ENCOURAGING THINKING USING LOCALLY CONSTRUCTED
LEARNING MATERIALS: A CASE STUDY OF ONE
INTERMEDIATE PHASE CLASSROOM

Mini-thesis proposal submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of M. Psych
the Department of Psychology, University of the Western Cape, Bellville

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature: …………………….. Date: ……………………………………

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the use of 'Stories for Thinking' learning materials in one Intermediate Phase classroom in the Western Cape.

A convenience sample of forty learners and one teacher were drawn from a local Primary school in a working class community in a Metropolitan Region of the Western Cape. A qualitative case study approach was used to gather information and to help address the research question. Data were collected by means of a focus group interview with the learners, two interviews with the educator and eight structured observation visits by the researcher. The data were presented for analysis in the form of three classroom vignettes representing the initial, middle and final phases of the study. These were linked to a thematic analysis of field note records, interview data and a summary of the observation checklist for each phase.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief background to the study and explain its rationale. The chapter will describe the aim of the study and its theoretical framework and provide an overview of the methodology employed. It also outlines the general structure of the thesis. Finally, certain important terminology that is used in the research is defined.

1.2   BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The 1994 elections in South Africa marked the end to the apartheid system with all its inequities and ushered in a democracy. Some time previously the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) had undertaken a study investigating possible transformation of education in the country (NEPI, 1992). The White Paper on education and training (1995) and the South African Schools Act (1996) took into account the NEPI recommendations as well as the general principles of the new constitution. Education was to be based on the principles of human rights and social justice, participation and social integration, equal access to a single inclusive system, access to the curriculum for all, equity and redress, community responsiveness and cost effectiveness.

The new curriculum, Curriculum 2005, introduced by the Department of Education incorporated these principles. Curriculum 2005 was piloted in 1997 and first implemented in certain classes in 1998. The new curriculum is termed Outcomes Based Education (OBE). It draws heavily on the work of a North American educationist, William Spady (cf. Spady, 1988; Spady & Marshall, 1991). Curriculum 2005 specifies certain desirable critical outcomes that are informed by various aspects of thinking (cognition). An issue that arises is how these curriculum outcomes are to be achieved?

Key elements of the new curriculum are contextual relevance, the integration of knowledge and a constructivist understanding of human meaning making applied to both learners and educators. The learners are not, as in the old education system, to just reproduce knowledge. Educators are no longer to teach what they are told to teach in a manner prescribed to them. Educators are encouraged to make choices about the relevance of content to their context and to develop their own materials (Green, 2000). The outcomes have much in common with the aims of the cognitive education movement and with the ideas of Splitter and Sharp (1995) and others that reasonableness, care and respect are significant ingredients of good thinking and that strengthening judgment and thinking for oneself should be important goals of education (Ashman & Conway, 1997; Haywood, 1993).

After reviewing the implementation of Curriculum 2005 in 2000, the Department of Education introduced the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) to meet the many challenges of Curriculum 2005. The critical outcomes of the Revised National Curriculum Statement specify that learners should be able to identify and solve problems and make use of critical and creative thinking in their decision making. Learners should also work effectively in teams, groups, organizations and communities. In addition learners should be able to organise and manage themselves and their activities in a responsible and effective manner. Learners should also be able to collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information. Another critical outcome is that learners should be able to communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and language skills both in oral and written presentation. Learners should use science and technology effectively and critically, displaying responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.

Finally, the learner should demonstrate an understanding of the world systematically and recognise that problem solving seldom occurs in isolation (Western Cape Education Department, 2000).

The researcher, educated in and a teacher for 15 years within the previous system years, is aware that the previous curriculum never really focused explicitly on teaching thinking. Creative and critical thinking seem to have been incorporated into the different subjects and were acquired, if at all, through a process of incidental learning. The new democracy held the promise of improved lives for all people. Since 1994, South Africa has became part of the global community which has created new opportunities, expectations and demands. Education through its curriculum is one tool that can make a valuable contribution to improving the lives of people by developing them into responsible democratic citizens who can meet not only the social, economic and political demands of South African society, but also meet global demands. To do so, it is imperative that learners be developed into independent, responsible critical thinkers.

Despite the introduction of Critical Outcomes, the curriculum does not specify the approach that educators can use to assist them in teaching thinking skills. It is also argued that teaching approaches can inhibit or enhance learner's ability to think well. If this is the case, it is important to identify approaches that are effective for the educators in the South African classroom. The proposed study hoped to address these issues by evaluating the effectiveness of one particular form of intervention, 'Stories for Thinking'. The identification of possible weaknesses could make it possible to effect improvements. Furthermore, this study could provide additional knowledge on issues relating to the teaching of thinking skills and provide input towards the development of future intervention programmes.

The 'Stories for Thinking' project resulted from The Western Cape Education Department project, Cognition in Curriculum 2005 (Department of Education, 1999). This project explored the potential role the cognitive education movement could play in accomplishing the goals of the Curriculum, especially the Critical Outcomes. The aim of the project was to investigate a range of strategies primary school educators could use to develop cognitive abilities. A group of educators at one Primary School in the Metropolitan region developed the learning material, 'Stories for Thinking' using Philosophy for Children as a model. The local curriculum material is designed to develop

critical, creative and caring thinking. The material consists of 12 stories, each with activities. They are designed to encourage learners to think more deeply and carefully about concepts, recognise and begin to manage their own thinking and learning processes, and acquire some of the skills and habits of reasoned inquiry. Some of the stories highlight a particular concept, others focus on thought and thinking and specific thinking processes. The stories raise questions rather than provide answers. They also provide examples of learners inquiring together in a familiar South African context (Green, 2000).

1.3   THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to investigate the use of the *Stories for Thinking* learning materials in one Intermediate Phase classroom in the Western Cape.

1.4   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for cognitive enhancement was provided by Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development in conjunction with other cognitive approaches. Lipman's (1991) approach to cognitive enhancement, (Philosophy for Children), the inspiration for the present study, was the chief among these.

Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and Perkins (1995) maintain that much of what we call intelligence is not fixed, but learnable. Mental functioning develops through mediated social interaction. Potential is not something that children bring with them into the world and is then fulfilled. It is actively created out of the process of upbringing and education in the home, at school and in society. Vygoysky contends that children develop on their own, but we adults are able to enhance their development. If this is the case, it is the responsibility of school and educator to ensure that learning happens and that children develop as thinkers. Vygotsky adds that it is through interactions in language that children acquire the "higher   mental functions". Vygotsky's position implies that educators can help to prepare children to become effective thinkers and learners. One

major debate is whether thinking should be taught explicitly in the curriculum or incorporated into subjects (Burden & Williams, 1998).

Included in the discussion is brief mention of other cognitive enhancement approaches that can help children to become effective thinkers, namely those of De Bono (1991) and Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller (1980). Both Lipman and De Bono assert that teaching of facts and acquiring of knowledge only, is an inadequate manner of preparing children for the difficulties that they may encounter in their lives and believes that children can be helped to think more effectively. Feuerstein *et al.* (1980) share Vygotsky's opinion and contend that children's cognitive ability is improved when learners develop thinking skills through mediation with an adult.

Lipman (1991) claims that cognitive development involves the mediation of learners in the company of peers and adults within a 'community of inquiry'. He believes that an environment where learners can have discussions about topics that are philosophical in nature will assist them to develop their cognitive ability and enable them to acquire thinking skills. Chapter Two gives a detailed explanation of Lipman's programme, Philosophy for Children, and discusses a key concept of his programme, the community of inquiry as well as explaining the importance of stories as a stimulus. The Philosophy for Children Programme, although it emerges from a different discipline and conceptual background (Green, 2000) is consistent with a Vygotskian understanding of human development. An adaption of Lipman's material was considered appropriate for the South African context because of its cost effectiveness and local relevance and in order to engage and encourage ownership of the material by local educators.

It is very difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of this type of intervention but research seems to suggest that Philosophy for Children has positive effects on learners. Evidence is accumulating that Philosophy for Children can enhance thinking, judgement, in young and older children (Baumfield, 2000; Fisher, 1995; Tock Keng Lim, 1994; Schleifer & Courtemanche, 1996; Schleifer, Daniel, Peyronnet & Lecomte, 2003; Wegerif, 2000). Studies have focused on logical, moral reasoning and problem solving ability (Palson,

1996; Schleifer, Lebuis & Caron, 1987) problem solving ability (Baumfield, 2000, Fisher, 1995; Tock Keng Lim, 1994; Wegerif, 2000)

Research has also found that Philosophy for Children improves respect, trust, empathy and confidence in children as well as enhancing their ability to show emotions, and it can also reduce prejudice and stereotyping (Baumfield, 2000; Fisher, 1995; Niklasson, Ohlsson & Ringborg, 1996; Pons, Harris and Doudin, 2002; Schleifer and Courtemanche, 1996; Schleifer *et al.*, 2003; Sigurthorsdotti, 2004; Wegerif, 2000). Others claim that gains in language ability have been made.

Green (2000, 2004) found some evidence to suggest that the intervention, *Stories for Thinking*, based on Philosophy for Children, has positive effects on both learners and educators in South African classrooms.

1.5   RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative case study approach was used. It appeared to be a suitable method because it allows the researcher to explore a single entity or phenomenon bounded by time and activity (a programme, event, process, etc.) and collect detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time (Cresswell, 1994 in Leedy, 1997). It also enables the researcher to understand people in terms of their own definition (Mouton, 2000), as well as the researcher's perspective. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996 in Leedy, 1997) found case studies useful since they enable the researcher to give a rich description of a phenomenon or to evaluate the phenomenon. This is done by gathering a substantial amount of data from a variety of sources to present a description of the phenomenon or experience from the perspective of the participants, and the researcher. A classroom case study enabled the researcher to obtain an understanding of the learners' and educator's experience of the intervention using *Stories for Thinking* and allowed for unexpected findings.

The study was conducted among learners at a school in a working class community in the Metropolitan region of the Western Cape. The participants consisted of approximately 40 learners aged between 10 and 12 years and one educator in one intermediate phase classroom in a local primary school.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and the school's governing body were approached to obtain permission for the study. The purpose of the study was explained and permission was requested from the principal and the educator. In addition, parents were asked to give written consent for their children's participation in the study. Data were collected by means of a focus group interview with the learners at the end of the study, two interviews with the educator which took place at the beginning and end of the study, and eight structured observation visits by the researcher.

The data were analysed by creating three classroom vignettes representing the beginning, middle and final phases of the study, linked to a thematic analysis of the field note records and interview data and a summary of the observation checklists for each phase. An attempt was made to minimise the possibility of error by careful data collection, the use of a co-researcher, and by developing a good and trusting relationship with the participants. No external validity will be claimed for this case study but it may be that others in similar contexts can reason from it by analogy.

It was the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the confidentiality of participants in this research was protected in any spoken or written communication and that any breach of confidentiality was negotiated in advance. The participants engaged in the study voluntarily. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department, the school concerned and the participants. Copies of the mini-thesis will be made available to the Western Cape Education Department and the participating school at the end of the study, and if requested, informal feedback will be provided.

1.6   TERMINOLOGY

Definitions of keywords used in the study intelligence, cognition, and community of inquiry will now be given.

Intelligence

Vygotsky, 1962, 1978) and (Perkins, 1995) maintain that much of what we call intelligence is not fixed, but learnable. Mental functioning develops through mediated social interaction. Potential is not something that children bring with them into the world and is then fulfilled. It is actively created out of the process of upbringing and education in the home, at school and in the society.

Cognition

Cognition is a concept that refers to the mental or psychological processes of understanding, reflecting, making meaning of experiences and the world as well as constructing knowledge. Cognition is modifiable and can be enhanced by effective teaching (Green, Faragher & Faasen, 2000).

Community of Inquiry

Splitter & Sharp (1995) describes a community of inquiry as a place where people make meaning of an issue or topic in which cognitive skills are refined and improved; it is a process of participation with others in thoughtfulness.

1.7   OVERVIEW

Chapter One introduces the study and explains its rationale. It explains briefly the theoretical framework and research methodology, the aim of the study is described and important terminology is defined.

