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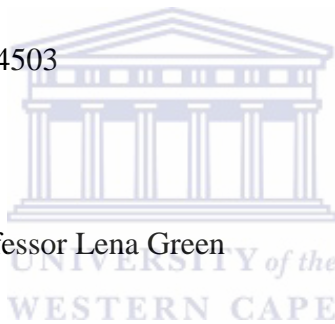
Faculty of Education

Title: The perceptions of Intermediate Phase educators about the
                      implementation of Stories for Thinking in one Western Cape
                      Education Department region.

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Vygotsky, Matthew Lipman, IAPC.

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned hereby declare that *The perceptions of Intermediate Phase educators about the implementation of Stories for Thinking in one Western Cape Education Department region,* is my own original work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

RONALD AGULHAS

Signed: ………………………………… Date: …………………

ABSTRACT

South Africa had a change in government and in education after the 1994 elections. A new curriculum was introduced and some of the underlying critical outcomes were to develop the learners to become critical thinkers. The methodology by which to teach these outcomes was not clear. An intervention programme, Philosophy for Children (P4C) is used in some countries across the world to promote thinking. Research across the world has shown that this programme has the ability to enhance the cognitive abilities of learners exposed to it. Stories for Thinking (SFT) is an intervention programme based on the principles of Philosophy for Children and was introduced in some schools in an Education District of the Western Cape. This study investigates the perceptions of Intermediate Phase educators about the implementation of Stories for Thinking in this Education District. Educators were asked their strengths and challenges of the approach, their way of using it and the support they received. A qualitative research method was used and data were gathered to answer the research questions by means of questionnaires and interviews. Research findings indicate that educators perceived that Stories for Thinking was able to enhance the reading ability of the learners, it showed a significant improvement in their confidence levels, and a positive change in their general behaviour. Language was seen as a barrier to learning, but the evidence indicates that the community of inquiry can be used as a tool to overcome some of the barriers. It seems as if educators valued the support from the project leaders. It is concluded that this kind of intervention programme is worth introducing as long as all the role-players play their part and the setting is conducive.

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- The educators who worked so tirelessly in the SFT project made it very easy for me to do my research. Their share in this study does not go by unnoticed.

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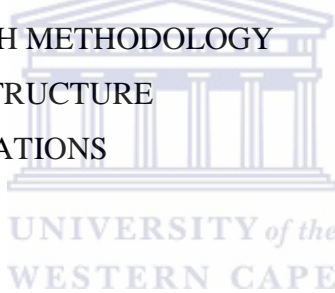
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Abstract

Acknowledgements

CHAPTER 1

1.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter will briefly explain the context of education in South Africa and the cognitive aspects of the curriculum. It will also describe the aim of the study, and give a brief synopsis of the methodology, theoretical framework and the scope of the study. In addition, the general structure of the thesis will be summarized. Some terminology that is relevant to the study will also be clarified.

1.2   CONTEXT OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa had a change in government after the 1994 elections. This newly formed democratically elected government had the enormous task of bringing all the different education departments (18 in total) in South Africa under one National Education Department rule. According to DoE (2009) this drastic step was necessary to promote the new constitution; rebuild a divided nation and to establish and promote a sense of national identity.

The National Department of Education tried to formulate and introduce, in a short space of time, an education system that was according to their research and knowledge acceptable to all the citizens of the country. Harley and Wedekind (2004: 195) describe it in the following way: "When the new democratic government assembled, one of its key strategic and symbolic challenges was the rapid transformation of the school curriculum. The ensuing change in the form of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was of a scale arguably unparalleled in the history of curriculum change". Because of the aforementioned it was inevitable for C2005 to have flaws. The implementation of C2005 was reviewed by the Department of Education in 2000 and after looking critically and dissecting it, it was decided to make some amendments. Out of this

process the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), subsequently known as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), was born (RNCS, 2003).

In the Foreword of the RNCS's Teacher's Guide for the Development of Learning Programmes, the then Director General of Education said that "we are now convinced that educators implementing Curriculum 2005 have gained skills, experience, knowledge and techniques that have provided them with a base for engaging with the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 Schools" (RNCS, 2003, no page number).

Harley and Wedekind (2004:200) allude to the fact that the Department of Education had at that stage no choice, but to provide crash course training to educators. However, they criticize the original training that was supposed to prepare educators for the amendments to the curriculum. They also mention that the training was uneven because it was outsourced to the NGO`s and also because it relied on the cascade model (those who received the training must train the others). Educators were thus not sufficiently trained and equipped as the Director General so hopefully put it (RNCS, 2003). The educators in the field were still not happy with the curriculum.

The curriculum was once again reviewed in 2009 by a panel of experts that was appointment by the current National Minister of Basic Education. The minister reacted to the complaints that were made by all the role players involved in education in South Africa over a number of years. Their specific task was to "investigate the nature of the challenges and problems experienced in the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement and to develop recommendations designed to improve the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement" (DoE, 2009:5). They identified five key areas around which their investigation was centered.

The areas were:
  ➢ Curriculum policy and guideline documents
  ➢ Transition betwe- 2 -en grades and phases

- ➤ Assessment, particularly continuous assessment
- ➤ Learning and Teaching Support materials (particularly textbooks)
- ➤ Teacher support and training (for curriculum implementation) (DoE, 2009)

Transition between grades is the only one in my opinion that was not so much a concern to educators. It seems as if the administrators knew all along what the frustrations of educators were and it is a good sign that they are trying to do something about it. The broad recommendation from the task team is the following: "a coherent, clear, simple Five Year plan to Improve Teaching and Learning across the schooling system needs to be developed and adhered to; it must be clearly and widely communicated to the nation…" (DoE, 2009:7).

As an educator, I do hope that this plan will indeed help to strengthen the education in our country and that the time lost through "fighting" for new measures will not be in vain.
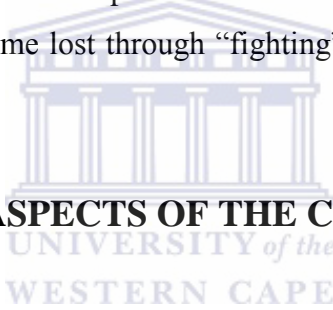
1.3 COGNITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CURRICULUM

The RNCS, NCS and the review of the task team retained the broad conceptual goals of the original curriculum C2005 which include a number of Critical Cross Field Outcomes. "Critical and Developmental Outcomes, which underpin teaching and learning across the South African school curriculum, are retained" (RNCS, 2003:1) The task team also mentioned that "An aspect of Curriculum 2005 that remained and usefully framed the social or general aims of the curriculum were the well received and supported Critical and Developmental Outcomes" (DoE, 2009:13). In both of the two review processes it was made clear that the Critical and Developmental Outcomes cannot be replaced or taken out of the equation.

The Critical Outcomes cannot be changed or replaced because they form an integral part of the national curriculum. (RNCS, 2003) The following are two of the Critical Outcomes of particular reference in this study.

1. "Learners must be able to identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;"

2. "Learners must be able to work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organization, and community (RNCS, 2002:11)"

The first abovementioned outcome expects and implies that children should develop the ability to be critical thinkers. Outcome two emphasises that learners should work together and implies respect. Theory suggests that children are unlikely to develop these skills on their own and they need guidance from educators to help them to overcome this hurdle. If critical thinking is such a major issue for the learning area developers then surely something must be put in place to achieve these cross field outcomes. The NCS does not give guidance or even suggest how these critical outcomes should be taught by the educators, but it is expecting and implying that learners should become critical thinkers. It was left to the educators to find ways and means to teach these outcomes.

In addition it was also expected of educators to be Learning Programme developers (RNCS, 2003). Educators were also handed a curriculum that they must make work at all costs. Learning Area advisors, Circuit Managers and District Offices each appear to have their own set of rules and their own set of paperwork. Every one interpreted the policies in their own particular way. (DoE, 2009) My personal engagement and discussions with educators from different areas or districts also confirms the abovementioned statement.

The workload for educators is promulgated by the PAM document *(Government Gazette* No. 19767, 1999). The administrative workload has become unbearable for educators who have to teach all the learning areas, be on pastoral duty, do extra mural activities, and still attend parent evenings or Governing Body meetings. Each post level within a school has different duties and responsibilities including the ones mentioned above.

After years of complaining from the educators, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) embarked on a campaign in 2008 to assist educators with the interpretation of the curriculum and Work Schedules. They list some of the following reasons in the Foreword of these documents.

> "to demystify OBE (Outcome Based Education) and the NCS (National Curriculum Statement)"
> "to ensure that educators have a common understanding of the learning outcomes and assessment standards"
> "to ensure that educators address the prescribed knowledge and skills in the National Curriculum Statement" (WCED, 2008: no page number).

This has had a major effect in boosting the morale of educators throughout the province. These documents, however still do not address the critical need of the educators on ground level. The Chief Director: Curriculum Development of the WCED, says that "Policy implementation is not an uncomplicated event. It is a process of interpretation that spans over a period of time" (WCED, 2008: no page number). This is indeed true because if there is no clear cut document, the opinion of anybody is the norm. Their concern and cry for help still is, "how do I teach the critical outcomes and how do I get the learners to be critical thinkers"?

Educators must first realize and believe that it is of the utmost importance that learners should be able to think for themselves. Thinking is important in every phase of our lives and guides children as well as educators to discern between right and wrong and make informed decisions. Cowley (2004) says that thinking is the one thing that differentiates humans from animals. She says that thinking is important in the classroom for the following reasons:

> It gives a sense of ownership
> It applies what is learnt and thought
> It gives sense of individuality
> It fits the work to the class

➤ It fits the work to the individual

The critical thinking skills that the NCS speaks so clearly about are encapsulated in the ideas of Cowley (2004), and she speaks clearly about the end result of what can be achieved when critical thinking skills are developed within our learners. When they express themselves it will be their own thoughts, because nobody can think alike. Out of any class size there will also be differentiation in how the learners think, because the levels of thinking will also differ. All learners can think, but all learners are also able to think critically. It is this quality of thinking that provides the challenge for our educators within the South African education context.

The NCS has provided us with the challenge to look for methods to engage our learners in critical and analytical thinking. The resources and the literature have been provided and some are still being developed to guide our educators as well as our learners to become critical thinkers.

Langford (1989), after studying the work of Piaget, Bruner, Gagné and Ausubel says that educators should study cognitive development because they must be aware of why they are teaching in a particular way. They should also know what method is best to reach each and every individual child. This will at least ensure that the educator has some idea as to what goes in the mind of the child and also what the developmental level of the child is.

A possible solution to the overcoming of at least part of the abovementioned problem is to develop and implement separate learning programmes that can facilitate critical thinking in learners and help achieve one of the outcomes of the NCS. One such programme is the Stories for Thinking programme. These booklets have been modeled on Philosophy for Children (P4C) which was designed by the philosopher, Matthew Lipman.

Two key elements in the Philosophy for Children programme are the development of the classroom as a community of inquiry and the use of stories that reflect real situations in the classroom, thereby creating a platform for communication that is relevant to the children in a specific classroom. Stories for Thinking (SFT) materials which are based on P4C were developed by local educators to promote critical and creative thinking in learners and to develop respect. A manual on how to use these booklets has also been developed (Green, 2008). This locally developed programme based on Lipman's Philosophy for Children was introduced in selected primary schools in one of the regions of the Western Cape Education Department between 2007 and 2009.

This programme however, needs to be evaluated to find out if it is achieving its objectives and to identify strengths and weaknesses (challenges) and make suggestions for its improvement and streamlining.

1.4 STATEMENTS OF OBJECTIVES

The aim of my research was, therefore to investigate the perceptions of the educators who participated in the SFT project. The research sub-questions were:

Research question 1 -   What did educators perceive to be the strengths the SFT project?

Research question 2 -   What did educators perceive to be the challenges to the success of this project?

Research question 3 -   How did educators use the SFT materials and community of inquiry methodology

Research question 4-   What support was provided to promote the success of the project?

1.5   PERSONAL CONTEXT

My own experience confirms the problems described by Harley and Wedekind (2002) in their research. Just the reading of these documents brings confusion. The policy was written in a complex manner. The training that was provided to experienced educators of more than 30 years was not adequate to equip them with the tools to ensure optimal delivery of the curriculum. In some cases even the district officials interpreted it in their own way and had no answer to questions about the curriculum posed to them. They were not able to answer any questions and their responses included such comments as, *"do not shoot the messenger, we do not have answers, but we will try to get back to you"* and *"this will still be discussed at higher level"*. After years of complaining somebody at higher level eventually listened and the answers are slowly but surely coming to us.

1.6   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory that underpins the study is Vygotsky's socio-constructivist theory of cognitive development. Vygotsky suggests that development is complex and that its very nature changes as it unfolds (Driscoll, 2005). Vygotsky also argues that the capacity to learn through instruction is itself a fundamental feature of human intelligence (Wood, 1990) as cited by Roberts (2006). Children acquire not only information but also ways of thinking and learning. Vygotsky's theory highlights the role played by adults, peers and others in enhancing cognitive development in children, through communication, language, and social interaction.

Vygotsky also states in his theory that a child is able to overcome shortcomings in his or her development because of the existence of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD is not itself a stage. With the help of mediation and scaffolding children can be helped to move onto the next stage of development and later they can move on to another stage.

One means of actively teaching thinking has been created by Matthew Lipman, a professor and philosopher at Montclair State University in New Jersey. He is the person who in 1969 first thought about the concept of doing philosophy with children when he saw the low levels of thinking skills that some students possess when they go to college. His ideas are now being used in a lot of countries around the world and have been adapted in various ways. His interest is not only in improving reasoning skills by teaching logic and thoughtfulness, but also in the development of creative and caring thinking.

Lipman's (1969) ideas are one way of implementing Vygotsky's belief about cognitive development.

The connection between Philosophy for Children and Vygotsky's work is embedded within the notion of collaborative dialogue, where children develop the confidence to reason and explore a range of pertinent and often 'taken for granted' issues at a level that they would probably not have done had they not had social interaction (Roberts, 2006). Fisher (1995) comments that the mark of a critical thinker is the readiness of the child to challenge the ideas of others.

Lipman says as quoted by Fisher: "we do not sufficiently encourage (the child) to think for himself, to form independent judgments, to be proud of his personal insights, to be proud of having a point of view he can call his own, to be pleased with his prowess in reasoning." (Fisher, 1995:156) Lipman also believes that children possesses the ability for abstract thinking at an early age and thus to bring logic to them at an early age will improve their reasoning and thinking skills. The central pedagogical tool and guiding ideal of Philosophy for Children is the community of inquiry.

In the community of inquiry students work together to generate and then explore their own questions about the philosophical issues contained in purpose written materials or a wide range of other resources.

Kennedy (2003) mentions that he believes that young children are quite capable when they have learned by participating in conversations with those who do it on a frequent basis to carry out basic logical operations of critical thinking and to develop the characteristics to make it possible. "If we wish our children to be critical thinkers we should try to encourage them to challenge our ideas." (Fisher, 1995:67) This concept of the community of inquiry can start on a smaller scale in the family circle of learners. Lipman wants this to happen before passive thinking skills are embedded in the child.

Lipman, (2003); Fisher, (1995); Kennedy, (2003) and Vygotsky all point to a common thread about the ability of children to become critical thinkers. They can be helped to become critical thinkers if the right strategies are followed or implemented.

Research related to various approaches suggests that it is possible to enhance the cognitive ability of learners in order to get them to think more effectively. This research with reference to Philosophy for Children in countries around the world will be reviewed and discussed in chapter 2.
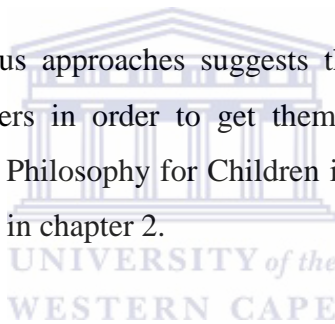
1.7   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. "The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (Creswell. 1998:15).

