

**A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY TO RESPOND
TO PROBLEMS OF LITERACY IN A GRADE 4 CLASS**

By

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DECLARATION

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M.L. MALEBESE

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother and family, who have always been a pillar and source of strength in my life. My loving daughter, Thuto Nicole Malebese – your faith, love and patience, in spite of being left behind while I pursued this study, has constantly inspired me to become better. This study was undertaken in your honour and it belongs to you more than it does to me. I love, admire, respect and want you all to be proud of me.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis set out to formulate a socially inclusive teaching strategy intended to respond to English literacy problems as they relate to a given Grade 4 class in one primary school in the Free State province, South Africa. In this regard, the major contention of the thesis was that poor academic performance by foundation and intermediate phase learners can be attributed to insufficient preparation on the part of teachers to facilitate learners' transition from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase. The study theorised and formulated a community-based teaching strategy which involved stakeholders of a school, using various teaching and learning resources, coming together to collaboratively enhance learners' levels of competence and achievement in listening, speaking, reading, writing, technical functioning and critical thinking skills in the Grade 4 English class. The research question was, how can a socially inclusive teaching strategy respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class? This study used critical emancipatory research as its theoretical framework. Data were generated through the use of participatory action research and analysed using critical discourse analysis. The empirical analysis, interpretation of data and discussion the findings resulting from interventions were done with critical discourse analysis.

The framework thus developed contributes to demystifying the teaching of English literacy, and improved the subject performance of learners in this class significantly. The socially inclusive teaching strategy understands that learners are expected to demonstrate a basic operational knowledge and that a socially inclusive way of teaching has a wide applicability in/outside the classroom. In the first part of the study, the results of brief empirical reflections by means of participatory action research show that the inability to activate a socially inclusive teaching strategy to respond to English literacy problems is caused by the absence of a dedicated team with a common purpose/vision, failures relating to lesson preparation, ineffective lesson presentation and an absence of effective assessment measures; these causes have a negative impact on learners' learning attainment, namely, learners are unable to read text meaningfully or to reason logically, their decision making is uninformed and they are unable to perform given tasks.

The second part of the study identifies the components of the solution, namely, the formulation of a socially inclusive teaching strategy to respond to the problems of teaching English literacy – these components are required for such a strategy to be implemented successfully. These components can only be described successfully in the presence of a dedicated team. Numerous findings of this study with regard to the common literacy challenges faced by beginner English as Second Language learners are consistent with results of other research studies reported in the literature review. The distinctive aspect of this research project has proven to be the infusion of humanitarian elements into educational management and curriculum studies, which has transformational characteristics within a research paradigm. All of these characteristics involve understanding the contexts within which such a strategy can be implemented successfully by a strong team working in a socially inclusive learning environment, in an attempt to create a conducive, sustainable learning environment.

The study advocates the consideration of learners' voices as the measure of the success of learning and, thus, recommends that these voices, which have often been viewed as "insignificant", are heard. In conclusion, the thesis argues that a socially inclusive teaching strategy does not reside in an individual, but in collective and collaborative relationships; anyone who is/will be affected by any decision or action taken in an institution earns engagement and involvement. The thesis offers a strategy that can respond to literacy problems in a socially inclusive manner.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis wakker 'n poging aan om 'n strategie vir 'n sosiale inklusiewe onderwysstrategie te formuleer wat daarop gemik is om Engels geletterdheids probleme aan te spreek wat deur 'n Graad 4 klas ondervind word in 'n laerskool in die Vrystaat Provinsie in Suid-Afrika. In hierdie verband is die hoof twispunt van die tesis dat gebrekkige akademiese prestasie deur grondslag en intermediêre fase leerders toegeskryf kan word aan gebrekkige voorbereiding van opvoeders wat die oorskakeling tussen die twee fases moet bewerkstellig. Die studie teoretiseer en formuleer 'n gemeenskapsgedrewe onderwysstrategie wat belanghebbendes van 'n sekere skool betrek met die gebruik van verskeie onderwys- en opvoedingshulpbronne wat tesame die leerders se vlakke van bevoegdheid en prestasie in luister-, praat-, en leesvaardighede sowel as tegniese funksionering en kritiese denkvaardighede in die Graad 4 Engelse klas beïnvloed. Die vertrekpunt vir die navorsing was die vraag, "*Hoe kan 'n sosiale inklusiewe onderwysstrategie reageer op Engelse geletterdheids probleme in 'n Graad 4 klas?*" In hierdie studie word gebruik gemaak van kritiese vrywaringsnavorsing vir die teoretiese raamwerk. Data is genereer deur deelnemende aksie navorsing en ontleed met die gebruik van kritiese diskoers ontleding. Die empiriese analise, interpretasie van data en bespreking van die bevindinge wat ontstaan vanuit die ingryping is volbring deur kritiese diskoers ontleding.

Die ontwikkelde raamwerk dra dus daartoe by tot die demistifikasie van opvoediging van Engelse geletterdheid en dat die uitvoering van die vak leerderprestasie aansienlik verbeter. Die sosiale inklusiewe onderwysstrategie is gebasseer op die begrip dat leerders veronderstel is om 'n basiese operasionele kennis van die vak behoort te demonstreer en dat 'n sosiale inklusiewe manier van onderwys 'n wye toepaslikheid binne en buite die klaskamer geniet. Die eerste deel van die studie dui daarop dat, die onvermoë om 'n sosiale inklusiewe onderwysstrategie om Engelse geletterdheid probleme te beredder, by wyse van ligtelike empiriese nadenke, die resultate wat verkry word deur middel van deelnemende aksie navorsing 'n tekortkoming uitwys in die gebrek aan 'n toegewyde span met 'n gedeelde visie wat daartoe bydra tot a) tekortkominge in les voorbereiding, b) ondoeltreffende les aanbieding en c) 'n afwesigheid van effektiewe assesseringsmetodes. Hierdie

probleem versoorzaak 'n negatiewe impak op leerders se leervermoë bied, naamlik dat leerders nie teks met begrip kan lees of logies kan redeneer nie, hulle besluitname nie insiggewend is nie hulle nie opdragte kan uitvoer nie.

Die tweede deel van die studie identifiseer die komponente van die oplossing, naamlik die formuleering van 'n sosiale inklusiewe onderwysstrategie om die probleem van opvoeding in Engels geletterdheid aan te spreek – hierdie komponente word benodig om sodoende die strategie suksesvol te kan implementeer. Die voorafgenoemde komponente kan dus suksesvol beskryf word in die teenwoordigheid van 'n toegewyde span. Verkseie bevindinge in hierdie studie met betrekking tot gemene geletterdheidsvraagstukke wat deur beginner Engels tweedetaal leerders ondervind word is konsekwent met die resultate van ander navorsingsstudies wat in die bronne studie aangehaal is. Die onderskeidende aspek van hierdie navorsingsprojek is gewis die inspuiting van die humanitêre elemente in opvoedkundige bestuur en kurrikulum studies wat beskik oor transformatiewe eienskappe binne die navorsingsraamwerk. Al hierdie eienskappe behels 'n verstandhouding van die kontekste waarin so 'n strategie suksesvol geïmplementeer kan word deur 'n sterk span wat binne in 'n sosiale inklusiewe omgewing werk wat so 'n bydraende, volhoubare leeromgewing kan vestig.

Hierdie studie bevorder die inagneming van die leerders se stemme as die maatsaf van sukses van opvoeding en beveel dus aan dat gehoor gegee word aan hierdie voorheen geignoreerde stemme. In sluitng, vestig die studie die aandag daarop dat 'n sosiale onderwysstrategie nie binne 'n enkele persoon gevestig word nie maar binne in 'n kollektiewe en samewerkende verhouding van alle belanghebbendes. Hierdie tesis bied 'n strategie wat 'n oplossing kan bied vir geletterdheid probleme by wyse van 'n sosiale inklusiewe manier.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement
CDA	Critical discourse analysis
CER	Critical emancipatory research
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
HoD	Head of department
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SITS	Socially inclusive teaching strategy
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
TPR	Total physical response
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aims to formulate a socially inclusive teaching strategy (SITS) to respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class. The socially inclusive learning environment of a classroom plays a central role in determining how English as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) can be improved and sustained best. This chapter introduces this initiative with a brief background to contextualise the problem statement and a brief summary of various contexts that inform the comprehensive theoretical framework of this study. It also provides a brief outline of the study design, methodology, tools and techniques used for data generation and analysis. Lastly, the layout of the chapters is given.

1.2 BACKGROUND

A SITS represents individuals who enthusiastically and substantively participate in an exchange of ideas that result in a co-constructed understanding, bringing to the fore the importance of learner engagement and learning. Such a strategy refers to a situation where the following are improved: listening, speaking, reading, writing, technical functioning and critical thinking. This improvement brings a richness of culture and knowledge to individual learners, who develop self-regulated learning behaviour, and helps them to become useful members of society (Malebese, 2013: 37). It enhances equity, equality, social justice, freedom, hope and fairness, in order to provide learning opportunities for all, irrespective of learners' diversity (Devereaux, 2013: 1; Faulker, 2011: 19; Munger, 2010: 1). Thus, a socially inclusive teaching strategy refers to what happens when equality of access and cohesive communities come together collectively in one spirit to enable learners to demonstrate levels of competence and achievement in ways that suit their needs best (DoE, 2009: 98).

Studies conducted on learners' literacy capability indicated that Grade 4 learners are unable to read text meaningfully. Learners also encounter problems with a range of literacy skills, including synthesising information, making informed decisions, communicating effectively, reasoning logically and expressing their thoughts clearly

(DBE, 2011: 45; Government of Alberta, 2010: 1). Some of the reasons identified for this poor performance include problems with learners' transition to English as the medium of learning and teaching, teachers' inability to teach literacy efficiently, and inadequate parental involvement (DBE, 2011: 7). Though these challenges are rife in South African schools, literature shows that it is not limited to South Africa. Many schools internationally also find learners' inability to use language effectively in communicating and assessing knowledge to be a big problem (Phasha, Mclure & Magano, 2012: 320; UNESCO, 2012: 2; Wetere, 2009: 3; Ofulue, 2011: 12).

Various strategies have been employed to respond to these challenges, ranging from teachers defining rules of grammar, through to situations where emotionally appealing scenarios are presented to learners who are required to express themselves independently (Feiman-Nemser, 2001: 20). These and many other strategies, such as comprehensive reading and writing, have been designed and used to enhance literacy. However, these strategies have not been as successful as SITS that require learners and teachers to talk to one another about real-life situations and using language to communicate real ideas and solutions to real-life problems (Mahlomaholo, 2013: 2). The aim is to design a classroom learning environment that includes all learners in the teaching and learning process that allows them all to voice their views freely (Shepherd, 2012: 1).

Many theories of learning literacy emphasise communication between and support from all stakeholders, who also bring new and novel ways of being, listening and speaking to the situation – much more than when there is one teacher role modelling to many learners (Woolfolk, 2007: 47; Wenger, 2006: 1). In countries where the culture of doing things is democratic, the emphasis on learning literacy has been more socially inclusive, while, in less democratic countries, the approach has been more rote and more memory oriented. Shepherd (2012: 1) and Boog (2003: 426) further maintain that knowledge is conveyed and accomplished through collaborative work. Therefore, providing enough access to resources and services becomes beneficial to the school, learners and their families in developing and implementing a conducive learning environment (Nazir & Pedretti, 2011: 4; Das & Kattumuri, 2011: 4; Eggen & Kauchak, 2008: 331; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003: 78).

Threats to a SITS that could hinder the successful implementation of such a strategy could occur when school management team members are not able to provide meaningful curriculum leadership (DBE, 2011: 7). Furthermore, teachers' resistance to getting involved in implementing changes, thinking that they are being evaluated or feeling overwhelmed by additional work, can also be viewed as threats to the successful implementation of a SITS (Elish-Piper, L'Allier & Zwart, 2009: 12). Parents with very low levels of literacy may feel incapable of supporting their children's literacy. Therefore, empowering parents with activities that could help them support their children's literacy, increasing the parents' confidence, improving their own literacy skills and realising their role, especially during the early years of child development, could improve the situation (Akerman & Bird, 2005: 12). Socio-economic factors, namely, the stress of daily life, poverty, unemployment, family breakdown and poor health, can also impede the success of the anticipated strategy.

The success of implementing a SITS can be observed through improved literacy levels in the participating countries. Luke (2012: 4) maintains that civil society, human relationships and freedom are dependent upon emancipated streams of knowledge. Thus, through knowledge gained, learners are able to choose vocabulary that is correct, understandable and appropriate for describing texts, to rephrase words to clarify context and use grammar structures accurately (Bazo & Cabrera, 2002: 2; Poole & More, 2005: 1). Learners' engagement in more mature conversations and the ability to express themselves in a much more personal way, is key for acquired, desired knowledge, skills and attitude (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000: 25).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

As encapsulated in its title, this thesis set out to devise and investigate a SITS intended to respond to English literacy problems as they occur in a given Grade 4 class in one of the primary schools in the Free State province, South Africa. The main argument of this thesis is that high levels of poor academic performance by foundation and intermediate phase learners is attributable to teachers failing to prepare learners sufficiently, thereby facilitating learners' transition from foundation phase to intermediate phase. The study locates its research problem within the area

of a primary-school-based transitional literacy. By focusing primarily on literacy practices, such as listening and speaking, reading and writing, the thesis argues for an all-stakeholder-driven SITS as a means of addressing English literacy problems encountered by Grade 4 learners, who are the part of the study's co-researchers.

1.3.1 Research question

Based on the scenario given above, this thesis sought to answer the following research question:

- How can a socially inclusive teaching strategy respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class?

1.3.2 The aim of the study

To respond to the above question, the research aim is to formulate a SITS to respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class. In order to elaborate on this aim, the following sections provide a list of objectives to be realised by this study.

1.3.3 The objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To investigate the challenges and English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class, making the formulation of a socially inclusive teaching strategy necessary;
- To describe the components of such a socially inclusive teaching strategy that responds to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class;
- To understand the contexts under which such a socially inclusive teaching strategy can respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class and can be implemented successfully;
- To anticipate plausible threats to a socially inclusive teaching strategy in order to circumvent them; and
- To formulate indicators of success and lack of it with regard to a socially inclusive teaching strategy to respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class.