Chapter Two looks at cognitive enhancement. It describes briefly Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development as a theoretical framework and refers to other cognitive

enhancement initiatives. Particular attention is given to Lipman's (1991) approach to cognitive enhancement which was the impetus for this study.

Chapter Three describes how the research was approached and conducted. Case studies are explained and a rationale is provided for the use of this approach in this study. The context and participants are described, and the data collection procedures and data analysis are discussed. Finally, an explanation is given of the means the researcher used to ensure the validity of and ethical conduct during this research.

Chapter Four describes the school context and presents the results of the study in the form of three miniature case study reports.

Chapter Five discusses the findings of the study, and focuses on factors that might have influenced the study and considers some implications of the study. It also looks at how the findings relate to the literature in chapter two. Lastly, limitations and tentative recommendations are explored.

CHAPTER TWO

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND ITS ENHANCEMENT

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is cognitive enhancement. After a brief review of Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development, various cognitive enhancement initiatives will be outlined. Special attention will be given to Matthew Lipman's (1991) approach to cognitive enhancement, which was the impetus for the present study. Lipman, whose concept of thinking is not inconsistent with certain other approaches to intelligence and thinking to be found in psychology, is interested in thinking from the perspective of philosophy, and describes thinking as the combination of critical, creative, procedural and substantial thinking (Lipman, 1991: 4). The people whose work influenced him most are Peirce, Mead and Dewey (Palsson, Sigurd & Nelson, 1999).

The term thinking has many meanings. Thinking can be described as the ability to think logically, creatively or critically. It can also be described as the ability to remember and connect aspects of one's past and present as well as being able to look to the future and make predictions about the consequences of an individuals actions. In education, thinking can be seen as transferring skills such as problem solving and learning to learn (Nisbet & Shucksmith, 1986). In the discipline of psychology cognition is defined as the higher mental processes of humans including how people see and understand the world, the way information is processed, how judgements and decisions are made as well as how they describe their knowledge and understanding of people (cf. Feldman, 1980). Feldman (1980) defines cognitive development as the process that enables a child to change his or her understanding of the world as they grow older and gain experience. The ability to think well is often associated with the concept of 'intelligence'.

There are a number of definitions of intelligence. Three seminal theories are presented to illustrate this. Cattell (1967, 1987) differentiates between two types of intelligence: Fluid intelligence and crystallised intelligence. Fluid intelligence includes the individual ability to reason, memorise and process information. Crystallised intelligence refers to the information, skills and strategies that an individual has acquired through experience, which becomes useful when solving problems. Sternberg (1985, 1991, 1994, & 1996) speaks of a triarchic theory of intelligence. The theory suggests that intelligence has three aspects to it namely componential, experiential and contextual. The componential part refers to the mental aspects, which enable individuals to analyze information for problem solving. The experiential part refers to the impact that previous experiences have on intelligence and how it will affect the individual's ability to solve problems. The contextual part of intelligence refers to the individual's ability to cope with the demands of life on a daily basis.

A number of theorists claim that intelligence has a genetic and a learned aspect to it. Haywood and Switzky (1986), who distinguish between intelligence and cognition, are among this group. They describe intelligence as having its origin in genetics. It is not really modifiable. In addition they claim that intelligence can be assessed to determine an individual's achievement and it is indicated by the individual's aptitudes such as verbal, spatial, memory skills. Cognitive processes, however, are explained as being abilities that are learnt so can and must be taught. Since cognition is modifiable, it can be increased through effective teaching. The cognitive processes can be assessed and are composed of innate ability as well as acquired characteristics such as habits and attitudes. The comparison of these two concepts clearly highlights how different, yet complementary they are in nature.

This study makes reference to the term cognition and cognitive development rather than intelligence. The view of cognition and cognitive development, as presented in the previous paragraph, is more optimistic since it sees change and growth as possible. Perkins (1995) prefers the term "learned intelligence".

2.2. THEORIES OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Many people have influenced debates on how children develop their ability to think so that they can be effective thinkers and learners. For the purpose of this study, the work of Vygotsky will be used as a theoretical framework. Reference will also be made to Piaget and Feuerstein. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) describes the cognitive ability of a child as a sociocultural construct that develops from the child's interaction with the environment. Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky does not see cognitive development as a natural process of maturation but rather as the ability to use new sociocultural tools to extend one's own mental processes.

The notion of sociocultural mediation of the learning process is central to his theory. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) highlights the importance of the social context, especially the role that adults play in the learning and development of learners He claims that children internalise abstract concepts and operations when they interact with adults and more competent peers. He believes that the development of a child's cognitive ability is strongly influenced by the society in which the child lives and by significant people with whom the child interacts. Vygotsky believes that social interaction is the stimulus for cognitive development since it is through this process that the child develops and enhances the lower mental processes with which he or she is born (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). Consequently, he emphasises the importance of mediated learning. He suggests that all higher mental processes start when there is social interaction between the child and mature members of society. According to Hoffman *et al*. (1994), Thomas (1992), and Wertsch (1985) a suitable environment and active mediation by a responsible adult provide the child with opportunities that will enhance or support the development of his or her cognitive abilities.

According to Vygotsky, gestures seem to be a natural action to grasp an object. The adult interprets the grasping movement as a gesture, therefore the meaning is given by adults to the child. Gestures are internalised and become the child's inner command to him or herself. The meaning of human activity is thus formed by mediation through another individual. In addition Vygotsky adds that the child's cognitive development happens

firstly on a social level between people (*interpsychological*) and only later on the individual level, inside the child, *intrapsychological* (Vygotsky, 1978,1986).

Vygotsky (1978, 1986) argues that development of higher mental processes occurs during mediated activities through the use of symbolic tools and sign systems developed by human cultures. Vygotsky contends that language is the most important sign system. In his view thought and language differ in their origin. Vygotsky believes that initial language is merely a means of social communication and initial thought is underdeveloped or a mere action very similar to Piaget's sensory – motor intelligence. When humans have more access to sign systems in their culture, their language develops and enables them to formulate and express their thoughts. Language eventually with time becomes the tool for thought, "… the means of thinking…" (Vygotsky 1987: 120).

Language and thought eventually become integrated. Thought is produced by motivation when the individual wishes to act on the world, but this can only happen in the form of verbal meanings in inner speech. Green (1998) describes thought as an internal conversation with oneself. Inner speech thus differs from speech, which is directed to others. Inner speech is the personal abbreviated dialogue that individuals have with themselves whenever they seek to make meaning of their experiences. When communicating with others words have to be selected carefully. The meanings of the words that are used must be shared by others. However, the contextual meaning of the thought is sometimes lost. According to Kozulin (1990: 276), the formulation of thought in language is a dialogic process between the inner sense and outer meaning which can be described as "thought becoming itself out of what is not yet thought".

Vygotsky holds the view that development not only includes acquisition of knowledge, but that when new concepts, language and skills are acquired, the child also develops new psychological tools, which can be transferred to different situations that they encounter in the world (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986).

Another important concept for Vygotsky is the zone of proximal development. It developed out of the debate regarding intellectual testing which, he claims, only measures what the child is able to do unaided. He argues that a better predictor of a child's ability would be the child's potential. The assessment should take into account what the child is able to achieve when assisted by an adult. The difference between what the child can do on his or her own and with the support of an adult Vygotsky called the zone of proximal development (ZPD). One of the factors that will influence the progress of a child is the quality of the interaction between the child and adult (mediator) who represents the culture and helps the child to obtain the sign systems and symbolic tools that are necessary for learning.

Some authors understand the zone of proximal development differently. Cole & Wertsch (1996) describe the ZPD as place where social negotiations occur about various meanings to gain understanding. Newman and Holzman (1993) suggest that the ZPD is not a place but an activity where humans express their ability to socialise.

Jean Piaget is one of the best-known theorists of cognitive development. While in some respects Piaget and Vygotsky have opposing ideas, they do have common ground.

Piaget's work has been interpreted by a number of authors such as Flavell (1977, 1985), Ginsberg and Opper (1988) and Elkind (1976) and by Meadows (1983, 1993), who has provided an overview of Piaget's work that has made his theory of cognitive development more accessible. Piaget begins with the adult's cognitive abilities especially the ability to reason logically about abstract concepts in mathematics and science. He makes the assumption that humans progress from infancy to adulthood developing the appropriate cognitive ability for each stage of development. This motivated him to investigate how this process occurred. He believes that the structures of thought that humans develop are general and would be found in any culture and learning area (Green, 1998).

Vygotsky, however, believes that culture has an important influence on cognitive development. He suggests that the Piaget's focus on individual performance is

misleading. Vygotsky holds the view that we cannot understand cognitive development without considering the social aspect. Vygotsky claims that children will develop cognitively as a consequence of social interaction as they work with others to solve problems. It is through social interaction that children's cognitive skills increase and they are able to function intellectually on their own. According to Vygotsky children's cognitive abilities increase when they encounter information within their zone of proximal development which is the level where the child can almost, but not fully understand and do a task on his or her own (Feldman, 1999). Mediation promotes development. Piaget (1970) takes a very different view. He contends that children develop cognitively through a series of stages in a specific order and that mediation is not necessary. However, the environment must permit active exploration.

Piaget, like Vygotsky, claims that cognitive development is an active process where the individual engages with new information from the environment. Children take ownership of it as they construct and reconstruct their own patterns of reasoning. He refers to these internal patterns as cognitive structures, which develop via the individual's own interaction with the world, and are independent of language. He suggests that this process does not originate only from within the individual but that cognitive structures develop through the interaction with the environment on a physical and social level.

Vygotsky, however, believes that cognitive development requires more. It occurs when parents, educators, or skilled peers assist the child by presenting information that is both new and within the ZPD (Rogoff, 1990, Steward, 1995). This type of assistance is sometimes called scaffolding, which is the support for learning and problem solving that encourages independence and growth (Bruner, 1983). Vygotsky holds the view that scaffolding not only helps with solving of specific problems but also promotes cognitive development generally.

2.3 APPROACHES TO COGNITIVE ENHANCEMENT

There are numerous cognitive enhancement approaches that have made valuable contributions in promoting ideas that could assist children to become effective thinkers, some of the best known being De Bono (1991), Feuerstein *et al*. (1980) and Lipman (1991). They believe that teaching of only facts or the provision of knowledge alone has become an inefficient and ineffective way of preparing the child to meet the challenges of the future (De Bono, 1991, Lipman, 1991). Feuerstein shares many of Vygotsky's ideas on cognitive development and believes that children's cognitive abilities are enhanced when learners acquire thinking skills through the mediation of an adult (Feuerstein *et al*., 1980). His programme, Instrumental Enrichment (IE) provides caregivers and educators with a tool for effective mediation through which cultural knowledge can be transmitted. It is an interactive and meta-cognitive approach for learning and teaching. It helps to teach thinking skills in a systematic, logical and practical way. It aims to develop the individual's cognitive abilities that are the foundation for higher mental processing (Green *et al*., 2000).

De Bono developed a widely used programme for the direct teaching of thinking as a subject in schools (the CoRT- programme). He believes education implies preparing the learner for life so the thinking skills taught in school must be useful to life after school. In addition the method of teaching thinking must be practical and simple. His CoRT-programme fosters lateral thinking, which encourages coming up with new perceptions and new ideas. This is directly linked with creative thinking (De Bono, 1991). Matthew Lipman advocates an approach to development, that involves the mediation of learners within a community of inquiry. The discussions and topics are philosophical in nature. Lipman believes that this milieu will give children an opportunity to develop their cognitive ability and enable them to acquire thinking skills as they engage in philosophical discussions (Lipman, 1991). A detailed explanation of his approach, Philosophy for Children, will follow.

2.4 THE PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN APPROACH

2.4.1 Explanation of Philosophy for Children

Matthew Lipman contends that philosophy when it is efficiently taught has the potential to develop higher order thinking in education. He argues that in a democracy there is an emphasis on developing reasonable individuals. Therefore the education context in which children develop should be constructed to facilitate this process so that they can grow to be reasonable and inquiring citizens (Lipman, 1991).