This study was conducted in one of the Education districts of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). The participants comprised the 40 educators who were involved in the Stories for Thinking project that was being run in this particular district. No learners formed part of the study.

Permission was sought and obtained from the WCED and also from the educators of the nine schools involved. Principals and educators were explained the purpose of the study and an information document were also discussed and distributed with the schools involved (Appendix E).

Data were collected by way of questionnaires (Appendix A) and also by means of individual interviews (Appendix B). It was expected of educators to fill in the questionnaire and also be available for an interview. This was set up with the help of the principal and the educator responsible for SFT in the school. The participants took part on a voluntary basis and the researcher had to make sure that they understood the concepts of confidentiality and anonymity.

It is requested by the WCED in their requirements that a copy of the research findings must be made available to them, which the researcher will provide at the conclusion of this study. The participating schools will also receive a copy if a request is made.

1.8 THESIS STRUCTURE

The present chapter is an introduction to the study and explains its significance. It provides a brief overview of the theoretical framework/literature review and methodology and sketches the general and personal context of the study.

Chapter two puts forward the theoretical framework of the research. This chapter will try to show what relationship there is between Vygotsky, Lipman, and Stories for Thinking. The history and the use of the community inquiry will be put forward. Some research on the effectiveness of Philosophy for Children in other countries will be discussed. The introduction of Stories for Thinking (SFT) in South Africa and the SFT materials will be discussed.

Chapter three describes the paradigm and research methodology employed in the investigation. The data collection and analysis methods are explained and discussed.

Chapter four presents and discusses the results of the study. It is framed within the four research questions.

Chapter five summarizes and discusses the findings and refers to some limitations of the study and makes some practical recommendations.

1.9   ABBREVATIONS

RNCS   -   Revised National Curriculum Statement

NCS   -   National Curriculum Statement

P4C   -   Philosophy for Children

SFT   -   Stories for Thinking

OBE   -   Outcomes Based Education

DoE   -   Education Department

WCED   -   Western Cape Department of Education

ZPD   -   Zone of Proximal Development

IAPC   -   Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children

PAM   -   Personnel Administrative Measurement

NJTRS   -   New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills

CHAPTER 2

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will put forward the theoretical framework of this research, which is the theory of Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist. The aim of this chapter is to show the relationship between Vygotsky, Lipman, the philosopher who created Philosophy for Children (P4C) and the implementation of some of Lipman's ideas in the Stories for Thinking (SFT) project in some South African schools. I will explain key concepts from Vygotsky and give an overview of Philosophy for Children and the community of inquiry as described by Lipman and discuss some findings regarding the effectiveness of Philosophy for Children both internationally and locally.

2.2 VYGOTSKY

Lev Semenovich Vygotsky was born in 1896 in Russia. In his students days at the University of Moscow he read widely and avidly in the fields of linguistics, social science, psychology, philosophy, and the arts (Vygotsky, 1962).Vygotsky first enrolled at medical school, but after a year he moved over to the law faculty and also enrolled at another university, majoring in history and philosophy (Vygotsky, 1986). He was a well read scholar who was keen to learn and explore new fields. His major contribution to educational psychology was to offer an alternative to Piaget and others who maintain that intelligence is fixed. The main difference between the theories of Vygotsky and Piaget is that Vygotsky believes that the cognitive ability of children can be modified as soon as a stage known as the Zone of Proximal Development is bridged (ZPD). He defines the ZPD as "the distance between a child's actual developmental level as determined by actual problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978: 86).

2.2.1 Importance of social interaction

Vygotsky's view is that mental functioning in a person can only be understood when you examine the social and cultural processes from which it stems (Wertsch and Tulviste, 1996). As explained by Splitter and Sharp (1995: 57), "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals."

As Crawford (1996) points out, social interaction where speaking and listening is involved is fundamental to the development of an individual. It is only through dialogue and the exchanging of ideas and information that growth will be evident. Crawford continues to say that Vygotsky says that children use social interactions in language primarily as a tool to interact with their peers to air views and to serve as a communication tool with their parents. It is only after they begin to understand the meaning of words and what they are used for that they develop higher thinking skills. Children learn to think and refine the lower mental functions as they acquire and use language.

2.2.2 Mediation

How do children learn to think effectively? Vygotsky's answer to this is that "Higher human mental functions must be viewed as products of mediated activity. The role of mediator is played by psychological tools and by means of interpersonal communication". (Vygotsky, 1986: 24) These are two very important points, the importance of mediation, and the concept of psychological tools.

Vygotsky argued that the process of concept formation by a child achieved in cooperation with an adult would be a much more sensitive gauge of the child's

intellectual abilities than what the child can do alone. According to Vygotsky learners can be assisted by somebody who possesses structured methods to steer the uninitiated in the right direction. He explains it in the following way "This is the place at which the empirically rich but disorganized spontaneous concepts meet the systematicity and logic of adult reasoning" (Vygotsky, 1986: 35). The term that he gave for this space is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky is of the opinion that you cannot set down fixed stages to describe or determine a child's level of development. He argues that a child can develop with the help and guidance of somebody that is more knowledgeable than the child. The ZPD differs in children and different intervention strategies must be developed to support each individual child. He is therefore of the opinion that the gap between what they know and what they can know can be overcome by supporting them in a meaningful and structured way. This intervention is called scaffolding. Bruner (1983) as cited by Borman (2005) describes scaffolding as support for learning and problem solving that encourages independence and growth.

2.2.3   Zone of Proximal Development

Bransford (1999) describes the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as the distance between the actual development level as determined by the independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with an adult. This means that children can move from one stage to another if the necessary guidance and support are given to help them to reach a higher stage. It also implies that it is possible to alter the cognitive ability of children. The help that the child gets from the adult person must take them from one level of cognitive ability to the next more complex level. This is called cognitive modifiability. As mentioned earlier it is of the utmost importance that the mediator must take into account the different levels of abilities that the individual learners possess. From this knowledge structured interventions can be developed to meet the individual needs of the learner.

For Vygotsky children develop with the help of human mediators, but also with the help of psychological tools provided by an environment that is conducive to learning. The social environment that moulds the child in the early years plays a significant role in the development of the child's cognitive ability. The mediators must therefore be aware of the cultural influences impacting on the specific child and the cognitive tools needed by the child in order for them to make an informed decision on how best to support the learner. Vygotsky believed and argued that learning in children is dependent on their interaction with the social environment through observation and language. These are the things that mould their thinking and enhance their learning. The physical surroundings shape how they use and develop their bodies; the "mental" surroundings shape how they use and develop their minds. When they interact with people they model their behaviour and also learn their language. They learn from the social and material environment.

2.2.4   Language as a cognitive tool

Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (1999) point out that both Vygotsky and Piaget view humans as goal-directed agents who actively seek information and come to formal education with a range of prior knowledge, skills, beliefs, and concepts that significantly influence what they notice about the environment and how they organize and interpret it. This influences their abilities to remember, to reason, to solve problems, and to acquire new knowledge. It is important for the person who is being mediated through the stages of development to be a willing and eager participant.

If the writings and research findings of Vygotsky and other researchers are true, then intervention programmes to help learners develop as critical thinkers can be developed. Several interventions to enhance thinking have been designed, the best known of which are probably those of Feuerstein (1980), De Bono (1991) and Lipman (1991). This chapter focuses on the work of Lipman, because his practices are one way of implementing Vygotsky's ideas and are the basis of the intervention that I am researching. Lipman's intention was to enhance children's thinking not by

having them learn about the complex world of philosophy but by having them **do** philosophy.

2.3   PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN (P4C)

2.3.1   History and origin

Matthew Lipman, a professor of Philosophy, is the author and pioneer of the Philosophy for Children (P4C) programme (1991). Although Lipman did not originally base his ideas on the works of Vygotsky, his programme represents one way of implementing Vygotsky's ideas.

Philosophy for Children originated in the 1960`s in the United States of America. Lipman traced the lack of understanding and reasoning from his adult students back to their school days. This prompted him to investigate ways of reaching learners at school level before they become students presenting with a lack of logical and critical thinking. Lipman told Naji (2005) in an interview that he got the idea to develop Philosophy for Children while working with students at the university and seeing their lack of reasoning and judgment. He was of the opinion that courses for children in philosophy should be drawn up to enhance their reasoning and thinking abilities before they enter tertiary institutions. He was concerned about preparing children for democracy by helping them to reason and think well. He believed that children and young people can acquire some of the "thinking moves" used by philosophers.

P4C according to Sutcliffe (2003) has been implemented for 30 years in the United States. The model of the community of inquiry has been adopted in well over 30 countries. Some of the countries use it for different reasons. He says that some former dictatorships have used it more for its potential in developing participatory democracy, than for its potential for cognitive enhancement.

Lipman (2001:23) is of the opinion that P4C has made possible educational criteria which it would have been unwise to express a few centuries earlier. He says that P4C is a means by which

> children's judgment can be sharpened and strengthened; children's reasoning can be improved; conceptual analysis may be fostered; interpersonal communication may be perfected; children can engage in more effective deliberation and by which the inquiry process can be better taught to and by educators.

Sasseville (1994) points out that the P4C programme is designed to foster different kinds of thinking skills: reasoning skills, inquiry skills, concept-formation skills and translation skills. Together these skills help children not only to think (because they already think) but to think well.

2.3.2 Community of inquiry

The central idea of P4C is that the classroom should become a community of inquiry. "The remaking of education – of its curricular assumptions and pedagogical practices-required that the classroom be converted into a community in which friendship and cooperation would be welcomed as positive contributions to a learning atmosphere, rather than the semi-adversarial and competitive conditions that prevail in too many early childhood classrooms" (Lipman, 2001: 29). A community of inquiry is characterized by learner engagement, shared construction of meaning and the practice of philosophical dialogue or inquiry.

Sutcliffe (2003) explains that for Lipman it is important for the learner himself to be engaged in inquiry- asking questions of others, and formulating answers of his or her own. He says that this is the only time that real philosophy is being done, by the learner and not by the teacher. Lipman (2001:32) explains it in the following way: "If the teacher selects the questions to be discussed, the students are likely to interpret that act as a vestige of the old authoritarianism". The teacher must allow the learners to operate independently as far as possible. This will allow them to master the skills of

self criticism and self reflecting in order for them to engage meaningfully in the community of inquiry.

Sutcliffe (2003:173) describes the community of inquiry in the following way, "it is a group of people who deliberate in response to a common stimulus or experience with a view to creating better understanding and appreciation of each other's words and worlds". He says that it is a deliberate attempt to think creatively and critically together.

Splitter & Sharp, 1995: 18 say the following about the community of inquiry:

> The community of inquiry which develops is driven by the need to transform that which is intriguing, problematic, confused, ambiguous, or fragmentary into some kind of unifying whole which is satisfying to those involved, and which culminates, albeit tentatively, in judgment.

Splitter (1995) explains that the community of inquiry is a learning and teaching environment based on the awareness of children's perspectives which engages in a search for meaning through dialogue which involves reasoning.

According to Green (2006a) participation in the community of inquiry is an opportunity for learners to become more effective and better thinkers. Fisher (2008) says by engaging in a community of inquiry children learn how to: ask their own questions and raise issues of concern; explore and develop their own ideas, view theories; they will be able to explain and argue their points of view with others and listen to and consider the views and ideas of others. They build on others ideas and develop their understanding, and sometimes they change their minds or engage in discussion and recognize and respect differences of opinion. Lipman says that in a community of inquiry students listen to each other with respect, build on one another's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another's assumptions (Lipman, 1991). Green (2006a:140) proposes that:

a community of inquiry is characterized by respect for persons, for truth and for the procedures of inquiry. Any group that hopes to develop over time into a community of inquiry needs to generate and agree to certain ground rules before it can operate.

Green (2007:79) describes the involvement of the educator within the community of inquiry in the following way: "the role of the teacher is to mediate appropriate attitudes and skills, not to provide the "correct" answer". It is difficult for educators who are used to providing answers to take a step back, but for the community of inquiry to be authentic, this is exactly what they must do.

The important part that Lipman (1991), Green (2006) and Fisher (2008) speak about in a community of inquiry is that it should be structured and the rules of the engagement must be clearly negotiated with all those that participate. Certain procedures are expected when groups engage in a community of inquiry. Any gathering of people discussing something does not imply that they are engaging in a community of inquiry. Kennedy (2003) points out that asking questions is a cognitive move that comes naturally to all children. Young children should be taught how to ask questions consciously and use it as a tool in conversations. Some of the "thinking moves" that take place during a community of inquiry dialogue are, as described and explained by Kennedy (2003),

> asking a question; agreeing or disagreeing; giving a reason; offering a proposition, hypothesis or explanation; offering an example or counterexample; classifying/categorizing; making a comparison; offering a definition; identifying an assumption; making an inference; making a conditional statement; reasoning syllogistically; self-correcting; restating and entertaining different perspectives.

The greatest challenge that an educator will have is to know what to listen for.

The teacher's role is then that of the mediator as described by Vygotsky. It is his or her responsibility as a knowledgeable adult to help and supply various interventions, like Philosophy for Children to help make it possible for the learners to reach their true

potential. Green (2006.b) says that it is the responsibility of the teacher as community of inquiry facilitator to prod the learners from their practical questions towards the philosophical questions that underlie the issues that they are raising. She also mentions that the educator must plan carefully, anticipate possible scenarios and must be familiar with the process of inquiry. This will help if the lesson unfolds in a different manner than anticipated. Fisher (2008) is in agreement with Green when he says that "the teacher's role then becomes that of coach and participant rather that of leader". The learner, however must be an active participant in his or her own development with the teacher as mediator.

Fisher (2008) summarizes the practical elements of a community of inquiry as follows. He says it is a community setting, where you sit so that you can see everybody and hear everybody. There are agreed rules and everyone must listen to the speaker. It is important to give time to think to the participants so that they can give a meaningful contribution to the discussion. Time is given for questioning and everybody has the right to express their own views and opinions.

According to Lipman (1991) "inquiry" is a self correcting practice. Inquiry is thus an investigation into your thoughts and what you have said. Children frequently correct each other, sometimes with disastrous consequences. Children at certain ages or stages in their development do not care or seem not to care about the feelings of their peers. They usually mock and tease each other when faults have been made. This inquiry thus offers a structured, well organized method for children to correct, to disagree, and to agree with each other, without aggression and to learn the importance of evidence for one's beliefs.

Green (2006a) and Sutcliffe (2003) explain the roles of the driving forces in the community in the following manner. Both place emphasis and importance on the role of the educator and the role of the learner in the success of the outcomes of the P4C programme. Green explains that the educator's role should diminish and should be less visible in the community of inquiry as it develops. The training that the educator

received must be adequate enough to ensure that they understand the role to be played in the whole process. Green also mentions that it is also up to them to take ownership of initiatives to develop learners as critical thinkers. Sutcliffe is of the opinion that the educator should not just be the instructor or facilitator but should be instrumental in the creating of the community of inquiry. He also mentions that learners should be engaged in inquiry for real philosophy to take place. Without these two above-mentioned entities the community of inquiry cannot function properly or even exist. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the facilitator and the learner must be active participants. The educator should have the appropriate didactical knowledge and use this knowledge to apply the process correctly although there is not one recipe for success. The role of the learner is as important as that of the educator because without the active involvement of both entities the project cannot succeed.

2.3.3 Philosophy for Children stories

The stimulus to start the philosophy lesson in the case of Lipman is always a story. This however is not the case in all situations when Philosophy for Children, or with children, is being done. Jackson (2001) says that the stimulus can be poems, paintings, videos or even listening to music. Murris (1994) uses picture books to stimulate philosophical inquiry in young children.