The following subsections explain how each of the objectives contributed to achieving the aim of the study.

1.3.3.1 Demonstrating and justifying the need to formulate a socially inclusive teaching strategy to respond to literacy problems in a Grade 4 class

The first objective of the study (see 2.4.1) demonstrates and justifies the need to formulate a SITS to respond to literacy problems in a Grade 4 class. The discrepancy of what South Africa's Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) documents stipulate and what the reviewed literature says with regard to the high failure rate of Grade 4 learners justifies designing such a strategy. The strategy will promote hands-on education and improve learners' listening and speaking, and reading and writing skills; and learning outcomes that can be achieved when learners are placed in the centre of a conducive learning environment -doing so will help learners to integrate gained knowledge independently in real-life situations, as members of society.

1.3.3.2 Identifying and describing the components of a socially inclusive teaching strategy that responds to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class

The second objective of the study (see 2.4.2-2.4.4) considers best practices and related theories relevant to the implementation of a SITS that responds to the English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class. Section 4.2.3 explores the operationalisation of the literacy teaching strategies and theories responding to listening and speaking, reading, writing and learning skills, which resulted in the effective implementation of a SITS. Firstly, we established a dedicated team with a common vision to formulate such a strategy. The team determined the priorities by means of a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats); this information was used to develop a strategic plan and to monitor the progress of the strategy. Section 4.2.3 focuses on good teaching methods, and presents detailed instructions for implementing these easier and fun ways to teach English literacy (see 2.4.2-2.4.4).

1.3.3.3 Understanding the contexts in which a socially inclusive teaching strategy would respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class and whether the strategy could be implemented successfully

Sections 2.4.6–2.4.7 explore the conditions that enabled the implementation of a SITS, while Section 4.4.1 investigates the conditions that favoured the strategy tried and tested in this study. One of the conditions that supported the implementation of the strategy was the usage of hands-on education, games and (outdoor) physical learning activities. For a team involving parents, the use of Sesotho as language medium acted as an enabling factor. Differences between the conditions described in Sections 2.4.6 and 2.4.7, on the one hand, and 4.4.1 on the other, are also pointed out.

1.3.3.4 Anticipating plausible threats to a socially inclusive teaching strategy in order to circumvent these threats

The fourth objective of the study is explored in Sections 2.4.9 and 4.5.1. Factors that might have hampered the implementation of the SITS and ways to circumvent them are clarified, and Section 4.5.1 examines mechanisms employed to counterbalance the effects of these threats. These threats are also cited from a literature perspective (Chapter 2) and through the operationalisation of the strategy (Chapter 4).

1.3.3.5 Formulating indicators of success and a lack of it with regard to a socially inclusive teaching strategy to respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class

The fifth objective of the study is interrogated in Sections 2.4.10 and 4.6.1. Section 2.4.10 provides evidence of the effectiveness of the strategies, and the evidence is presented in Sections 4.6.1–4.6.2. Sections 4.6.1–4.6.2 highlight the differences in the evidence presented in Sections 2.4.10 and 4.6.1–4.6.2.

Having presented the aim and objectives of the study, in the next section I briefly discuss the framework informing the study.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to formulate a SITS to respond to English literacy problems, critical theory was used as a basis for this study. Critical theory seeks to enhance the democratic principles of equality and justice, which are liberating, enlightening, emancipating and empowering (Tutak, Bondy & Adams, 2011: 66). In my opinion, a critical emancipatory research (CER) lens is the best theoretical framework for designing such a strategy, as it seeks to stimulate a society that is committed to lifelong learning, thereby reducing inequality by promoting learning opportunities for all, irrespective of diversity (Devereaux, 2013: 1; Faulker, 2011: 19; Munger, 2010: 1). The critical approach to literacy teaching, as used in this study, aims to improve language learning and achieve social change in marginalised communities (Luke, 2012: 5; Norton & Toohey, 2004: 1). Hence, the study aims to empower and motivate learners, and the whole community, to change and become competent in literacy (see 2.2).

1.4.1 The origin of CER

CER evolved from the emancipatory role of critical theory, which came into being as a result of the Frankfurt School that was established in Germany in 1924 (Giroux, 1997: 1) (see 2.2.1). The supporting aspects of literacy education within CER strengthen persistent equalities in learners' home environments to empower individuals and overcome social oppression (Tracey & Morrow, 2012: 113). Thus, Frankfurt School theorists were central to the improvement of critical theory, which aspired to emancipate the marginalised and the oppressed. The theorists agree about assumptions used to describe the formulation of components for a SITS to respond to English literacy problems (Perkins, 1992: 164; Heller, 2002: 209; Mahlomaholo, 2009: 7).

1.4.2 Formats of CER

The formats of CER, which are in line with the manifestations of literacy teaching, are numerous and include the social learning perspective of sociolinguistics theory (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998: 101). The sociocultural theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979: 1). On the other hand, emphasises the broader effects of communities and

cultures on styles of interaction and subsequently on learners' learning. This supports the formulation of a SITS that will promote rich and noble ideas, in an attempt to demonstrate different aspects of teaching that are easy and fun. The social constructivism theory (Vygotsky, 1986: 1) describes ways in which knowledge is constructed within individuals as a result of social interaction. Critical literacy theory (Freire, 1970a: 32) scrutinises ways in which literacy teaching and learning can be understood as a tool of power to improve social inequalities. This study will be guided by Freire's critical literacy theory, due to its distinctions and similarities to the anticipated teaching strategy (see 2.2.2).

1.4.3 Steps of CER

In guiding this study, CER followed its three main steps, which are, interpretive, analytical and educative phases (Tracey & Morrow, 2012: 112) (see 2.2.3). In the field of language, CER steps are entwined in the sense that CER's interpretive phase encourages social engagement, and for sociolinguistics theory, anthropology provides a perspective about the way cultures affect social practices such as reading and writing. The educative phase encourages participation and transformative literacy practices using different modalities (Lei & Huang, 2012: 205). The field of linguistics contributes the notion that the ability to read is related to personal gains that avoid illiteracy constraints and are pertinent to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and aptitudes. Furthermore, the critical analytical phase encourages a critical examination of social issues generated by reading the text (Lei & Huang, 2012: 209).

1.4.4 The objectives and the importance of CER

The major objectives of CER are developing the ability among members of the working team to critique certain aspects of teaching, particularly those that are sensitive to issues of power and emancipation (Yates, 2014: 458). Learners are able to use gained knowledge to create, invent or explore new ideas and ways to use the learnt knowledge and skills. The gained knowledge also engages effective teaching with causes – not only the symptoms – of oppression, by inviting teachers and all stakeholders involved to experience the liberating as well as the educative power of sharing, thereby reinforcing teaching and learning (see 2.2.4). CER researchers are subjective in their work and reign around freedom, equality, social justice and hope.

Hence, they strive to achieve a transformative, unequal social arrangement in and outside a classroom situation – everywhere where learning takes place.

Thus, emancipatory values are particularly important where social injustice and unfairness of power exist in relation to opportunity, authority and control (Tracy & Morrow, 2012: 48). Such values also helped the researcher to obtain cross-cultural understanding with stakeholders within the system, so that she could support the environmental compatibility of the chosen methods. Moreover, all the stakeholders involved in a socially inclusive learning community gain self-understanding, and recognise that their inputs are valued (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: 717). Such participation and collaboration ensures mutual empowerment for the researcher and the co-researchers (Yates, 2014: 459). Therefore, having inherited the principles of CER, all the participating members of this study were themselves pastoral caregivers involved in fostering compassionate relationships in the school community and nurturing the entire school into wholesome maturity (Grove, 2004: 9); thus, they were defined by roles and spaces as the mediators of transformation (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2010: 3), as effective and impartial administrators of socially inclusive learning communities and as monitors and assessors of learners' progress in the teaching and learning process, thereby becoming experts in their field of work.

1.4.5 Epistemology and ontology of CER

Epistemology is theory relating to the study of the nature and grounds of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity and scope and the distinction between justified belief and opinion (Lybeck, 2010: 92). CER focuses on the means of acquiring knowledge collaboratively and encouraging the marginalised to differentiate between truth and falsehood (Poland, 2010: 1). Dewey's teaching points out that, although it is the task of the teacher, or any person facilitating learning, to create an enticing curriculum and a conducive learning environment, learners are responsible for their own learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2012: 50). Kincheloe (2008: 152) postulates that a critical epistemology involves an understanding of the relationship between power and thought as well as between power and truth claims.

On the other hand, ontological assumptions are concerned with what is believed to constitute social reality; to express, nurture and expand learners' learning

capabilities in a shared praxis (Mertens & Wilson, 2012: 172). Contrary to previous understanding, as a researcher using a critical emancipatory approach, I believe that all knowledge about the world is subjective. Teachers, parents and communities assume that different learners have differing realities. Therefore, the anticipated teaching strategy is aimed at making all the participating members collaborators, co-researchers and facilitators with each learner. So, collectively, using a SITS ensures that everything that is taught is relevant, enabling learners to make connections between what was being taught, their worlds and themselves. If learning involves only memorising facts, learning has no impact and no meaning, and if learners do not realise why it is important to learn, then education becomes meaningless.

Moreover, the anticipated strategy's aim is to make learning real by designing a curriculum that corresponds with the culture of learners and builds on the basic skills of listening and speaking, and reading and writing while helping learners learn the things they need to know (Barry, 2012: 18).

1.4.6 Role of the researcher and the relationship between the co-researchers

The researcher sometimes had the impression that she was the only participating member who understood the concept of the study material, and she was deeply involved in supporting learners' individual needs and growing independence (Guglielmi, 2012: 1). However, by de-powering herself and making it workable, it became possible to find solutions to the problems. The role of the researcher is that of convener, whose major role is to create space in which people can work collaboratively in an attempt to solve a problem and initiate network connectivity. Moreover, the researcher and co-researchers are the driving forces of research processes; hence, trust between co-researchers and recognition that they equal members of the team are important (Watson, Watson & Reigeluth, 2008: 69), and that can be achieved through open communication.

1.5 DEFINITIONS AND DISCUSSION OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS

An operational definition is a technique employed to measure a concept and gather data about it. Conceptual definitions employ symbols to represent concepts and,

therefore, the operational and conceptual definitions are of key importance in scientific research measures. The focus of this section is defining and discussing concepts that guide this study in accordance with the title. Thus, the aim of defining and discussing these operational concepts is assisting in achieving the objectives of the study. The main concepts are literacy, social inclusiveness, socially inclusive strategy and SITS.

1.5.1 Literacy

Literacy is a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. It is the ability to read and write; especially, to handle information, to express ideas and opinions as well as make informed decisions and solve problems logically (Luke, 2012: 5). Considered this way, literacy is the space between discourse and thought. Literacy is at the centre of basic education for all. It is, therefore, essential for ensuring sustainable learning development for improved peace and democracy (UNESCO, 2012: 2) (see 2.3.1.1). Six types of literacy will be explained in detail (see 2.3.1.2), namely, basic, functional, cultural, multiple and new literacy, critical literacy, as well as social literacy.

1.5.1.1 Conceptualisation of literacy

Basic literacy is the capacity to read and write, understand words, sentences and texts (Luke, 2012: 5), and functional literacy is the way people actually use gained skills to live and work in society. Learners at the stage of functional literacy have mastered basic reading and writing skills (UNESCO, 2012: 2). On the other hand, cultural literacy involves knowledge of history, through which contributions by and perspectives of various cultural groups are regarded as intellectual contributions to emerging concepts about the world (UNESCO, 2004: 2-3). As such, cultural literacy refers to the possession of a gained general knowledge and knowing how to use it to build communication, acceptance and understanding in an ever-changing global society (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014: 1). In the teaching and learning environment, cultural literacy is referred to as prior knowledge – the acquired skill gained outside the four walls of a classroom. Teachers who understand and respond to learners' lack of motivation can help learners take an active role in literacy learning and maintain their engagement.

Multiple literacy develops the way in which literacy teaching and learning enable multiple interpretations, and prepare learners for the future (Anstey & Bull, 2006: 21). By acquiring such skills, strategies and practices that are needed for work and leisure, social participation, cultural and community activities as well as personal growth, teachers need to help learners develop a capacity for connectedness by building on previous knowledge (UNESCO, 2015: 7). New literacy is generally new forms of literacy made possible by digital technology developments (Anstey & Bull, 2006: 22).

Social literacy refers to the development of social skills that help people to communicate in a respectful manner, as well as involving them in a community (Freire & Macedo, 1987: 18). Social literacy is about learning from the team how to be respectful, and being able to express thoughts and emotions. Through nonverbal and verbal cues learners begin to learn from people around them (see 2.3.1.2). Furthermore, a social learning perspective provides the foundation for writing and investigation related to the political aspects of literacy education (Tracey & Morrow, 2012: 113), and it falls under the umbrella of critical literacy theory. Critical literacy is grounded in critical theory, which ensures that school learning is directly related to learners' life experiences (Tracey & Morrow, 2012: 114). Thus, critical literacy theory is the best approach for this study about literacy teaching and learning processes, although it is supported by other theories for social inclusivity.

1.5.2 Social inclusion

Social inclusion is an approach used to achieve equality of access and cohesive community participation, and to encourage the contribution of all persons to social and cultural life through open coordination (Haynes, 2008: 1). A socially inclusive strategy is an approach ensuring equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background, in order to achieve their full potential (Devereaux, 2013: 1). Social inclusivity seeks to clarify relations between the needs, identities, aspirations and behaviours of individuals as well as their communities of interest, thereby creating a safe space for personal growth (Davis, Hankinson & Morris, 2008: 4) (see 2.3.2). The above suggestions anticipate that diversity operates in opposition to social trust and cohesion, making friendly encounters more difficult and more unlikely (Pang,

2010: 30), but the anticipated strategy proposes unique development. The evidence gathered shows that, when people feel emotionally anchored in their home environments and believe that their way of life is respected, they are more willing to integrate. In this study, social inclusion emphasises the significance of social influences and social interactions for literacy learning.