According to Lipman the most appropriate strategy for learners to achieve and develop these skills at schools is through philosophy, which, he claims should be part of the curriculum both in primary and secondary schools. He suggests that philosophy should be taught in a dialogue form (the community of inquiry) so that philosophy is done in a practical way rather than theoretically learned. He believes that children should be given the opportunity to philosophise, which will include practising thinking, debating questions and issues in a supportive and reflective context. Here learners will practise and internalise good thinking habits as they deliberate issues (Lipman, 1991).

The original Philosophy for Children consists of a set of stories for children each having a manual to assist teachers when using it in the classroom. It is designed for learners between 6 and 16. It has been used for 30 years in United States and has been adapted for use in over 30 countries (Sutcliffe, 2003). The content of these stories is relevant to everyday happenings in the lives of children. These stories aim at assisting them to discover more about their world and themselves as well as at developing their ability to think. The stories are the tools that stimulate the learners to engage in inquiry. Many philosophical issues that have been debated over many years are included in Lipman's stories in a form accessible to children. The content is relevant to the child's context and serves to stimulate the philosophical discussion. Fisher (1998: 96) argues that "stories liberate us from the here and now, they are intellectual constructions but they are life-like. Stories are intellectually challenging, but also embedded in human concerns. They provide a means to understand the world and to understand ourselves. No wonder they are the primary means of teaching in every human society". In addition, he claims that

stories challenge both affective and cognitive abilities. A story has different aspects that pose a challenge to learners' attention and understanding if they want to make sense of it.

The Philosophy for Children stories are accompanied by a substantial manual. It allows educators considerable of flexibility so they can adapt the material according to the needs of their own contexts. This increases their relevance to learners and allows educators to be creative, innovative, thus owning the process. However, the lack of clear instruction can make educators extremely anxious especially if they have not been exposed to the discipline of philosophy.

2.4. 2 Community of inquiry

In 'Philosophy for Children', learners engage in a community of inquiry. The community of inquiry indicates Lipman's belief in the social nature of thinking and that an individual's thinking is to a large degree dependent on the internalisation that occurs as the individual engages regularly as part of a group. Lipman claims that "if education is to produce individuals who are intellectually flexible, resourceful and judicious, the cognitive processes of the young must be sharpened in an enormous variety of ways, not merely those that are memory or action orientated…" (1985: 101).

Lipman (1993: 379) stresses the necessity of developing what he describes as "the capacity of independent judgement" in children. This should take place in formal settings such as classrooms so that learners can experience intellectual discussions. A community of inquiry allows learners to discuss, debate and explore ideas, concepts and issues in a social context which is a reliable way in which higher-order thinking can be enhanced (Lipman, 1991). Lipman argues that "a community of inquiry has institutionalised patterns of self criticism among its members and prepares the way for those members to become more self critical, self controlled and autonomous" (1991: 52).

Green (2000) points out that discussion in the community of inquiry enables learners to use different thinking skills. It affords them the opportunity to develop their listening

skills, ask questions about ideas and learn to justify their answers. The process allows learners to change beliefs and opinions when new insights and perspectives are discovered.

In a community of inquiry the learners attempt to answer a question together while the educator acts as the facilitator of the discussion. The educator is the creator of the community of inquiry in the classroom, in which learners can share responsibility to develop their own understanding by actively engaging and reflecting in the process as it unfolds (Mercer, 2000). At the start of the process learners together with the educator negotiate rules for the community of inquiry. All participants are encouraged to adhere to the decided rules. The rules are simple and suitable for the age and developmental stage of learners so that they are easy to understand and practice. Examples of rules are that everyone will listen and respect the person who is speaking and that people will give a reason for what they are saying.

2.5 RESEARCH FINDINGS CONCERNING PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN

Although it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of this type of intervention, research suggests that Philosophy for Children has positive effects on learners. In their case study on the effect of philosophical dialogue on pupils aged 11 and 12 years, Peyronnet and Daniel (2002) adapted a tool employed by pragmatic psychologists to enable them to analyse classroom discourse. The study found evidence from the transcriptions that pupils progress cognitively since pupils use speaking to think. Other studies have also found that Philosophy for Children improves the ability to think in young and older children (Baumfield, 2000; Fisher, 1995; Wegerif, 2000).

Schleifer *et* a*l*. (2003) claim that Philosophy for Children improves the judgement of 5 year old children. Their study took place over the course of a year. Measurement of their level of judgement was done using an adapted form of a test developed by Schleifer (1992) which involved looking at differences and similarities. Toch Keng Lim (1994)

also obtained positive results in a study in which primary school children had one class of Philosophy once a week for a period of four months.

The study found that children developed skills to think for themselves and were able to make good judgements when they were asked to look at different possibilities and draw acceptable conclusions. The instruments used for pre-test and post test were intelligence tests and the AH2 group test of general reasoning (Heim, Watts & Simmonds, 1974).

Other studies showed that Philosophy for Children improves the logical and moral reasoning of children as young as eight years. In one study a hundred children took part in a Philosophy for Children programme for a year. The New Jersey Test of Reasoning Aptitude was used to assess their logic and reasoning ability (Lebuis & Caron; 1987; Schleifer *et al.*, 1987; Palson, 1996;). In another study, Lam Chi Ming (2003) found that doing Philosophy for Children in a secondary school improved learners' ability to clarify concepts. The intervention consisted of eight lessons and change was measured using the New Jersey Test of Reasoning skills and a Student Questionnaire. The Cognitive Behaviour Checklist was used to identify and quantify the learner cognitive behaviour that was characteristic of critical thinking. Transcripts and videotapes were used. In yet another study third, fourth and fifth grade learners had Philosophy classes for 5 months (a 70-minute period once a week) (Sasseville, 1994). The Pierce-Harris self-esteem test was administered as a pre-test and post test. This study indicated that there is a relationship between self esteem and logical skills. The learners who increased in their self esteem also increased in their logical ability.

Sprod (1994) reports that Philosophy for Children is effective in improving scientific reasoning. Both quantitative and qualitative measures were used in this study involving twenty-eight eleven to twelve year old learners of mixed ability and gender. The Science reasoning Task Volume and Heaviness (Shayer, 1977) was used as a pre-test and the post test was Pendulum (Kuchemann, 1977). In addition, transcripts of audiotapes of four discussions which were analysed.

Schleifer and Poirier (1996) claim in their study that philosophical discussion increases respect for others. Twenty-six learners from a working class community, who were in their second year were used in their study. Two questions from the adapted and modified. Reasoning Skills test (Schleifer *et al*, 1987) were used with content that children knew. Palsson (1996) found when 12 year old learners are involved in communities of inquiry they think more about others and their opinions. There was a maximum of 28 learners who had an 80-minute session once a week. The teacher kept a diary of all the sessions. The assessment tools were a questionnaire for learners and the New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills. Schleifer *et al*. (2003) indicate in their study that five year old learners who participated in philosophical discussion showed improvement in their ability to show empathy and recognise emotions over a period of a year. The instrument used was Selman's dilemma (Selman, 1971; Selman and Byrne, 1974) and the emotion recognition test based on Freeman's work (1984). A study by Pons *et al*. (2002) also found that 9 year olds understood their emotions better.

Niklasson, Ohlsson and Ringborg (1996) showed in their study how learners' confidence improved. Grade 1-3 children, ranging in age between 7 and 10 years had Philosophy for three years. Each lesson lasted approximately 45 minutes and was audio-taped and transcribed. The researcher returned to these learners two and a half years later when they were in sixth grade. Two questionnaires were formulated in advanced and some of the 24 questions were taken from an evaluation scheme constructed at the British Centre for Philosophy for Children. Schleifer *et al*., (2003) found that participation in philosophical discussion had a positive impact on 5 year old learners' moral autonomy. The test used to measure this was developed by Saltzstein (1994). This research was conducted over a year. Sigurthórsdóttir's (2004) study indicated that learners who regularly participated in a community of inquiry stated their opinions more confidently. This was a two year programme for young children up to the age of six years old. The learners participated four times a week for 30 minutes. The researcher kept reports on the implementation of the programme, its developments and outcomes. A similar study by Niklasson, Ohlsson and Ringborg (1996), as previously discussed, also found that philosophy trained children seem to be more autonomous and self reliant.

Niklasson *et al.* (1996) also found in their study that learners' ability to participate in philosophical discussion improved. This was evident in the manner in which they talked together and how they used each other's ideas as well as how they were able to question their teacher. Sigurthorsdottir (2004) also found similar results.

Studies by Palsson (1992) and Schleifer and Poirier (1996) mentioned earlier also showed that Philosophy for Children helps children to express themselves better. Schleifer and Couremanche (1996) found that Philosophy for Children improves children's language ability. Twenty learners between the ages of ten and twelve participated twice a week, for eight months in two one hour periods in communities of inquiry. Many learners had difficulty with language communication and expression because they could not speak English or French. Oral presentations were recorded and the audiotapes were heard by 25 neutral evaluators who evaluated using a twelve point scale.

Studies previously discussed also indicated other findings. Schleifer and Courtemanche (1996) concluded that Philosophy for Children helps to reduce prejudice and stereotypes. Palsson (1992) and Schleifer and Poirier (1996) indicated that Philosophy for children also improved the attitude and behaviour of children.

Green's (2000) study with 17 educators a primary school introduced to these educators Philosophy for Children. It involved educators in creating their own relevant stories and participating in a communities of inquiry in their classrooms. The findings of the study indicated that 'Stories for Thinking', modelled on Philosophy for Children had positive effects, on both learners and educators. A subsequent intervention with educators (Green, 2004) found that both educators and learners improved after practising thinking in a community of inquiry and using the stories that they created as they engaged with learners in the classroom.

2.6 PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA

Philosophy for Children has been used extensively in South American countries especially in Brazil, which is a developing country with similar socio-economic and educational conditions to South Africa.

Philosophy for Children as an approach presents practical challenges regarding the affordability of imported resource materials. Also, Philosophy for Children material is complex and designed for a different community of learners. The idea of using stories to generate discussions of philosophical topics in a community of inquiry is, however, pivotal. Lipman generously allows his work to be used as a model.

Philosophy for Children has the potential of making a positive contribution in South African education, for educators, learners and the society as a whole. When educators are encouraged to write their own relevant stories, they take ownership and are motivated to use these stories in their classrooms. Green *et al*. (2000) describe a study where seventeen educators at one primary school were introduced to the ideas of Philosophy for Children and experienced being part of a community of inquiry. Eleven workshops were used to create stories that reflected local context, which were then used as learning materials in their own classrooms. This gave birth to the 'Stories for Thinking' learning material, which was subsequently developed further. The stories are the tool used to stimulate and engage learners in meaningful discussions in communities of inquiry in the classroom.

The 'Stories for Thinking' material is accompanied by a short manual, which suggests possible questions, gives ideas on how to discuss them and exercises to develop thinking and explore the central ideas in each story. Additional activities such as drama, drawing, role-play, writing etc. can be used to illustrate and expand learners understanding of the discussion. Green (2000) underlines that to teach a *Philosophy for Children* lesson is not easy and that it requires commitment, skill and practice. Like any effort to teach learners to think the success of this programme depends on regular engagement over time.

A second study emerged in South Africa (Green, 2004) where 24 educators attended a nine-week course that involved both creative and critical thinking. The participants developed ten short stories that reflected learners' own context, experiences and concerns. The educators practised thinking aloud in a community of inquiry and used the stories that they constructed to encourage learners to engage in classroom communities of inquiry. It is this programme that gave rise to this case study, which investigates the use of the 'Stories for Thinking' learning material by one of the Intermediate Phase educators who took part in the programme.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the way in which the research was approached and conducted. It will include a brief explanation of the case study approach and its suitability for this particular study. A brief description of the context and participants will also be given. In addition, the data collection analysis procedures will be discussed. Lastly, the attempts made by the researcher to ensure validity and ethical conduct will be discussed.

3.2 THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to investigate the use of the Stories for Thinking learning materials in one Intermediate Phase classroom in the Western Cape.