Philosophy for Children is a set of specifically written stories that has been written keeping the level and experience of particular learners in mind. The text is designed to model participation in a community of inquiry for both learners and educators and to raise philosophical issues. Lipman explains the use of stories to Bosch (2003) in an interview in the following way. Stories are easier for children to read and understand than philosophy textbooks and in this way philosophy will become more accessible to children. The structure of stories is basically the same and therefore children can relate to this, whereas textbooks add more information than is necessary. The children from the stories are always exploring, investigating and inquiring.

As Green (2006a) explains Philosophy for Children relies on a set of story books for children and young people aged between approximately six and seventeen together with comprehensive manuals. The content of the stories is not philosophical, but designed to raise questions that have their roots in issues that are the traditional concern of philosophers. She also mentions that the text is designed to reflect issues thought to be of interest to children and young people and to tap into their genuine concerns and that this is designed to motivate an engagement in discussion.

According to Jackson (2001) and Fisher (2008) a philosophy lesson takes the following form: the learners read and engage with the story or another form of stimulus; they then identify issues in the story that they want to discuss and speak about, then the students deliberate the matter of concern in the community of inquiry while an adult, ideally with philosophical training, facilitates the dialogue; finally the students self evaluate their thinking in the community of inquiry.

2.3.4   Evaluation of Philosophy for Children

Evaluation has been done in many countries to test the effectiveness of P4C. The aim of this review is not to mention them all, but to give an overview of the findings relevant to this study.

Lim (2009) says that evaluation is the systemic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about a programme. All evaluation work involves collecting and sifting through data, making judgments about the validity of the information and of inferences we derive from it. Programmes that are being introduced in any system need to be evaluated in order for the designer, users and future users to test the impact that they have on the system. It serves also to test the validity of said programme. Philosophy for Children has also been evaluated in various ways during the more than thirty years that the programme has been used. These evaluations have been done by most of the countries that are using Philosophy for Children. Methods may vary and the reason for testing might differ in some cases.

In evaluating P4C Sutcliffe (2003) mentions the fact that the tools to evaluate this programme are not adequate enough. The common evaluation strategies used involve reasoning tests, tests of academic achievement, observation, and interviewing of educators and students. Sutcliffe however alludes to the fact that out of the three reasoning tests that have been used, the Cornell Critical Thinking Test; the Whimbey Analytical Skills Inventory and the New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills (NJTRS) the latter which was developed in the late 1970s, is the one that is most consistent with P4C outcomes. The test represents 22 reasoning skills and includes analogical reasoning; avoiding jumping to conclusions; detecting underlying assumptions; inductive reasoning; detecting ambiguities, discerning causal relationships; identifying good reasons, distinguishing differences of kind and degree and contradictory statements. The NJTRS was used from 1979 to 1994 to test 4th, 5th and 6th graders in the United States of America. The tests showed that learners who were exposed to P4C had better results than a control group that was not exposed to P4C. According to Sutcliffe similar studies in other countries showed generally similar results. He is of the opinion that language and culture do not hinder the effectiveness of P4C. Any learner can thus be exposed to P4C under the prescribed conditions and that learner will show positive results. He substantiates this by saying that he agrees with Lipman and other researchers that the way the different educators engage with the learner in the community of inquiry is of the utmost importance. Sutcliffe (2003) and Green (2006) hold the role that the teacher plays in this process in high regard. Murris (1994) and Doherr (2000) as cited by Sutcliffe (2003) mentioned that learners in the United Kingdom (UK) who were exposed to P4C showed improvements in reasoning, listening, and self-esteem. In another school in the UK according to Doherr the children improved in recognizing different emotions and in making links between thoughts and feelings after being involved in philosophical inquiry.

More recent research indicates that P4C has shown consistent gains in the academic achievement of learners. According to Lim (2009), Othman and Hashim (2006) and GarcÍa-Moriyón, Rebello and Colom (2005) there was a general improvement in the

thinking abilities and academic achievement of the learners after being exposed to P4C. Lim says that the programme in Singapore started in 1992. Pre tests and post tests were done on experimental classes and also on control groups. The results of the tests showed that the experimental class had higher scores than that of the control group. They had better scores in English and Mathematics achievement as well in the verbal, numerical, and perceptual sections. This was an indication that P4C had an impact on the ability of students in general reasoning and thinking skills. Othman and Hashim (2006) compared P4C in Malaysia to Reader Response (RR). Both approaches, P4C and RR use reading materials whereby students give various interpretations of the meaning of texts read. Active involvement is essential to both approaches. After extensive research was done on both approaches, RR and P4C, it was concluded that the P4C methodology enhanced students' thinking more than the RR. GarcÍa-Moriyón *et al*. (2005) say that according to their findings in Spain, P4C has a positive effect on the target group's thinking and reasoning skills.

Studies done by Schleifer & Courtemanche (1996) showed that the communication skills of the learners who took part in the P4C project have improved significantly. In Canada the study was done with mostly children of immigrants who had trouble with language communication and expression. All of these children had been exposed to philosophical materials. Twenty learners were selected randomly, especially those who had serious language problems. Oral presentations were conducted with each learner. According to the above authors the results show clear improvement from a majority of children who had the benefit of the Philosophy for Children discussions. Their qualitative research findings lead them to conclude that the discussions did improve the communication capacity of these children.

Niklasson, Ohlson, and Ringborg (1996) say that tests were done on a class in Sweden who had exposure to P4C two and a half years after their last formal philosophy lesson. They wanted to find out if there were any significant differences between the children who had been trained in philosophy and children who had not. It was found that the most striking difference was the difference in the learners' communication

patterns. They found that the philosophy pupils talked to each other and used the arguments of their peers. They questioned their arguments and even that of their educator. They seemed to focus on the central problems and the quality of their argumentation seemed higher. Greater skill in formulating their thoughts was evident and they were more autonomous and self-reliant. Borresen (2008) says that P4C has ensured that the learners in Norway have improved significantly by developing critical capabilities, to participate in dialogue in various contexts and getting practice in listening and reasoning. They learn to keep to the point and also acquire experience and attitudes which are important in a community of inquiry

The above mentioned results can be interpreted to imply that P4C, if introduced correctly can have a long lasting effect on the learner's abilities to engage in inquiry and enhance their critical thinking skills.

2.4 STORIES FOR THINKING IN SOUTH AFRICA

The original stories by Lipman were written for the North American context i.e. schools in a different setting and sometimes a different era from children growing up in now developing countries. Green (2006a) says that permission was sought from Lipman to engage educators in the Western Cape in materials development based on P4C. They volunteered to be involved in a project to investigate the possibility of local educators developing materials like Philosophy for Children that would be relevant to local contexts and local needs.

The P4C approach was introduced in 1999 to educators in the Western Cape (Green, 2006a). Green (2006) explains that the first project involved all the educators at one primary school where they were introduced to the works of Lipman and were introduced to the community of inquiry. This was later extended to other schools in the same Education District. Educators from thirteen local schools wrote their own philosophy stories in 2005. The stories were modelled on the text that forms the

stimulus material for Philosophy for Children. They constructed their own stories with a South African context, although their stories lacked the philosophical depth of Lipman's stories. The approach in South Africa was, however not essentially different to that of Lipman. Manuals for the Intermediate Phase, (grade 4-6) were subsequently produced in collaboration with the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children and the selected schools were supplied with them. These booklets have possible activities that can be used by the educator to extend thinking and some questions to choose from if the children do not come up with their own questions.

The project was called Stories for Thinking (SFT). It is important to note that the stories still try to reflect the kind of community of inquiry that Lipman proposes. Green (2006a) is of the opinion that the stories written in South Africa do not reflect the depth and philosophical richness of Lipman's stories although they do incorporate philosophical issues. However, they show life in South African classrooms that children in a particular area can relate to.

This is a very important fact, because the South African educational environment is very diverse. In the Western Cape there are affluent areas with excellent facilities and schools but in some areas learners are being sent to school without having breakfast and not even bringing lunch to school. The same curriculum that needs a lot of resources has to be taught to the learners with a poor socio economic background and it is expected that they must be assessed on the same level of learners from the affluent areas. The Stories for Thinking materials have been written about learners from the poorer areas and the aim is to reflect the community they come from and where they live.

2.4.1 Research findings about Stories for Thinking (SFT)

Research about SFT varies because the different researchers all took their own perspective when they investigated SFT. Four researchers, Borman (2005), Roberts

(2006), Permall (2007) and Green (2009) thus far have done some research on SFT as it was introduced in the Western Cape, South Africa.

Borman's research participants were forty learners and one educator from one of the schools that participated in the initial project. The classroom community of inquiry was observed over a period of six months. Her observation focused on the initial, middle, and final stages of the implementation. Two interviews were conducted with the educator and also a group interview with seven learners. She found that the learners showed significant progress in their ability to negotiate the aims of the community of inquiry and to engage in reasoned dialogue. In her final analysis Borman notes that learners' signs of careful thought increased and they were more mindful of their surroundings and what impact their actions has on the other learners. One of the recommendations that Borman makes is that "Stories for Thinking is a useful tool that had the potential to help many of the Revised National Curriculum Statement's critical outcomes and should be an integral part of the curriculum" (Borman, 2005:66)

Roberts (2006) conducted his research with some of the 25 educators who attended a 10 session programme based on P4C. These educators also co-wrote the Stories for Thinking. He conducted semi-structured interviews and his research questions were the following: whether the primary school educators who attended the course were aware of any changes that had occurred in themselves on a personal or on a professional level; to what extent educators found community of inquiry process relevant to the curriculum; and the changes, if any, educators had observed in their learners. He mentions that the educators felt that the story writings were a personal and developmental exercise for them. Educators also became more aware of the inherent abilities that their learners possessed. Although this was a very small study he says that: "The P4C training programme has created a shift in how educators perceive learner's insightfulness, their use of their imagination, their ability to give personal opinions, and to be critical in a respectful manner." When he interpreted the theme, the relevance to the curriculum, he argues that educators felt that the
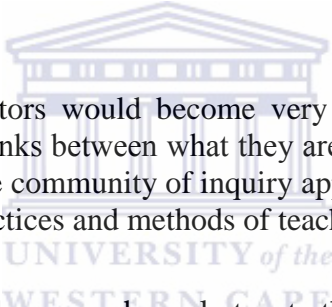
community of inquiry has usefulness throughout the curriculum. In other words its potential and the impact that it has on learning is being felt in other learning areas. He says about the learners: "Children learnt to explain themselves; they elaborated on ideas and thoughts. There appears to have been shifts in children's thinking, questioning, and reasoning. Learners were becoming more attentive within the community of inquiry sessions."

Permall (2007) used a qualitative study to explore learners' experiences of a classroom community of inquiry. Her research sub questions were: does SFT impact learner's personal development? Does SFT impact learner's social development? And does SFT impact learner's cognitive functioning? She made use of group interviews and grouped 6-8 learners together in each of five groups. Her research findings show that most groups were strong on respect and the use of cognitive moves and developed their interpersonal skills. To support her argument she mentions the following that one of the learners said: "Sometimes you feel that it's hard and you try to get another reason to fight back at them but you can't and then you can see that he's absolutely right". This statement indicates that the learners are moving in the right direction and are thinking about their thinking. They have developed the skill to accept the thought process of their peers and to contemplate another response.

Green (2009) mentions in her research that the way the educators in her study were using the materials and the pedagogy was disappointing. The educators did not stick to the prescribed time as decided on for the lessons and so learners did not gain the full potential benefit. Nevertheless the educator's opinions were that there was greater involvement of the learners and they showed greater confidence after they had been introduced to SFT. This was in line with what the learners in the study felt their gains were. According to Green (2010) 77% of learners claimed they had become much better at listening, 68% claimed they had become much better at giving reasons, etc; much better at sticking to the point, 54%; and much better at going deeper, 49%. The results above show that there is a more or less even distribution of what learners

claimed has changed due to their involvement in the community of inquiry. This is a strong indication that the learners did not simply say they had got better at everything indiscriminately.

Borman (2005), Roberts (2006) and Permall (2007) all concluded that more educators need to be trained in SFT and that it should be implemented at teacher training level. These three researchers went in as foot soldiers in the battlefield and explored the field for future study. Their findings of the classroom and the school support came out very clearly through the following: Permall recommends: "change at the level of the school to support the implementation of the Community of Inquiry approach within the learning and teaching process". Borman says: "educators should be trained in this approach so they are able to implement this programme in their classrooms." Roberts says:

> I believe that educators would become very interested in P4C if they could visualize the links between what they are expected to "deliver" and how SFT through the community of inquiry approach can be integrated to enhance existing practices and methods of teaching.
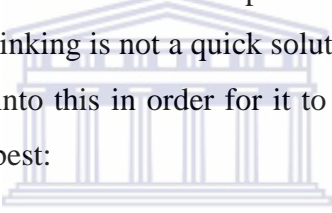
These final comments by the researchers alert us to the fact that SFT has the potential to transform the educational environment in South Africa if implementation and monitoring are done on a broader scale.

All the researchers Borman (2005), Roberts (2006), Permall (2007) and Green (2009) acknowledge that their qualitative studies cannot be generalised to other contexts. However, the significance of these studies and research must not be underestimated. It is a strong indication that P4C pedagogy can be adapted and used in different contexts to improve the thinking abilities of learners.

One of the educators who participated in one of the earlier projects wrote an article that was published in the journal of Cognitive Education in Southern Africa. The article is entitled: "I discovered a Goldmine in my classroom" (Kearns, 2004). It is

clear from the caption of her article that she holds the possibilities of SFT in high regard and values the introduction of SFT in South African schools. According to this particular educator SFT has helped her to be more patient and accepting of the different learners in her classroom and she discovered that there were more sides to thinking. She alluded to the fact that she discovered that there are different sides to thinking. Wondering, pondering, imagining and reasoning were actually different ways of thinking. She also discovered that stories are not just there to read, but can be used in different ways, like oral lessons, life orientation, as grammar lessons and in many other ways. The thought process of the learners must never be underestimated, because she was surprised by the depth of it when they got going in the community of inquiry.

Educators want a quick solution to solve the problems of the learners. Community of Inquiry with Stories for Thinking is not a quick solution to the curriculum problems. A lot of work has to be put into this in order for it to work in a South African context. Green (2006a:150) puts it best:

> it is always tempting to imagine that the introduction of a particular programme can solve all the problems of education. Even if it were possible to introduce them on a large scale, Philosophy for Children, or its South African offshoot, Stories for Thinking, would not be a panacea.

The solution does not lie with Stories for Thinking alone. The complexity of the curriculum of the South African education system will need a lot more intervention to make it easier for the educators as well as the learners. SFT is however a step in the right direction to alleviate the cry for help from the educators as well as the learners. The educator must also know that according to Vygotsky they must only play the role of mediator who must withdraw gradually if the learner reaches the intended level. The educator must facilitate the merging between what they know and what the learners know in order for them to guide the learners to have a meaningful understanding of the content. They must thus be a joint construction of knowledge. Splitter and Sharp

(1995) say that the educator's role should diminish slowly when the group becomes a more effective community of inquiry.

A significant finding by Fisher (2008) is that educator's confidence is also boosted. At the moment educators in South Africa and the Western Cape are low on morale because of the workload and the general state of some of the schools in the country. Fisher (2008) found that doing philosophy in the classroom had a positive effect on:

- *educators' professional confidence and self esteem*
- *students achievements in academic tests*
- *students' self esteem and self concept as thinkers and learners*
- *the fluency and quality of students' questioning*
- *the quality of their creative thinking and verbal reasoning and*
- *their ability to think for themselves and engage effectively in discussion with others*

Educators need something to show them that what they are teaching the learners has a positive effect on the learners in totality. It seems as if P4C and SFT are making this difference and providing the impetus for these educators.