1.5.2.1 Conceptualisation of social inclusivity

The interrelations of social inclusivity demonstrate the value of the stakeholders being characterised by a sequence of transitional teaching methods with regard to the various aspects of the teaching and learning process (Chen, Poland & Skinner, 2007: 126). The family, community, Department of Education, schools and school authorities, library and learners are all the primary focus of child development in the social and educational spheres – all play a critical role in learners' learning outcomes. Learners' literacy, in turn, is interconnected with the nature of development. Learners are naturally curious, thus, encouraging them to explore their worlds will improve their understanding of how literacy can help them live fulfilling and successful lives, especially in their families and communities. Communities are where literacy is located, as public libraries are normally situated within communities. Libraries are in a key position to find ways of engaging with learners, irrespective of their backgrounds (see 2.3.3.1).

1.6 RELATED LITERATURE

In this section, the literature relating to the challenges and strategies used in different parts of the world in pursuit of best practices is reviewed, with the aim of learning from them. The focus is to understand the contexts under which a SITS will respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class and how it can be implemented successfully. Therefore, anticipating plausible threats to a SITS will enable the team to circumvent the threats and formulate indicators of success and a lack of it with regard to the SITS.

1.6.1 The need to formulate a socially inclusive teaching strategy to respond to English literacy problems

This section gathers data that are related to the challenges of teaching literacy, which makes the formulation of a SITS necessary. The anticipated strategy was designed to solve English literacy problems while taking into account social problems identified. The strategy forms a collage, bringing together various types of expertise to solve problems related to English literacy. Each challenge relating to expectations to move away from traditional methods of teaching to a more socially inclusive way of teaching English literacy, is discussed. Literature is reviewed on the basis of problems that were identified; finding solutions for these problems was not going to be possible in the absence of a dedicated team. The following are the problems that were identified.

1.6.1.1 Ineffective way of teaching the four main language skills in a socially inclusive learning environment, due to the lack of a dedicated team

In the context of this study for the effective teaching of the four main language skills, namely, listening and speaking, and reading and writing (McKenna & Robinson, 2013: 178; Shintani, 2012: 40), there has to be a dedicated team that shares a common purpose for good and effective teaching of English literacy to support learners' learning and performance beyond reasonable doubt. Teaching activities are aimed at enhancing the four main language skills, namely, listening and speaking, reading and writing skills (Martin & Peercy, 2014: 722; Prasad, 2012: 190). These skills must be taught and learnt simultaneously, and they complement one another when various learning materials and techniques are used. In this case, in the school under investigation, there appeared to have been no collaborative effort to do lesson preparation, presentation and assessment. Observations of what the teacher presented as lesson preparation showed it to be scant and superficial. This showed that the teacher in question prepared the lesson without the help of resources. Therefore, a lesson intended to promote fluent reading, and aimed at raising awareness and inspiring and expanding learners' understanding of important areas of reading, could not be retained by learners.

Hence, we see learners who cannot read text meaningfully, cannot make informed decisions, are unable to reason clearly and logically or write legibly and confidently. The interaction made possible by a socially inclusive learning environment, if facilitated, can be achieved when the teacher works with other people to demonstrate the use and benefits of a SITS in and outside the classroom. However, demonstrations should not consist of only the teacher or team role modelling to a group of learners. Instead, demonstrations should combine the teacher and the team modelling with opportunities that involve learner participation, allowing learners to direct their own learning. By negotiating the form, content and context of demonstrations socially, teachers, with the support of more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1986: 102), can help learners create a rich schema for employing various aspects of teaching in ways that quite naturally involve many literacy-related activities (Tracey & Morrow, 2012: 108).

Therefore, drawing from a socio-cognitive perspective, learners who observe and interact with teachers during the teaching and learning process internalise relevant vocabulary, develop approaches to problem-solving and encounter action schemes that enable learners to become critical thinkers and producers of their own learning. Moreover, due to ineffective ways of teaching, learners don't learn from each other in a shared practice that resembles real-life situations in the teaching and learning of listening and speaking skills.

1.6.1.2 Ineffective ways of teaching listening and speaking skills

Listening is an active skill, especially listening for meaning (Egan, 2013: 1) and when someone is listening, someone might have spoken or created sounds to capture someone's attention to a listening mode. In listening how words are spoken, someone with a limited knowledge of English language may find it difficult to comprehend and understand what has been said. Overall, people do not listen critically to the way the message is conveyed or pronounced. Even the most literate people sometimes find it difficult to isolate knowledge of how a word is spelled from how it is pronounced. Although such a person may be quite aware that the spoken forms of the words *pale* and *pail* are identical, an aura of difference persists because of the different spelling (Burns & Richards, 2009: 167). With this in mind, therefore,

Grade 4 learners who are novices in the LoLT find it difficult to listen attentively. They pay attention to words that are new to them and do not focus on the intent of each word or the message each word is intended to communicate. Clearly, when someone is listening to English being spoken, s/he is listening for the meaning of the message and not to the way the message is being pronounced. To interpret messages, the listener must first determine the central idea being communicated, and then attend to anecdotes, explanations and other details meant to clarify meaning.

This idealist view is naturally attractive to most teachers in that they want to teach good English to their learners. Since the teachers' main interest is teaching their learners correct pronunciation, they naturally want to find a slow, clear model for learners to imitate. Another simplifying assumption that I make is that the variable along which different styles of speaking differ is pronunciation alone. It should be clear, however, that anyone's ability to understand what someone else is saying depends on much more than the manner of pronunciation, which is related to the degree of familiarity of the listener with the subject and its associated terminology, the background of the subject and the modes of expression of the speaker (Deacon, 2012: 457). During lessons, teachers asked learners to read texts and then teachers explain grammar rules. Learners do not have opportunities to practise listening and speaking skills and learners who lack such skills experience difficulties learning to read and write.

1.6.1.3 Ineffective ways of teaching reading and writing skills

Reading is the intellectual procedure of constructing meaning from written text (Richards, 2011: 72). Reading development is a progression of skills that begins with the ability to understand spoken words and decode written words, and develops towards an ever fuller understanding of written text. The so-called reading wars, between those who advocate a phonics approach and those supporting a whole-language approach, may persist, but most learners agree that both approaches are necessary and that the acquisition of technical skills and the development of meaning interact with each other in the development of reading capacity (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011: 493). Reading and writing should be linked closely in the sense that

the spontaneous drawings and paintings of learners are, in effect, their picture writing, which they read and/or interpret to the teacher (Fry & Kress, 2006: 71). The teacher tries to express learners' thoughts in a phrase or a short sentence and lets them write over her writing.

That strategy might have been effective, until learners were punished for misspelled words. Such treatment prevents learners from describing words openly and freely, thus obvious joy is missing from their experiences due to a fear of making mistakes. Therefore, they are no longer in the position of being spontaneous, because of the red pen correcting every error in spelling, and limiting the exposure of learners to different styles of spelling and pronunciation of English. In addition, there seems to be resistance by some teachers to the idea of supplementing such teaching styles with others, which are intended simply to be listened to and understood in the comprehension of normal, informally spoken English. Hence, it is stated by Schwartz (2014: 125) that the process of reading is more than just being able to decode words, instead, it must involve explicit and effective reading and writing; listening and speaking. Instruction is, therefore, critical in teaching learners how to read.

1.6.2 Identifying and describing the components of a socially inclusive teaching strategy that responds to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class

A working and dedicated team, able to take each learner by hand, is essential to help learners improve their ability to listen and speak fluently, read critically and write legibly. By gathering a group of people that each bring noble ideas for enhancing the four main language skills, learners became involved in the use of many concepts – more than would have been possible for one teacher conducting a big class singlehandedly. The study required the coordination and integration of various types of knowledge through a socially inclusive learning environment. Hence, the establishment of a dedicated team to facilitate the formulation of a SITS that responds to the problems of English literacy was necessary, because the teacher alone could not reach all the crucial and sensitive parts of learners' learning.

1.6.2.1 Effective way of teaching listening and speaking skills

The team established a balanced and effective way of facilitating a morphological structure for the spelling of complex words to help learners interact positively with verbal stimuli. Research has shown that learners make more progress in learning to read and spell when they are able to manipulate the speech sounds of their own language (Ehri, 2005: 136). Thus, the team used indigenous games, songs and poems to enhance learners' listening and speaking skills through total physical response (TPR) learning activities (see 4.2.3). As they interacted, especially in a socially inclusive learning environment, learners learnt the alphabet, letter-sound relationships, recognised high-frequency words and read simple texts containing language and thought processes within their frame of reference. Alphabetical and phonological knowledge is used to blend sounds and sound out new words that are encountered in the texts, thereby, reinforcing decoding skills and the reading of simple language became more automated, accurate and fluent (Priebe, Keenan & Miller, 2010: 27).

1.6.2.2 Effective way of teaching reading and writing skills

Skilled reading depends on the ability to distinguish words quickly and effortlessly, and to read and write words accurately with ease and speed. Good reading fluency enables learners to automatically recognise words and be in a position to break words into meaningful units, providing a bridge between word recognition and reading comprehension (Ehri, 2005: 137). To reach the aim of an efficient teaching of reading and writing skills, the team formed a socially inclusive learning block, to serve as a framework for guiding the reading instruction, which involved two goals. The first goal was to find among the best practices a technique combining the main methods of reading instruction. The second goal involved converging learners' needs with an inclusive range of incoming levels of literacy, without putting learners into ability groups.

Before suggesting the activities, the team referred back to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the members with the aim of delegating tasks based on each individual's expertise, and ascertaining the opportunities and threats of a socially inclusive learning environment (Urquhart & Weir, 2014: 127). When individuals had

been allocated their tasks, the team collaboratively planned and determined the priorities that had been suggested (Ayele, 2014: 137), and the learning activities to be facilitated and resorted to, thereby exhausting every detail of how to implement it best. In this way the group set time frames, asked who was going to do what and when, and suggested types of learning activities and their monitoring and evaluation criteria. Chapter 3 outlines the details of the strategic plan implemented according to the prioritised items.

1.6.3 Understanding the contexts under which such a strategy can be implemented successfully

The teacher's role in a socially inclusive learning environment is multifaceted. The teacher is not only charged with creating and designing a socially inclusive learning environment, but also with acting as an expert, model, guide and facilitator of these social interactions (Ma, 2009: 1). The teacher initiates learning tasks, the team then joins forces to design and develop resources that enable the establishment of a socially inclusive learning environment and norms for interactions. This incorporates identifying roles and appropriate behaviour for learners as they interact with one another, fostering discussions between and among learners and managing the complexities of multiple ongoing tasks and activities (Wright, 2013: 101). One of the more common misconceptions about the teacher's role in a socially inclusive classroom culture is that the teacher supported, stood off to the side, and encouraged learners to discover learning themselves.

To the contrary, socially inclusive classrooms are carefully constructed learning environments in which teachers are very much involved in shaping a socially inclusive learning environment (Tobias & Duffy, 2009: 39). Specialists in a subject helped the team to plan extensively, gather and arrange resources and watch diligently to figure out where their help was needed, while allowing the participating members to learn without feeling intimidated (Attard, DiLorio, Geven & Santa, 2010: 1). The elements of this kind of teaching blend well with the principles of the theoretical framework guiding this study and support as well as correlate with the anticipated teaching strategy, namely, a SITS, to respond to the problems of teaching English literacy.

The learner, as an emerging expert, a group member and a responsible individual, takes more responsibility for his/her own learning and interests (Bramaje & Espinosa, 2013: 57). Learning occurred within interaction, as learners with different strengths supported their peers in developing understanding and skills. A socially inclusive learning community enforces the interactions that resemble a sustainable learning environment and can be seen in classrooms where teachers create discussion-based or problem-based, collective and/or collaborative learning environments that are under the umbrella of a SITS (Tobias & Duffy, 2009: 39).

The SITS strategy aimed, on a daily basis, to incorporate more hands-on, minds-on and manipulative learning activities. Learners praise and cheer each other as they write the Word Wall words. They manipulate letters as they make words and move words around as they sort them. They write words in the right columns during Using Words You Know. In addition to engaging learners physically in the activities, we tried to include a puzzle-solving quality. Every Making Words lesson had a secret word. In this manner learners were induced to participate.

Can you figure it out? Which of the words you know will help you spell your name? What word that begins with s-k could fit in the following sentence: ...He broke his leg when he fell off his_____.

The team's collaborative effort was essential for the work being done and the teacher's role was to assist learners to dominate their own learning processes (Bramaje & Espinosa, 2013: 57). In this way, a socially inclusive learning community extended beyond the classroom walls, to the school and local community that constituted the larger audience and to a community of experts on the subject matter, who provided expert models for learners (Wright, 2013: 98).

1.6.4 Anticipating plausible threats to a such strategy so as to circumvent threats

The brief discussion of threats correspond with the contexts and solutions emanating from the reviewed literature. The first threat was the presence of the team guiding the implementation of a SITS to respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class – the team's functionality being hampered by more work given to it and power relations (Campbell, 2003: 97). The second threat was the expectation among

teachers that faculty members would provide answers to all their problems (Lei & Huang, 2012: 217).

In a socially inclusive learning environment, power was not expected to lead, but it was theorised to interact with self-focused goals in an orderly manner to envisage self-regulation to affect behaviour (Bryan, 2007: 34). Insufficient training was a threat to the operationalisation of the strategies, as expressed by the team's lack of dedication and team spirit. A threat identified by a SWOT analysis was that teachers feel that their honesty would disadvantage them (Biputh & McKenna, 2010: 289). In the implementation of the strategic planning, threats included teachers being transferred to other schools while the programme was still running (Murtaza, 2010: 220).

The above-mentioned situation was a threat that made it difficult to predict whether the project would be successful. This redeployment process (transferring teachers) (Hlongwane, 2009:166) therefore hampered continuity. In terms of monitoring, parents, especially those with a low socio-economic status, were unable to play their part and to monitor the work of teachers, as expected (Mattson, 2006:10-14). The second threat to monitoring was the insufficient training provided to the team responsible for the project (Biputh & McKenna, 2010:289). Insufficient training resulted in monitors being unable to play their part as expected. The lack of monitoring made it necessary to undertake this study and put in place mechanisms that would make continuous monitoring possible. Honesty-humility also is another perspective on personality traits and liberal values in a culture that promotes both individualism and equality (Bargal, 2008: 17).