3.3 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

3.3.1 The Case Study as a Form of Qualitative Research

A case study approach seemed a suitable method since it allows the researcher to explore a single entity or phenomenon bounded by time and activity (a programme, event, process, etc.). Detailed information is collected by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time (Cresswell, 1994 in Leedy, 1997). Merriam points out that "the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case" (Merriam, 2001, p.27). Merriam identifies the case as a thing, single entity, or a unit that is enclosed by a boundary. The case could be anything from an individual person, a group of people such as a class, a school, a

community or a policy. A bounded system that forms a case usually has things in common that are obvious e.g. an educator, a school, a community or an innovative programme (Adelman, Jenkins, & Kemmis, 1983: 3 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). In this instance, the bounded system in this case study was a class of learners and their educator.

This research method enables the researcher to understand people in terms of their own definition (Mouton, 2000), as well as from an observer's perspective. Case studies are an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon or social unit (Merriam, 1988, p.21) and a form of qualitative research (Merriam, 2001).

According to Stake (1995, p. 11) a case study is "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances". Wilson (1979: 448 in Cohen *et al.*, 2000) understands the case study as a process "which tries to describe and analyze some entity in qualitative, complex and comprehensive terms not infrequently as it unfolds over a period of time". The period of time in this study was eight sessions. The case study approach was considered for this study because it helps to broaden understanding of an issue or situation and unfolds context characteristics that would shed light on the object that was being investigated. Case studies can expand readers' understanding of the phenomenon that is studied, which could help readers to discover new meaning, expand their knowledge and experience, or perhaps confirm existing knowledge. They also have a unique ability to expose vital information about a phenomenon which would usually not be accessible when using other methods (Sander, 1981 in Cohen *et al.*, 2000).

Another reason for choosing this method is suggested by Bromley (1986 in Cohen *et al.*, 2000) who claims that it enables the researcher to get very near to the subject of interest because of direct observation in natural settings. This enables researchers to get close to subjective factors such as participants' cognition and emotions.

Merriam (2001) divides case studies into four important categories: ethnographic, historical, psychological and sociological. Both Sturman (1999: 107) and Stenhouse (1985 in Cohen *et al*., 2000), however, place case studies into the following five categories: an ethnographic case study, single in-depth study; action research case study; evaluative case study and educational case study. Stake (1994) identifies three important types of case studies. The intrinsic case study (to improve one's understanding of the particular case in question); instrumental case studies (evaluating a particular case in order to gain insight on an issue or a theory) and collective case studies (groups of individual studies in order to gain a holistic picture).

My research can be termed a single in depth study or an ethnographic case study since it focuses on what happens in one classroom as the educator and learners engage with a particular form of learning material. It can also be termed an instrumental case study because it informally evaluates the process that unfolds in the classroom as the educator and learners use a particular learning programme in order to enhance understanding of the programme and its application.

Usually the case study occurs in real life situation and ends in a rich and full account description of the phenomenon (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2002). Case study as a design has proved useful in applied fields of study such as education. It has aided in understanding educational processes, problems and programmes that in turn have affected, and even improved, practice and informed policy. Case studies enable research to be more accessible to ordinary people because the language and the way it is presented is simple and less dependent on expert interpretation. It allows the readers to judge the implication of a study themselves.

According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: 322), possible strengths of case studies are that although researchers forms an integral part of the study they have very little control over the events thus not influencing the results. The active nature of case studies enable the participants to contribute to the process and meanings may be interpreted and be used which could contribute to their own development.

Nisbet and Watt (1984) in Cohen, Manion & Morrison further suggest that case studies can be conducted by one researcher and without the assistance of a full research team. Case studies can factor in unexpected events and uncontrolled variables. According to Nisbet and Watt (1984) in Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) limitations of case studies are that the generalisation of results is not easy since it depends on other readers or researchers to see their application. Case studies are not easily open to cross checking, hence they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective. They are also vulnerable to the problem of observer bias, despite the effort to address reflexivity. The product may be too long and detailed or too involved for busy policy makers and educators to read and use.

The nature of the researcher could also limit qualitative case study. The researcher is the main source of data collection and analysis. This could be a disadvantage since training in observation and interviewing which are vital for this process is not readily available to case study researchers. There are also no guidelines for constructing the final report available. The researcher is left to depend on his or her own intuition and abilities throughout most of this research. Another concern for Guba and Lincoln (1981: 378 in Cohen *et al*., 2000) is about the "unusual problem of ethics. An unethical case writer could also select from among available data, virtually anything he wished to be illustrated". It is suggested that readers and researchers of case studies must be aware of biases that can influence the end product.

3.4   RESEARCH PROCEDURES

3.4.1   Participants

One educator and forty-two intermediate phase learners, in Grade six were participants in the case study. The bounded system was the class. There were 23 girls and 17 boys in the class. They were in the 11 to12 year-old-age range. The educator was 38 years old and had been teaching for 15 years. He has a Diploma in education and at that stage was in the process of completing a BA degree. He had also occupied a senior post as Deputy Principal for six years at a previous school. After resigning from the Western Cape Educational Department, he worked in the private sector. He had been in a contract post

for three years and intended applying for a permanent post. He had been married for 19 years and had four children. Just before the case study he had volunteered for a nine-week course that introduced educators to 'Stories for Thinking'.

3.4.2 Context

At the time of the research, the school which is situated in the Western Cape was twenty years old. There were 900 hundred learners in grades 1 to 7 and 32 teachers including support staff were employed at the school. There are eighty grade six learners at the school.

Most of these learners were from disadvantaged backgrounds. The local community is faced with many psychosocial problems. There is a high rate of unemployment, poverty, and gangsterism, and most of these learners come from families who have single parents. The safety of the children is often threatened by gang violence and shooting. Burglaries often occur at the school. Although they have a feeding scheme, this is not sufficient to serve the needs of the school.

3.4.3 The Researcher

At the time of my fieldwork I was employed in a Western Cape Education Department contract position as a school psychologist. At present, I am contracted as a Positive Behaviour Co-ordinator, for the Metropole South District. The school used in my study is one of the schools that I provide service to. I am familiar to the school, educators and learners. This has certainly been useful since it facilitated my access to school. The principal and educator always gave their co-operation so developing a positive relationship was easy. Although this familiarity to the school had advantages, it might also have had a negative influence on the study. My position as a department official could have influenced the natural behaviour of the participants thus affecting the results of the study. I could also have certain biases towards the school due to previous work at the school, which might have influenced the results in a positive or negative way. I, as a trained psychologist, have developed various skills and realise the importance of

maintaining distance when interviewing and observing, which were essential during my fieldwork. Skills such as empathy and creating rapport assisted the interview process with educator and learners.

3.5   DATA COLLECTION

3.5.1   Description Observation (Field work notes)

According to Tuckman (1999: 378) one should observe the event or phenomenon in action. The most important aspect of observation is looking, and absorbing as much as you can without influencing that which you are observing. The researcher is given a chance to accumulate data from a real life situation. The researcher is given an opportunity to look at what is taking place " in situ rather than at second hand" (Patton, 1990: 203). The observation should allow the researcher to gather information on the physical setting, human setting, interactional setting and the programme setting (Morrison, 1993: 80).

It is necessary for the researcher to structure the observation in order to be aware of what he or she is observing and looking for. Adler and Adler (1998: 88-89) claim that observation is the least intrusive of all research techniques and has the ability to add value to research activities when combined with other methods.

I observed the classroom community of inquiry on eight occasions over a period of six months, using both unstructured and structured observation methods (field notes and a checklist (see Appendix 1)). One session was video-recorded. From the third session a co-researcher was also present, Before the commencement of the class observations I briefed the co-researcher about recording on the observation checklist (Appendix 1). The checklist was adapted from an observation checklist used in a study by Fisher (1998).

The checklist was designed to highlight key elements that a community of inquiry is said to encourage. We independently ticked off whenever an opinion, reason, agreement or disagreement was stated. Examples that learners provided were also recorded as often as

possible as well as any other relevant behaviours. We sat on different sides of the classroom at the back so that we could have a good view of all the learners in the classroom. These observations took place once a week, over the second and third term for a total of eight weeks. Each observation session lasted for approximately forty-five minutes.

3.5.2   Interviews

Kvale (1996, p.1) suggests to researchers that "if you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk with them." He adds that "in an interview conversation, the researcher listens to what people themselves tell about their lived worlds, hears them express their views and opinions in their own words. The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subject's point of view" (Kvale, 1996: 1). Holstein and Gubrium (1997) speaks of the interview method as an active meaning-making process. They suggest that meaning is not only elicited by suitable questioning and not simply conveyed though the replies of the respondent but it is when they actively engage and communicate in the actual interview encounter. "Respondents are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p.114). Interviews can be seen as the interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest.

Cohen *et al.* (2000: 271) describe different types of interviews namely the informal conversational, interview guide approach, and standardised open-ended and closed quantitative interviews.

I opted to use the informal conversational interview where questions emerged from the immediate context of the study and the questions are asked in a natural manner as the discussion unfolds. Broad guideline questions were prepared for this research which served to keep the interview relatively focused and helped to stimulate discussion, (see Appendix 2). Each interview was recorded and transcribed.

In this study two individual interviews took place, with the educator. Each interview was 45 minutes long. One educator interview was to take place before the start of the class observation (pre-interview) but due to the availability of the educator it was conducted only after the second session and the other was at the end of the eight observation sessions (post-interview).
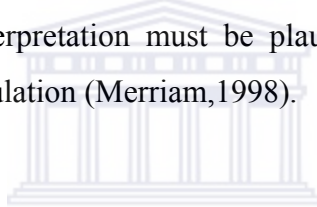
3.5.3   Group Interview

A further interview was conducted with a group of seven learners after the observation period. A group discussion was opted for rather than individual interviews with learners because young children are likely to be more responsive and spontaneous in an informal, semi-structured group setting. The group interview took place after the formal observation process. It consisted of seven learners, three boys and four girls. The group discussion lasted for 45 minutes. The discussion took place in the staffroom which was private. It was facilitated by the researcher. A group question guide was developed (Appendix 3) in advance by the researcher to stimulate discussion and to maintain the focus of the discussion. The session was conducted in the language of instruction of the learners and the session was recorded and transcribed.

3.6   DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is an important component of research. The researcher should carefully consider the type of data analyses to be used. Cohen *et al*. (2000: 77) suggest that careful consideration should be given to what must be done with the data when it has been collected, how will it be processed and analysed. In addition, how the results of the analysis will be verified, cross checked and validated. The choice of data analysis should be appropriate for data that was collected. Most qualitative researchers prefer using a systematic process such as the constant comparative approach as suggested by Glaser (1967) and many recent writers. This method includes identifying themes or categories that appear consistently in the data. The researcher also needs to classify examples which he or she saw, heard or was told under the theme headings. This could be done for every data source separately and then collated across all the sources. Many writers prefer an

intuitive method. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that data analysis is a complex process of making meaning that includes going back and forth between concrete data and abstractions, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation. Papadopoulous, Scanlon and Lees (2000) also assert that qualitative data analysis is a pluralist, cyclical, continuous process that goes through data organisation and data interpretation. Irrespective of which approach is used the researcher has to summarise her experience of the case.

In case study work, interpretation is when the researcher makes comment on what she saw, heard, read or was told and states what she think the data means and why it is the way it is. Attention should be given to data that does not agree with the story which the researcher wishes to tell. This indicates how complex a case is as the researcher attempts to interpret it. Furthermore it helps readers to understand the relation of the research to other similar studies. Any interpretation must be plausible to readers and should, if possible be supported by triangulation (Merriam,1998).

Stake (1995) suggests a form of narrative analysis for case study reports which consist of an introductory vignette which will include a rich description of the case in order to give the reader an opportunity to experience the place and time as if they were there.

Triangulation data such as quotation, descriptive detail, and documents can be presented to confirm or disconfirm observations.

The nature of the case has resulted in a particular structure since this is a study over time. I present the data in the form of three classroom vignettes representing the beginning, middle and final phases of the study, linked to a thematic analysis of field note records and interview data and a summary of the observation checklists for each phase.

3.6.1   Data Verification

Lincoln (1989) produced criteria for judging qualitative research which have been summarised by Mertens (1998), who also gives a list of criteria that could be used to judge the quality in qualitative research. This includes the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability which parallel the criteria of internal validity, external validity and reliability that are used for evaluating quantitative research.