2.5 SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

Vygotsky says that a child's cognitive development can be modified by making use of intervention methods by knowledgeable people that enter the life of learners. He places a very high emphasis on the role of mediation. Lipman's P4C is one way of implementing the ideas of Vygotsky. The community of inquiry plays a very significant role in this strategy. The community of inquiry is characterized by learner engagement, shared construction of meaning and the practice of philosophical dialogue or inquiry. Educators as well as learners are vital pivots in this community. Research

findings about P4C indicate that it can be adapted for use in any culture and that language differences do not necessarily retard the effectiveness of it. There is a significant improvement in the reasoning abilities, communication, academic achievement and the critical thinking capabilities of learners after they have been exposed to P4C for a significant period of time.

Taking these findings into consideration a project based on P4C was introduced to some learners and educators in one Education District in the Western Cape. This particular project is called Stories for Thinking. Educators wrote their own stories that were relevant to the context of the learners. The stories were used as stimulus to engage the learners in community of inquiry dialogue to enhance their critical thinking abilities. Local research to date suggests that SFT has the potential to have a positive effect on the overall abilities of the learners.

The research results indicated above gave an indication that it would be worthwhile to research the perceptions of the educators involved with this project, with particular reference to the support they received, methods of implementation and the strengths and challenges apparent to them. The research method that was used will be explained in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will explain in detail the research that was carried out. I will explain what research methodology was used and how it impacted on the outcome of the research and why this particular methodology was used. I present and justify the details of the research design, provide information about the participants and explain the data collection and analysis procedures. Finally I indicate how I tried to promote the trustworthiness and reliability of the data collected and to ensure that the research was ethically conducted.

3.2   THE AIM OF THE STUDY

As explained in Chapter 1, the aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions of certain Intermediate Phase educators regarding the Stories for Thinking (SFT) project. The research sub questions were:

Research question 1 -   What did educators perceive to be the strengths the SFT project?

Research question 2 -   What did educators perceive to be the challenges to the success of this project?

Research question 3 -   How did educators use the SFT materials and community of inquiry methodology

Research question 4 -   What support was provided to promote the success of the project?

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Guba and Lincoln (1998) state that a paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs that deals with ultimates or first principles. According to them it represents a worldview that defines for its holder, the nature of the 'world', the individuals place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts, as, for example, cosmologies and theologies do. They identified the following paradigms: positivism; post positivism; critical theory and constructivism.

A research paradigm according to Johnson and Christensen (2004) is a perspective based on a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that are held by a community of researchers. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006b) mention that paradigms are all encompassing systems of interrelated practices and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their inquiry along three dynamics or questions, which are ontology (nature of reality), epistemology (specific relationship between the researcher and what can be known) and methodology (how to go about what is studied). They also identified the following three paradigms namely positivist, interpretive and constructionist. The research paradigm that I subscribe to is the interpretive paradigm. I chose this paradigm because I agree with Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006a) who says that in order for a researcher to be successful with research, you need to stay close to the data and to interpret it from a position of empathic understanding.

The research aimed to find out the perception of educators who were implementing and dealing with SFT on a daily basis. As with any kind of research the findings must be interpreted and presented in a meaningful and understandable manner. By using the interpretive approach it lends itself exactly to that and it coincides with what Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006a: 322) explain when they say that :

> what you want to come out at the other end must be close enough to the
> context so that other people familiar with the context would recognize it

as true, but far enough away so that it would help them to see the phenomenon in a new perspective.

The findings must thus be presented in such a way that the daily "users" can identify with the outcome, but also provide them with insight and a new point of view that might open the doors to more opportunity and to see the potential in it.

There are three major methodological approaches namely: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method research. Quantitative research relies on the collection of quantitative data (i.e., numerical data). Qualitative research relies on the collection of qualitative data (i.e. non numerical data such as words and pictures). Mixed method research is the mixing of the two above-mentioned research methods.

For the purpose of the study I made use primarily of the qualitative research method because it was in line with what the research was all about and consistent with how I understand the nature of human knowledge. The study took the part of inquiry into the understanding of the respondents of the world around them. A researcher can never predict the outcomes of the questionnaires and interviews, because the respondents have the liberty to answer as they see fit.

The difference between qualitative and qualitative research is defined in the following way by Babbie and Mouton (2002: 270). "Qualitative researchers attempt to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves. The primary goal of studies using this approach is defined as describing and understanding rather than explaining human behaviour". Henning (2004: 3) agrees that the distinction between the qualitative approach and the better known quantitative approach lies in the quest for understanding and in-depth inquiry. She says that qualitative studies usually aim for depth rather than "quantity of understanding" and that the "variables are usually not controlled because it is this freedom and natural development of action and representation that we wish to capture. McMillan (2004) states that a distinguishing characteristic of qualitative research is that it studies behaviour in its natural state.

According to Moore (2006) qualitative research sets out to tell you why things happen. It aims to develop an in-depth understanding of individuals` views attitudes and behaviour. The interviewer must master the technique of stimulating the interviewee and to encourage the flow of information. A considerable effort must be made on the part of the researcher not to influence the outcome of the interview. Creswell (2005) mentions that qualitative research has the following characteristics that we can recognize it by:

➢ A recognition that as researchers we need to listen to the views of the participants in our studies,

➢ A recognition that we need to ask general, open questions and collect data in places where people live and work and,

➢ A recognition that research has a role in advocating for change and bettering the lives of individuals

Creswell (2005) also mentions that if you ask broad open ended questions, you can best learn from participants. Although the researcher wants the participant to answer specific questions, there are also open ended questions to allow them to speak their minds. This might be the impetus that the researcher is looking for to propel the research. She says that you research a single phenomenon of interest, as I did in this case and explains further that it is the researcher's intent to allow the participant to talk openly about their experiences. My intention was to interview educators about their perceptions and to allow them to speak as freely as possible. I visited the individuals in their own settings where they felt comfortable and listened to what they said and collected the data as Babbie and Mouton (2002) suggest.

McMillan, (2004) states that qualitative research is also called field research, because it takes place in the field or setting. The research that I conducted took place in its natural setting. Although I did not directly observe the project in action, I interviewed educators in their school settings. The familiar surroundings could have encouraged the participants to speak more freely.

3.4   RESEARCH PROCEDURES

3.4.1   Participants

The research participants were the 40 educators who were involved in the Stories for Thinking project that was run in the Intermediate Phase in nine schools in one of the seven education districts of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) from 2007-2009. The principals of each of the nine schools volunteered to be part of the project but individual educators were not consulted regarding their participation. All educators were requested to complete a questionnaire with a rating scale for the follow up part of the study, which involved only certain educators, I tried to make sure that grades 4, 5 and 6 were fully represented. I also asked for representation of both sexes, but in the end had to interview the educators that the principals recommended, and who were willing to be interviewed. They ranged from recently qualified to very experienced educators.

Mouton (1996) mentions that participants` effects play a very vital role in the interview situation. He states the following factors that will influence the outcome of any interview. The characteristics of the participants; memory decay, interview saturation and the omniscience syndrome are of importance. The attitude of the participant and the motivation of the participant will go a long way in deciding the validity of the data. All 13 interviewees at the particular schools were, however, willing participants although they were selected by the various principals to be interviewed.

3.4.2   Context

All nine schools that took part in the survey and who were implementing SFT were situated in the same education district. The schools were selected by the District as those who were likely to benefit most from the intervention. The learner enrolment at the schools involved differed significantly, but the school fees were more or less in

the same range. There was a huge traveling distance between these schools and most of the educators had no idea where some of the other schools in the project were. Some of the schools were situated in crime ridden and sub economic areas where safety personnel were employed to see to the safety of the learners as well as the educators. The buildings at some of these schools were old and run down. The educators involved in this project attended regular cluster (Intermediate Phase personnel from three schools) workshops and cluster meetings to learn how to use the SFT materials to develop thinking in the classroom, and to share their ideas and experiences. These cluster meetings were organized by the District and held approximately once per term.

3.4.3 The Researcher

I was employed by the Western Cape Education Department at the time that the research was conducted, working in an education district other than that in which the study took place. My previous graduate studies, research and work experiences have been within the field of education. I have worked as a post level 1 teacher, a head of department, deputy principal and am currently employed as a principal at a primary school. I have for a number of years had a personal interest in the study and understanding of cognitive development and the reading abilities of children and why children cannot think critically. I have completed a course in remedial teaching, inclusive education and special needs and support services.

I am not currently involved on a daily basis in teaching and was a little out of touch with the whole setting of the classroom, which might have influenced my interactions with individual educators. Due to my position, however, I could negotiate and speak more freely to the headmasters of the nine schools that were involved in this project. I had no knowledge of the nine schools involved and had only met one of the educators at a conference that I attended. This feeling of insecurity played a big role in my approach to the schools. I was not sure if the principal or the educators would be willing to be interviewed and if they were really engaged in the project. I did not want

to put them on the spot or embarrass them by requesting to meet with them. As a school principal I could get permission more freely to go and conduct some of the interviews and distribute and collect the questionnaires.

The researcher effects mentioned by Mouton (1996) say the following about data collection. He says that the object of data collection is to produce reliable data. The collected data must be consistent over place and time. This implies that the collection of any data should be methodical and scientific and the researcher must be sure of the facts. Data collection should therefore be a well thought through exercise. He makes it clear that although this is supposed to be the phenomenon there are various factors that plays a role in producing unreliable data. He divides and explains it in the following way: researcher effects, participant's effects, context effect and political factors.

It is evident from the abovementioned that the researcher and participants must build up a relationship very quickly in order to ensure that the data that is going to emerge be as true and trustworthy as possible.

The normal trend is that what the researcher aims to achieve and what the participants perceive is not on the same level. Researchers must make sure that they do not try to force the outcome of their research into a particular direction but must accept the data provided and then look at all the other contextual factors that might have influenced the data produced.

3.5   DATA COLLECTION METHODS IN THIS STUDY
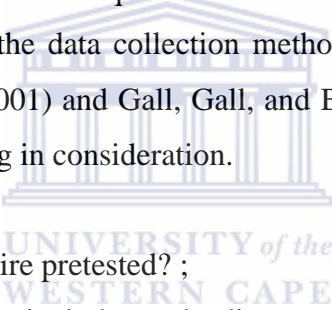
3.5.1   Questionnaires

Johnson and Christensen (2004) say that a questionnaire is a self-report data collection instrument that each research participant fills out as part of a research study. They say that researchers use questionnaires to obtain information about the thoughts, feelings,

attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, personality, and behavioral intentions of research participants.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) suggests some of the following options when drawing up a questionnaire:

- number of questions;
- limited open-ended and closed questions;
- Make items clear;
- Avoid double barreled questions;
- Respondents must be competent to answer;
- Respondents must be willing to answer; and questions should be relevant .

For the purpose of this research a questionnaire was designed in the form of a rating scale and used as one of the data collection methods. I followed the suggestions of both Babbie & Mouton (2001) and Gall, Gall, and Borg, (2005). The latter states that you must take the following in consideration.

- Was the questionnaire pretested? ;
- did the questionnaire include any leading questions? ;
- were any psychologically threatening questions included in the questionnaire?
- and were the individuals who received the questionnaire likely to have the information that was requested?

This is important in determining the validity of the questionnaires. The questionnaire was pretested with some of my fellow students and also with my colleagues and some minor adjustments were made. The final version of the questionnaire is included as Appendix A.

Questionnaires are a popular means of collecting data as they have the following advantages according to Robson (2007)

> They do not require personal interaction skills on the part of the researcher.

> The absence of face-to-face interaction between researcher and participants reduces the effect of the researcher on responses.

But as the above author pointed out they also have the following disadvantages

> difficult to obtain high response rates

> it is not possible to go into topics in depth, as long and complex questionnaires reduce response rates

> calls for careful planning and design and meticulous attention to detail is required

> checking the truthfulness of answers is difficult

> the resulting data can give inflated impression of the value of the findings

I attempted to overcome some of these disadvantages by not sending the questionnaires to the participants but going there myself and waiting while the questionnaires were being filled in. I had to change this because of limited time at the schools. The first round of interviews was conducted near the end of a term while schools were busy with examinations. The other round took place at the beginning of a term and some schools were busy with their internal evaluation of educators. I contacted some of the project leaders at the various institutions and ask them to let the educators fill in the forms. This helped with ensuring that the questionnaires were fully completed as recommended by Gilham (2008).
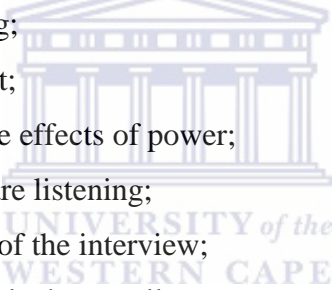
3.5.2 Interviews

Interviews are a common research strategy used in qualitative and well as quantitative research. Face to face interviews have several advantages according to Babbie and Mouton (2001: 250) and they list the following:

> Interviews attain a higher return rate than mail surveys

- The presence of an interviewer also decreases the number of I "don't know" and "no answers"
- The interviewer can probe for answers
- Interviewers can serve as a guide to confusing questions and answers
- The respondents can be observed i.e. body language

Freebody (2003: 143, 145) says that careful consideration must be given to the type of questions as well as the answers that are given in response to the questions. The way that some of the questions are structured will determine the answer and the subject can also determine the answer which is relevant to them. A lot of planning has to be done to make sure that the relevant answers pertaining to the research questions are given. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) list the following characteristics of effective interviews:

- careful pre-planning;
- checking equipment;
- being mindful of the effects of power;
- signaling that you are listening;
- managing the pace of the interview;
- making follow up telephone calls;
- explaining the purpose of the interview;
- being genuine about your research and putting the interviewees at ease.

As with any other data collecting method the interviewing process also has its advantages and some disadvantages. It has a good response rate; it is complete and immediate and possible in-depth questions can be asked, and if one interviewer is used, then there should be a uniformity of approach.

On the other hand the disadvantages can also be a bit disconcerting because there is a need to set up interviews. This can also be extremely time consuming and also has geographic limitations. This is particularly relevant if the researcher must travel long distances to conduct the interviews and it is spread over a couple of weeks. It can also

become an embarrassment if personal questions are asked during the interviewing process. (Primary Data Collection Methods: 2008/04/24)

I attempted to overcome some of the disadvantages by taking note of the strategies suggested by Lankshear and Noble (2004) mentioned above.

Each of the 13 interviews lasted about thirty minutes and was recorded with the permission of the participant. In each case I made use of the interview guidelines included as Appendix B. At one of the nine schools I had to do the interviews with the educators in the classroom with the learners present because of a lack of manpower. This was very stressful and I had to silence the learners myself. All the interviews at the other schools went according to plan but some of the rooms provided for the interviews had much to be desired. I was shoved into an old dusty copy room, the ballet room, the library and even the office of the secretary. In most cases the educators were a little nervous as was shown through their body language as they did not know what to expect. I immediately calmed them down and assured them that the interview is strictly private and I will make sure that their anonymity stays intact. By speaking about general educational matters I sometimes got more than I bargained for but I opened them up to be more honest and forthcoming in their answers. It was also evident that the respondents knew more than they thought about SFT. The probing questions confirmed this. I realized that the suggestions, if used correctly, of Babbie and Mouton (2001) ensure a smooth interview.

3.5.3   E-Mail

I instigated direct contact with the principals of all the participating schools through the use of e–mails. I tried this route to find out from the principals what their perceptions about SFT were. I thought that this would speed up the whole process. A standard format E-mail inquiry was therefore sent to the nine principals involved.