1.6.5 Formulating indicators of success and lack of it with regard to a socially inclusive teaching strategy to respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class

In this section, indicators of success and lack of success will be discussed; these indicators provide examples of accomplishment when formulating a SITS. The success of a SITS, achieved through a well-established and working team, was generally traced back to enhanced learning by learners and improved literacy within the community. The social constructivist perspective adopted by this study meant

that literacy was considered to be a social act. Hence, a SITS involves individuals who actively and functionally participate in an exchange of ideas that results in co-constructed understanding. This means that the size and social make-up of a group influences the level of participation and the way that text is interpreted, the cultural conventions of literacy and the different perspectives others convey about listening and speaking; reading and writing of the text (Wedin, 2010: 1).

The team used guidelines derived from what learners already knew when they started, as learners' prior knowledge is a foundation upon which new meaning is built. The team assessed learners' conceptual understanding and ability to apply knowledge or alter what s/he already knows for new application. The team provided skills and practices, which supplied every learner and other participating member with the necessary background knowledge to prosper and flourish in literacy endeavours; this approach correlates with Vygotsky's (1986) notion of a zone of proximal development, which suggests that ideal learning occurs when the teachers and team determined learners' current level of understanding and taught novel ideas, skills and strategies that were at an appropriate level to challenge learners. The zone of proximal development also confirms that learners need concentrated instructional support to develop interpersonal skills; they need to learn skills and strategies that they would find difficult to discover on their own.

Most importantly, the team observed that motivation exerted a tremendous force on what was learned, on how and when it was learned. This was witnessed when learners were involved in the lesson preparation, presentation and assessment. In all of their learning activities learners were given a platform to direct their own learning (Dorner & Gorman, 2011: 12). Clearly, learners need both the skill and motivation to develop competency as creators of their own learning. For this reason, it was concluded that implementing a socially inclusive participatory approach was crucial for the teaching and learning process. Evidently, effective instruction provided a balanced programme, in which skilful, committed teachers, with the help of other team members, adapted and integrated a collection of components, thereby enabling individuals to acquire literacy skills (Begum, 2012: 49). The team's triumph occurred when classroom instruction fused elements of home learning perfectly into instructional activities. Unquestionably, this was never an easy task – it required

commitment, time and knowledge. A socially inclusive participatory approach ensured that co-researchers were enlightened and were able to look at the particular strengths and needs of every learner and, therefore, teachers could plan instruction that was based on those strengths and needs. The rewards were dependent on cooperation and the investment of forces from all parties.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study was based on critical theory and used CER. Social inclusiveness aims to bring together different skills, knowledge and expertise in order to enhance learners' competence in literacy. The study, therefore, required a practical intervention through participatory action research (PAR) to create conditions that fostered space for empowerment (Kassam & Tettey, 2003: 156; Kindon & Elwood, 2009: 20). PAR is a research approach that is pursued to promote social justice by creating conditions that foster empowerment. PAR addresses the differences between power structures and enables researchers to put CER into practice; thereby ensuring that everyone who has a stake in the outcome of the partnership has a voice in the process of decision making. Informed by CER, a team was formed to apply the principles of PAR; team members worked together at a school in the Free State to contextualise and conceptualise English literacy problems, formulate strategies and identify the best ways to implement them, in order to address learners' poor academic performance in literacy.

Involving all the stakeholders made them feel more empowered to support learning. They were determined to use every opportunity to inspire children, therefore, inform the direction of the study (Foster, 2005: 8). The team comprised learners in a Grade 4 class, three language teachers, a head of department for languages, a local librarian, school governing body members and parents. This team shared a common vision, namely, enhancing learners' literacy competence. First, the team engaged in a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, threats, opportunities) analysis to strategise the process. The strategic plan, which identified priorities, activities and responsibilities, was designed. Each priority was accompanied by information about the resources and the time frames needed to complete each activity (Mahlomaholo, 2013: 6). Progress was monitored continuously through meetings and feedback from team

members. This information was used further in replanning and strengthening the intervention. Data for the study was generated through meetings, workshops, document analysis, focus group discussions and observations. The conversations were audio and video taped and documented for the purpose of data analysis at a later stage.

In an attempt to obtain enriched meanings from the perspectives of the co-researchers, I used critical discourse analysis (CDA), which Bloor and Bloor (2007: 2) define as a cross-discipline that involves the analysis of text and dialogue in all disciplines. CDA analyses data to obtain the in-depth meaning of the gathered data (Van Dijk, 2003: 256). CDA corresponds with CER in that both seek to find the origins of a problem and solutions to the problem at hand (Bloor & Bloor, 2007:12; Chilisa, 2012: 254). To avoid misinterpretation of spoken words, member checking was conducted.

1.8 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

The study envisaged contributing to efforts of the DoE to enhance the teaching of literacy in schools, specifically, increasing learners' English literacy competence and confidence and improving educational outcomes. School management teams were encouraged to provide effective curriculum leadership and teachers' ability to teach literacy was enhanced. Parental confidence and skills around literacy were also enhanced, and active community engagement encouraged children to stay in school and fight crime.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The co-researchers involved in the study were informed of the nature and purpose of the research, the procedures that would be used, as well as the benefits of the study. The consent form (see Appendix D) was made available for learners' parents to complete and sign. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study, and their anonymity was assured. The names of the co-researchers and the school where the research was conducted would not be revealed. The researcher remained responsible for the ethical quality of the study (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:

213). Full permission to conduct the research at the selected public school was granted by the Free State Department of Education. Research findings and results will be open and available to the public in a written form.

1.10 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

The following is an outline of this study:

Chapter 1: This chapter provides an overview of the whole study, from conceptualisation through to operationalisation and integration of findings.

Chapter 2: This chapter involves a literature review that focuses on the theoretical framework formulating the study, the definition of operational concepts and a literature study, for the purposes of developing constructs and making sense of the empirical data.

Chapter 3: This chapter discusses the research methods and the design employed in the study about the way a SITS could respond to English literacy problems.

Chapter 4: This chapter contains an analysis of the SITS, its interpretation and the findings of the study.

Chapter 5: This chapter presents a summary, limitations of the study, recommendations and suggestions for future research.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter dealt with an orientation to the research project and an overview of the entire study, including the outline of the study. The exposition of the research problem was done through a brief exploration of the present situation with regard to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class, which occurred as a result of learners' transition from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase. I also demonstrated that the study is centred on the formulation of a SITS to respond to learners' English literacy problems. On the basis of the research problem, aims and objectives were developed as well as methods to be adopted in achieving the set goals. Lastly, an outline of the chapters was provided.

Chapter 2 presents a literature review towards formulating a SITS to respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW TOWARDS FORMULATING A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY TO RESPOND TO ENGLISH LITERACY PROBLEMS IN A GRADE 4 CLASS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The study aimed to design a SITS to respond to the challenges faced when teaching English literacy in a Grade 4 class. This chapter reviews literature, starting with the selection of an appropriate theoretical framework, in this case, CER, and justifying its appropriateness for pursuing the objectives of this study. This chapter also defines and discusses operational concepts, which are literacy and a SITS – these are the concepts that anchor this study. This chapter further defines and discusses what a socially inclusive strategy to teach English literacy involves, by analysing best practices from other countries, in order to learn from these best practices. The purpose of this chapter is to develop constructs that could guide the study, to interpret and make sense of the empirical data presented in the way described in Chapter 3 and presented in a meaningful and logical manner in Chapter 4. Lastly, the conclusion sums up the chapter by restating the aim of the study and chapter, highlighting important points, tying up loose ends and linking the content of Chapter 2 with Chapter 3.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A CER lens was deemed to be the most suitable theoretical framework for assisting to design a SITS, because of its principles and values of social justice; respect, equity, freedom, peace and hope that the oppressed would be empowered and emancipated (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2010 35; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010: 142-143). Therefore, the relevance of CER was pursued and is illustrated under subheadings that relate to identifying a theoretical framework suitable for the study, historical background, forms and steps, objectives of CER, importance of CER, epistemology, ontology, how CER clarifies the researcher's role, the relationship between the researcher and the co-researchers, rhetoric and what influenced the quality of research. The above-mentioned subheadings were incorporated in anticipation of a need to formulate a SITS and its components; the discussion would

facilitate the identification of conditions that are conducive to the creation of such a strategy. In addition, in the presence of threats that might hinder the formulation of the anticipated strategy, the use of CER established ways to circumvent any threats. Furthermore, CER guided the study by making the formulation of indicators of success or lack of success of a SITS possible, in response to the problems involved in teaching English literacy in a Grade 4 class.

2.2.1 Historical origin of CER

CER evolved from the emancipatory role of critical theory. Critical theory came into being because of the Frankfurt School that had been established in Germany in 1924. Carl Grunberg fell ill shortly after taking up the post of director of the Frankfurt School. Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) then became a leader of the Frankfurt School (Berendzen, 2013: 1; Bohman & Rehg, 2011: 1), a position from which he planned, supported and contributed significant work, such encouraging individuals to know their standpoints and being conscious as human beings (Calhoun, 2013: 18; Lemert, 2010: 210). Horkheimer's early thinking emphasised suffering and happiness and the role played by rationality in emancipatory movements, and he combined critiques of metaphysics, positivism and the methodology of interdisciplinary social research (Wiggerschaus, 1994: 151; Schmidt, 2012: 225) this formed the main themes of his early philosophy in the context of what the Frankfurt School was to accomplish under his leadership. Horkheimer's theory draws inspiration from Marxist thought.

Karl Marx's theory about society, economics and politics states that human societies progress through class struggles, whereby society favours the participation of the middle-class over the lower-class; Marx opposed capitalism (Calhoun, 2013: 19; Wink, 2005: 95; McLellan, 2006: 21). Marx's theory promises a better future and postulates that education is a powerful tool for constructing knowledge. However, Marx's ideas about the nature of the Frankfurt School's ideas and its association with prominent Jewish thinkers led to the closure of the school (Berendzen, 2013:82). The Frankfurt School theorists were central to the development of critical theory; they aspired to emancipate the marginalised and the oppressed, thus stimulated the idea of formulating a SITS (Perkins, 1992:164; Heller, 2002:209; Mahlomaholo, 2009:225). Habermas (1984:99) proceeded to develop communicative action theory,

which he intended to be an epistemology of emancipatory knowing – knowledge was derived from humankind's desire to achieve emancipation from domination. This idea leads to the formulation of socially inclusive learning communities.

CER, in accordance with Frankfurt School philosophers and through communicative action theory, challenged Comte's views of knowledge, which were based on the experience of the five senses (Woolfolk, 2007:1) and which progressed through three stages. In the first, a theological stage, faith is a prerequisite for knowledge of reality. Only those who could relate to their creator through faith were in a position to retrieve true knowledge. The second, a metaphysical stage, highlights the adoption of specific beliefs for reasoning and logical thinking as ways of accessing knowledge. Lastly, a positivistic stage emphasises that knowledge might be gained from information relating to observable experiences. Therefore, only those who engage in scientific observations would gain true knowledge, according to Habermas (Wood, 2003: 327).

Habermas was of the opinion that the authentication of knowledge was achieved through education and that those involved in communication attained self-understanding, resulting in improved quality of human life (UNESCO, 2004: 1). According to Boog (2003: 425), the Frankfurt School adopted a critical stance against communism and capitalism by practising and encouraging emancipatory principles and values. It also challenged Christianity, as the main form of knowledge gained and developed through religious beliefs. CER discouraged all forms of class, patriarchal and structural power that the elite and the dominant use against the marginalised to justify their interests (McGrew & Evans, 2004: 1). CER's objectives include emancipation from all forms of oppression, cultivation of hope and happiness, and commitment to freedom, as well as the transformation of individuals and society through human action. The most common societal practice is oppression, which manifests in various ways and forms based on race, class and gender (Wiggerschaus, 2004: 78; Rehg, 2009: 29; Bohman & Rehg, 2011: 31).

Given these objectives of CER, the researcher identified the need to design a strategy to stimulate a lifelong learning society (Kassam & Tettey, 2003: 156; Kindon & Elwood, 2009: 20). The main reason for CER's objectives was to reduce levels of

inequality, thereby enhancing learning opportunities for all, irrespective of the diversity of the people involved (Devereaux, 2013: 1; Faulker, 2011: 19 & Munger, 2010: 1). The critical approach to literacy teaching, as used in this study, means I am interested in the application of literacy to achieve social justice in marginalised communities. Therefore, the formulation of a SITS aimed to improve academic performance of learners. Strategies that have been employed to improve memory and comprehensive reading and writing skills have not been particularly successful because they focus only on individual stakeholders, and not on the community at large (Norton & Toohey, 2004: 1; Luke, 2012: 5).

2.2.2 Formats of CER

There are many types of CER, as there are many manifestations of power (Mertens & Yamashita, 2010: 238). One example is critical feminist theory espoused by Hooks (1994: 6), which focuses on gender-based power. Critical action research is committed to provide a broad social analysis of literature about educational action research, which emerged from classroom action research, which encourages learners to revisit their learning (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007: 273). In the late 1980s, the critical race theory drew on critical theory in law, sociology, history, ethnic studies and women's studies that separate critical theory from conversations about race and racism (Kemmis, 2009: 464).

Critical ethnographic theory was judged appropriate for this study because of its inclusivity and because it places events and people in social, cultural and political history (Moje, 2007: 1). This theory is said to be subjective, since it is deeply rooted in a political and moral process (Barton, 2006: 899). It demonstrates the mutual support between theory and method, and how they can become more meaningful, compelling and useful together, when theory and method interact through fieldwork (Ambridge & Lieven, 2011: ix). Critical ethnography, through CER, has the potential to empower people through a discursive process of gradual enlightenment, which leads to the acquisition of communities of practice through mutual engagement (Habermas, 1984: 62; Schwarz, 2006: 281). Wenger (2006: 29) asserts that mutual engagement in a community of practice is more productive when there is diversity in the consortium. For that reason, it is easier for people to join a dialogue if they share

a common goal. The discursive process incorporates emotions, desires, intentions and awareness of certain things, which people who were not involved in the study could not access (Watson, 2012: 1).

