
Academic   **WHOLE BRAIN**   **Futuristic**

Results   **LEARNING AND READING MODEL**   **Opportunity-driven**

Figure 5.1: A whole brain learning and reading model

During the construction and integration of my learning and reading model *(Figure 5.1)* new meaning was discovered based on and adapted from the original model of Herrmann's *whole brain teaching/training and learning model* in Chapter 2. The model below is an integration of the literature study, my practical experience and the results of my empirical study. I also used the inputs of principals and educators to adjust my own perspective and to fine-tune my model.

In terms of this model the principal monitors the educators and the learners in the implementation of reading literacy. Educators monitor the readers (learners) and provide feedback to management. The educator adopts the learning and reading model to facilitate reading with learners.

I believe that this model could serve as a framework for the development of reading literacy but its application should be further researched. It is recommended that the application of the principles of whole brain reading as represented in the model should be investigated and piloted, or tried out, by educators responsible for facilitating reading literacy. The recommended way of investigating such innovation is action research since it helps educators become practitioner-researchers.

The brain is divided into two hemispheres (left and right) which are interconnected, forming two left halves and two right halves. Each quarter (figure 5.2) has very distinct clusters of cognitive functions. They are categorised as A, B, C and D thinking processes in the model. All four quadrants, i.e. all the thinking cognitive functions, are active during effective learning. Cognitive functions are accommodated when teaching activities are constructed to comply with a learner's preferred mode of thinking/learning. They are utilised when learning activities are constructed in such a way that the cognitive functions associated with all four quadrants of the model are used.

As indicated earlier, the model illustrated in Figure 5.1 is an adaptation of the Herrmann four quadrants brain model and provides a basis for determining choices of control required within the four equal quadrants of the brain. The left (structured) mode in an individual is concerned with logical, rational, theoretical issues, activated in Quadrant A. The organised, sequential and procedural elements of the learning/teaching activities are found in Quadrant B. The

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experiential right-brain mode, which involves activities that deal with emotional, interpersonal and kinaesthetic thinking, is a Quadrant C activity, with visual, conceptual and experimental issues and activities belonging to Quadrant D. The inclusion of all these modes in learning/teaching activities ensures the use of the whole brain. Educational activities that implement all the modes will ensure that all learners' preferred thinking styles are accommodated and less preferred thinking modes are activated /exercised.

A-quadrant thinking preference expects:	D-quadrant thinking preference expects:
Generalize from specifics Precise, to the point information Theory and logical rationales Proof of validity Research references Textbook readings Numbers, data	Fun and spontaneity Playful approaches Pictures, metaphors, overviews Discovering and exploration Quick pace and variety in format Opportunity to experiment Originality and imagination
B-quadrant thinking preference expects:	C-quadrant thinking preference expects:
Organised, consistent approach Staying on track, on time Complete subject chunks A beginning, middle and end Practice and evaluate Practical applications Examples Clear instructions/expectations Order and control	Group discussion Sharing, expressing ideas Feeling based Hands on learning Personal connection Emotional involvement User-friendly learning Use of all senses Intuitive and understanding Expressive, talkative and friendly

Figure 5.2: Expectations with thinking preferences in the four quadrants

For example, if the learning content contains fact-based data and research results in a logical order, a learner with a thinking preference for the A-quadrant will feel comfortable if the content is presented in a lecture-type instruction. For a learner with a thinking preference for the C-quadrant, facilitation of learning pertaining to data and research results should be constructed to include group discussion and personal involvement.

Effective reaching implies and awareness in educators of their own thinking preferences and the implications thereof for their teaching/training practices. Although an individual may favour cognitive activities associated with a specific quadrant, "both hemispheres contribute to everything, but contribute differently"

5.6 Conclusions

Teaching, like other professions, is a process that requires comprehensive and practical professional learning aimed at the development of the requisite knowledge and skills, to facilitate reading literacy in this case.

The provision of educator development on the one hand, and the facilitation of learning on the other, need to be balanced against each other. Interactive reading time must bring pleasure and enjoyment to educator and learners alike, with a variety of books being displayed and learners being encouraged to choose their own books. This should be done in a constructive manner in accordance with rules.