Gillham (2008) says that the use of e-mail for interviews is useful when respondent is too busy to meet or lives in another city or country. It is also useful when it is the preferred option of an interviewee who is reluctant to participate in a face-to-face or telephone interview. It can also be used to clarify minor factual details such as an individual's date of birth or occupation. Of the negatives according to Gillham (2008), it must be mentioned that e-mails can also be ignored or piled up or the responses can be very abbreviated or edited. All the initial e-mails that I sent out to the principals never reached them or were not given to them. I could thus not gather any information from the principals to inform my research. The use of e-mails, if administered correctly must, however not be underestimated and can be used to the advantage of the researcher.

3.6   DATA ANALYSIS

The gathering of the data can be a tedious process, but the way that it is analysed and presented informs the researcher what the outcome of the study is.
"Data analysis is the process of organizing these pieces of information, systematically identifying their key features or relationships (themes, concepts, beliefs etc.) and interpreting them" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004:266)

The rating scale data in the questionnaire were summarized and are reported in tables. The data were analysed using the procedures recommended by Lankshear and Knobel (2004). They suggest the use of thematic analysis by identifying and counting the appearances of themes in a written text. "Qualitative content analysis is the preferred choice of novice researchers because it is easy to access and it works on one level of meaning" (Henning, 2004:102). The only problem that can arise from this, according to Henning, is that the content is not questioned in any way whatsoever.

I made use of the qualitative content analysis as described by Henning (2004) in the extract below.

Transcribed text of single interview. Read set of data to form Impression of context of single utterances

Segment units of meaning – in one or more sentences or phrases. Use a marker to show the end of the unit

Label a unit of meaning in more than a single word. Write this label in the margin with an arrow pointing to the text.

Look for possible groupings of the codes

Make a list of all the codes and then READ the whole text again to see whether the codes make sense and whether there is some coherence. Also make sure that codes can be related to the research question

Source: Henning (2004: 104. fig.6.1)

3.7   VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE DATA

Reliability and validity are terms used in quantitative research. Ogunniye (1992) says that an instrument is only valid if it measures what it claims it will measure. It is however only valid in a given context. Experiments and tests that are valid for one group would thus not be valid for another group. Reliability on the other hand deals with the notion of consistency or accuracy of the instrument. He says that if an instrument is reliable it will give the same results if given after a certain period of time to the same group. An instrument that incorporates the abovementioned terms would then be an instrument that researchers will strive for. As the results will be affected by the method used, a mixed-method mode is useful to promote validity and reliability of results. Triangulation is deemed to be one of the best ways to strengthen validity or trustworthiness ([Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

These terms pertaining to quantitative research have somewhat different meanings with regards to qualitative research. Kvale (2002: 304) says that "validity asks the question whether we are measuring what we are supposed to be measuring or whether we are investigating what we say we are investigating". Johnson and Christensen (2004) say that when we select a test for an assessment, we choose the one that will give us the information we want. The data that we gather to support our findings and to make them valid it is thus very important. Validity evidence according to Johnson and Christensen (2004) can come from various sources such as: evidence based on content; evidence based on internal structure and evidence based on relations to other variables. They are of the opinion that validation is never fully attained. It is true that data gathered over a period of time will result in different returns due to the changing of setting, change in attitude from the respondent or the researcher or also change in time. This means that data collected is only valid for a certain period of time. Thus it is up to the researcher to ensure that the validity of the gathered data for a specific time is assured by means of what Henning (2004) and Kvale (2002) are suggesting.

Henning (2004) says that she will go with the notion of Kvale (2002) and promote the "trinity" that he is talking about. The elements of this trinity are "good craftsmanship, honest communication and action. "Validation for good craftsmanship will be continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings". (Henning, 2004:148). This implies then that the researcher must be on top of the research and make sure mistakes will be cut down to the minimum. Communication as a tool to ensure validity is to ask people around and especially those who participated in the research about the findings. This is equally important even if they do not agree with the findings their input will add a degree of trustworthiness. It is also important according to Henning that the participants should be kept abreast of what is going to happen with the research and what possible outcomes will be there for them. Just be open about the research. "the design has to build in the possibility for action, either directly as part of the action research projects, or action that could reasonably be instigated because of the findings." (Henning. 2004: 149). Henning goes further and suggests that through the research the participants must be empowered. The findings

must be communicated back to them and if possible be implemented to improve the current situation

"While giving feedback the quality of the analyst's thinking will be evident." (Henning. 2004: 103). According to Henning (2004) it is important for the researcher to make use of different methods to ensure that the strength of the inquiry is built. Triangulation can be used because considering the views of three different sources is believed to give validity to the research findings.

> the word triangulation comes to mind, because it has been in (and out of) use in qualitative methodology since, as a metaphor, it is suppose to indicate that by coming from various points or angles towards a "measured position" you find the true position. (Henning. 2004: 103).

Through the use of a variety of methods such as questionnaires, observations and interviews, or more than one researcher, researchers can be additionally sure of their conclusions (Scott & Usher, 1996). Triangulation refers to the use of different data collection methods in one study, such as the combination of qualitative and quantitative research (Cohen & Manion, 1985 & Krathwohl, 1998). This assists with determining whether the data is indicating what they appear to be indicating.

Robson (2007) says that data collection can only be reliable if you get essentially the same data when a measurement is repeated under the same conditions. It is however difficult to achieve this especially when you work with human beings. Although the setting might be the same, the conditions or mood of the interviewee could have changed. Moore (2006) mentions that the reliability of the data collected depend on the person who collected it. You will be much more cautious of the data that somebody else collected for you, than those that you collected yourself.

3.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

"Within educational research, ethics is concerned with ensuring that the interest and well-being of people are not harmed as a result of the research being done". (Lankshear & Knobel. 2004: 101). Merriam (1998) suggests that ethical dilemmas will occur with regard to data collection. With the distribution of the results during qualitative research it is an important fact that careful consideration must at all times be given to the accuracy   aspect and the researcher should plan for possible misinterpretations of the results.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) and Miles and Huberman (1994) mention that most researchers are in agreement that all research endeavors should be firmly grounded in ethical practice, that people's rights should be respected, that participation should remain anonymous, that safety should be guaranteed, that confidentiality should be respected, that a trusting environment should be secured and that the research process should not be pursued at the expense of the participants concerned.

I sought permission from the Western Cape Education Department to do research in the nine schools and permission was granted and the University of the Western Cape gave the necessary ethical clearance as described in Appendix C.

The research was guided by the following research ethical elements which were included on a consent form which was completed by all participants (Appendix D). The wording was based on that proposed by Cresswell (2005). Participation was voluntary and participants had the right to withdraw at any time. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study so that they knew what impact it would have on them. They were also informed of the procedures of the study so that they could anticipate what to expect and also knew of their right to ask questions and have their privacy respected. All participants were informed of the aims and implications of the research by means of an introductory document. (Appendix E).

It was difficult to ensure anonymity at the various institutions because the educators work closely together. They know each other's handwriting, what kind of pen they like to use, what colour etc. Some of the ways that I used to ensure anonymity were to handle all the questionnaires myself, supply pens which were all the same colour and tried to be present at the completion of the questionnaires, to provide the necessary guidance and to collect the questionnaires immediately. When representing the findings I took care to avoid references that would identify any specific individual.

The findings of the study will be analyzed and discussed in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I report the research findings within the framework of the research questions. The chapter is structured in the following manner. Firstly the data from the educator questionnaire are displayed as tables and related to research questions 1, 2 and 4. Research question 3 was not addressed by the questionnaire. Secondly I present a thematic analysis of the data from the educator interviews, within the framework of all four research questions. Themes are briefly discussed, after which I give an interpretive and integrated summary of the findings.

4.2   QUESTIONNAIRES DATA

The questionnaire responses are summarized below in tables 1 and 2. The questionnaire was designed in the form of a rating scale of 1-5 with 5 representing the most positive rating. This was distributed amongst the various participants at the schools involved in the SFT project. I analyzed the answers of the questionnaire by looking at the mean and the mode. The mode is the most frequently occurring score in a frequency distribution and the mean is the average score. Only 18 out of a possible 25 of the distributed questionnaires were completed by the educators involved.

The data from the items that refer to research questions 1 and 2 (items 6-10) are reported in table 1 below.

RQ 1 - What did educators perceive to be the strengths the SFT project?

RQ 2 - What did educators perceive to be the challenges to the success of this
        project?

4.2.1 Table 1: Educators' perceptions of project strengths and weaknesses

Table 1:

Nr.	Items	Mode	Mean
6	Relevance of the stories to the learners.	4	4
7	Value of the community of inquiry approach as a way to teach other Learning Areas to the learners	4	4
8	Extent to which learners' behaviour has changed due to the introduction of Stories for Thinking	4	3
9	Extent to which you're teaching has changed due to this programme	4	4
10	Extent to which the learners' ability to express themselves has developed due to this programme	4	4

Research question 1 that looked at the strengths of the project was addressed by items 6-10 in the questionnaire. The mean score for this cluster of items were 4. This score could indicate that educators had a positive feel about the implementation of SFT in their respective schools. They could sense some positive changes in themselves and also the learners.

Research question 2 that dealt with the challenges of the introduction of SFT was also addressed by items 6-10. As can be seen by the high rating of the strengths it is as if they did not perceive any challenges in any of these areas since they assigned such high ratings. All was sweetness and light! The fact that they rated the strengths so high will be discussed together with the research data derived from the interviews.

The data from the items that refer to research questions 4 (items 1-5) are reported in table 2 below. Research question 4 was: What support was provided to promote the success of the project?

4.2.2 Table 2: Educators perceptions of support within the education system

Table 2:

Nr.	Items	Mode	Mean
1	Support of the principal	5	4
2	Support of the Senior Management Team (SMT)	5	4
3	Support of Metropole South Education District	5	4
4	Enthusiasm/interest from the other educators? (Foundation-, Senior Phase)	4	3
5	Enthusiasm of the Intermediate Phase educators involved in the project	4	4

By looking at the mode and the mean it seems as if most of the responses to the questionnaire are positive.

Research question 4 that dealt with support was addressed by items 1-5 on the questionnaire. The implication here was that the educators involved on a daily basis with SFT valued and appreciated the support received from the principal, the SMT and also the District. It became clear, however, in off the record responses that my respondents were afraid that the people in charge and especially the principal would find out what their responses were. This can be inferred from the notably high mode and mean scores in questions 1-3 (which both received a rating of either 4 or 5) that speak about the support from the principal, SMT and the Metropole.

It needs to be taken into account that educators' responses to a questionnaire with a rating scale can be misleading because the ratings can just be ticked off without them thinking about the responses. From experience people do not always answer questionnaires as honestly as possible. Questionnaires do not lend themselves to probing questions and respondents answer whatever they think is appropriate. Sometimes this has to do with their frame of mind. Respondents would want researchers to believe that what they are doing is the right thing without putting a blemish on their names.

This is a worrying factor because they were informed about the ethics and anonymity clauses. In their defence it must be mentioned that although there are these clauses in place, there are many people out there that abuse the information that is given to them. Because I had some concerns about the above results, I decided to look more closely at the questionnaire data. Table 3 presents an analysis of individual schools, questions and educators.

Table 3 shows the questions and the responses to the rating scale. It also shows the different schools, 1-7 and the educators A, B, C, D and E at these schools.

4.2.3 Table 3 Ratings for each question, at each school, by each educator

Table 3:

QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4	QUESTION 5
The support of the principal	The support of the SMT	Support of Metropole South	The enthusiasm of the other educators	The enthusiasm of the other IP educators

QUESTION 6	QUESTION 7	QUESTION 8	QUESTION 9	QUESTION 10
The relevance of the stories to the learners	The value of the community of inquiry	Changing in learners behaviour	To what extent has your teaching changed	Developing of learners expression ability

Each question shows schools 1–7 with educators A, B, C, D and E, each rated on a scale of 1 2 3 4 5.

- 54 -

I looked only at which schools, individuals and questions were associated with consistently low or high ratings. Low ratings were clustered at schools 4 and 5, but school 1 had consistently high ratings. This might imply that the conditions under which SFT was applied was different at these schools. It could also have been the attitude of the educators involved.

Low ratings were made more frequently by educators A and B at school 5. The suggestion might be that these two educators were not at all familiar with the SFT process or they might just be disillusioned with the way SFT has been running in their school. In fact I discovered while looking at one of the questionnaire questions that these two educators have been involved with the project since 2007. In off the record conversations it became clear that they were not happy with the management at the school. This might be one of the reasons why they gave low ratings for most of the questions.

Low ratings were most frequent for question 5. This question dealt with the enthusiasm of the other educators who are not teaching in the Intermediate Phase. Those who gave the answers spoke in the third person and their replies were not necessarily the opinion of the educators in the other phases. In some schools the high enthusiasm of educators, especially those in the Foundation Phase about the project was mentioned in off the record talks. The general comment was that if introduced in the Foundation Phase, it will make sure that a basis is laid and the learners' critical thinking ability will be challenged at an earlier stage.

Questions 1 and 2 that specifically dealt with the support from the principal and SMT had a positive result. It is also noticeable that the educators from the same school held the principal and SMT in high regard at almost the same level. It almost seems as if they were afraid that the principal and SMT would see the responses to the questionnaires. School 5 scores the support of the principal, (question 1) with a 3, but the support of the SMT, (question 2) with a 2. It seems as if these educators are not

entirely happy with the way that their principal and SMT are conducting things. They also had different views from the other schools about the support that they are getting from the Metropole district office. In most of the responses the other schools involved in this project scored the support from their principal, SMT and Metropole higher than school 5.

Question 4 that dealt with the enthusiasm of the other educators and question 5 that dealt with the enthusiasm of the project educators both scored a rating of 1 by educator B at school 2. This same educator also assigned ratings of 1 for question 6 that dealt with the relevance of the stories to the learners and question 7 that addressed the value of the community of inquiry. This particular educator was not part of the original group that started the programme and was new to the school. This might be a reason for the low ratings.

The one question that had the most scores of 2 was question 4 and the one with the least was question 7 with no scores of 2. Question 4 dealt with the enthusiasm of the other educators at the school. It seems as if the other phases, namely the Senior Phase and the Foundation Phase are not happy about the whole SFT project that is running at their school, or else they simply do not know about it. This might be that the whole implementation phase was not made clear enough or explained thoroughly by those who are implementing the project. The value of the community of inquiry as addressed by question 7 did not receive any 2's. There is however one score of 1 and 1 score of 3. All the other scores were either 4 or 5. The way that the educators rate the community of inquiry must be seen as a positive response to the value of SFT in schools. It gives educators a platform to engage in a meaningful way with the learners.

Questions 8, 9 and 10 that dealt with the actual implementation and which would show that SFT plays a role in the enhancement of cognitive abilities did not score any 5's. However, these three questions scored the most 4's out of all the questions. This could be an indication that the educators acknowledged that SFT enhances the

abilities of the learners, but were a little bit cautious to give it a high rating to leave room for improvement.

The questionnaires are supposed to grant the educators the freedom to have their say in an anonymous and secret way about the strengths and challenges of the project. The responses to the questionnaires are not consistent at the same schools or from the same educators. There are often discrepancies between educators at the same school in the rating that they gave. Educators at primary schools are moved around frequently between grades and sometimes phases (Foundation Phase educators can move to the Intermediate Phase, but not the other way round) so it takes time for them to adapt to their new phase or grade. This might be a reason for some of the discrepancies in the same phase or grade from the educators. As mentioned earlier respondents are not eager to answer questionnaires and in most cases they answer whatever comes to mind. Usually the general public is ambushed in shopping centres to answer questionnaires and this in my opinion makes them skeptical about answering questionnaires. This might not be the same for this type of questionnaire, but it might be a reminder of how they got tricked into answering surveys.

If the questionnaire data can be taken at face value, it seems as if the implementation of SFT in schools received very positive responses. This might imply that although they are not quite happy with some of the implementations, they are still willing to give it their full support.