In the context of this study, teacher knowledge and authority contradicted the dialogue and thus destroyed mutuality in the community of practice, whereas the aim of the study was to heighten all the involved co-researchers' willingness to share useful resources through their social networks (Shor, 1987a: 11). This meant that adjusting to a discursive practice became problematic, as learners had been exposed to a role model and were used to a teacher-centred teaching style and one-way communication (Freire, 1974: 75; Kucan & Palincsar, 2013: 85). Critical ethnographic work shows how much more instrumental action is in deciding what to use to reach a certain point that influences ordinary practice, and the difference it makes for questions about power and powerlessness, community and autonomy (Habermas, 1987: 63; Schmidt, 2012: 221). Each of the above stated formats was implementable in three steps, namely, interpretive, analytical and educative (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012: 43-44).

2.2.3 Steps of CER

CER consists of three main steps, namely, the interpretive, the analytical and the educative (Tracey & Morrow, 2012: 112). The purpose of these steps is to strategise the research process. During the interpretive phase learners are encouraged to evaluate the information that is provided against their daily experiences, feelings and emotions during critical reflection, which fosters self-awareness and, in turn, has potential for change and social engagement (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000: 9; Fine, 2000: 17). It also allows learners' unique voices to be heard, because they are given the opportunity to direct their own learning. Hence, during the interpretive phase, the researcher made an effort to understand the meaning that her co-researchers had created their own worlds and experiences. The way they made sense of their experiences and other people's behaviour could only be understood in light of their specific interests (Denscombe, 2003: 267).

The critical analytical phase encourages critical examination of social issues generated by reading a text (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000: 9). The focus is on the

essence of the problem and the co-researchers' voices carry indigenous meanings and experiences. Lee and Smagorinsky (2000: 9) maintain that the aim of this phase is to help all the stakeholders involved, especially learners, understand how to interact with their personal, affective investment in textual reception, so that they could personally relate to the matter of textual production structure. Therefore, the team analysed learners' interests, ideologies, power and legitimacy that were at work in a teaching and learning situation (Fine, 2000: 17). Attention was given by the dedicated team to the underlying meanings that reflect the way co-researchers understood the related topics and to the patterns that emerged from the analysis of information (Denscombe, 2003: 267).

Lastly, in the educative phase, the researcher and co-researchers took a clear position regarding intervening in hegemonic practices and served as advocates to expose the material effects of marginalised locations, while offering alternatives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: ix-xvi). In this way, they encouraged all participating members to promote creative and constructive actions that address the social realities discussed in or outside classrooms through a variety of transformative literacy practices using different modalities (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000: 9-10). The team analysed information from the analytical phase to make sense of the findings and formulate a socially inclusive way of teaching literacy. All the stakeholders involved became empowered and emancipated through the knowledge and skills that they gained during this stage, and they were able to employ it in the formulation of a strategy. Involving learners in textual (re)production enhanced their awareness of the way textual construction positions individuals and allows them to explore how their perceptions are shaped, which explains why the anticipated strategy needs to intersect with all three the phases discussed in this section (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000: 9-10).

2.2.4 Objectives of CER

The ultimate objective of this study was to develop a thoughtful example of CER and to gain knowledge about the root cause of an undesirable situation that presented in a Grade 4 class (Tracey & Morrow, 2012: 85). CER engages with causes, not only the symptoms of oppression, by inviting teachers and all stakeholders involved to

reveal themselves and experience the liberating and educative power of sharing, in order to reinforce teaching and learning. CER also initiates an agenda for equity, social justice, peace and hope (Mahlomaholo & Netshadama, 2010: 35) in a classroom situation. A child could be labelled as having problems with work suited to his/her age level, without the person doing the labelling realising that a child might have spent nights avoiding potential rapists. An abused child often resorts to bullying to relieve his/her pain and humiliation in an attempt to deal feelings of inequality amongst the privileged (Ferreira, Cardodo & Abrantes, 2011: 1707).

CER served as a platform for designing ways to implement methods to effect change (Nkoane, 2010: 98). Learners' moods and welfare were improved because of their increased understanding of concepts and this led to better cooperation between the classroom and community life. The CER perspective's aim was to emancipate and give hope to the marginalised, in the sense that, by reading for themselves, learners would discover their own worlds or the excluded section of the community, by working harmoniously together to reach the anticipated goals. Furthermore, this study, through CER, aimed to investigate the challenges associated with a socially inclusive way of teaching literacy, and finding solutions for those challenges. CER advocates closeness between the researchers and the co-researchers as co-researchers, and requires all co-researchers to work collaboratively to understand the contexts under which SITS aimed at responding to English literacy problems could be implemented successfully (Denscombe, 2003: 267). In addition, Kollar, Fischer and Hesse (2006: 162) maintain that the relationship that has been established between the researcher and co-researchers allow for a reflection on progress, thereby enabling the team to anticipate plausible threats to a SITS. Being aware of the potential threats enabled them to circumvent the threats and formulate indicators of success and lack of success with regard to a strategy to address English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class.

Critical emancipatory researchers, however, view the school as a structure that maintains separation between social classes; as a result reproducing not only economic structures but also cultural inequalities (Mulcahy, 2010: 14). Therefore, CER encourages the commitment of learners and all stakeholders involved, as equals, to creating a favourable learning environment that would lead to the

successful formulation and implementation of a SITS. With this in mind, this study aimed to encourage teachers, parents and school communities to seek their own solutions to the challenges facing learners' learning, especially in a Grade 4 class. This strategy illustrated that positive change does not simply happen, but has to be worked at and agonised over collectively (Nkoane, 2010:28). This statement is in line with what Mahlomaholo (2009: 225) postulates, namely, that CER pursues emancipation of humankind from all forms of oppression through critical activity, as it has a caring, inclusive and soothing character.

2.2.5 Importance of CER

CER is a political and moral social science, designed to change society for the better (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: ix-xvi). It developed from Habermas's notion of a perfect discourse setting, where communication is free from distortion, validity claims are respected and endorsement of knowledge is produced through education (Watson *et al.*, 2008: 69). However, emancipation is achieved through gaining knowledge, leading to individuals' overall development (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: 710). More importantly, it is also achieved when all the stakeholders involved in socially inclusive learning communities gain self-understanding and recognise that their inputs are valued (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: 717). Therefore, such participation and collaboration ensure communicative interaction between researchers and the co-researchers and, as a result, they empower one another. After so many years since CER was first proposed, critical emancipatory researchers still maintain its adeptness at disrupting and collectively challenging the status quo, and to provoke highly charged emotions of all types (Kincheloe, 2008: 95).

Kincheloe (2008: 96) further maintains that schools should incorporate some type of knowledge base, values and social relations in their curriculums, which would lead to individuals' overall development. Furthermore, emancipatory values are vital, considering the social systems in which inequality of power exists in relation to opportunity, authority and control of human liberation – the unequal power relations and conceptual deceptions that exist in real social systems are often ignored (Watson, 2012: 68; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: 718). CER, however, is committed to

working towards human emancipation and facilitating the development of full human potential through equal participation in social systems (Kincheloe, 2008: 99).

2.2.6 Epistemology of CER

Epistemology refers to the study of the nature and grounds of knowledge with regard to its methods, validity, scope and the justification of belief and opinion (McNulty, 2013: 525) – it is referred to as a theory of knowledge. Knowledge empowers teachers, learners and all the stakeholders involved to strive for social change, and to promote democracy and equality while they improve their literacy skills. CER focuses on the means to acquire knowledge collaboratively and encourages the marginalised to differentiate between the truth and falsehood (Scharp, 2013: 428). Espino (2012: 33) postulates that a critical epistemology is an understanding of the relationship between power and thought, and power and truth claims. Therefore, to achieve an understanding of power, thought, and truth claims, McNulty (2013: 525) advocates the examination and articulation of researcher bias and the discovery of researcher value orientations. Without ways of understanding how knowledge has been acquired, how we rely on our senses and the way concepts in our minds were developed, we have no prescribed logic or coherent path for our thinking (McNulty, 2013: 526).

For this reason, a socially inclusive way of teaching was a good strategy to alleviate the banking education consciousness, thereby creating space for learners to control their learning. In the same way, Freire's (1970a: 62) emancipatory learning theory encourages individuals to be empowered and emancipated. This, however, suggests that changes are conceivable if contradictions are revealed (Boog, 2003: 427), and this is achievable through dialogue. Freire (1985: 63) describes dialogue as a horizontal relationship, in which mutual trust between the co-researchers is a logical consequence. Epistemology enables us to analyse the nature of knowledge and its relationship to similar notions, such as truth, belief, justification and an interpretive understanding of the subject (Mertens & Wilson, 2012: 169-170). This suggests that, if a society is receptive to the flowering of intelligence, it will get a great deal more from this flowering than if it is not.

Mertens and Yamashita (2010: 48) maintain that knowledge is socially and historically located within complex cultural contexts. Because each child develops differently, paying attention to children's own interests will guide all the involved co-researchers to the areas that will excite each child most. Therefore, the co-researchers can certainly trust a child to seek and find the challenges that will lead to the greatest growth and, eventually, to the highest performance of which s/he is capable (Barry, 2012: 16). On the other hand, Freire's critical knowledge challenges the notion of an educational system, because it does not teach learners to become critical thinkers by owning up to their learning; instead, learners are regarded as empty vessels waiting on the all-knowing teachers to fill them up with educational knowledge (Freire, 1970b: 72).

Garlick (2010: 123) suggests that the education system is a problem-posing activity, facilitating a Socratic dialogue between a teacher, parent and a learner. Thus, emancipation is not only liberating, but transforms society and achieves an equal distribution of power and control within society (Boog, 2003: 427). Empowerment, however, is related to nurturing of self-consciousness, self-advocacy and self-actualisation. Thus, a collective empowerment has been utilised by the research co-researchers in the sense of empowering groups collectively (Boog, 2003: 427). These approaches share the assumption that, by changing the learning environment and the way information is presented, the team can get substantially better results than are possible with traditional education.

2.2.7 Ontology of CER

Different perspectives on what is real were determined by the diverse values and life experiences of the co-researchers. Co-researchers had undergone a variety of different socially constructed experiences, and it was necessary to specify the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, gender and disability values that defined realities (Mertens & Wilson, 2012: 172). The habit of relying almost entirely on words as a means of communication in classrooms does not challenge thought in important areas of experience. Therefore, ontology is the study of what there is in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: 711). Ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes a social reality, to express, nurture and expand learners' learning

capabilities in a shared praxis. Contrary to previous understandings, critical emancipatory researchers believe that all knowledge relating to the world is subjective.

Moreover, social reality is structured on the basis of individuals' perceptions, but once created, it influences individuals, who are the engineers of their own social worlds (Boog, 2003: 428). Thus, the nature of reality is socially produced through social interaction (Barry, 2012: 18), and the cultural conditions under which we live and learn shape our knowledge and the way we view the world around us. This statement challenges the strategy that this study planned to formulate. The components of the solution of the identified challenges were assessed. I conclude that an individual's ontological position is his/her answer to the question, what was the nature of the social and political reality to be investigated when formulating a SITS to respond to the English literacy problems?

2.2.8 Role of the researcher in CER

The role of the researcher was that of the convener, whose major role was to create a space in which people could work collaboratively in an attempt to solve a problem. In Freire's view of education, power is shared by working collectively to find strength and common purpose (Freire, 1970a: 75). Thus, the researcher was vigilant and avoided using personal power to improve herself at the expense of others, or to suppress the lively experiences of the co-researchers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001: 19; Feng, 2011: 30). Furthermore, the role of the researcher was to initiate an unusual hub, much like a network connectivity, so that all the stakeholders involved, particularly teachers, were authentically empowered to create interesting ways to teach and instil in learners a desire to learn English.

2.2.9 The relationship between the researcher and the co-researchers

The relationship between the researcher and research co-researchers was based upon a dialogue. The initial interaction between the researcher and research co-researchers established a meaningful relationship (Barry, 2012: 18). The researcher and co-researchers were the driving force of the research process, hence, trust and the recognition of one another as equal members was very important (Watson, 2012:

69) – this was achieved through open communication. Moreover, the researcher was not arrogant, but strived to be humble in engaging co-researchers, by depowering herself in order to make co-researchers feel like equals (Boog, 2003: 425). There were openness and open-mindedness between the researcher and the co-researchers (Lincoln & Denzin, 2011: 716), thereby it was possible to gain each other's trust.

A socially inclusive way of teaching inevitably alters the situation of power by sharing the power relating to knowledge about shaping the future (Lind, 2007: 376). Thus, the researcher was able to break barriers through dialogue, thereby motivating the co-researchers to take charge of the study (Keistin & Stichter, 2011: 98). The purpose of CER is to improve individuals' quality of life by enhancing trustworthy communication and the learning processes of the researched. Overall, a meaningful dialogue liberates oppressive structures, leading to a social change (Luke, 2012: 5).

2.2.10 Rhetoric in CER

CER relies heavily on language, through a meaningful dialogue that encourages participation of all, with mutual respect (Van der Westhuizen & Makoelle, 2013: 14) as individualised learning becomes delivery systems for lifeless bodies of knowledge. CER also emphasises the fact that any research that involves humans should take knowledge of language into consideration. This is in line with what Freire (1970a: 75) postulates, namely, that teachers and the co-researchers pose problems that derive from learners' life, social issues and academic subjects in a mutually created dialogue. Hence, the CER approach does not encourage discriminatory language under any circumstances, but recognises all the co-researchers and their languages in research; where necessary, an interpreter may be employed for the smooth running of meaningful conversations (Wilson, 2012: 11).

Discursive reflection among peers and other co-researchers involved situated special knowledge inside the language, experience and living conditions, especially those of the learners (Sisimwo, Rop & Ahmed, 2014: 22). This reflection accommodates the diversity of all co-researchers, irrespective of their background (Silva, Almeida & Alves-Martins, 2010: 31). It was through the learners' actions, behaviour and language that significant transformation was corroborated. Therefore,

all these reflecting elements exerted elucidation, confirming the learned experiences through the process involving a socially inclusive way of teaching literacy.