Interactive reading could include peer reading, group reading and oral reading, with learners being encouraged to apply phonic skills, word recognition and decoding and helping each other throughout. The educator should emphasize meaningful reading and ask learners for feedback afterwards.

Bilingual educators in English and isiZulu are best equipped to support learners in understanding what they are reading and completing their tasks. All educators should, however, apply appropriate, relevant knowledge and skills in addressing the challenges of teaching and, to be successful, they should use the relevant content knowledge and skills. The focus of professional development must be on equipping educators with relevant processes, purposes and understanding of reading literacy and these should be linked to assessment and techniques of facilitating learning. Equipping educators could be a task allocated to management or to subject advisors.

The results of learner assessments in the area of reading literacy reveals only what the learners do not know, not what skills educators can build on. When looking at assessing

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progress, educators lack systemic information of how learners integrate and interpret concepts when learning to read. The availability of knowledge to detect such problems early in a child's schooling would inform educators appropriately of what action is required and what adjustments could be made. This, too, requires professional development.

5.7   Recommendations

It is evident that there are social barriers to progress in reading literacy. However, these barriers can be overcome by changing the mindset of learners. Within the education system many educators would evade changes instead of working for a common purpose to contribute to learners' progress to become effective readers.

Considering the assessment outcomes relating to the performance levels of learners in reading, there is a need to examine the validity of the measures used. It is important to consider whether performance differences across the proficiency categories are consistent.

Educators need to adapt the knowledge, skills and attitudes of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive skills, and the whole brain learning and reading model (Figure 5.1) to comply with a learner's preferred mode of thinking/learning.

Based on the findings emerging from the analysis of my research data, I would like to offer a few suggestions, or recommendations, regarding the development of learners' reading ability and, by implication, their literacy levels.

5.7.1 Use theoretical models as basis for changes to the facilitation of reading development

Informed by the theoretical model discussed earlier I would recommend that educators should use multiple approaches, techniques and strategies to help learners improve their reading ability. When dealing with comprehension, for example, it is a good idea to use the three methods strategy, that is:

- First, before reading, do a prior knowledge assessment which focuses on what the learner knows, predicts, or visualizes about the story.

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- Second, involve learners by stimulating discussion after the story has been read for the first time.

- Third, have learners read quietly by themselves, interpreting questions on their own/ this is a process of self-enquiry.

Setting directives as a requirement to be followed to achieve the ideal for reading literacy is a necessity. Facilitators need to develop and use positive methods to promote learners' developing reading ability by using step by step innovative strategies to help novice readers to become skilled readers. These would require, amongst others, that:

a. Educators should formulate appropriate learning outcomes to guide reading literacy levels. Outcomes can be achieved when the directives given corresponds to skills required for the grade or age level that is being developed. The educator must construct appropriate building block directives and check the learner's ability, brain activity and potential to read.

b. Educators should supervise the assessment and evaluation of outcomes. Appropriate supervision in the sequencing of reading activities is required. This is achieved when the educator has clear evaluation methods and criteria against which to appraise learners' reading according to their level of skills development.

c. The Department of Education should direct and coordinate process required for the achievement of objectives. The dynamics for an optimal facilitating and learning situation must be established by the Department of Education. Departmental officials must create of maintain governmental structures that guarantee transformation. Disciplinary strength should ensure the realization of all objective in a coordinated and coherent manner. This requires skilled and proficient educators and principals who are committed and able to regularly monitoring and evaluate those in their charge, and who have the commitment to re-engineer the entire education system if this is what is needed to realize innovation goals.

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d. School management should monitor and evaluate reading literacy. School management must be effective in implementing decisions and policy in order to achieve outcomes by focusing rigidly on facilitating and learning. This results in educators monitoring learners' performance constantly.

e. The Department of Education should launch intervention progammes to ensure that reading literacy improves. Monitoring and evaluation are a positive intervention in determining the performance level of learners. Such intervention programmes allow for immediate adjustment and change to inadequate processes.

f. Follow-up programmes are crucial. In order to assist and support learners to achieve results in reading literacy it is necessary to develop additional programmes that aim to motivate and ensure long-term reading success. A follow-up programme is used to verify the accuracy of the assessment that has been implemented. It also determines the effectiveness of any measures used to determine the effects of reading literacy.

g. The roles of the learner, educator and principal have to be established so that each becomes part of the process of reading literacy improvement. Once the role players contribute positively to the teaching and learning process every learner will be able to read. In each reading literacy programme at school, there should be a responsible role development promoter who is responsible for one or more components for reading. This process should be managed by an immediate authoritative guide, who monitors and evaluates each component of reading activity. The level of support provided by the educator is initially necessary to guide the learner to become an independent competent and skilled reader. This interactive process is schematically presented in Figure 5.1.