4.3   EDUCATOR INTERVIEWS

The source of quotations is indicated by a letter for the school and a numeral for each participant, for example, F(3) represent school F participant 3

4.3.1 Research sub question 1: What did educators perceive to be the strengths of the SFT project?

Three themes were identified namely:

➢ Improvement in reading,

➢ Greater confidence,

➢ Positive change in behaviour

4.3.1.1 Improvement in reading

The following quotations illustrate this theme

The reading ability of the learners does improve ... C(2)
Reading? That has improved, really improved…F(1)

Slight improvement in their eagerness to read…E(2)

Desire to read well. Comprehension improves…F(2)

you know they would take the books without me and read it .F(1)

According to these educators the learners' reading has improved to such an extent that they are not scared of books anymore. They take books in the class and start to read whenever they have the time. Some of them bring newspapers to class to ensure that there is always literature to read.

The overall view of these educators was that the comprehension ability of the learners improved significantly to such an extent that a Learning Area like Language draws benefits from this. A child who cannot read or who does not have the necessary ability to comprehend will not show an eagerness to read or take books from the shelf. The educators also mentioned that due to the community of inquiry everyone wants a chance to read and they are eager to become good readers.

4.3.1.2 Greater confidence

The following quotations illustrate the above-mentioned

that child is going to say what he thinks not what you think or what he has to think he's gotta be himself...A(2)

Learners feel free to express opinions and to think critically...D(2)

I have noticed in my experience as an educator that many young children are confident by nature with no inhibitions. They say what they think without even blinking an eye. In most cases it is their peers that take their spirit of free expression and conversation away from them. Their answers and honesty have left a lot of parents with egg on their faces. In the classroom situation learners lose their confidence, because they are afraid of the reaction from the class if they say something "stupid". They are worried about their images. Educators have reported that, because of the controlled situation in a classroom community of inquiry using the SFT materials, learners have developed a new degree of confidence in their ability and their thoughts about issues of the day.

By developing confidence to speak in large groups learners will in time develop the ability not just to voice their opinions, but also to critically engage in trying to find solutions for more serious issues.

... by exposing learners to opportunities for self growth in different aspects, learners become confident , readers, speakers and thinkers. F(2)

This was the general observation as expressed by the educators that were interviewed. Learners just need to be given time and exposure in order for them to develop their confidence.

4.3.1.3 Positive changes in behaviour

The following quotations illustrate this theme.

learn to carry over the agree or disagree over to the playground or the classroom...C(2)

to be able to speak to each other and resolve problems in a verbal manner rather than in a physical manner…F(1)

the behaviour in the SFT it does slightly influence the behaviour in the other areas..C(2)

Playground and sometimes the classrooms have become battlefields in many schools. Some educators that come from the "old school" have difficulty in controlling learner behaviour because of corporal punishment being outlawed by the South African Constitution and also the South African Schools Act of 1996 in line with the Constitution (SASA, 1996) In schools where SFT is done on a regular and controlled basis it seems as if there is an improvement in learner behaviour and also control of emotional outbursts.

It seems as if educators are worried about the transition of the behaviour from the controlled situation in the classroom to the volatile playground. They are, however quick to spot and acknowledge the difference that a programme like SFT can make in the general conduct of the learners. According to their experience and deduction learners have unconsciously adopted one of the principles of SFT and that is to respect their peers.

Behavioural problems usually go together with a loss of respect for your fellow human beings. Children can be cruel without thinking twice about it. They can and will say the nastiest things about their friends. It is evident that they do not have respect for adults, property, space and sometimes their own parents or guardian. It was heart warming to notice how some of the educators spoke about the change in behavioural patterns of some of the learners.

… like with the behaviour I said they learn to respect a higher level of that…E(2)

they learn that their opinions can be respected. C(2)

they learn that they have to have their own opinions and that they have the rights to those opinions. D(2)

This they attribute to the fact that the SFT setting makes room for inculcating respect in the learners. Although they do not want to at first, they have to listen and acknowledge their peers if they do want a chance to speak. These are some of the further comments from educators:

…it's all about respect and listening to each other…F(1)

they respect each one another and then if this one is talking now everyone want to know what they are saying you know…A(2)

…it forces them to speak to each other respect for people's opinions…B(2)

they will tell you why they agree and why they don't agree…A(2)

No more shouting at each other and making fun of the statements and opinions of others. Some of the learners carry it over to the other classes and learning areas. This however happens only to some learners. Under controlled situations they learn to behave, but left to their own devices it is not necessarily the case.

4.3.2 Research sub question 2: What do educators perceive as the challenges of the SFT approach?

Three themes were identified in this category namely: Language barriers, lack of monitoring and support and time constraints and time management.

4.3.2.1 Language barriers

The following quotations illustrate the abovementioned theme.

I am talking about the Xhosa learners that they are at a disadvantage when it comes to the additional language…A(1)

it is a fact that we have learners from different backgrounds when I say backgrounds it is the demographics so English is not their mother tongue its French its Portuguese its Xhosa its Zulu its you name it…C(1)

most of our learners are second language English learners…C(2)

because of the language issue some of them don't have the vocabulary…B(2)

The concern at some schools was the inaccessibility of the stories due to language differences. Three of the schools' Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) was English and six were dual medium (Afrikaans and English). The diverse cultures at these schools made it difficult for the learners as well as the educators to have a meaningful conversation. Most of the learners came from an Afrikaans background and were being taught in English at school. The schools are not to blame for this debacle with the languages. It is my opinion and experience that parents are of the opinion that the English language will prepare their children better for their tertiary education. The general feeling is that it is the language of the world.

All of the stories in the SFT booklets are written in English. This presents a problem because English is the first or sometimes the 2nd Additional Language of some of the learners. The educators are teaching in English, but in some cases it is also their 1st Additional Language. This makes it harder for them to reach the learners who are not even able to speak fluently in the language of learning and teaching. These apparent problems do exist, but educators found and explored other ways to get the message and the purpose of SFT through to the learners. Some of the interviewed educators confirmed that they are using newspaper articles in the language class to give all the children the opportunity to have an item to read and discuss.

they saw something in the newspaper now they bring it to school and that specific child that brought the newspaper, I would let that specific child read whatever it is …A(2)

Newspaper articles that are written on their level of understanding can be a functional tool to support and develop the learners according to these educators. The same method, (community of inquiry discussion) as used for SFT is followed when discussing these articles.

The weak points is that the children finds it a bit difficult to express themselves…B(1)

it's a matter of the lack of vocabulary…C(1)

they have to sort of translate it into their mother tongue and then they have to work through the issues in the story…C(2)

Learners overcome the language barrier through confident self-expression. Using key words prompted by the educators…E(2)

Language as a barrier can be a big stumbling block, but addressed in the proper way SFT can be introduced and serves its purpose. The community of inquiry is a useful tool to help the learners overcome some of the barriers that impede their ability to take part in the discussions. They can learn from their groups and lean on each other for assistance, in this way their vocabulary and also those of the interpreters will improve.

4.3.2.2 Lack of monitoring and support

The following quotations will illustrate the theme.

That is a lack for me because we don't have one person on the staff that is doing it for SFT you know we as coordinators in a group we monitor it through our planning, but that is about it…F(1)

We don't know no we don't have anybody monitoring…A(1)

I cannot recall monitoring by the EMDC…C(2)

Monitoring plays an important role in the daily life of any person and especially educators. Monitoring as a tool is vital to ensure success. The concern of almost all of the educators that were interviewed was that there was not adequate monitoring of SFT. They felt that if there were a better monitoring system in place SFT at schools would get its rightful place.

A genuine concern by these educators is noticeable in the comments that they make about the absence of monitoring. The lack of proper monitoring creates a void in the success of SFT. We can argue that we are all responsible adults, but some people just need that extra attention and encouragement to make a success of what they aim to achieve. Monitoring in most cases can inspire a person to achieve their goals, but can

also be a stumbling block to some. People who monitor should be adequately equipped to provide assistance where needed. It might be that educators with good intentions about doing SFT can also become entangled into their "normal" daily routine and neglect SFT. Monitoring and support will go a long way to ensure the proper implementation of SFT.

The principals of all of the schools were never interviewed due to their unavailability and it was easier for the principals at most of the schools to just hand everything over the educator in charge of SFT. It must be mentioned that at one of the schools the principal was very involved and it was clear from our informal discussion that the said principal's knowledge was vast about SFT. The educators were reluctant to mention the support of the SMT and especially that of the principal, but when they did say something it always was negative.

No nothing happening from the SMT there we are just left on our own…B(1)

We don't know no we don't have anybody monitoring…A(1)
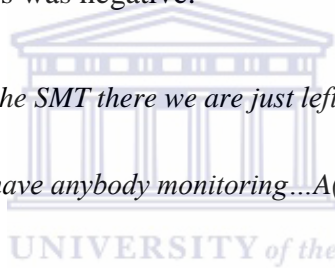
The researcher tried his best to stay clear of this topic, because it could jeopardize his visit to the school. It was educators' opinion that the principal and SMT should show more understanding and support. They felt that they were left to their own devices after the project was introduced. This happens to a lot of projects that are introduced at schools. Project leaders make an appointment, but seldom or never inform the principals about their responsibilities. Principals of all nine schools were invited to, and attended, a briefing meeting and thereafter decided to involve their school in the project but it seemed from the interviews that they took no further interest.

4.3.2.3 Time constraints and time management

The following quotations will illustrate the above-mentioned theme.

we haven't a special time table for it…B(1)

time is a constraint in the fact that you can't give everybody with the big classes that you have you can't also get everybody's opinion…C(1)

Time restricted because of workload …D(2)

Some of the educators were of the opinion that the current NCS curriculum did not make provision for them to incorporate work that is not prescribed by the curriculum. Time was of the essence and because the curriculum advisors all wanted their percentage of the notional time to be used to the maximum, it was virtually impossible to give full attention to SFT.

No definite time was allocated for SFT. Educators do not have the authority to allocate time to implement new programmes. The prescribed time is decided by the National Department of Education. Intermediate Phase time allocation is 26 hours and 30 minutes and 25% of this is allocated to Languages. (RNCS. 2003)

It depends on the extent to which the educator integrates it into learning areas…E(1)

Incorporated it into reading period…G(1)

As it grows it was incorporated in other learning areas…G(1)

The educators found innovative ways to incorporate SFT into their daily planning. They were of the opinion that whatever works for the learners they will try and implement. They made use of the information that they received in their NCS training where the buzz word was integration. One educator said the following:

I did it more not stipulated to days. F(1)

Like I told you we do it in our planning, week and term planning...F(1)

According to one of the educators it was easier for them to incorporate it into their daily planning and mentioned the following: "This will ensure that SFT were done on a regular basis to the benefit of the learners". In this way the educators could not

"conveniently" forget about SFT, because they will be reminded on a daily basis about its existence.

The mentioned educators used their knowledge of the curriculum to their advantage and did not make any excuses about why they could not do it. They used integration to infuse the concept into their existing planning and teaching across the curriculum. The RNCS (2002) mentions in Learning Outcome 6 that deals with Language Structure and Use that the learner will know and be able to use the sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts.

4.3.3 Research sub question 3: How do the educators use the Stories for Thinking materials?

It emerged from the research that teachers used it as instructed in the training as a community of inquiry lesson and also for reading.

Most of the educators used the SFT stories generally as part of their reading period and did not at first use it as intended. The responses from the educators that were interviewed shows that SFT is a tool that can be used to enhance the reading abilities of the learners. Literacy is a serious problem in South African schools and particularly in schools in the Western Cape. The WCED under the guidance of the Deputy Director General, Brian Schreuder who is the driving force behind their LitNum programme is giving excellent support to schools. Any other programme that can assist must be looked at favourably.

It is clear from the following quotations that the educators focus more on reading than the community of inquiry in order to teach the learners thinking skills.

Paired and individual reading, reading aloud. Group reading…G(1)

…and so on certain days we have individual reading of their own with their own reading books on other days they will do individual reading with their class reading books then they will do group reading and when we do class reading…C(2)

I think would think for the first time after they took readers away we now have a reader. F(1)

...provision for using this booklet and there's only a few stories in it so like now we at the second last story I mean there's nothing wrong going back and reading a previous one again to have a different deduction perhaps so the curriculum does make provision for ...C(1)

It is evident that the SFT booklets were used as a tool by the educators to supplement their lack of proper reading material. These booklets that were designed by experienced educators were more or less on the level of most of the Intermediate Phase learners. In the writing of the stories the different levels of the learners were not a consideration. One of them mentions the fact that the booklet is seen as a reader and therefore they are maximizing the use of it. They mention that if the booklet is used properly it can be used much longer in the classroom situation and for many other purposes.

One of the educators felt that if you go back to the stories that had been dealt with and take a different approach it can also benefit the learners. It is however, clear from the abovementioned quotations that the formal reading exercise and period still plays a vital part in the everyday teaching life of educators and learners. It seems as if the half an hour reading period per day is used to its capacity.

The following quotations will illustrate the above theme.

because many people just took it as a reading programme. F(1)

use it as um as part of my reading programme. C(2)

and when we do class reading I use the SFT books. C(2)

The whole focus point for the some of the educators was on the half an hour reading period that was introduced by the education department, some years back to try to improve the reading abilities of the learners.

This varied from asking the learners to bring newspapers to school, to incorporating it into the half an hour reading period. It seems as if the educators were regarding SFT as just a plain reading period. They spoke about group reading, paired reading, and individual reading. In some cases the community of inquiry was never mentioned. It was also pointed out that it was introduced throughout the lessons of the week.

I use the SFT books and we do a SFT exercise once a week. F(2)

I think would think for the first time after they took readers away we now have a reader. I think we got a reader. F(1)

and there's only a few stories in it so like now we at the second last story. C(1)

It was even mentioned that the SFT booklets were a godsend because it replaced the books that the learners no longer had. Schools that did not have the necessary infrastructure or funds said they received free books from the programme that they could utilize as they saw fit.

They even mentioned that the booklets were not interesting after a few weeks of reading it regularly, because it substituted also as a class reader. To what extent the actual SFT programme was followed by those who declared that they do it once a week never became clear.

4.3.4   Research sub question 4: What support was provided to promote the success of the project?

The following quotations illustrate the abovementioned theme.

… where they gave us ideas of how to incorporate it and how to start and explained the whole process and they gave us good guidelines of how to do it and how to implement it…B(2)

Well we do have workshops. Mrs. X often get us together or she will come pay us a visit and find out how we are getting on she gave a dem here at school…B(1)

All necessary required forms of support…" were provided from the EMDC…E(1)

Educators all across the spectrum in the current South African context are in desperate need of support of how to implement the new curriculum. Cluster meetings do not provide them with the much needed support. A programme like SFT lends itself to more barriers if not implemented and administered correctly. It is, however heartwarming to discover that the educators that took part were not only reliant on the support from outside sources, but also created their own support structure. The educators at the schools met and spoke informally about their way of handling the implementation and others could learn from this.

That is a lack for me because we don't have one person on the staff who is doing it for SFT you know we as coordinators in a group we monitor it through our planning, but that is about it. F(1)

Educators felt that the support that came from the Metro was adequate enough to guide them about the implementation of SFT. They mentioned that workshops were frequently held to help them with the implementation.

The support from the project leaders can make or break a project and the success of a project usually depends on the commitment of the project leaders. It is the responsibility of the project leaders to give guidance and be available to give support and feedback. The educators involved in SFT had nothing but praise for the project leaders. They all agreed that if it wasn't for them, they would not have been able to implement the programme so successfully. These are some of the comments that were mentioned during the interviews.