2.2.11 Quality of research

This study envisaged contributing to the efforts made by the DoE to enhance the teaching of literacy in schools through social inclusivity, thereby increasing learners' literacy competence and confidence as well as improving educational outcomes – emancipation attained at the expense of others represents oppression. Therefore, personal freedom and individuals' development occurred mutually and with others (Novak, 2011: 12). A SITS provided an opportunity that was open to the visualisations and free exercise of control by learners, teachers and the community. This research, with its CER approach, was committed to social justice and intended to bring about social change, hope and fairness, irrespective of learners' background (Nkoane, 2010: 318), thereby addressing issues of injustice, such as racism and unequal power relations, that facilitate social injustice.

2.3 DEFINITIONS AND DISCUSSIONS OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS

The focus of this section is to define and discuss concepts that guided this study. These concepts were derived from the title of this thesis and were critical to the operationalisation of the study. Therefore, the aim of defining and discussing these operational concepts is to assist in achieving the objectives of the study. The two main concepts are literacy and SITS. This section, firstly, defines literacy and discusses different types of literacy, its teaching strategies and the theories of teaching literacy that provided background for the formulation of the anticipated strategy. Furthermore, this section defines social inclusivity and elaborates on theories that inform a SITS, its identified phases, different types, how the idea developed and its incorporation in the education system.

2.3.1 Literacy

Being literate is a vital skill, as literacy is freedom and the most powerful weapon one can use to change his/her world. With this statement Freire and Macedo (1987: 29) propose that reading is intertwined with knowledge of the world. Although many

different definitions of literacy are used by educational theorists and researchers, there has not been an easy way to define literacy because it was not always clear what specific abilities or knowledge count as literacy. Literacy has been the most important element that has helped to foster the development and improvement of living standards in society. To circumvent any threats that might impede successful literacy acquisition, a strategy was formulated to aid the conceptualisation of literacy.

2.3.1.1 Conceptualisation of literacy

Literacy is the capacity to read and write based on the knowledge of alphabet letters and the ability to use them to serve the purpose of reading and writing (Bruner & Cole, 1990: 2). Barton (2006: 1) and Luke (2012: 5) characterise literacy as reading and writing content in at least one language, and the ability to apply these skills to one's everyday life. Hmelo-Silver (2004: 236) expands on what Luke (2012: 6) suggests, but refers to literacy as a quest for meaning, and this created meaning is largely a matter of learning to read. Freire and Macedo (1987: 157) propose that literacy develops by reading the word and by reading the world at the same time, each one influencing the other as reading and writing words empowers learners to read and write their universe. Literacy has been customarily characterised as the capacity to read and compose one's own particular name with comprehension, promoting that information to write soundly and to contemplate the composed word (UNESCO, 2013: 24).

The articulation of an imperative thought by historical research, that reading and writing were methods for making, translating and imparting meaning, surely united the essential skills of reading and writing. The aforementioned statement is taken further by Wearmouth and Soler (2001: 113), who assert that literacy includes talking and listening, since oral work improves learners' comprehension of dialect in oral and in composed structures. Literacy is a concept used to carry out complex tasks related to reading and writing in the world of work and life outside school (Camacho, 2003: 28). Mulcahy (2010:1) supports the aforementioned statement, postulating that education theorists and researchers agree that literacy involves interactions among various linguistic and cognitive influences, thus, literacy development is influenced significantly by sociocultural contexts. However, it is believed that literacy is a more

complex and multifaceted skill that changes continuously from acquisition (Luke, 2012: 5).

Freire confirms that acquiring literacy does not involve memorising sentences, words or syllables and memorising objects that are unconnected to an existential universe, but rather an attitude of creation and recreation, a process of self-transformation that produces a stance of intervention in one's context (Hlalele, Tsoetsi & Malebese, 2014: 64). Literacy is the ability to access, evaluate and integrate information from a wide range of textual sources and is not reduced to words, but instead, words are used as reflections of reality (Parr & Campbell, 2012: 564). Numerous studies, including that of Leu (2002: 467), report on our perceptions and understanding of literacy as it continues to deepen and broaden: literacy is a human right, a tool of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development (Barton, 2006: 1), thus, educational opportunities depend on literacy. Moreover, and importantly, literacy may be thought of as a moving target, continually changing its meaning depending on what society expects literate individuals to do (Government of Alberta, 2010: 7).

Literacy is regarded as the first step and a crucial element in the empowerment of the mind. Literacy not only provides access to the culture's written record, it also shapes the way in which the mind is used (Hiebert & Raphael, 1998: 20). Machado (2007: 165) maintains that literacy involves demonstrating competence in communication skills, which enables an individual to function in accordance with his/her age independently from society, and with the potential for movement in society. Literacy acquisition involves a commitment of time and mental energy, as literacy is a skill that is the foundation of almost all the processes of learning (Machado, 2007: 165). Writing, as the precursor to literacy skills, represents spoken language symbolically, enabling full participation in society. Reading is the process of understanding and creating meaning from this representation (Neaum, 2012:129).

Literacy enters young children's lives in a variety of ways (Hiebert & Raphael, 1998: 8), and is intensified when parents become involved in their children's education. For instance, through the help of their parents, many young children engage in a range of activities related to reading and writing well before they encounter formal literacy

instruction in school. In that case, children learn to read and write the same way they learn to talk and listen. Although Hiebert and Raphael (1998: 8) may explain how literacy develops, literacy will ultimately depend on whether reading and writing become meaningful parts of the child's life. Literacy learning occurs through the meaningful use of reading and writing, which are embedded in oral language and that occur in multiple contexts with teachers and peers. Its form is dependent on the social context in which it occurs, which makes it extremely difficult to define broadly.

Wading through the sea of definitions for literacy can be a somewhat daunting task, because literacy in the real world has become much more than making sense of written words on a page (New London Group, 2010: 6). Literacy is at the heart of basic education for all and is essential for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy (UNESCO, 2012: 2). Therefore, the point I want to emphasise is that literacy is a concept that describes a whole collection of behaviours, skills, knowledge, processes and attitudes.

2.3.1.2 Levels of literacy

To acquire literacy involves more than mastering reading and writing techniques psychologically and mechanically. It involves mastering those techniques in terms of consciousness, understanding what one reads and writing what one understands. It is *communicating* graphically. Acquiring literacy does not involve memorising sentences, words or syllables (Freire, 1974: 34). The following section discusses levels of literacy development.

i Basic literacy

The conception of basic literacy is used for the preliminary learning of reading and writing. Basic literacy is therefore referred to as the capacity to read and write and understand words, sentences and texts. Some studies conducted on learners' literacy competency indicate that Grade 4 learners are unable to read text meaningfully. They also have problems with a range of literacy skills, including synthesising information, making informed decisions, communicating effectively, reasoning carefully and logically and creating clear expressions of thoughts (DBE, 2011: 45; Government of Alberta, 2010: 1). Once Grade 4 learners have developed

such skills and are able to use them effectively for meeting basic needs, they are regarded as being literate (Tozer, Senese & Violas, 2009: 262). Learners will, therefore, be able to independently exercise knowledge in practices and fields involving listening, speaking, reading and writing, as required by life. This view of literacy sees it as an evolving set of skills, with less emphasis on a fixed set of generic skills.

Freire (1982: 37) demonstrates that literacy could be the focal point for transformation of consciousness. DBE (2011: 114) maintains that literacy is the ability to process and use information for a variety of purposes and contexts and to write for different purposes. Literacy is defined as the ability to decode texts, allowing one to make sense of one's world. Literacy does not simply mean knowing how to read and write a particular script, but rather a literate individual can apply knowledge gained for specific purposes in specific contexts of use. UNESCO (2013: 1) and Maruatona and Millican (2006: 10) maintain that literacy is a responsive lifelong learning process meant to train individuals with specialised knowledge, skills, attitudes, techniques and competence. Even though reading and writing seem so central to what literacy means traditionally, reading and writing are not such general and obvious matters as they might seem to be at first. As a result, basic literacy is not sufficient, because literacy is more than just the ability to read and write.

Wanger, Street and Venezky (1999) and UNESCO (2013) are of the opinion that literacy includes language and relationships about knowledge: the ways people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being. At the stage of basic literacy, learners are taught by rote learning. Rote learning refers to learning that does not make connections with prior knowledge, hence we say it is learning at the level of memorisation and conditioning. Rote learning is soon forgotten once deliberate attempts to remember it has stopped. The primary skills that are closely related to rote learning are lower-order and higher-order reading skills, with the acquisition of the latter being led by the former (Franke & Bogner, 2013: 7). Learners will advance from the mastery of reading to the use of reading when they start to attach meaning to what they are reading (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011: 493). They will be able to apply the skills of reading with

comprehension, make inferences, show interest and retain the information learned. The whole process is therefore referred to as functional reading for meaning.

ii Functional literacy

Functional learning is acquired through a broad range of knowledge, attitudes and skills related to reading and writing. Various strategies are employed, ranging from teachers defining grammar rules to entire classrooms of learners expressing themselves independently through emotionally appealing situations in order to reach a mastery level of language skills (Feiman-Nemser, 2001: 20). Normally referred to as functional literacy, these and many other strategies, such as comprehensive reading and writing, have been designed and used to enhance literacy, but have not been as successful as socially inclusive teaching strategies. Functional literacy is, therefore, referred to as literacy for adaptation and as something to be learned collaboratively (Mulcahy, 2010: 3). A child's home reading experiences are usually functional in nature: a child watches his/her parents and older siblings use reading and writing to accomplish real-life objectives (Christie, Enz & Vukelich, 2011: 129).

Functional literacy activities are important because they provide opportunities for learners who are at different stages in their literacy development to learn new skills and concepts. Johnson (2008: 56) asserts that, unlike basic literacy, which focuses on acquiring skills, functional literacy deals with the way people actually use such skills to live and work in society. It is a broader concept of literacy, whereby individuals are able to analyse things, understand general ideas or terms, use symbols in complex ways, apply theories and apply other necessary life skills. Therefore, the term functional literacy correlates with what Johnson (2008: 56) suggests was introduced to refer to the demands of literacy in the complex world (Verhoeven, Elbro & Reitsma 2002: 4). Functional literacy refers to how competently learners can employ their reading and writing skills and how readily they access information and skills that will facilitate their participation in the social, economic and political development of their country (Jacobs, 2008: 9; McDaniel, 2004: 472; Tozer *et al.* 2009: 263). Despite this knowledge, however, I believe that we should no longer view literacy as something a person does or does not have, instead, we should consider literacy from a social perspective.

iii Cultural literacy

Cultural literacy is understood best as a set of social practices and cultural achievements that vary from one context to another, depending on the diverse needs of learners, tasks, domains and societies (Knobel & Lankshear 2002: 1; Lankshear & Knobel 2003: 12; Mulcahy, 2010: 1). The aim of cultural literacy is to create a classroom environment that includes all learners, in which they are allowed to voice their views freely while striving to master a complex set of attitudes, expectations, feelings, behaviours and skills related to written language (Shepherd, 2012: 1). Thus, we can say that literacy is valued as a source of other skills and strategies necessary to achieve a critical reconstruction of social and personal realities. Many theories of learning literacy emphasise communication and support from all stakeholders, who contribute new and novel ways of being, listening and speaking – much more than when there is one teacher acting as a role model to many learners (Woolfolk, 2007: 47; Wenger, 2006: 1). Hence, literacy practices are derived from social institutions and power relationships embedded in broader social goals, cultural practices and the community at large (Shor, 1986: 412). Simply teaching people how to read and write is not enough, especially in this technological era.

Kirsch (2008: 3) believes that, nowadays, a broad understanding that enables every individual to create new ideas and overcome challenges is needed. It is the background information stored in our minds that enables us to take up a newspaper and read with an adequate level of comprehension, getting the point, grasping the implication and relating to what has been read. The unstated context alone gives meaning to what we read. Children in a diverse society are taught to be culturally literate through learning the culture, values and morals of the dominant culture. Cultural literacy reflects a culture's knowledge of significant ideas, events, values and the essence of that culture's identity (Giroux, 2011: 176). Giroux (2011: 176) maintains, further, that cultural acquisition offers fresh frames for understanding learners' living of literacy practices, rather than reinforcing the banking method and a domesticated education (Freire, 1970a: 73; Tozen *et al.*, 2009: 249). Therefore, control of key information is required for success in the modern world, and the only sure escape for culturally disadvantaged children from social determinism (Machado, 2007: 165).

iv Multiple literacy and new literacy

This type of literacy is important because it emphasises the different ways in which language is used in households, workplaces, schools, communities and social groups. Learners gain multiple literacy skills through acquiring the ability to use reading and writing to produce, understand, interpret and critically evaluate texts received through a variety of media and in many forms, such as print, digital, audio-visual and other technological appliances (McLane & McNamee, 1990: 3). Miller (2013: 387) reminds us that multiple literacies recognise ways of being and becoming literate, and the manner in which literacy develops and is used depends on the particular social and cultural setting. With multiple literacy, different linguistic systems work within the same space (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012: xix; Neaum, 2012:129).

Luke (2012: 5) focuses on using literacy for social justice in marginalised communities. Moreover, and importantly in a multilingual society where some languages are associated with status and power, literacy issues are always nested from language and from larger socio-political issues that deal with access and the monitoring of social resources (Wanger *et.al.*, 1999: 419; Jonsson, 2014: 118). The traditional functions of speaking and listening and reading and writing remain crucial to being literate. However, living in a modern society has created new literacy needs, particularly because of technology. As societal expectations for literacy change and demands on literate functions in a society change, definitions of literacy should also change to reflect this moving target (Leu, 2002: 108). The articulation of some important dynamics indicate the very definite potential for acknowledging that school is only one of the settings where literacy takes place. For this reason, the formulation of a SITS will make individuals aware that classrooms are not the only settings where literacy learning takes place.