5.7.2 Promote the improvement of reading literacy

In the first instance I would like to recommend that school-based professional development be used as a means of motivating educators to improve reading literacy across the curriculum by using some of the strategies highlighted in my research findings. Even though educators reviewed different strategies to address reading literacy they could not substantiate how the

development of reading skills was carried out except that the focus is on peer, group reading and oral communication skills. I would recommend therefore that all educators, irrespective of their learning area undergo some sort of professional development which will equip them with reading literacy facilitation skills.

Professional development helps educators to grow professionally, enabling them to achieve whatever goals they have set for themselves because it gives them the opportunity of acquiring the skills, knowledge and attitudes they need to progress in their careers. In addition to this, professional development could help them educators to overcome some of the challenges they face on a daily basis since the knowledge they acquire might provide them with problem-solving skills or other solutions to their problems. Finally, without professional development educators will not be able to change education by using different facilitation methods of facilitating to improve reading literacy.

The educators who participated in my study indicated that the workshops they attended equipped them with tools they needed to teach reading. For example, when learners do not know certain words, they could be taught to pick up a picture card, link the word to a picture and write the complete word. In order to meet such challenges, educators should prepare lessons according to approved methods. Different methods of assessing reading skills could be introduced: the missing letters in a word could be suggested by providing learners with a picture related to the word. In trying to link the picture to the word, learners will have to think about the word and this will help them identify the missing letters.

During the lesson, educators could encourage learners to participate by asking relevant questions on the passage concerned. This would encourage learner participation and enable them to demonstrate their understanding of the content. The preparation of the lessons should also reflect the use of learning media and resources employed relevant to the reading task on hand, and there should be evidence in educators' preparation that learners are given written work. Educator records should, moreover, indicate that preparation is being checked, approved and monitored by management on a weekly basis.

The School A educator stated that the reading literacy level of some learners requires few exercises focusing on a particular skill, while others need more and constant attention.

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Learners sometimes deduce their own meaning through the text. Educators must continue to focus on skills exercises as these enable the learners to develop abilities such as constructing meaning and interpretation. Continuous professional development brings about changes in educator practice: it prepares and develops the educator to promote effective reading among learners in the classroom. These learning skills result in learners finding enjoyment in reading a range of texts with some measure of independence, fluency and understanding.

Strategies that could help learners improve their reading ability include, *inter alia,* the use of word lists, flash cards, paired reading, story corner and incentives for improved reading. Educators could use knowledge and skills acquired from workshops and courses attended, implementing these in the planning and facilitation of reading lessons. Facilitating the process in terms of new information and in innovative ways generates would generate enthusiasm for reading in learners, resulting in their reading more regularly and improving their reading ability and confidence at the same time.

Schools should draw up reading policies and educators need to keep abreast of new and innovative methods to facilitate reading. In making time available on the time-table for reading and for visits to fully functional libraries and/or by encouraging educators to start library corners in their classes, the school would be sending out the message that reading is important across the curriculum. It follows that reading will become the norm rather than the exception and that learners' reading ability will improve as a consequence.

5.7.3 Improve the current status of reading literacy facilitation

The findings emerging from my research indicate the presence of strong viewpoints amongst educators and principals regarding the manner in which reading literacy should be undertaken in schools as well as on the contribution that professional development could make in the area of reading literacy development.

The study provides a detailed account of the school contexts, biographical data of educators and the development of learners in reading literacy. The practices adopted by educators to cope is emphasised by highlighting the strategies they use and the knowledge they acquired from classroom practices to transform learners' reading ability. These accounts are intended

to yield an understanding of how professional development in reading literacy and school development programmes could contribute to the achievement of learning outcomes, and how the role played by school leadership could support the culture of transformation.