According to Newmark, (2001: .206) credibility in qualitative research is attained through continuous and constructive engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, progressive subjectivity and triangulation. It is suggested that the advantage of using triangulation is that it protects the research process against bias. The process of triangulation also strengthens the internal validity and reliability of the process (Cohen & Manion, 1997). In this study different forms of data collection were used such as observation and interviews and a video recording to ensure triangulation. Another form of triangulation is when different people tell the story. In this study the teacher, observer and learners were the source of triangulation. The data collection included eight observation sessions of the educator and learners, two interviews with the educator and one group interview with the learners as well as the researcher's and co-researcher's fieldnotes. The above mentioned data collection procedures were undertaken in order to contribute to verification of the data.

3.7   Ethical Considerations

I followed the guidelines proposed by Merriam (1998). She suggests that from time to time ethical dilemmas will occur with regard to data collection and the distribution of the results during qualitative research. The researcher should give careful consideration to the accuracy aspect and plan for any possible misinterpretations of the results. Consideration should also be given to ensure that personal records of individuals are not revealed, unless written permission is given by them. The researcher should also accurately inform participants about the general nature of the research. All participants were informed about the project and what will happen to the results so that they could make an informed decision when considering to participate. Participants should also be informed that they

can withdraw from the research programme at any time. In this study, however, learners were not really free to withdraw parents gave permission for their children's participation.

I informed the Western Cape Education Department about the projected research and received permission to work in one of the schools in the South Metropole area. I also requested permission from the principal and the educator concerned. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants in this research, I used pseudonyms for the participants and have omitted the school's name. I have offered to provide informal feedback to the school and educator.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter looked at how the research was approached and conducted. As stated previously, the aim of my research was to investigate the use of the Stories for Thinking learning material in one Intermediate Phase classroom in the Western Cape.

This chapter presents the findings.

A case study report is a rich description for the reader so that he or she can get a good sense of the context and the phenomenon of interest. Stake (1995) claims that there are many different ways to present a case study, as he believes that, "each researcher's style and curiosity will be unique in some ways" (p.135). The nature of the study has resulted in a particular structure since this is a study over time. I have opted to present the data in the form of three miniature reports, describing the initial, middle and final phases of the study. Each will consist of an entry vignette, which attempts to provide a rich description of the process in the class, followed by an analysis in terms of themes from the field notes and interview data and a summary of the checklist data. This is preceded by a description of the school in order to contextualise the data.

4.2   THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

The school was established in 1985 and is twenty years old. At that time there were 1400 learners, a principal and 43 teachers. The support staff included a secretary, tea lady, three general cleaners and a caretaker. Many of the educators came from neighbouring schools when they were declared in excess. The first principal, who was at the school for seven years, is said to have exercised good discipline. Originally educators had to teach all subjects including physical education and needlework. Eventually specialists were appointed to teach these practical subjects. Each class at the time had between 40 and 45 learners. In order to channel learners' energies constructively, the school introduced all

kinds of sport and cultural activities such as music, sewing, chess, cooking, volley ball, netball, soccer and darts. The school excelled at athletics.

At present the school operates in a similar way, but with a different principal and many new staff members. The principal, together with her staff members, is competent, proactive and innovative. Since 2004 the school has followed the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS); the medium of instruction is both Afrikaans and English. There are 900 learners at school. Up to grade 6, the teachers are class teachers in the sense that they teach all of the learning areas, but the grade 7 educators are learning area specialists. Parent support is valued and the school has lots of fundraising events such as karaoke, casual days, food fairs, variety concerts, school dances and surf walks to raise funds for learners who are not able to afford to pay school fees. Learners and educators are kept motivated by giving them recognition through awards both individually and as a class.

For example, certificates are handed out at prize giving ceremonies and at assemblies. learners and educators are awarded diplomas or trophies and applauded for any achievements, both at school or in the community.

Learners come from various backgrounds since many of their parents were forced to move into this area when the government introduced forced removals. Many of the families came from District Six in 1975. At first the community found living together extremely difficult. Poverty is rife due to the high unemployment levels. People also have to travel long distances to work. In addition, the community has to contend with other psychosocial problems such as gangsterism, single parenting, substance abuse and violence. A soup kitchen was introduced after discovering that learners were hungry when they come to school; some often fell asleep and struggled to concentrate in class. This feeding scheme was funded by the Rotary Club and the Peninsula Feeding Scheme and was the first in the area. The feeding scheme fed 400 hundred learners everyday, with the school doing all it could to ensure that no learner was hungry. Educators including the principal were involved with the preparation of the food and served the food to learners

each morning. This practice was used as a model for other schools in the surrounding area.

The classrooms were built for approximately 35 learners but many classes have far more than that number. The school is situated in a deep basin and shares its borders with surrounding houses. In the beginning this was not an issue but it became evident that the school was surrounded by four gangs, which often resulted in the school becoming the centre of gang fights. As a consequence, the school is very conscious about security and has a steel fence, a remote control gate and all windows are fully burglar barred.

4.3   THREE CLASS PORTRAITS
4.3.1   Initial Phase of the Study
4.3.1.1 Classroom as a community of inquiry

Driving towards the school for my first field work appointment, I became aware of a strange feeling. Is this what they call butterflies in your stomach? A smile shaped my lips, I realised that even though I was familiar with the school, I actually felt nervous and excited at the same time. Anxious, perhaps about this new venture – not very sure about what would happen in the classroom and the excitement was probably about being so glad that I had finally reached this stage. An unemployed youth sitting at a corner nearby heard the hooter and rushed over to open the gate. I nodded my thanks to him for his generosity. Parking my car, I passed some of the community workers in their bright yellow overalls who work at the school and they greeted me politely.

The foyer was neat and the smell of fresh paint indicated that this administration block had recently been painted in bright green, yellow, blue and peach colours. The secretary indicated that I could proceed towards the office. At this time the co-researcher also arrived.

A term planner and motivational posters were on the wall offering inspiring quotes for both learners and teachers and encouraging them to meet life challenges and strive to

reach their dreams. On a cupboard there was a display of trophies which bore testimony to the school's many achievements. Also on the wall were quite a number of past and current staff photos taken over the years as well as certificates and diplomas, a record of generations of excellence.

After knocking, we entered a class, which immediately greeted us. The principal repeated that she was glad to have the co-researcher at the school again and explained that everyone at school missed her since her appointment at the department. She then introduced me and assured me that this class was one of her best classes and she was proud of them and their teacher who always strove to do their best. She concluded by saying that she hoped that we would have a good and fruitful time together. I expressed our thanks to her, the learners and the teachers for participating in the research and for affording us the opportunity to work at the school.

After the principal had left the classroom, the educator indicated that he was ready to start and enquired about where we would like to be seated. I sat at the educator's table and the co- researcher sat in a desk on the opposite side, at the back of the classroom. I noticed that this grade 6 classroom had comfortable seating for all forty learners. The desks were arranged in three rows. Groups of four learners faced each other. The classroom was well organised. There were charts and posters on the walls about science, history and about the new curriculum showing the new learning areas and critical outcomes. On the other side below the small windows were flash cards of high frequency words, the class time table and a writing chart with the alphabet written in cursive. The big, green chalkboard in the front of the classroom had two long brown cupboards on either side. The one cupboard on the left side had big boxes which seemed to have the learners' portfolios in them.

The educator commenced by reading a story from the 'Stories for Thinking' collection (Healthy Living) with lots of expression and enthusiasm while learners listened carefully.

Despite his Afrikaans accent which affected his pronunciation, he was a good storyteller and was able to hold the learners' attention. He then questioned them for content to see

how well they had listened. It was noticeable at the first session that the educator had already introduced the learners to 'Stories for Thinking' because he spoke about revising the 'rules' of a community of inquiry before the discussion started. Learners were asked to name the 'rules' of a community of inquiry. Their 'rules' were to look at the person speaking, not to laugh at the person speaking, not to talk while the person is speaking, to think before you speak, try to give reasons and use 'I agree' or 'disagree'. The educator then wrote a question on the chalkboard and learners were asked to read it.

The question was: 'Should children always do what grown-ups say?' Referring to this question he questioned learners briefly about punctuation. It was encouraging to see how well he could integrate other learning areas. The question was used to stimulate the discussions in smaller groups. In addition a timeframe was given for small group discussions which would then be followed with a report to the larger group for further discussion. The educator did not ask the class to generate their own questions, but selected from the manual that accompanies the stories. He had found that children struggled to identify questions for discussion.

It was surprising to see how learners organised themselves in the small communities of inquiry, regarding taking turns to speak. Two groups made a small ball using paper and another group used a soft toy which was passed around in the group and you could only speak when you had it in your hand. They also decided who would give feedback to the big community of inquiry. In the small communities of inquiry, one could see how learners would nudge each other, reminding someone that it was his or her turn to speak. Also evident in these groups were learners telling each other to listen and not talk while the other person is speaking. Although it was evident that learners were engaging with each other which was a good thing, we as the observers, could not hear what was being discussed in each group thus limiting our understanding of their potential to contribute meaningfully in a discussion. Most of the learners were quiet; five learners dominated the discussion by giving their opinions in the large community of inquiry. On more than one occasion the teacher made a concerted effort to encourage other learners to speak. For instance, the educator said, "*Michael, I know you have a lot to say, lets first hear from*

someone else and then we will get back to you". "*Do you have anything to add or say, Jane?*".

The question discussed in this lesson was: 'Should children always do what grown-ups' say? Mark said "*Yes, they are older than you and you must show respect*". Carol asked "*Now, what if they tell you to do something wrong?*" Mark replied, "*And then I won't do it*". Sarah questioned, *"But won't you get into trouble?"* Kyle said, *"But adults won't teach you wrong things*". This short interchange demonstrates that the learners who spoke had opinions that could have led to an in-depth debate. However, the educator at this crucial moment posed another question: 'If people win something in a game is it always OK for them to keep it?' Carmen said, "*A person play hard to win your game and I don't think it is fair to give your prize away, you must keep it.*" Peter responded: "*If I play and win a chocolate, I must keep it but maybe, Sir, I can give my friend a piece if I want to*". Jarrod's point was: "*Sir, lets say I play the lotto and I win, I am not going to give my money away. I think I will be very stupid*". Shahied added: "*You get a lot of Moslem people who play the lotto, Sir, but if they win they can't keep the money because it is against their religion. My mommy said they must give it away to poor people*". "*I don't think they will do that,*" replied Sharon. Keagan said, "*If you win a soccer game and you get a medal or a trophy you must keep it, it is crazy to give it away.*"

The discussion then moved to the following question: 'What is the best thing to do if things happen that you do not like?' Different learners responded. Some felt that they would tell their parents, an adult, teacher or the principal. One learner said to walk away and ignore it. Another learner said, "*If a person blames me for nothing, I will talk to the person*". A third question was discussed: 'Why do people make rules?' Michael responded, "*If you do not have rules at school everyone will do what they want to.*" Brenda added, "*People with cars must know the rules of the road, or they will go to jail*". Shaheed replied that there must be rules, or there would be a lot of accidents. More learners seemed to give their opinion and ideas in this session than previously. More questions were discussed in this lesson and there was more widespread engagement, but no topic was pursued for long. Children did, however, demonstrate their capacity for thoughtfulness.

Although, learners showed interest in it and could relate to the topic there were still a few learners who did not pay attention all the time because they were talking to a friend. But learners had begun to monitor each other. On one occasion I heard and saw Mary saying "*Shush*" to John, showing with her finger to her lips that he should be quiet because Michael was speaking. The educator would occasionally call out a learners name, e.g. "*Sarah*", if he saw that they were not paying attention. Some learners became distracted and scribbled on paper.