In fact, a SITS recognises that the resources used to teach in classrooms might be different from the resources used by learners outside the classroom to make learning different, fun and more meaningful (Schwartz, 2014: 124). Literacy practices have transformed and new ones are repeatedly acquired through processes of colloquial learning and sense making as well as formal education and training (Miller, 2013: 386). For this reason, rethinking literacy and preparing our 21st century children are

highly recommended in this technological era. Redefining literacy on the basis of critical perspectives goes beyond the traditional concept of decoding and encoding words to reproduce the meaning from the text, to understanding our own history and culture, in order to connect our lives with the social structure and to recognise possibilities for change (Mulcahy, 2010; 2). Leu (2002: 467) postulates that significant, collaborative functioning is undoubtedly a key element of effectively embedded liberation.

A SITS is aimed at enabling learners to facilitate dialogues between diverse communities and enrich their ability to move across different media platforms and social networks easily, enhancing their knowledge, work and entrepreneurship (Neuman & Dickinson, 2011: 97). This study provides additional insight into redefining literacy policy, by explicating the necessity to incorporate the use of new literacies with a SITS. A strategy relates to what happens when equality of access and cohesive communities come together collectively in one spirit in order to maximise the teaching and learning of skills, strategies and dispositions necessary to adapt to changing technologies that influence all aspects of life (Miller, 2013: 387). It is, therefore, important that learners leave school confident and creative, as productive users of new information and communication technologies, and fully understanding the impact of these technologies on their daily living (Neuman & Dickinson, 2011: 98; Evangelou, Sylva, Kyriacou, Wild & Glenny, 2009: 97).

New literacy studies moved literacy beyond school into other spaces. However, there are other places where literacy practices have developed within a SITS context (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012: 16). Pahl and Rowsell (2012: 16) assert that the consequence of such a strategy is a progressive literacy. In turn, this leads to enhanced personal growth, self-improvement and engagement of the learners and teachers in the process of reading and writing through theme-based units. This enables learners to play an active role in creating their own knowledge, because the curriculum is focused on learners and what they bring with them to the classroom (Mulcahy, 2010: 6). Even though learners are encouraged to construct their own knowledge and engage in reading and writing activities that have meaning in their lives, progressive literacy fails to question cultural and political contexts. Therefore, it reinforces the notion that literacy is politically neutral (Freire, 1974: 73).

v Critical literacy

Critical literacy has become the most popular approach to teaching English to learners. This is probably due to the heavy emphasis placed on this discourse and pedagogy, which should be considered seriously, as it invites individuals to take action to achieve more humane goals (Shor, 1987a: 8; Chen, 2015: 134) and enables individuals to question power structures and analyse the escalating inequalities in society (Mulcahy, 2010: 18). Critical literacy is grounded in critical theory and, like critical pedagogy, it investigates ways in which social, cultural, racial, sexual and economic inequalities are reproduced (McDaniel, 2006: 473). Therefore, when acquired, it enables individuals to change their situations for the better by emancipating them. In reality, children need to see and feel the connection between literacy, power, their lives and different ways in which literacy has empowered them (Gadotti, 1994: 24). The educational context ensures that acquiring critical literacy is a beneficial factor for school learning, as it is directly related to learners' life experiences (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003: 33).

Social critical theorists, such as Freire, who is concerned with dismantling social injustice and inequalities, developed the term critical literacy (Robinson & Robinson, 2003: 3). Luke (2012: 5) defines critical literacy as a necessary life skill that uses printed technologies and media of communication to analyse, critique and transform the norms, rule systems and practices governing the social fields of daily life. Norton and Toohey (2004: 34) emphasise that, although many attempts have been made to provide literacy programmes to the marginalised in different countries, most of these attempts have failed. In my opinion, the lack of success has been due, in part, to the absence of a SITS. Therefore, to meet these challenge, Freire encourages a discursive approach to literacy based on principles of reciprocal exchange between a learner and the stakeholders involved (Freire, 1985: 37; Booyse, Le Roux, Seeroto & Wolhuter, 2011: 45). Again, the success of implementing a SITS can be comprehended by improved literacy levels and socio-economic factors (Gee, 2003: 7).

However, Tozer *et al.* (2009: 263) postulate that critical literacy aims to empower people to problematise and act upon political and economic oppression to effect

change. As a result, it recognises that literacy is not politically neutral, but can be used to empower yourself and others, or to control others. It is defined not only as a teaching method, but also as a way of thinking and a way of being that challenges texts and life as we know it. Moreover, and importantly, the ability to read words on paper is not necessarily required to engage in critical discussions of texts (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003: 16). Therefore, the most important thing is being able to have a discussion with others about the different meanings a text might have, and teaching the potentially critically literate learner how to think about it flexibly. Being literate without a critical consciousness is not enough, for critical literacy to be empowering, a combination of critical understandings, critical actions and an ability to use language tools of an influential culture have to be in place (Mulcahy, 2010: 9).

However, the term critical literacy is an instructional approach arising from Marxist critical pedagogy, which supports the adoption of critical perspectives towards the text. Thus, problem-posing, two-way dialogues and an examination of the broader society uncover social oppressions and enable people to be aware of ways in which their world can be transformed (Kincheloe, 2008: 48). In other words, the role of the stakeholders is to ask questions, but also to provide the information necessary to promote learners' critical thinking (Freire, 1985: 41). The improvement of critical literacy skills enables individuals to interpret messages in the modern world through a critical lens and to challenge the power relations within those messages. We also have to continuously second-guess what we believe is true, ask harder and harder questions, see beneath, behind, and beyond the texts, and find out how these texts establish and use power over us, over others, on whose behalf and in whose interest (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000: 50).

Using critical literacy helps draw the power away from the researcher and set an equal platform between the researcher and her co-researchers, by enabling all the stakeholders involved to see the texts from all angles, not simply believing what is written down. For this reason, it is important to acknowledge the potential that critical literacy holds for portraying the understanding embodied within texts, as opposed to a surface reading of texts. Critical literacy practices grew out of the social justice pedagogy of Freire (Mulcahy, 2010: 8). Freirean critical literacy is conceived as a means of empowering marginalised populations to oppose oppression and

intimidation as exercised by corporate or government bodies (Blackledge, 2000: 18). Critical literacy started with the desire to balance social inequalities and address societal problems caused by an abuse of power. It proceeded from this philosophical basis to examine, analyse and deconstruct texts. Therefore, acquiring such skill also helps us solve English literacy problems.

vi Social literacy

Social literacy provides a broader and more subtle approach to understanding the ways in which the school curriculum plays a determining role in learners' social maturation (Arthur & Davison, 2000: 11). Children are most certainly social beings and one of the central problems facing teachers is deciding how they learn to live socially with each other and with adults. The acquisition of a social literacy disposition teaches learners to be social before they learn what sociability is all about (Arthur & Davison, 2000: 14), thereby developing learners' self-confidence and their socially responsive behaviour in and beyond the classroom. Furthermore, it involves the acquisition of the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for making reasoned judgements globally. Social literacy is concerned with the empowerment of the social, critical and ethical self, which includes the ability to understand and explain differences within individual experiences (Giroux, 2011: 170). Social literacy is an essential precondition for the successful preparation of children to participate in the lives of their communities and in understanding their rights and duties within a democratic society (Freire & Macedo, 1987: 18). Thus, a SITS encourages the connectedness of living in a community through a socially relevant curriculum. This curriculum helps learners live successfully with others (Gay, 2010: 187). A socially inclusive teaching strategy is discussed in detail in Section 2.3.4.

There seems to be widespread agreement that English is a difficult subject to define, as it covers many literacy levels. There has been a gradual shift in the learning process, between the basic and functional literacy levels, which translates into a cultural way of applying gained knowledge. Beyond the cultural literacy level, learners are now exposed to multiple literacy skills, which makes them critical learners.

2.3.2 Social inclusion

Social inclusion is understood to be a process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background, so that involved individuals can achieve their full potential in life (Berry, 2006: 489-450). It is a multidimensional process aimed at creating conditions that enable full and active participation by every member of the society in all aspects of life (Mahlomaholo, 2013: 2). Social inclusivity seeks to clarify links between the needs, identity, aspirations and behaviour of individuals, as well as their communities of interest, thereby creating a safe space for personal growth (Tracey & Morrow, 2012: 83). Despite this knowledge, however, change culminates in an individual who has experienced a personally meaningful life and the articulation of some important dynamics, enabling him/her to make sensible choices and contribute to a community in ways that are valued.

The establishment of an inclusive, cohesive society in which all people are equal participants in the creation of a shared future, regardless of race, class, gender, disability, country of origin, age, belief or any other distinguishing factor, will greatly promote equal opportunities for all (Davis *et al.*, 2008: 4). Hence, the ideal of social inclusivity and cohesion relate to the experience of quality of life and the establishment of improved social capital. Ferragina (2010: 74) asserts that social capital can be generated collectively through the presence of communities and social networks. Individuals can therefore use the social capital of their networks to achieve private objectives and groups can use it to enforce a certain set of norms or behaviours. Schools' alienation from the involvement of poor and uneducated families in their activities represents an enormous loss of social capital, as such parents may be highly skilled. Meanwhile the children of such parents may feel inadequate (Booyse *et al.*, 2011: 14).

2.3.3 Socially inclusive strategy

A socially inclusive strategy is an approach that ensures equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background, in order to achieve their full potential (Devereaux, 2013: 1). Such a strategy refers to a situation of listening, speaking, reading, writing, technical functioning and critical thinking, bringing a richness of culture and

knowledge to individual learners in a way that there is equity, equality, social justice, freedom, peace, hope and fairness in terms of learning opportunities for all, irrespective of their diversities (Faulker, 2011: 19; Maruatona & Millican, 2006: 10). A SITS enables learners to demonstrate a level of competence and achieve an outcome in a way that suits their needs (DoE, 2009: 98). DoE (2009: 99) further maintains that a socially inclusive strategy creates a more equitable and effective environment, enabling the community to work together collectively in an attempt to solve literacy problems that require everyone's involvement and participation.

Individuals and groups from inside and outside school classrooms can contribute local knowledge, passion, energy and vision to developing methods of teaching that enhance learning attainment (Van der Westhuizen & Makoelle, 2013: 1), while governments, businesses and service organisations can bring expertise and much-needed resources. Therefore, helping parents to realise their role, even if their literacy skills are limited, is crucial, especially during the early years of child development (Akerman & Bird, 2005: 12). These individuals create learning communities of practice that a smaller organising group, in its turn, puts together to streamline activities for the rest of the group (Mahlomaholo, 2013: 6). Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger, 2006: 1; Crafton, 2006: 1). By investigating the ideological, political and social structures that perpetuate inequalities, communities of practice hope to raise consciousness and move towards creating more inclusivity.

Social, emotional and cognitive developments are complementary processes that ultimately work together to shape a child's literacy growth (Johnson, 2008: 4). Therefore, with this in mind, a SITS aims to promote a lifelong learning society, thereby reducing levels of illiteracy and poverty. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) believe that a variety of aspects influence learners' achievement and adjustment. Parents, the broader family, peer groups, neighbourhood influences, schools and other bodies, such as churches and clubs, all shape children's progress towards self-fulfilment. Figure 2.1 presents a diagram that illustrates how a socially inclusive team is intertwined.

2.3.3.1 Socially inclusive literacy teaching-learning community model

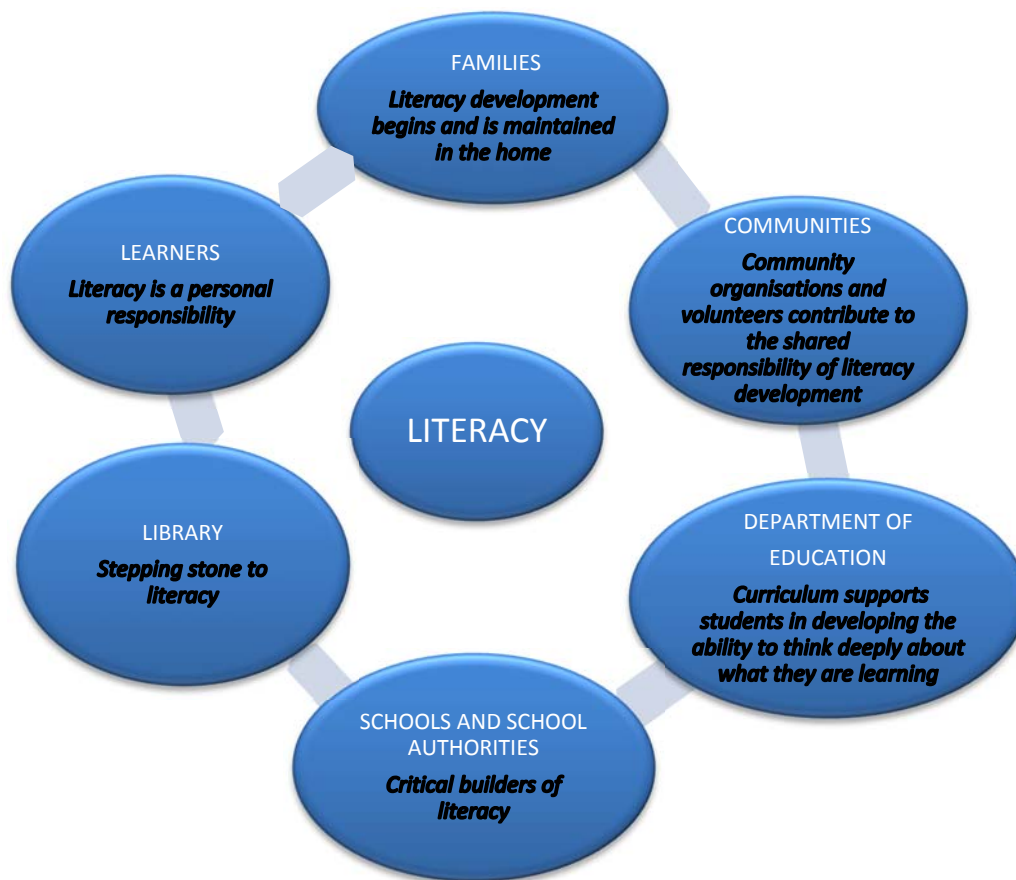


Figure 2.1: Interrelations of the SITS (Adapted from Government of Alberta , 2010: 6)

Figure 2.1 describes the inter-relationships involved in the socially inclusive way of teaching literacy from early childhood to adulthood, and the attached influences. The family, as the primary focus of child development in the social and educational spheres, plays a critical role in achieving positive outcomes for a child (Malebese, 2013: 33). It is not who the parents are, but what parents do to encourage and facilitate learning, that makes the difference in the learner's achievements and adjustments (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003: 74). Hence, the impact of conversations in the home is fundamental to learners' attitudes and values. Only through positive attitudes can the family influence learning outcomes. Aspects of a child's young life are dependent on the community for moulding and shaping. These influences also

play a pivotal role in the mental and physical development of the child. Moreover, Desforges and Abouchaar (2003: 74) maintain that the quality of a school influences the type of peer group experience a learner might have. At the same time, the learner influences the peer group and the peer group influences the learner. A thorough explanation of each category follows below. Each of these categories has important implications for approaches to literacy teaching and the learning process.

i Home and school literacy brought together

Parental support of children's learning is one of the strongest predictors of early literacy skills (Merz, Zucker, Landry, Williams, Assel & Taylor, 2015: 15-16). Parents can make an enormous difference to their children's chance of achieving success at school, at home and later in their lives. As a result, it is important to conceptualise the relationship between home and school literacy practices, that is to say, literacy across home and school. Therefore, the role of the teacher should not remain only that of teaching the learner by rote learning, but should also include facilitating learning through the process of scaffolding (McLeod, 2012: 3), especially as learners will meaningfully interact with the whole world by exploring and manipulating objects, struggling with questions and controversies or performing experiments (McLeod, 2012: 3). Home and school literacy will therefore enable us to recognise where children's literacy practices are, as I believe diverse literacies at home can be used in school and merged with school literacy to create successful literacy learning (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012: 59).