Currently the internal school reading programmes are based on internal reading syllabi developed from those provided in the *Foundations for Learning* document and/or by NGO's and the African Bank. What were found lacking were adaptable strategies to address issues of reading literacy and interventions to accommodate learners who were unable to read. My recommendation is that there should also be directives from other stakeholders, for example the Provincial Department of Education.

Educators find that a lack of time inhibits the development of reading skills. According to them half an hour a day is insufficient given large class sizes and learners currently poor reading ability. It is recommended therefore that rigid time frames be set for reading to show that reading is important. Reading must be prioritized and learners have to be reminded of the importance of reading.

Principals are of the opinion that the home does not recognise or complement the input of the school. In most cases homework is not completed as learners totally rely on the school. When learners come from a background where they do not know English, they do not understand the medium of teaching and learning. There is no continuity when learners go home as they interact with their friends and family speaking isiZulu. The attitude of learners poses a problem at school, especially for those who come from backgrounds where learners live with grandparents. An investigation into this matter is urgent and needs to be prioritized.

Finally, as regards contextual and background factors, I would recommend that the questions asked by principals of the schools that served as my research sites be used as point of departure for school-based efforts to improve learners' reading literacy. Perhaps these questions could be discussed at a staff meeting, followed by an in-depth investigation aimed at finding the answers, and concluding with the development and implementation of an intervention strategy based on the results of the investigation. The questions asked, in no particular order, were:

i.   Why are learners not achieving the desired reading level?

ii.   Can the poor reading ability of learners be attributed to a disjuncture between the language of instruction at school and the home language, resulting in serious barriers to learning?

iii.   Do learner attitudes, which result from parents not being fully involved or supportive of their children, undermine reading literacy development efforts by schools and educators?

iv.   Is it true that learners perform poorly in reading because there is lack of parental supervision?

5.7.4 Strengthen the current educator intermediate phase knowledge base to develop learner reading literacy

Principals have a very positive view of experienced educators and rely on them to be creative and to promote reading literacy. They indicated, though, that negative attitudes are detrimental to professional development and that, when educators have been in the profession for some time they get into a rut and are reluctant to attend development workshops. Those who do have found workshops that take place after school hours very useful.

The principal of School B indicated that there seemed to be a steady decline in reading literacy as learners do not make the effort to improve. Also, their reading is not age appropriate, which means that they are not reading according to their age level. Although educators are skilled, the desired improvement and the desired results in English proficiency or literacy are not attained because of the language barrier to teaching and learning. Some of the principals blame this on the inexperience of novice educators. According to these principals, inexperienced educators simply are not creative and not much development takes place to guide them. They, especially, require knowledge and skills on how to identify reading disabilities in learners and to take steps to give them access to appropriate remedial support. I would recommend that knowledgeable professionals in this field are invited to identify the problems in teaching reading and to be of assistance to the learner and/or the educators concerned.

5.7.5 Use action research in the development of intermediate phase educators involved in reading literacy

The interviews with principals revealed that they feel strongly about leadership and management in professional development, especially where decisions and procedures have an impact on staff development. They argue that educators in a school with the right atmosphere and appropriate teaching and learning attitudes could become the most important resources in education. This, they argue, is what management should achieve, though staff development and monitoring of curriculum activities.

The analysis of data collected in my research indicates that monitoring is one of a number of strategies that have a marked impact on teacher effectiveness in reading literacy facilitation, especially if management is serious about literacy development. I would therefore recommend that regular monitoring, especially of reading lessons, followed by constructive feedback becomes the norm in schools. Not only will this inform management of the quality of educators' planning, preparation and presentation but the post-monitoring discussions would stimulate reflective thinking and a commitment to self-development in staff members. This attitude, in turn, could form the basis for action research as a school and/or class activity.

My own action research, combined with my observation of educators' reading lessons, indicate a need to reflect on the kind of questions asked of learners during reading literacy lessons. Educators should focus on encouraging learners to use higher order thinking in answering questions. Questions should be structured in a manner that focuses learner attention on important elements of a lesson that should result in better comprehension and correct responses. The inclusion of probing and lower order cognitive questions *(factual, closed, direct, recall and knowledge questions)* and higher order cognitive questions *(open-ended, interpretive, evaluative, inquiry, inferential, and synthesis questions)* must develop intellectual thinking and promote academic growth and achievement.