Excellent commitment from project coordinators…E(1)

Fruitful meetings are held...F(2)

Discussions take place, difficulties are worked at…F(2)

Help is always available. Good encouragement. Feedback always fresh ideas…F(1)

Regular meetings were held where they could discuss and share with each other the difficulties and barriers that they have experience. C(1)

In most circumstances meetings are places where new ideas and instructions are enforced upon you. The educators involved in this project looked forward to have their regular meeting, because they viewed this as their fountain of knowledge

A select group of the educators that were busy with SFT were also invited to an international conference that was held in Cape Town. Here educators were allowed to rub shoulders with international experts who made in depth studies on the concept of Philosophy of Children and on the teaching of thinking generally.

... the other educators they went to a conference for SFT and came back reporting about how well it was. F(1)

... was also there and was so excited you know about how much more we can do. F(1)

All the educators that were interviewed had high praise for the amount and quality of support rendered by the project leaders. This was indeed seen as the strong point of the project. There was a shoulder to lean on. The support from the EMDC and the SMT has been discussed above under challenges.

4.5   Comparison between questionnaires and interview questions

Questions 1-3 of the questionnaire dealt with the support from the principal, the SMT and also from the Metro. It was surprising to see that questions 1 and 2 that dealt specifically with the support from the principal and SMT had a good result from the questionnaire, but in the interviews the educators had a different story. It is also noticeable that educators from the one school held the principal and SMT in high regard at almost the same level in the questionnaire. At the other schools the educators' viewpoint of the principal differed and they were not perceived as supportive. At some of the schools the educators made it perfectly clear that the role that the principal and SMT played was non-existent.

No nothing happening from the SMT there we are just left on our own. B(1)

The principal and SMT plays a very important role at schools; because they are suppose to be the catalyst when it comes to the implementation of new programmes or projects.

Questions 4 and 5 dealt with the enthusiasm of the senior and intermediate phase and also with the enthusiasm of the educators involved in this project. I wanted to explore the level of interest from these phases and also aimed at finding out if the educators involved were all keen about SFT. It was mentioned by the educators in the Intermediate phase that they believed that SFT must be introduced from grade 1 until grade 7. The rating was also high and question 5 that dealt with those involved scored between 4 and 5. This is a clear indication that those involved were enthusiastic about SFT. They were also willing to help to expand the project further by incorporating the Foundation- as well as the Senior Phase. One of the educators mentioned that it would be an advantage, to make it a whole school project so that the learners coming from the Foundation Phase will have already been stimulated and those going to the senior phase will have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Question 7 scored a mean of 4, but from the interviews it is obvious that the educators do not spend enough time on SFT as it has been suggested by the project leaders. Some of them said the following

time is a constraint in the fact that you can't give everybody with the big classes that you have you can't also get everybody's opinion…C(1)

The community of inquiry cannot add value if it is not utilized in the appropriate manner. The educators who do justice to SFT will be able to comment with a clear conscience about the added value of the community of inquiry. If educators are struggling even to implement it in the languages, there is no way that they can have used it in other Learning Areas.

Educators indicated that even on the playground during break there is a general change in learners' behaviour. They can express themselves in a "*in a calm and*

agreeable manner and they can also agree or disagree with their peers". A(1). They ascribe this to the influences of the community of inquiry and SFT. The whole school is not involved in this project and it may be that the behaviour of learners in certain classes is better where they practice SFT. The behaviour of the learners as mentioned in question 8 has indeed according to those interviewed undergone a huge transformation. They also had a mean score of 4.

In most, if not all the cases the thinking of the educators still did not seem to change. The rating of 4 as it is displayed in table I question 9, is not a true reflection of the thinking of the educators. The evidence has been noted in the interviews that most of them still see it as a reading period and treat is as such. They are still looking for a separate period although they know that the NCS does not make provision for a programme such as this. I understand that the project leaders have instructed them what to do and how to deal with time management. The rating of 4 in my opinion is thus flattering to the change in teaching as it is attributed to the educators involved in this project. Some of the educators involved also mentioned that they tried to integrate SFT with other learning areas.

I try to incorporate it when I give a language. B(2)

We will connect it with LO. B(2)

They used the stories in some cases to draw learners attention to moral issues. C(1)

In question 10 with also a mean rating of 4 it was clear that the educators were surprised but also enthusiastic about the way that SFT has changed the behaviour of the learners. They spoke about the respect and improvement in behaviour that the learners have developed. They were happy about the fact that the learners were able, after being exposed to SFT, to handle conflict situations with ease. It is however a worrying fact as one educator put it that, this is not their community. The general feeling was that when they go back to their communities they are still confronted with violence. Young children do not have the presence of mind to deal with these situations outside a controlled environment. They must still go back there and handle

the situation. Everyday is thus a challenge, but they are getting there. The educators were so confident that the learners were gaining self-management skills, and confirmed this with a rating of 4.

...to be able to speak to each other and resolve problems in a verbal manner rather than in a physical manner. C(2)

...that makes them think deeper than what they have been taught . A(1)

The communities that most of these learners are coming from are cruel and do not allow you to reason out issues. In most cases this is sorted out through the use of violence. The safe haven of the school and the community of inquiry makes them aware that problems can be ironed out through discussions and reasoning.

4.6   Conclusion

The main purpose of SFT is to encourage the learners to think critically and carefully and to apply this thinking to real life situations and to their learning. Roberts (2006) says in his conclusion to his research about SFT that it has the potential to positively affect educators both professionally and personally and to effect positive change in learners.

The findings as discussed above suggest that even when not implemented as it was intended, certain positive changes took place in the learners. Educators perceived that the following challenges need to be addressed: the monitoring of the implementation, adequate support by the principal and SMT, and the language barriers. But on the whole they thought this was something worth pursuing further as illustrated by their comments below. They had the following positive things to say about the way forward for SFT:

With continued application and implementation of strategies and methodologies we will eventually reap the rewards...E(1)

It is still a long way, but it will get there…F(1)

It will reach the goal over a period of time as learners are given more opportunities to practice what they are taught…F(2)

The findings will be discussed further in Chapter 5, which also includes comments regarding the research process, some practical recommendations and suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This last chapter gives a summary of the study and discusses the findings. Relevance of the study and the limitations of the research are also discussed before presenting some tentative recommendations to bring this study to a close.

5.2   SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Questionnaires and interviews were used in this study. Eighteen educators from nine different schools completed a questionnaire and thirteen were subsequently interviewed. The following research questions were used to address the perceptions of these Intermediate Phase educators about the implementation of Stories for Thinking in schools in one Western Cape Education Department region:

Research questions:

1 -   What did educators perceive to be the strengths the SFT project?

2 -   What did educators perceive to be the challenges to the success of this project?

3 - How did educators use the SFT materials and community of inquiry methodology?

4 -   What support was provided to promote the success of the project?

Educators' responses indicated that there was a general improvement in the reading abilities of the learners. They referred, firstly, to the fact that the general reading abilities of the learners had improved significantly since the introduction of SFT and

community of inquiry methodology. Although SFT was not a programme specifically designed to stimulate reading it had just this effect. Educators knowingly and some unknowingly by introducing SFT and community of inquiry discussions stimulated the reading ability and the love of reading within the learners that they were teaching.

The reading ability of the learners does improve ...C(2)

This ability to read can have a positive effect on all the other school work that learners are involved in. Most of the educators that were interviewed were of the opinion that at least the learners' abilities to read a text had improved. Other researchers, for example Othman & Hashim (2006) and Niklasson, Ohlson & Ringborg (1996) have also found that P4C (which is the model for SFT materials) has a positive effect on reading.

The general improvement in the reading of the learners had increased their confidence. This might also be due to the fact that the community of inquiry has rules of engagement. The strict rules of the community makes the learners feel safe and protected and they are not scared to make known their opinions.

Another strength that was identified was the improvement in the confidence of the learners as well as positive changes in the behaviour of the learners as they engaged with the community of inquiry. This is consistent with the research of Murris (1994) and Doherr (2000) who mentioned that learners in the United Kingdom who were exposed to P4C showed improvements in self-esteem. The educators in my research say that:

Learners feel free to express opinions and to think critically…D(2)

The learners it seems have developed the ability to engage in meaningful conversations. The community of inquiry has given them the opportunity to realize that that their opinions are relevant too. In the society outside of school life they are maybe not heard or given the chance to air their views. This classroom intervention has given them the opportunity to make known their thoughts without the fear of

being criticized or ridiculed. Their new found freedom to speak is enabling them to look critically at and dissect opinions without having to feel scared of the responses of others. Schleifer & Courtemanche (1996) Niklasson, Ohlson, & Ringborg (1996) and Borreson (2008) are in agreement that communication skills and the ability to participate in dialogue improve after learners have been exposed to community of inquiry practices. This also coincides with the fact that the educators in my study were of the opinion that the general behaviour of the learners had changed.

Although a lot of the perceptions from the educators were positive, there were also some weaknesses about SFT that were identified throughout the research. The Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) has been a tough nut to crack in South Africa throughout the years. The student uprising of the 1970's and the earlier 1980's started because the government of the day forced certain communities to use Afrikaans as a language of instruction. Mda (2004) alluded to the fact that English and Afrikaans were the only recognized languages in the country and all other languages were viewed as "tongues" or "vernaculars" or dialects. This was one of the concerns from the educators involved in the project that the language (English) being used in SFT is only the LoLT of the learners, while their mother tongues are different. From my experience as a parent and an educator, parents in our country have the tendency to send their children to schools so that they can be taught through English as a medium of instruction, because they feel this will help them with future studies

I am talking about the Xhosa learners that they are at a disadvantage when it comes to the additional language…A(1)

In some of the schools it is only their 2nd Additional Language. It is the educators' view that is thus difficult to engage the learners in a meaningful community of inquiry because of this language barrier. This is one barrier that SFT is not able to bridge at this moment in time. By commenting on this, I believe that the expectations of the educators were a bit too high, however the responses of the educators involved

in the project indicates that SFT might be used to teach learners English as a Language.

Thinking skills written work improve. D(1)

learners overcome the language barrier (Xhosa speaking learners) through confident self expression using key words. E(2)

Using key words prompted by the educators. E(2)

Being involved in the community of inquiry to speak without inhibitions stimulates them to speak and this in turn develops their vocabulary.

The vital role that monitoring and support play from the project leaders is captured when they say:

... Mrs. X often gets us together or she will come pay us a visit and find out how we are getting on she gave a dem here at school...B(1)

However educators at the various schools felt that the support that they received from their base, the school was not adequate enough.

No nothing happening from the SMT there we are just left on our own. B(1)

They would have valued more obvious support from the principal and the SMT, and were complaining about the lack thereof. Lunenberg (1995) points out that principals play a vital role in changes that happens at schools and should play the following role. They must,

- ➢ Create a positive climate – they understand that the success of the faculty is also their success
- ➢ Provide resources – they must provide the necessary budget, staffing, supplies and other resources
- ➢ Remove barriers – they must make policies flexible, finding ways to circumvent opposition from the outside and dealing with any other opposition.

The standout factor that the educators were in agreement about was the fact that the support they received within the project from the Metropole and the project leaders was of a high standard and this paved the way for them to get the most out of SFT.

... Where they gave us ideas of how to incorporate it and how to start and explained the whole process and they gave us good guidelines of how to do it and how to implement it...B(2)

An important factor that project leaders can take note of is the fact that people (educators) are reliant on the appropriate guidance to see a project through. The educators took heart from the fact that their support was sufficient to implement and get the most out of SFT.

The fact that principals were not actively involved in the SFT project can be linked directly to the discrepancies in the responses between the questionnaires and the interviews. This might be attributed to the fact that educators were afraid that their responses in the answering of the questionnaires would be made known to the principal. They endorsed the support of the principal in the questionnaires, but when they were interviewed they were careful about what they said, although in informal off the record conversations they made it clear that they were unhappy with the involvement of the principal. I acknowledge the fact that I have no hard evidence to support this fact, but it seemed important to mention that most of the principals were not highly rated by the respondents in terms of their involvement in this project. There were however, a few educators who acknowledged the supportive role their principals were playing. However, their disappointment with the support from some of the principals could not convince any educator to come on record. They were of the opinion that if the evidence came to light it might jeopardize their relationship with the principal. This was despite being reminded about the confidentiality and the anonymity clauses and also the ethics involved in the study.

The movement of educators within a phase, like the Intermediate Phase, also creates problems for the implementation and understanding of SFT. The principal also plays an important role in this regard. Staff movement is the prerogative of the principal and the SMT, but there are times when principals do consult with the educators about moving them to a different phase or grade. The responses to the questionnaires and interviews clearly indicated that some of the educators that were interviewed did not know much about SFT and could not answer as honestly as possible. New staff entering the phase will most likely have a negative impact on the data in any other study.

The expectations from these educators who were involved in the SFT project were not that unrealistic or that high. They were of the opinion that the principal as manager of the school is in a better position than any other official to ensure the smooth implementation and sustainability of SFT in their respective institutions. Proper management and allocation of resources by the principals would also ensure that the time allocated to SFT is maximally optimized by the educators involved in the project. Educators are aware of the notional teaching time that the curriculum prescribes, but are not ignorant of the fact that the principal must be able to determine where the shortcomings in the results of the school are and act upon that, if necessary adapting the curriculum.

5.3   RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions of the educators about the implementation of SFT in their schools. Perceptions, according to the dictionary, are "the way you think about something". (South African School Dictionary) This implies that the educators viewed the implementation through their own eyes and decided to respond in the way they saw fit. Their perceptions might not be true, but this will definitely influence their actions and attitude towards the implementation.

Curriculum 2005 (DoE, 2005); the RNCS (DoE, 2003); the NCS (DoE, 2005) and the Review of the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (2009) all mention that the development of the thinking abilities is paramount to the overall development of the learners. SFT, together with community of inquiry pedagogy, is a tool that was introduced to help educators to engage the learners in critical thinking. It was also intended to help educators negotiate the recent massive changes to the curriculum more easily. The curriculum is again undergoing revision, but the Critical Outcomes remain in place. The study is relevant because it explores the strengths and weaknesses of one particular means of intervention to help the learners to improve their critical thinking skills. It highlights the improvement in the learners overall abilities, but also suggests practical improvements to the current implementation of SFT.

Harley and Wedekind (2004) remark reform of the educational sector in South Africa was non negotiable. Change and reforms usually scare human beings because of the fear of the unknown, but this was inevitable in order for the country to move forward. Van der Westhuizen and Theron (2007) cites Taylor (1987) who says that change is the struggle between what is and what is desired and that is an unavoidable feature of human experience. It brings about alteration in both personal and employment spheres. There was indeed a change in the personal and also the working conditions of educators. Some of the South African educators who were participants in my study had to live through this reform and this SFT programme was thus worth investigating as a means of supporting them.

## 5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.4.1 Researcher

At the time of the research I had limited knowledge about the SFT project and the work of Lipman and could have displayed some bias towards the study and thought

that it was just a fad. There were also practical limitations, mainly related to my time constraints that affected interviews and data collection generally. The travelling distance to the different institutions in limited time made it difficult to conduct the research. Interviews had to be scheduled so that two or three interviews were conducted on the same day one after the other at different times at different schools. I am also of the opinion that my current position and post level at my own institution were some kind of a deterrent in the interviews with the individual educators.