While this conversation continued there was a learner at the back of the class looking for something under his desk. Two learners on the right side of the class were not listening at all because they were talking to each other. Another learner who sat next to the window stared outside oblivious to the world around him. Many learners were quiet. Whether they were listening and following the conversation is debatable. I am, however, of the opinion that one does not always have to verbalise your thoughts to indicate that you are thinking. It is also possible to process information internally, to have an internal conversation, thinking about ideas, concepts and reasons without verbalizing one's thoughts. Once in a while a learner would also nod in agreement. It was also very obvious that those who were interested in the conversation would turn their heads and look at the speaker. One of the learners who spoke often appeared to be popular and whenever he spoke he seemed to make learners laugh even when he made a serious contribution. The educator would remind learners of the rule that laughing at each other is discouraged because the views of others are valued.

4.3.1.2 Thematic Analysis

The following themes were identified in the research journal and interview data:

Listening skills

It is evident that most learners enjoyed listening to these stories because they sat quietly and showed a keen interest. Learners' responses to the content indicated that they had been listening attentively. It appears that the stories in 'Stories for Thinking' were able to captivate learners' attention and interest and would be a useful tool to develop listening skills. It was noticeable, however, that when the discussion started there were learners who became distracted by talking to each other, fidgeting or stared out the window and had to be reminded to attend by the educator and other learners. Joan said "Tony, you must listen". Another learner also reminded someone else on another occasion, saying, "You mustn't talk – Michael is speaking".

Respect

During this first phase of my observation there were quite a few learners that were not following the rules of the inquiry since they laughed at the person speaking or did not look at the person speaking and, as previously mentioned, also talked while others spoke. Although the educator revised the community of inquiry rules at the start of the lesson, he had on several occasions to remind different learners about a specific rule. The educator said, "*Come now, Peter, remember the rule that we do not laugh at the person speaking because everyone's contribution is important*". In these classes one could also see many learners reminding each other not to laugh. Miriam said, *"Nicole, remember what Sir said, you must not laugh at Sandra*". There seemed to be a growing awareness amongst most of the learners about showing respect to each other.

Learners appeared to identify when someone was disrespectful. By the third session there were fewer learners that laughed or talked as indicated by the observational checklist.

Participation in discussions

The educator indicated in the first interview (which took place after the second visit) that there were still some learners who are not participating and said, "*It can get better with practice and doing it more actively, they will get used to it. I have noticed with the first question ... after reading the story, ... It was quite difficult but when they get started*

they communicate more and more". Although learners listened attentively to the story, I was surprised and somewhat disappointed that many learners participated only in the small communities of inquiry but avoided speaking in the large community of inquiry. By the end of this first phase more of the quiet learners started to engage in the large community of inquiry.

Expressing opinions

Many learners participated in discussions, in the small communities of inquiry. Even though we could not hear their individual opinions or ideas, the reports of learners to the large community gave one some ideas about their conversation. Evidence of their participation was seen as they were always encouraged to speak when they received the paper ball or toy or the learners would organise themselves taking turns. I, as an observer, was amazed at the number of opinions, and examples that these learners gave in response to the different questions, even at this early stage.

Giving reasons

During this phase there were very few reasons given and most of the reasons came from the five learners who were very confident and articulate. Learners were more inclined to use examples as reasons.

4.3.1.3 Checklist analysis

Learners: signs of careful thought	%
1. expressing opinions	36.5
2. giving reasons	-
3. using agree	-
4. using disagree	-
Learners: signs of disrespect	
5. interrupting	3.3
6. laughing	6.6
7. talking to someone	9.1
8. not paying attention	8.3

4.3.2   Middle Phase of the Study

4.3. 2. 1 Classroom of community of inquiry

After the third session, I experienced some challenges. The programme could not continue for a while at the school. All staff members had to focus on preparing for the June examination. The educator had deadlines for setting examination papers, revision with learners, and the administration of the examination as well as the marking of examination scripts. Also, on one or two occasions the teacher and I had to change our appointments because of other commitments. This period also covered the mid-year vacation. I was very disappointed because I had really hoped to complete this part of the study. I soon realised that working in a school environment is not easy. It is necessary to consider and plan for the unexpected interruptions. My concern, however, was about the possible effect it might have on the study.

Plans were made during this period to do a video recording of the teacher, in the new term practicing using a story from the 'Stories for Thinking' collection. This was organised by the co-researcher and a colleague who were the co-ordinators of the Philosophy for Children training. This video became part of my data since it involved the educator and learners in my study, and it made interesting viewing.

Although the sound is not always clear and some dialogue cannot be heard, it still illustrates some of the principles that are encouraged in a community of inquiry as well as raising awareness of practices that should be avoided.

The structure followed by the educator on the video was the same as before. The story used from the collection was 'Difficult Choices'. The educator seemed to speak too much and appeared to forget his role as facilitator from time to time. There were many opportunities when the educator took a response from a learner, and instead of extending the conversation, he moved to a new question.

Learners gave many examples of cheating but never really clarified the concept even though the teacher tried to get an explanation. Some learners gave the example that if you take a race around a block and you take a short cut and you come first, that is cheating. When you write the answers on your hand and copy the answers in a test. Another learner added that if I promised not to hit my brother and then hit him, then I am cheating. Carl was asked what he thought; he said that when someone that is married has a girlfriend then he is cheating on his wife. I was surprised when a learner started her response with "My opinion is…." In response to the question, 'Are there times when it is all right to cheat?' Mary responded, *"I agree Sir when your family is threatened then I think it is all right to cheat"*.

The question, 'Is it possible to cheat your self?' resulted in an interesting discussion.

Michael said, *"If for example you take the drug, 'Tik' and you decide that you are going to give it up. Every time you take it again you are cheating on yourself"*. Sally also gave a

similar explanation of a person having a row of sweets which he said he would not eat, and then he eats it. Thando disagreed with the two previous speakers since he felt that we cannot cheat ourselves. Janice responded, "*I disagree because if I decided to save money, and I use it to buy something else then I am cheating on myself*". Michael replied, *I also disagree with Thando and I agree with Janice because she gave a good example*. Learners also gave more reasons than before and used "I agree" and "I disagree" which had not been in evidence before.

One can clearly see how in the video learners pass the paper balls around in order to take their turn to speak. The interest, enthusiasm and how learners are enjoying themselves is captured on the video recording. One can also see that more learners participate in discussions when the community of inquiry is smaller. The quiet ones also had something to say. Learners' interest can be seen in their sitting very close to each other and bending over to hear and looking at each other.

After all the excitement and fun of being an actor on a video, we continued into the next three sessions which covered the stories, 'Trouble with Tazos', 'Peter the Cheat' and 'PayBack Time'. The educator followed the same procedure in the lesson as previously discussed.

The educator asked the following question, 'Why do some people steal?' Learners gave many answers, for example "*I think people steal because they are poor and need money to buy food for their children*". Wayne added, "*I agree with her, Sir, because a lot of people can't find work and then they don't have money to buy food and clothes for their families*". "*Some people, Sir, belong to gangs then they must steal or else they can't belong to the gang,*" added John. Danny felt that a lot of people steal because they want what others have but they don't want to work for their things. "*I think they are greedy and just want what other people have,*" added Miriam. Thando did not pay much attention to the discussion he looked as if he was far away and ended up scratching under his desk.

Towards the end of middle phase it seemed that learners had become clearer about and understood the expectations of them as a member of a community of inquiry. Many more learners and different learners participated in the discussions. Learners seemed more relaxed and comfortable to express their thoughts. There was less talking and laughing in the class.

Learners also appeared to be able to distinguish the difference between laughing at the person and laughing at what is being said. Learners know that it is appropriate to laugh at a joke. The educator also seemed to be more relaxed and found it unnecessary to remind them about the rule of laughing which often had to be repeated in the initial phase. Instead, the educator encouraged learners to use 'I agree' or 'I disagree' and to give reasons for their answers. The educator also during this phase did not concern himself about the content anymore. Learners and the educator became more aware of their thinking. I remember how Russell, a unassuming character, received the ball to speak. He responded very confidently saying, *"I am still thinking"*. Russell passed the ball on. I was shocked and surprised and thought it was 'cute' but it left me wondering whether this was an easy cop out or if he genuinely needed more time to think. He surprised me later and took his turn.

During the initial phase there were many opinions and examples. In the middle phase there are still many opinions and examples but learners were more inclined to use 'agree' or 'disagree' when they responded. Another example of this is when the teacher posed the following question, from the Payback Time story "Is it good to cheat?" Keagan replied, *"I agree that it is not good to cheat because if you cheat in a soccer game, you get disqualified."* Miriam added that you would get into trouble if they catch you. In response Danny replied, *"Yes and no, I agree and disagree, Sir. I agree that it can get you into trouble but sometimes we must cheat to protect a neighbour, if a person wants to hurt another person and ask where the person lives, I will say I don't know, even if I know"*. I noticed how other learners nodded in agreement.

Also with the Peter the Cheat story, learners were requested to consider the following question, 'Should children always do whatever adults say?' Brandon said, "*Yes and no because adults never teach you wrong; but if they say jump in a fire, you can't do this*". Catherine answered, "*Adults can teach you something that you don't know*".

4.3.2.2 Thematic analysis

Listening skills
Some learners appeared to show improvement in their listening skills since learners were able to make connections with previous speakers by saying I agree or disagree with previous speakers and give a reason. It requires concentration and attention to make these links.

Respect
It was evident that talking while another learner was speaking was occurring less often. Learners seemed to have concluded that there is a difference between laughing at the person and sharing a joke with others. Respecting the other person's point of view seems to be important to learners, irrespective if the response is right or wrong.

Participation in discussion
Many more and different learners participated in the communities of inquiry since the initial phase of the study. This was also evident on the video recording. More of the quiet learners also participated.

Expressing opinions
With an increase in the number of different learners' contribution, this resulted in more examples and opinions. Previously, learners would express their opinion without really taking into account what others said. In this phase there is evidence of them linking their opinion to the previous speaker by giving a similar example or opinion. In this phase there is evidence of learners linking their ideas to previous speakers using I agree or I disagree. Some learners also went as far as saying I agree and disagree with the previous
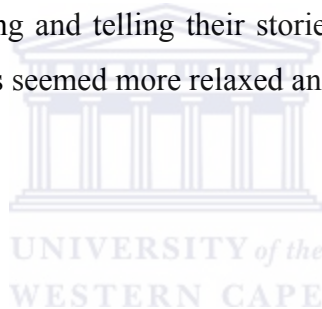
speaker. There was one smart boy who disagreed with a previous speaker and liked what the person had to say and agreed with another with her because he thought that her example was a good illustration of why he had also disagreed with the previous speaker.

Giving reasons

During this phase I observed that there was an attempt by the teacher to increase learners' awareness about giving reasons. He would remind learners to give reasons. More learners gave a longer answer which would include an opinion, example and a reason. The educator had also became less focused on the content and seemed to be more concerned about the procedures. Learners also used the word 'because' more.

Speaking skills

Initially learners would give one sentence answers. In this phase it was noticeable how learners became better at sharing and telling their stories using many examples of their own experiences. Many learners seemed more relaxed and comfortable.

4.3.2.3 Checklist analysis

Learners: signs of careful thought	%
1. expressing opinion	63
2. giving reasons	48
3. using agree	15
4. using disagree	10
Learners: signs of disrespect	
5. interrupting	2.5
6. laughing	5.1
7. talking to someone	5.8
8. not paying attention	6.3

4.3.3 Final Phase of the Study

4.3.3.1 The Classroom as a community of inquiry

On our last two visits we had different experiences. On the second last visit we found the door ajar – in this heat you can never dare to keep the door closed – so we entered. By this time some of the learners had spotted us. "Hello, teachers!" Carmen shouted. Paula turned to tell Edna that we had arrived. Shamiel shouted, "Sir", to warn the educator that there were visitors. The educators was sitting at his desk cutting papers. He looked up and as always gave us one of his familiar warm smiles. He apologised about the mess on the table. "I am checking learners' profiles and portfolios in view of progression and promotion," he said. "Would you like to start," he asked. "As soon as you are ready," I replied. It is always difficult to get learners to settle down in hot weather. The maroon and yellow tracksuit tops were off and the room still felt hot despite all the windows and door being open. The teacher called learners to attend and read the story, entitled Magic.

Learners appeared to be distracted and in a relaxed mood. It was evident that they did not feel like doing "Stories for Thinking" or any other schoolwork today. Concentrating and attentions were low.