Questions should create the opportunity for learners to demonstrate how they construct meaning and interpret and evaluate reading texts. The interaction between educators asking questions and the learners responding to these is also important. Questions could be asked in

different ways to reveal learners' thinking abilities. This can be then correlated with the levels of Bloom's taxonomy showing learner achievement Sometimes higher order questions inhibit learners' ability to think creatively or differently.

5.7.6 Change intermediate phase educator practice regarding reading literacy facilitation

The principal of School B mentioned that, in order to ensure that they benefited from foundation of learning programmes educators brainstormed the programme prior to implementing it to improve learners reading literacy. Their consultations were such that it ensured effective direction on foundational learning and guided educators on how to engage in improving reading literacy.

Principal B mentioned that the challenge here is to establish exactly what is happening in relation to the foundations for learning program as the information it provides is very broad and general without really addressing the resources required to achieve actual reading skills. Also, confusion occurs when the educator does not know what the assessment next to the actual reading skill is and what is to be taught. Clarity is needed with regards to form of the assessment and how this form of testing will allow for development of learner skills. This should be done as a matter of urgency given the importance currently attached to assessment results throughout the system.

The principal of School B stated that "reading is something that one has to go on practising and that this is sadly lacking". In order for learners to progress in reading educators should explicitly teach of sounds, word recognition, and phonics and use related approaches to build through to individual or self-reading. This is also my recommendation, with the proviso that these approaches take note of the need to address the whole brain and different cognitive levels.

Schools enlist the help of the church, the Rotary Club and NGOs, and/or use additional people to do voluntary reading development at school. Others use inspirational people, role models and former learners to communicate the importance of reading information to the children and parents to create a reading transformation. Parents have a very big role to play

in their children's education and it is really essential to get parents on board. Educators seem to gain much from these initiatives. I would recommend that they be maintained but that the Department should ensure that the approaches propagated by these groups are aligned to the demands of the official curriculum.

The educator's role includes getting learners to a level where they are able to use basic reading skills needed to improve their understanding of the English language as well as the content of other subjects. Reading must be incorporated in all learning areas and monitored regularly for development to take place. This could bear fruit if more resources and space are provided as teaching becomes difficult because of the large number of learners per class. The English educators' responsibility is to ensure that the learners are able to read and to grasp the English vocabulary.

Educators' greatest challenge is to get learners to converse with them in English, especially when the educators are not IsiZulu-literate. It is advisable at the initial stage of schooling to have an educator who is bilingual as it is very frustrating for the learner not to comprehend the educator. During the initial classes the educator must occasionally switch between languages to explain or make the learner understand concepts.

The principal and school management must engage in class visits quite regularly and should have an assessment tool to assess educator and learner output. The principal and Head of Department must set specific dates for educator class records and preparation books to be monitored. They must also monitor learners' work for quality and standard. Management must support and assist learners in reading by calling learners at random to test their reading ability. Should learners be identified as not being able to read, the monitor concerned should inform the teacher and give him/her constructive feedback on classroom practice.

The strategies indicated as activities in the lesson plan must be implemented by learners reading together, learners reading alone, shared reading and the story method of teaching reading. The educator must work with groups of learners according to their ability where more attention is given to the weakest group using regular repetition and reading practice. A learner's performance can be improved by using phonics on simple sounds with words that are difficult to read. This approach helps to establish a link with the learner. The focus

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should be on the learners who have difficulty to pronounce words - pointing to a specific word helps the learner to understand the word both heard (spoken) and seen (read). It is undoubtedly true that no meaningful learning can take place without understanding and comprehension of the text.

Educators should become skilled and equipped with knowledge and skills needed to facilitate reading by attending courses that deal with the development of reading with learners. The school should prioritize reading by making available library resources as reading material to facilitate reading literacy process and even by equipping each classroom with a reading corner.

Networking with other schools is necessary as it helps educators in phase challenges: educators are enabled to overcome problems when advice on the effective use of resources and ways to maintain and promote reading literacy are shared. Continuous professional development can bring about changes in educator practice.

In order to reach the stage where all learners are able to read well requires the co-operation of stakeholders involved in children's education, together with motivation from school management. Everything needs to be implemented with much commitment, determination and thorough planning because every learner must pay undivided attention to ensure that reading ability improves because it is the foundation for all forms of learning.