5.4.2   Participants

Two of the schools in the original project were not prepared to take part in the research and at one of the schools the principal mentioned that they were too busy with meetings in the afternoons. Also, in some schools educators who started with the project were not part of the Intermediate Phase any longer. At the time of the research several educators were either new-comers at the school or it was their first time in that particular phase
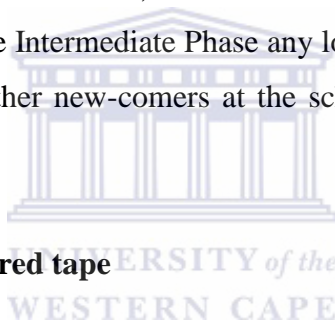
5.4.3   Bureaucracy and red tape

It is still my opinion that bureaucracy and red tape should play a vital role in every institution. I however, believe that this particular system worked against me in trying to get into the different institutions to do my research. There is always "stuff" that I do not want to do (I speak from experience) that gets delegated to somebody else. This also happens at most institutions. The easy way out is then: "I told person x to respond". This has really hampered my research and could also be one of the reasons why some educators felt that the principal do not know anything about the project. This was not made better by the fact that some interviews at scheduled dates did not transpire because the educators were not available when I got there. At times I heard about the cancellation when I phoned just before I left my institution for the interviews.

5.4.4   Limitations in design

According to Robson (2007) questionnaires have their advantages and disadvantages. Some of the advantages that he mentions are that it does not require personal interaction skills on the part of the researcher and thus reduces the effect of the researcher on the responses. On the other hand two of the disadvantages that he alludes to are the fact that the resulting data can give inflated impressions of the value of the findings and that it is also not always possible to go into topics in depth. The latter is indeed a flaw in the design of the questionnaire. Some of the questions could have been asked on a different level, but as Robson (2007) says it is impossible no matter the depth of the questions to question the responses of the respondents as indicated on the questionnaires.

Babbie and Mouton (2001), Freebody (2003) and Lankshear and Knobel (2004) are all in agreement that interviewing is one of the data gathering tools that lends itself to in depth questioning because of the physical presence of the researcher. This however, can be a problem in itself because the mere presence of the researcher could be an intimidating one especially if the respondents are not at ease with the project that they are doing. I think I could have structured my interview questions a little bit differently to ensure that all the research questions could have been given more or less equal attention and should have probed more carefully. The designing and structuring of the interview schedules and the responses given depends as much on the researcher as on the type of questions that is posed to the respondents. In future I will make sure that my questionnaires as well as the interview questions are pre-tested more thoroughly. I realise too that this is a qualitative study and not a quantitative one and cannot be generalized or seen as the general norm of how things will unfold when the settings of the questions and the interviews are different.

## 5.5	RECOMMENDATIONS

After carefully considering the research findings from the questionnaires and interviews and also by looking at the limitations of the study I am proposing the following recommendations.

### 5.5.1	Whole school approach

A whole school approach with regards to the implementation of Stories for Thinking should be adopted. This was mentioned by some of the educators at some of the schools that I visited. This particular project only starts at grade 4 level until grade 6. These educators were of the opinion that the Foundation- as well as the Senior Phase should be made part of this project. This was particularly emphasised at the schools where the educators displayed a more positive attitude towards SFT. It was their thinking that it is better to implement a thinking programme such as this at an earlier level in order for the learners to have time to master the intended outcomes.

### 5.5.2	Curriculum leaders

Principals at all schools are the curriculum leaders. Anything to do with the curriculum is the responsibility of the principal. In most cases work is delegated, but the principal cannot plead ignorance if something goes wrong. Ideally they must be trained in the implementation of any new programmes being implemented at the school. The importance to the enhancement to the curriculum must also be put forward to them. According to the PAM (1999: 8) the principal "is responsible for the development of staff training programmes, school-based, school-focused and externally directed, and to assist educators, particularly new inexperienced educators, in developing and achieving educational objectives in accordance with the needs of the school." Principals must be made part of any developments that will benefit the school community, the educators, as well as the learners. They should be the first point of call. When introducing new programmes at schools, principals should be

made aware of the core functions as described in the PAM document. Therefore it would be advisable to have the principals involved and onboard with the start of a new project so that they can distribute the work as evenly as possible amongst the educators.

5.3.3   Memorandum of understanding

A memorandum of understanding should be drawn up between the project leaders, the Metropole where it is being implemented, the principal and the educators. This action will most probably ensure that the educators do not see the projects just as another add on to the curriculum. Liaison persons should be appointed between the school and the Metropole as well as Head Office to inform them about progress made. In this way they will keep abreast with the developments at school level.

5.5.4   Action research

Research about the implementation of projects must be done to test the feasibility of the project that is going to be implemented. This could be done at an institution where the circumstances are conducive to teaching and learning and at an institution where the cooperation has much to be desired for. All the contextual factors should be taken into consideration to find out which circumstances will enhance the success of the project. Research being done in schools takes time and commitment from researchers especially novice researchers. They must take cognizance of the fact that consent for the study means nothing if they are not willing to be an active participant in the study. It is important for the powers that be to be an active participant in programmes being implemented in schools and also with the research that is being done. After all the programmes as well as the research are being done to better the education prospects for the children of this country. Schools should also be willing to conduct action research about their own practice. This will help them to understand the nature of doing things and make some changes to this.

5.5.5 Suggestions for future research

Future research could also look at the following to get a more extensive idea about the implementation of SFT or any other project in Western Cape or South African schools:

- ✓ The involvement and support of officials at Head office when new programmes are implemented in schools
- ✓ The credentials, suitability and experience of project leaders to implement specific programmes
- ✓ Research about the principals' knowledge of programmes implemented in their schools
- ✓ Research about the impact that these interventions have on children

Some of the above-mentioned may not pertain directly to SFT, but might ensure a smoother implementation of future programmes in schools.
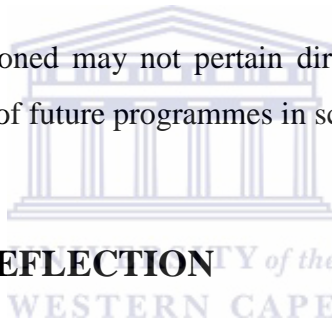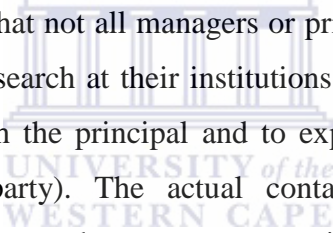
5.6   PERSONAL REFLECTION

The word master student is exactly what it says it is. You have to be a master over your emotions, a master in reflection, a master in listening to the respondents, a master in listening to your supervisor, a master in re-doing and re-editing your chapters, a master in manipulating your time and a master in getting along with your family. Hopefully you come out a Master in your own right at the end of your study.

I was the kind of student who handed in assignments without reading it through and check for grammar, punctuation and coherence. I started typing and when I end, that's enough, hand it in. This study has taught me that by just looking more closely at the wording and sentence construction, what you want to say becomes clearer to you as well as the readers. You have to be patient, open for uplifting criticism and approach everything with an open mind. I have come to learn that by being open-minded you could learn a lot more than when you do not listen to advice that has

been given. I have now learned all the expectations and requirements to be a successful post-graduate student. Hopefully I will be able to use my acquired knowledge to help prospective post graduate students when the time is right.

While doing this study I have come to realise that educators across the spectrum all feel apprehensive when their personal space is being invaded by an outsider. Although I was well received at the various schools, it must be mentioned that most of the educators looked a bit apprehensive to be part of the study. It cannot be assumed just because educators or people are implementing a project they will be willing to be interviewed or questioned about the project. However, when we started they gave their full support and sometimes more that was bargained for. I did not ask or do not know if the educators were informed before the start of the project about the research that will be done.

I also became aware that that not all managers or principals of schools are willing to allow researchers to do research at their institutions. It takes up a lot of time just to make an appointment with the principal and to explain the aim of the study (to a seemingly uninterested party). The actual contact with the educators or the interviewees takes even longer, because you are still reliant on the amount of time that you will get from those in charge of the institutions. With regard to my position at my institution I have decided to allow students to come to do research whenever it suits them without too much disruption. Normally the interview does not take more than an half an hour. This has even prompted me to allow more students for practice teaching. If I do not give them a chance, who will?

Schools in some of our suburbs in the Western Cape are struggling to make ends meet. The appearance of the buildings and the surrounding areas can be a deterrent to the educators, parents as well to the learners at the school. The attitude of the educators at these schools must be commended for the work that they are doing under sometimes appalling conditions. I have once again come to realise that with the right attitude you can make things work for the better.

I came to the conclusion that although educators at some schools criticize principals without the blink of an eye, they still look up to them for guidance and support. Due to the position of authority that the principal has, even if the educators do not agree with everything that they do, this is inevitable. This is apparent in the fact that most of them blame their principals for not supporting them, but at the same time they are criticizing them. This situation has taught me that to try to be supportive as a principal even if it is the least that can be done.

A lot of lessons can be learned from doing research and can make "masters" out of us. Research ensures that the depths of every subject or topic can be explored. Every researcher on a particular topic discovers new areas for future research and in this way ensures that there is always fresh material to work on. South Africa actually needs more researchers, but more money must be put into research to help prospective researchers.

5.7   CONCLUSION

The study was to find out what the perceptions of educators were about the implementation of Stories for Thinking in some schools in one of the Metropoles of the Western Cape Education Department. Evidence from the analysis of the questionnaires and interviews shows that most of the educators were of the opinion that the introduction of SFT in their particular schools has made a difference in the improvement of the reading of the learners, a significant improvement in their confidence levels and a positive change in their general behaviour. Research evidence from other sources also suggests that this kind of practice, if it is used in the prescribed manner, can have a significant influence on the critical thinking abilities of learners and educators. Although the introduction of SFT has some limitations, these can be overcome, and it is still worth pursuing in schools across the Western Cape at a later stage, if approved by the relevant officials from the Western Cape Education department or the broader South African educational sector. The evidence from the

local as well as the international research shows that this is worth exploring. More streamlining however is needed and the monitoring of the implementation process should be done on a more structured basis.

It is thus worth mentioning that projects like SFT that provide sufficient evidence that they have the potential to enhance and support the curriculum should be taken up by the policy and lawmakers in the educational sector. Our aim as educationists is to look for interventions to support the development of the learners of our country, this is what we fought for.

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MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children http://www.montclair.edu/cehs/academic/iapc/whatis.shtml 2008/04/15

STORIES FOR THINKING

School: ………………………

QUESTIONNAIRE

Date: ………………………

EDUCATORS

A) Please mark the years that you have been involved in this project

SCHOOL A	2007	2008	2009

B) How much of the training in 2007 and 2008 did you receive?

100%	75%	50%	Less than 50 %

C) In what age category do you fall?

20 - 30	30 - 40	50 -

STORIES FOR THINKING PROJECT

On a scale of 1-5 how would you rate the following (with 5 = very positive)

1. The support of the principal

1	2	3	4	5

2. The support of the Senior Management Team (SMT)

1	2	3	4	5

3. The support of Metropole South Education District

1	2	3	4	5

4. The enthusiasm/interest from the other educators (Foundation-, Senior Phase)

1	2	3	4	5

5. The enthusiasm of the Intermediate Phase educators involved in the project.

1	2	3	4	5

6. The relevance of the stories to the learners. The enthusiasm/interest from the other educators (Foundation-, Senior Phase)

1	2	3	4	5

7. The value of the community of inquiry approach as a way to teach other learning areas to the learners.

1	2	3	4	5

8. The extent to which learners' behaviour has changed due to the introduction of Stories for Thinking.

1	2	3	4	5

9. The extent to which you're teaching has changed due to this programme?

1	2	3	4	5

10. The extent to which the learners' ability to express themselves has developed due to this programme.

1	2	3	4	5

STORIES FOR THINKING

School: ……………………….

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS   Date: ……………………….

1. How do you understand the goals of Stories for Thinking?

   ………………………………………………………………………………

   ………………………………………………………………………………

2. Do you think it will reach its intended goal in your school, in your classroom?

   ………………………………………………………………………………

   ………………………………………………………………………………

3. a) Do you think that this project is effective and why do you say that?

   ………………………………………………………………………………

   b) What do you see as the strengths of this programme?

   ………………………………………………………………………………

   c) What do you see as the weak points of this programme?

   ………………………………………………………………………………

   Do you experience any changes in the development of the learners?

   a) Written work? …………………………………………………………….

   b) Reading? ………………………………………………………………….
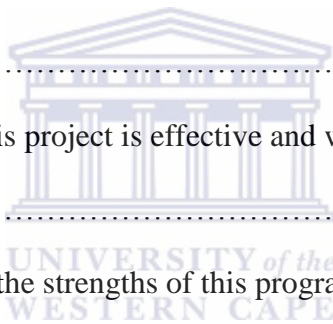
   c) Thinking? …………………………………………………………………

   d) Behaviour? ……………………………….…………………………………….

4. How do you incorporate this within the curriculum?

   a) Does the curriculum at this school make provision for this programme?

b) Constraints? ……………………..……………………………………………

c) Other learning areas? …………………………………………………………….

d) Time allocation? ………………………………………………………………

What is the involvement of Metro South Education District? What support are they giving?

………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………

7. How is the project monitored? How and by whom?

…………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………

APPENDIX C

Navrae Enquiries IMibuzo	Dr RS Cornelissen
Telefoon Telephone IFoni	(021) 467-2286
Faks Fax IFeksi	(021) 425-7445
Verwysing Reference ISalathiso	20090424-0036

Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Mr Ronald Agulhas
11 Mikro Street
GOODWOOD
7460

Dear Mr R. Agulhas

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE PERCEPTIONS OF INTERMEDIATE PHASE EDUCATORS ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STORIES FOR THINKING IN ONE WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT REGION.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from 6th May 2009 to 30th September 2009.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

    The Director: Research Services
    Western Cape Education Department
    Private Bag X9114
    CAPE TOWN
    8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 6th May 2009

APPENDIX D

OFFICE OF THE DEAN
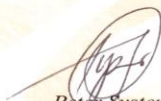## DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH
DEVELOPMENT

22 June 2009

To Whom It May Concern

I hereby certify that the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape has approved the methodology and the ethics of the following research project by:Mr. R Agulhas (Education)

Research Project: The implementation of Stories for Thinking in one Western Cape education region: Intermediate Phase Educators' perceptions

Registration no: 09/4/8

Peter Syster
Research Development
University of the Western Cape

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WESTERN CAPE

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE
A place of quality, a place to grow, from hope to action through knowledge

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: *The perceptions of Intermediate Phase educators about the implementation of Stories for Thinking in one Western Cape Education Department region.*

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

Participant's name………………………..

Participant's signature…………………………….

Witness……………………………………..

Date………………………

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact

Supervisor: Prof. L Green
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17, Belville 7535
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INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: *The perceptions of Intermediate Phase educators about the implementation of Stories for Thinking in one Western Cape Education Department region.*

What is this study about?
This is a research project that I am conducting at the University of the Western Cape in order to make the requirements for the degree M.Ed. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are able to give information about the Project at your school. The purpose of my research is to investigate how to teachers perceive the value of this project.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?
You will be asked to answer a short questionnaire. It will only take about 5-10 minutes to answer. The questions will provide me with information how the project was run at your school and how you perceived it.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?
I will do my best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, the questionnaire that you answer will not have your name on it and will be kept in a secure locked cabinet. There will be nothing on the questionnaire that can identify you.
Your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible in my thesis and any other documents.

In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, I will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to my attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others.

What are the risks of this research?
There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.

What are the benefits of this research?
This research is not primarily designed to help you personally, but the results may help to improve the project. This will also provide other educators the opportunity to reflect on the project and ultimately provide feedback. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the impact of this project.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

Audio taping
This research project involves making [*audiotapes*] of you. I will make audiotapes of all interviews to have the opportunity to listen to them while I am busy transcribing. These tapes will be stored at home in my safe. I am the only one who will have access to it. The tapes will be destroyed after the research has been conducted or could be handed back to you if so required.

___   I agree to be [audio taped] during my participation in this study.
___   I do not agree to be [audio taped] during my participation in this study.

What if I have questions?
If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact me,
Ronald Agulhas
079 695 8878

Or my supervisor

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Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Prof. A Fataar
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