Despite this the educator continued with the story and questions in the usual way. However, he had to pull out all stops to get the learners' participation. This was an exhausting session. The learners participated but not with the same enthusiasm displayed in most of the other sessions. At one time in the lesson, the educator got one of the learners to look up the meaning in the dictionary.

It was not all doom and gloom. Even in those circumstances learners were thinking. The teacher posed the question. 'What is Magic?' Sharon said, "I *think magic is when you pretend that something is real." "I agree with* Sharon," responded Jane, "*it is a trick.*" Michael started to explain his view: "*When I went to a magic show, the man made a rabbit come out of his hat, that can never be. I don't believe in magic*". Keith added, "*But, Sir, some people have special powers like a witch doctor*". *Thando responded saying, "I agree with Keith we have Sangomas. A lot of people go to them and they take bones and a lot of other things to make people better"* Brenda said, "*There isn't a thing like magic, "My brother told me it is only joke that they play on people. It's not real*".

Later the educator asked, the following question, How do we know when other people are speaking the truth? Mary said I know when someone tells the truth, "*If they look in your eyes when they speak to you.*" Mary added, "*Yes, I agree and also when they look away when you talk to them*". "*My mommy also told me when I look down then she knows I am lying,*" reported Jarrod. Michael was a clever, tall boy who always had a lot to say. Very early in the sessions the educator said to him that he must try to stick to his point. On another occasion he said that he must try to order his thoughts before he spoke. As he was about to speak Abigail said to him, "*Remember what sir said, that you must order your thoughts*". Michael said, "*Sir, I want to disagree because I think it is very difficult to know if someone is telling truth because let's say the person looks in your eyes he can*
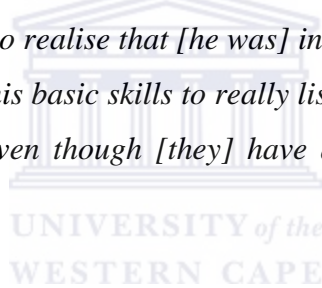
still be telling you a lie, you won't know". This got others thinking and one boy agreed that people can be good actors.

4.3.3.2 Thematic analysis

Listening Skills

Learners' listening skills also showed improvement because learners were able to link their ideas with previous speakers. The educator reported that Shehaam reported had told him that he had become a better listener: "*Sir, you know what? I always wanted my way and when I can't get my way, I blew a tantrum. But I see think I've grown, I think I've changed and I'm now more prepared to listen to what other people also say*".

The educator reported that 'Stories for Thinking' had "*probably taught [him] to listen properly to learners and [his] own kids. Another thing that [he] could say that has improved, was [he] even came to realise that [he was] intolerant and impatient with [his] wife. [He has] learnt through this basic skills to really listen to her and really understand her point of view on things, even though [they] have different view points on certain things*".

Respect

During this final phase, there was again no evidence of anyone laughing unnecessarily. Plenty of jokes were enjoyed by all. There were still a few learners who would talk while someone was speaking or not look at the person speaking but generally they were not many who did this. Learners seemed to have a better understanding of the rules. Rules seemed to have become the norm in class whenever they were engaged in discussions.

Participation in discussion

Although learners were reluctant in the beginning, when they started their conversation they could not stop. This phase illustrated a continual increase in the amount of interaction that occurred between different learners, unlike in the initial phases where five learners seemed to mostly dominate the discussions. In my opinion, learners enjoy sharing ideas; all they need is safe space and an opportunity to speak.

Expressing opinions

Learners in the final phase of the study continued to link their thoughts to previous speakers using "I agree and disagree". They would also use examples and reasons to substantiate their answers. Learners also showed clear improvement in the fact that they gave longer explanations in order to clarify their opinion.

Speaking skills

Some learners also showed improvement in the manner in which they expressed themselves. This was also confirmed by the educator in his interview. He also indicated that learners improved in the manner in which they express themselves. The educator highlighted a bright learner who usually rumbled things off without putting his thoughts into order and had difficulty sticking to the point. He added, "*At first he struggled but as I encouraged him by reminding him before he spoke. Now, instead of using ten sentences, he can explain his point using four or five sentences*".

Confidence

Learners also showed improvement in their confidence because over the weeks more and different learners appeared to be comfortable to express their ideas and feelings.
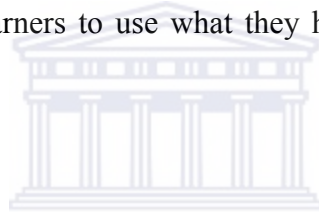
In referring to personal change experienced, Mandy said: "*Before I never spoke in the class because I was too shy, but now I am not shy to talk in the class*". Another learner had this to say: "*Miss I was always scared to talk because I thought if I make a mistake the children will laugh at me, but I not scared to talk anymore*".

The educator confirmed what they had to say: "*From the time I started some learners who I regarded as introverts, from a certain point of time started to express themselves more freely. One thing that was amazing, they were always ready to challenge me on a certain issue or question and were very curious to know more. So their confidence in conversing and giving their point of view has improved quite a lot*".

'Transfer'

During this phase learners continued connecting their ideas to previous speakers. Two boys were seen arguing over a toy. The educator used this opportunity to ask the following question, how can the principal resolve the problem of a group of learners who bullied another learner. Learners presented the following solutions. Peter said, *"The principal must call all the learners into the office and get all the information from both sides".* *"The principal must punish with suspension."* added Jane. Taryn had this to add: *"I agree with the others but I think the principal must call in the parents.* Another learner said, *"Let them make friends"*. Mark had a different view: *"I think, the principal must give them a warning and if they do it again suspend them"*. Another learner felt that the police should be called in while someone else suggested giving them a transfer.

The educator used a question from one of the story to make learners aware about the issue of 'bullying' to allow learners to use what they had experienced to find possible solutions.

Change of opinion

A learner reported that during one of the discussions on healthy living he had decided to change his attitude to playing sport at school after listening to the contributions of his peers. Michael had thought it was boring because this is what his friend told him at home. *"A discussion with my friends at school where they told me it is not boring, encouraged me to see for myself. I thought he did not tell me that sports was so nice, he said it was boring, so afterwards I thought, no man, I must not listen to him, I must do stuff on my own"*.
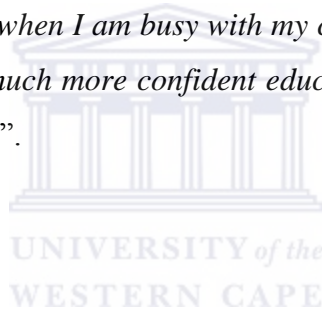
Making new friends

Learner Tammy said, *"When I heard Marlene speak and give her opinions and when she spoke in the group, I got to know her better and wanted to be her friend"*.

Teaching skills

The educator also reported on another occasion that before using communities of inquiry his focus had always been on the content of the story. He said, "*Now, I am looking for reasons when testing learners on reading material. Previously I used practical work e.g. making a Kite to stimulate thinking and discussion but now I am using the written word. In addition I am now more concerned with the 'How' and the other person's opinion is more important. I am also reading more and always trying to integrate it with my work at School*". The educator added that he had become more inquiring and consequently strove to look for material that was relevant to his learners. However, the educator concluded that it did not really affect his discipline since he regarded himself as a disciplinarian because he believed that you must have order for learning to take place.

The educator said, referring to the skills that he had developed through 'Stories for thinking', "*I am very confident when I am busy with my class whether it's my own or any other class. It has made me a much more confident educator and I think it has improved my skills a lot, my teaching skill*".

4.3.3.3 Checklist data summary

Learners: sign of careful thought	Initial phase	Middle phase	Final phase
	%	%	%
1.expressing Opinions	36.5	63	45
2. giving reasons	11.6	48	-
3. use agree	-	15	25.2
4. use disagree	-	10	8.3
Learners: signs of disrespect			
5. interrupting	3.3	2.5	-
6. laughing	6.6	5.1	0.8
7.talkng to someone	9.1	5.8	1.6
8. not paying attention	8.3	6.3	5.8

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the findings of the study by focusing on possible factors that might have influenced the outcome. It will also consider the implications of the study. In addition, it will look at how the findings relate to the literature survey in Chapter Two. As the researcher I will present my personal reflections on the study, highlighting my experiences. Finally, the limitations of the research are identified and some tentative recommendations based on the findings are made.
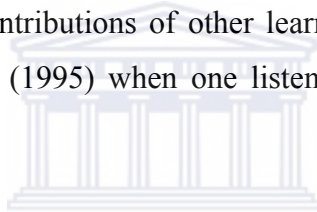
5.2   DISCUSSION

In 1977 the Minister of Education introduced the new outcomes based curriculum, known as Curriculum 2005 (OBE). The purpose is to develop all children in South Africa into critical thinkers, creative decision makers and independent, life long learners.

Curriculum 2005 has been revised and is now known as the Revised National Curriculum Statement, (RNCS). The Revised National Curriculum Statement is based on the Constitution, which strives to build a South African society in which citizens embrace democratic values, social justice and human rights in a united democratic country. Many of the principles of cognitive education are included in the critical outcomes of the RNCS.

The discussion of my findings in this study will be linked to the critical outcomes of the Revised National Curriculum Statement so the ways in which the programme, 'Stories for Thinking', can be used to meet the critical outcomes are highlighted. In addition I will relate my findings to the literature survey in Chapter Two.

One of the important critical outcomes is that learners must be able to communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and\or language skills in different modes. Lipman (1991) suggests that education should provide stimulating environments where children's inquiry and thinking can be encouraged and improved. Therefore the educator should provide learners with many opportunities where they can learn to manage and exchange ideas as well as communicate them accurately, creatively and with clarity. The 'Story for Thinking' approach appears to be one way of creating an environment in which learners are engaged. During the study, this became evident when more and more hands were raised and there was an increased eagerness to participate in the discussions. The stories used as stimulus for the discussion in the community of inquiry are useful since they seemed to have increasingly kept learners attention. This was probably because the stories were relevant to the learners' context. Being part of a community of inquiry also appears to have improved the listening skills of learners since they were encouraged to extend on or connect to the contributions of other learners by agreeing or disagreeing. According to Splitter & Sharp (1995) when one listens to others it is an indicator of thinking.

Another critical outcome is that learners must work effectively with others in teams. One of the fundamental rules of a community of inquiry is that it promotes respect for people and the views that they hold. Learners are encouraged to look at and listen to the person speaking. Green (2002) found in her study that a community of inquiry enables learners to use various thinking skills and helps them to develop their listening skills. In addition learners are encouraged not to talk while a person is speaking and also not to laugh at the person speaking. It was noticeable as the sessions continued, that fewer learners spoke while another person was speaking and even the number of learners who laughed at other learners decreased. Respect is an important aspect of being able to work effectively with others.

Splitter and Sharp (1995) make the claim that showing respect to others is also an indicator of thinking. Learners seemed to have gained more respect for each other and for their contributions. They also got to know, trust and value their peers better which

culminated in improved relationships. Green *et al*. (2000) found that communities of inquiry improve learner's interpersonal relationships. This finding concurs with Baumfield (2000), Fisher (1995) and Wegerif (2000) who concluded that young children's thinking improved, they displayed better co-operation and had more trust in each other as well as had respect for the views of their peers. Tock Keng Lim (1994) found that this happens in both younger and older children.

The critical outcomes also strive towards enabling learners to identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking.

Learners should become aware of their own cognitive abilities. More importantly learners should learn to use and integrate cognitive processes naturally in ordinary life situations. Critical thinking skills will assist learners to make sense of different kinds of experiences and help to create, evaluate and respond to them. The cognitive skills that they will acquire will enable them to think, reason and conceptualise. It is important for learners to understand and do cognitive tasks such as thinking, reasoning, classifying, arguing, justifying and summarizing. A community of inquiry is one of the methods, which provides learners with opportunities where these skills can develop. My findings are that learners appeared to be more inclined to use thinking processes consciously such as giving reasons and expressing opinions. This is in line with the finding of Chi Ming (2003) who claims that students wanted to clarify concepts that they did not understand. Schleifer *et al*. (1987) also found that it improved young children's logical and moral reasoning ability. Splitter and Sharp (1995) suggest that giving reasons, acknowledging different perspectives and viewpoints are all indicators of thinking. The learners in this study seemed to have acquired thinking habits such as thinking before you speak and to express their agreement or disagreement where possible. It was evident as the sessions continued that learners were quite comfortable listening to and expressing different points of view. It seemed to me that learners realised that the quality of the contribution is not necessarily the most important aspect in a discussion and it is perfectly in order to have a different opinion, the most important thing is verbalising and sharing ideas.