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Appendix 4

OBSERVATION SHEET : READING LITERACY
QUESTIONING CHECKLIST

EDUCATOR : **School A**
SCHOOL : **A**
DATE : 2011.03. 22

FACILITATIVE NATURE OF QUESTIONING

EPISODE NO	TIME	EDUCATOR	LEARNER	PROBING QUESTIONS	FACTUAL QUESTIONS	CONTENT BASED	INFERENTIAL QUESTIONS	OPINION QUESTIONS	COMPLEX QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	KNOWLEDGE ED	KNOWLEDGE L	COMPREHENSION ED	COMPREHENSION L	APPLICATION ED	APPLICATION L	ANALYSIS ED	ANALYSIS L	SYNTHESIS ED	SYNTHESIS L	EVALUATION ED	EVALUATION L	A	B	C	D	
1	1 - 5	x			1	1				1	11												11		1		3
2	6 - 10	x				111				111111	1		11										111		111111		9
3	11 - 15	x			111	11111				1	111		11111										11111111		1		9
4	16 - 20	x				111					1		11										111				3
5	21 - 25		x			1				1		1											1		1		2
6	26 - 30		x			111								111									111				3
	TOTAL				4	16				9	7	4	9											20		9		29
									20	9												20					
															155												

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Appendix 5

OBSERVATION SHEET : READING LITERACY

EDUCATOR : **School B**

QUESTIONING CHECKLIST

SCHOOL : **B**

DATE : 2011 03. 23

FACILITATIVE NATURE OF QUESTIONING

BLOOMS TAXONOMY | WHOLE BRAIN THINKING

EPISODE NO	TIME	EDUCATOR	LEARNER	PROBING QUESTIONS	FACTUAL QUESTIONS	CONTENT BASED	INFERENTIAL QUESTIONS	OPINION QUESTIONS	COMPLEX QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	KNOWLEDGE ED	KNOWLEDGE L	COMPREHENSION ED	COMPREHENSION L	APPLICATION ED	APPLICATION L	ANALYSIS ED	ANALYSIS L	SYNTHESIS ED	SYNTHESIS L	EVALUATION ED	EVALUATION L	A	B	C	D	
1	1 - 5	x		1111	11111111	111	1	1			111111111		111111				11						11111111 1111111			11	17
2	6 - 10	x			11111111		11	1	1		11111111		11				11						11111111 11			11	12
3	11 - 15	x			1111111	11				11	1111		11111										11111111 1		11		11
4	16 - 20	x		1	11111111					1	11111111						1						11111111	1	1		10
5	21 - 25	x			111111111		1				111111111				1		1						11111111 1	1			10
6	26 - 30	x			111111111111		11111			1	111111111 111111		1						1				11111111 1		11		18
	TOTAL			5	52	7	8	2		4	52		14		1		6		1				67	6	5		78
									74	4												74					

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OBSERVATION SHEET : READING LITERACY EDUCATOR : **School C**

QUESTIONING CHECKLIST SCHOOL : **C**

DATE : 2011 04. 21

FACILITATIVE NATURE OF QUESTIONING

EPISODE NO	TIME	EDUCATOR	LEARNER	PROBING QUESTIONS	FACTUAL QUESTIONS	CONTENT BASED	INFERENTIAL QUESTIONS	OPINION QUESTIONS	COMPLEX QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	KNOWLEDGE ED	KNOWLEDGE L	COMPREHENSION ED	COMPREHENSION L	APPLICATION ED	APPLICATION L	ANALYSIS ED	ANALYSIS L	SYNTHESIS ED	SYNTHESIS L	EVALUATION ED	EVALUATION L	A	B	C	D	
																								BLOOMS TAXONOMY				WHOLE BRAIN THINKING
1	1 - 5	x				111	1			11			111				1						111	1	11		6
2	6 - 10	x			1	111				11			1111										1111		11		6
3	11 - 15	x			111	111				111	1111		11										111111		111		9
4	16 - 20	x			111	11				111	111		11										11111		111		8
5	21 - 25	x			1	11					1		11										111				3
6	26 - 30	x				111	1			1111			111						1				111		1111		8
	TOTAL				8	16	2			14	8		16				1		1				24	1	15		
								26		14												26					40

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