An important critical outcome is developing learners into responsible, democratic citizens who have sound values and a good understanding of the world.

One aspect of the educator's role is to create a teaching and learning environment both in the classroom and school that reflects principles and values such as equality, tolerance, redress and human rights. Learners should talk and reflect on issues that are relevant to their age and interest. These life skills are important because they will assist them in understanding themselves, the world and how they fit into it. The 'Stories for Thinking' learning material contains stories about many issues that concern learners. A community of inquiry provides learners with the opportunity to talk freely about these issues. I found that learners have opinions and can reason or offer examples from their life experiences. I witnessed learners agreeing and disagreeing with each other as well as sometimes even changing their minds about something in a respectful manner. Lipman (1995) claims that a community of inquiry is a useful tool to teach values, which will help learners to become democratic citizens. Splitter and Sharp (1995) and Green (1997) agree that having a conversation about concepts such as rights, friendship and fairness increases the learners' understanding of their experiences, the world and people. Gardner (1999) and Sutcliffe (2003) are also of the opinion that a community of inquiry increases the learner's self esteem, which is useful in developing healthy citizens.

Although confidence is not a critical outcome, it is an important developmental principle that underlines all areas in the development of learners.

The educator should endeavor to provide learners with various opportunities to develop their own self-esteem, self-concept and confidence. The 'Stories for Thinking' approach provides a safe community where learners are allowed to give their opinions and ideas without fear of being ridiculed. Speaking is an important aspect of the learner's social, cultural and personal development. Through speaking learners connect their life experiences in an organised and planned manner to facilitate the development of their speaking skills. Over time increasing numbers of learners participated in the conversations and even the quiet learners had something to say as their confidence improved. Gardner (1999) and Sutcliffle (2003) also claim that meaningful participation in a community of inquiry develops self-esteem.

The manner in which they expressed themselves also improved. This was also a finding of Palsson (1992) and Schleifer and Poirier (1996) who concluded that Philosophy for Children helps children to express themselves better. For example there is evidence of one learner who started ordering his thoughts and stated his point of view in fewer sentences than before and also tried to stick to the point. Learners also very confidently said if they needed more time to think. Schleifer and Courtemanche (1996) claim that Philosophy for Children improves children's language ability, which this study confirmed.

5.3   PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

For most of my life I have had difficulty with my self-esteem, self-concept and confidence. This manifested itself in many ways. At primary school I had difficulty with reading, spelling and mathematics and disliked writing stories and letters. High school was no different except I had the luxury of being able to drop mathematics. I had many anxious moments during those years especially when I was asked to do an oral or speak in class. I really feared getting the answer wrong since this would lead to embarrassment, with the educator insulting or punishing me and possibly my classmates laughing at me as well. I remember sitting in a history lesson at high school, waiting and praying for the history lesson to end. I never looked up. I was afraid of meeting the eyes of my teacher because if I did he might ask me a question. "Boy, if you gave the incorrect answer, he would lash out with an insult".

Despite this my resilience, determination and perseverance amongst other factors motivated me to do a teachers' diploma. Looking back on my fifteen years of teaching, I cannot believe that for approximately ten years I sat through staff meetings never really offering a contribution to the discussion. I always feared that my ideas were not good enough, or perhaps I would not express myself clearly since I have a tendency to become emotional. My observations of the communities of inquiry over the eight weeks have certainly left me wondering whether this approach might have made a difference to my

life had it been used in my school years: I have seen the effect that it had on the educator, learners and myself, the researcher.

On reflecting on this process, I have decided that the 'Stories for Thinking' learning material a useful tool that can assist teachers to meet many of the critical outcomes of the RNCS. It effects an increased awareness of and change in the cognitive behaviour in the educator, learners and researcher. It has convinced me about the importance of teaching thinking skills at all our schools from a very early age. We cannot leave the development of cognition to chance. There must be a specific focus on cognitive development and the tools to reach this goal must be available.

I was amazed at how the community of inquiry created a safe, trusting learning environment, which facilitated interaction between the participants. I was surprised at the number of opinions, ideas, examples and reasons that learners shared from their own experiences. This lends impetus to the move towards adopting a learner-centred approach in all classrooms. Learners were very aware of the rules, which gave more structure to the lesson and improved the behaviour of learners. There seemed to be an increased understanding of the role of the educator as a facilitator, which seemed difficult in the beginning because many educators were not trained in this manner. I am hopeful that educator will be able to make the shift from being educator-centred to bring learner-centred with the necessary training and practice. The educator seemed to respect learners and their opinions. At the beginning of the sessions, he focused on assessing the content of the stories but as the sessions continued he became better at using thought provoking questions. Another interesting observation was that the educator integrated other learning areas such as Literacy and Life Orientation into the community of inquiry session.

The community of inquiry seems to promote diversity and inclusivity. Learners from various contexts, culture and religion can participate in the discussions. It also makes provision for learners to participate at their own pace and academic level. Learners became increasingly respectful of each other and also got to know each other better and relationships among classmates also seemed to have improved. In the beginning, the shy

and quiet learners did not give their opinions easily but as the weeks progressed they seemed to have forgotten about this and became more competent and confident at saying what they were thinking.

I have also become more confident in speaking in groups and often speak in staffrooms with groups of educators, in work forums in the presence of colleagues. I now present workshops and also do motivational talks at schools. I feel less shy and scared because I have realised that my views are important. At the same time I have learnt to be more respectful of different views of others.

I have also improved in the way I express myself since I am constantly aware of the rules of the community of inquiry. Most of the time I try to think about what I want to say. I also try to build on another person's point and use key words like 'I agree' or 'disagree' and 'because'.

My observations of communities of inquiry has certainly increased my awareness of the importance of using relevant stories as a stimulus for discussion. I have become more aware of my own thinking ability and have also become more tolerant of my own and others' thinking.

An important part of the community of inquiry is to encourage learners to ask questions. The skill of asking questions indicates the learner's ability to understand a particular subject. I feel that the educator did not spend enough time on helping learners to formulate questions and very seldom drew their attention to asking questions. I observed that the educator had some difficulty in formulating open-ended questions which might have created a richer discussion. He often moved to a new question from the manual without giving learners sufficient time to discuss. The educator appeared to have some difficulty with facilitating the discussion in a community of inquiry since many opportunities to extend the conversation in order to increase learners' understanding and knowledge of an issue were missed.

Another difficulty in the study was the length of the community of inquiry period. The educator always tried to stay within this time frame and on many occasions there were hands raised which might have extended the dialogue and increased the understanding of the concept or ideas but this was missed as the educator proceeded to ask another question.

Although the educator had attended some training in Philosophy for Children, in my view the educator needs to have constant practice participating in a community of inquiry so that he can improve his own skills in terms of questioning and thinking. He will improve his level of competence and become more confident when facilitating a community of inquiry.

These thoughts have made me wonder about whether learners were 'doing philosophy' as they engaged with 'Stories for Thinking'. Were they not merely having a discussion and if this were so, does it really matter?

5.4   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I share De Bono's view that it is difficult to measure cognitive change (1993). As a result, I feel that the study should cover a longer period such as a year to enhance the reliability of the study. In addition, schools have many interruptions such as sports, examinations and functions that could affect the planned programme and ultimately the results of the study. It is necessary for the researcher to plan well.

The 'Stories for Thinking' learning material is not prescriptive about how the educator should use the stories in a community of inquiry. Much of the dialogue was missed, especially when learners had discussions in small groups. A video recording of the whole class engaging in a community of inquiry will also help to capture data accurately. It is also very important for the researcher and co-researcher to write down any observations, impressions and the important verbal contributions of the learners and educator in

discussion accurately and consistently. This will ensure that valuable research data is captured making it possible to write a rich, descriptive case study report.

The findings of this study cannot be generalised except by analogy because they apply to only this one case. Also the educator's limited experience in a community of inquiry might have influenced the findings of this study.

5.5   RECOMMENDATIONS

- Stories for Thinking is a useful tool that has the potential to help meet many of the Revised National Curriculum Statements critical outcomes and should be an integral part of the curriculum.

- Educators should be trained in this approach so they are able to implement this programme in their classrooms. This would also imply that educators should be involved with writing more stories in order to give them sufficient stories to draw on.

- If Philosophy for Children and "Stories for Thinking" is introduced at a training institution level it will be more cost effective. Training of educators at district level will have serious financial, time and human resource implications. Funds and qualified educator trainers in Philosophy for Children are limited. In addition, educators may be reluctant to participate in the programme since they are experiencing an overload of different kinds of training at present.

- This study should be replicated. The community of inquiry should be audio-taped or video recorded so that transcripts can be analysed to ensure that the necessary data is captured and for the reliability of the study. The researcher should also suggest that the educator use the whole class as a community of inquiry. If smaller groups are used, the researcher and co- researcher could form part of a group as an observer to capture the necessary data.

- Similar and longer studies should be done at the same school or other schools to confirm the findings.

- The educator share his experience with the other staff members.

- It would be interesting to explore the perceptions of those educators who were trained in Philosophy for Children when they implemented and applied the principles of Philosophy for Children by using the 'Stories for Thinking' learning material in their classrooms.

5.6   CONCLUSION

The new South African government has a mandate to improve the lives of all citizens by developing them into responsible democratic citizens who can meet the demands of not only the South African society but also globally. To meet this challenge it is necessary that all children develop into independent, responsible, creative and critical thinkers. Vygotsky believes that education can help to prepare children to become effective thinkers and learners (1962, 1978). Lipman (1991) suggests that education should provide stimulating environments where children's inquiry and thinking can be encouraged and improved.. This means, however, that the curriculum must offer teachers clear strategies to achieve this goal. It is therefore important for education to identify suitable teaching thinking approaches that can be introduced into the South African classroom. Philosophy for Children seems to be one approach that will assist educators in teaching thinking skills.

Despite the limitations of this study, many positive findings have been observed. My experience has persuaded me that Philosophy for Children, which is the foundation of 'Stories for Thinking', is an approach which could be used effectively in South African classrooms to enhance learners' and teachers' thinking skills as well as develop good citizens in our young democracy.

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APPENDIX 1

Observation checklist

Stories for Thinking

Date:……………………………………..

Class teacher	No. of learners	Grade	Learning area	Duration of lesson

Learners: signs of careful thought	
Expressing opinions	
Giving reasons	
Using agree	
Using disagree	
Learners: signs of disrespect	
Interrupting	
Laughing	
Talking to someone else	
Not paying attention	

Adapted from Fisher (1998).

APPENDIX 2

Teacher interview

Guideline questions

1. Have you been in the habit of using strategies to encourage thinking in your classroom? Tell me about that.

2. How well do you think these strategies work?

3. What do you notice when using these strategies?

4. What effect did it have?

5. When it \ they did not work, how did you know that learners were different?

6. When it did not work, what were some of the challenges?

7. What do you think happened?

8. Why do you think it is worth doing?

Presently:

1. Have you been doing anything different now? Since the course.

2. What effect does it have on:

- Learners
- Yourself
- With colleagues

3. Do you notice anything about your own thinking?

4. Is there anything else that you wish to add?

Appendix 3

Focus group interview

Guideline questions

1. Did your educator always use methods that encouraged thinking in the class? Tell me about it.

2. How well do you think the method 'Stories for Thinking worked?

3. What did you notice when using this method?

4. What effect did it have?

5. When it did work, how do you know it worked?

6. When it didn't work, what were some of the difficulties?

7. Why do you think it is worth doing?

8. What effect did it have on you?

9. Have you been doing anything different since using 'Stories for Children'?

10. Do notice anything about your own thinking?

11. Is there anything else that you wish to add?