It is evident that, through carefully designed Socratic teaching methods, learners are able to draw on their past experiences and existing knowledge to discover facts and the truths that must be learned to the best of their capacity (Merz *et al.*, 2015: 16). Even though this teaching is mostly practiced in the higher levels of education, young learners should also be taught by this method, because it encourages critical thinking, in-class participation and other social skills that learners will need in order to succeed at any level of education (Ferragina, 2010: 75). However, with respect to early children's literacy, one of the best things parents can do for their children is to read to them. One of the main benefits of reading books to children is that it offers an opportunity for the parent and a child to have a conversation. Thus, parental

sensitivity and responsiveness play a crucial role in social and cognitive development. Furthermore, parents may need ongoing or specific guidance in the use of techniques that can promote their children's literacy development.

Learners can discover and learn literacy through their own attempts at reading and writing, or by observing role models, because children are active participants in their own learning (Neuman & Dickinson, 2011: 176). Parents who read regularly tutor their children to learn early literacy skills. Therefore, family learning activities are a way of conceptualising how parents could support their children's literacy while providing the opportunity to improve their own skills. This could later be translated into literacy support for children's schooled literacy. Pahl and Rowsell (2012: 79) assert that parents could provide opportunities for their children's literacy development through trips, visits, shopping for writing and drawing materials, books and opportunities to play. Thereby, parents' literacy practices explicitly value what children do. Parents should also listen to children talk, play and write. Furthermore, they should interact with children through activities such as spelling out words that children want to write, looking at letter sound names and helping children spell a word, to improve their literacy development by modelling their own literacy practices (Merz *et al.*, 2015: 16-17). Thus, reading can be a problem if families lack sufficient literacy to read to their children, which can be overcome by encouraging them to tell stories orally or to talk to their children about the pictures in books.

ii Learners' literacy

Learners are individuals who are actively engaged in constructing knowledge, therefore literacy is a personal responsibility, but it becomes more fulfilling when performed collectively (Bunch, Kibler & Pimentel, 2013: 3). Teaching and learning take place in many spaces and learners absorb information unexpectedly and in different places. Literacy learning for children is certainly interconnected with the nature of development, because learners are naturally curious and purposive (Johnson, 2008: 3-4). Johnson (2008: 4) further postulates that learners have a varied range of literacy capabilities – some may experience difficulty with learning to read or could be unmotivated to read, whereas others are avid readers and talk about books with peers. When learners are in the classroom, they sometimes pay

attention and sometimes do not; their attention and interest will ebb and flow during their experience of teaching (Bunch *et al.*, 2013: 3-4). Therefore, in order to create a favourable literacy teaching and learning environment, it is advisable to allow learners to create by getting to know the world, and getting to know the world by creating and expressing themselves and reality in an increasing lucid understanding of their reality (Gadotti, 1994: 23).

Moreover, and importantly, teachers should be able to provide pastoral care that will enable learners to feel emotionally comfortable to learn and explore their learning environment as required (Mahlomaholo, 2013: 76). Learners often bring experiences to the classroom and excellent teachers collaboratively create learning communities that enable teachers to personalise instruction in ways that help learners understand better how literacy can help them live fulfilling and successful lives (Mahlomaholo, 2013: 77). Therefore, to encourage critical reading, learners must feel free to challenge statements, support controversial ideas, offer divergent viewpoints and venture statements that conflict with the majority view. When learners see that their ideas are accepted, they are better able to accept the ideas of others (Merz *et al.*, 2015: 17). Furthermore, when engaging in the development of critical literacy skills, learners learn to acknowledge the unfair privileging of certain dominant discourses that society is guilty of. Learners can therefore participate in conversations about the injustices involved in privileging one group over the other because of racial issues or socio-economic status.

iii Literacy in the community

Literacy in the community context is nested within cultural, economic and social forces, where health centres, libraries, schools, youth clubs, community centres and families are linked and work together to bring to the fore resources of self-efficacy and personal development that had been hidden due to racial issues (Dutta & Prasad, 2009: 4). When these resources are cultivated they can lead to escalations in social capital, and the capacity of communities can be self-directed and support other community members (Yosso, 2005: 71; Dutta & Prasad, 2009: 4). Pahl and Rowsell (2012: 91) are of the opinion that communities are where literacy is, therefore, reading in the community is about reading the social worlds of the children

brought up in that neighbourhood. Thus, we can say that community linguistic wealth enhances learners' literacy competency (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012: 91).

iv Libraries: Stepping stones to literacy

Public libraries are normally situated within communities. They are in a key position to find ways of engaging with learners irrespective of their backgrounds. Therefore, libraries assist each individual to develop their skills in accessing information and using library resources to help them make informed decisions (Wedin, 2010: 7). Trained staff members share their love of reading with children through participating in library reading programmes, as most libraries offer organised reading programmes according to school levels for learners during school breaks. These programmes serve as stepping stones that lead to later reading success. Trained staff also discuss the importance of early reading, conversation and literacy development with parents by hosting activities based on books, and present special events and field trips that are designed to help learners explore literature on a deeper level (Wedin, 2010: 8).

Librarians are usually happy to help children and find ways to involve all levels of readers within any age group by providing improved and quality opportunities for children in and outside the library. The public library has remained a strength and pillar of promoting literacy in many countries. Adults who lack reading skills prevent them from reaching their full potential (McCook, 2011: 59). They might have difficulty getting and maintaining jobs, providing for their families or even reading stories to their children. For adults, the library might be the only resource for a literacy programme.

v Literacy at the school

What we do on a daily basis, our everyday literacy, is quite different from what is gained at school. Hence, it is acknowledged by schools that families are the first level of support for children's literacy (Evangelou *et al.*, 2009: 79). Institutions like schools and the government support power, inequality and injustice in human relationships, thereby perpetuating the status quo. Teachers are therefore obliged to continue, and deepen, parents' work. Teachers could try to facilitate the development of critical literacy by encouraging learners to interrogate societal issues

and critique the structures that serve as norms, and to demonstrate how these norms are not experienced in the same way by all members of society (Robinson & Robinson, 2003: 3). This will enable all participating members to explore the relationship between the theoretical framework and its practical implications.

When teachers engage in critical literacy it involves facilitating conversations; this approach is aimed at changing people's view of social problems (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011: 83). As a result, using critical pedagogical methods as teaching tools enables teachers to disempower themselves, thereby making learners believe that they are on the same level as teachers. Doing so provides context for all learners to construct and interrogate theories of knowledge, thereby emancipating them (Freire, 1970b: 73). Moreover, and crucially, the development of critical literacy encourages learners to question issues of power and socio-economic status (Cervetti, Pardales & Damico, 2001: 9). Therefore, for inclusion to work efficiently, teachers need to feel confident about their teaching ability to meet learners' needs successfully; at the same time, teachers should encourage knowledge construction instead of knowledge reproduction. Thus, we can see that in the critical literacy of education, the teacher serves as the facilitator of social change (Freire, 1970b: 73).

Freire (1970a: 74) further maintains that, in order for teachers to effectively teach learners functional skills, they should be able to provide learners with the theoretical tools necessary to critique and engage society, along with its inequalities and injustices. Therefore, when learners learn to use the tools of critical literacy, they can expose, discuss and attempt to solve social injustices within their own lives (Freire & Macedo, 1987: 182). Once they have acquired such skill, learners, with the help of their teachers, are provided with the opportunity to find their own voices, and they are therefore empowered and emancipated. The development of critical literacy encourages social justice and exploration of language and literature. When learners become critically literate it shows that they have mastered the ability to read and the skill to critique texts, therefore, they can examine the ongoing development, the parts they play in the world and how they make sense of those experiences (Knobel & Lankshear, 2002: 62).

Critical literacy theory focuses on the relationships between language, power, social practice and access to social goods and services. For that reason, Behrman (2006: 491) postulates that there are numerous methods of engaging learners in becoming critical members of their society, by reading supplementary texts, reading multiple texts, reading from a resistant perspective, producing counter-texts, having learners conduct research about topics of personal interest and challenging learners to take social action.

- Reading supplementary texts helps learners to connect with the literature or content being studied. These texts provide context for learners to confront social issues that are not covered in dated textbooks. Furthermore, teachers who expect learners to read supplementary texts encourage conversations about social issues that may not be covered in the typical reading curriculum of schools (Luke, 2012: 7).
- Reading multiple texts offers learners the chance to analyse critically the values or voices that are being promoted, thereby challenging the impression that meaning is fixed, and encouraging learners to use evidence to support their interpretation (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000: 1).
- Reading from a resistant perspective involves learners interpreting a text from the world's perspective. By being concerned about how people from different backgrounds would read the same text, learners can gain an understanding of how a representative group would be affected by a reading a text (Behrman, 2006: 495).
- Producing counter-texts involves having learners generate narratives from a non-mainstream perspective. This approach of the curriculum offers learners the opportunity to speak on behalf of those voices that are marginalised by the oppression, thereby empowering the marginalised. As such, producing counter-texts can serve to validate the thoughts, observations and feelings of learners and the oppressed (Behrman, 2006: 495).
- Providing opportunities for learners to choose is an effective way to involve, encourage and empower learners to actively participate in knowledge construction, instead of the reproduction of knowledge (Coffey & O'Toole, 2012: 2).

- Challenging learners to take social action by helping them take part in social action projects that seek to improve the conditions of their communities realises the relationship between the curriculum and the world beyond classrooms (Coffey & O'Toole, 2012: 2). Theoharis and O'Toole (2011: 648) maintain that learners are able to learn how to restructure their knowledge base and challenge societal norms in order to transform all institutions that oppress them.

Hence, within the frame of critical literacy, it is important to consider texts through a lens that challenges societal norms. Learners can evaluate the social construction of a text and identify whose knowledge is privileged in the text, in addition to deconstructing the message of the meanings that question the factors that may have influenced the author to create the text in a specific manner (Behrman, 2006: 491). Moreover, when using critical literacy, teachers encourage learners to look at texts from other perspectives and recreate the texts from the standpoint of marginalised groups. This is done in order to analyse the power relations and social inequities promoted by the texts. Examining power relationships that are found in language and literature shows learners that language is neutral.

vi Department of Education

School curricula, especially in South African's post-1994 political dispensation, support learners in developing their abilities to think deeply about outcomes-based knowledge gained through a learning process (Bowman & Callan, 2012: 46). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire emphasises how critical literacy is promoted in an educational context. He explains critical literacy as a system in which learners become more socially aware through critiquing multiple forms of injustice (Freire, 1970a: 72). This awareness cannot be achieved if learners are not given the opportunity to explore and construct knowledge in the way that suits their needs best. It is for this reason that Freire describes a traditional type of education with reference to the banking concept of education, whereby teachers are the pillars of knowledge and learners simply comply with the teachers' chosen content (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011: 78).

Moreover, Aliakbari and Faraji (2011: 78) maintain that the teacher does not challenge learners to authenticate or value their prior knowledge. For this reason, the Department of Education promotes a discursive teaching method by developing lessons based on dialogues so that learners can express their needs and interests freely (DBE, 2009: 47-50; CAPS, 2011: 115). Hence, teachers feel obliged to invite learners to take part in a community discourse that attempts to solve problems and create alternatives to oppressive situations (Degener, 2001: 82). Consequently, the aim of connecting the curriculum to the outside world in a tangible way is to emancipate the oppressed (Harward, Brown, May & Harding, 2007: 28).

2.4 RELATED LITERATURE

This section reviews the literature on the challenges and strategies used around the world to determine what other people are doing to learn from the best practices. The focus is to understand the contexts under which a SITS will respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class and how it could be implemented successfully. Therefore, plausible threats to a SITS are anticipated, so that they can be circumvented, and indicators of success and lack of success can be formulated with regard to such a strategy.

2.4.1 English literacy problems

If children lack early literacy experiences the foundation of the learning-to-read process prior to formal schooling may be invalidated, or their learning process may be hindered (Guglielmi, 2012: 582). Literacy experiences include a broad range of family activities, such as exposure to literacy, parent-child storybook and picture book reading and opportunities for literacy during interaction with family members (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012: 16). Therefore, parents are a key component of building children's literacy skills, but they often underestimate their own role, or their ability to contribute (Wilson, 2015: 144). In order to encourage children to explore literacy, all the stakeholders involved must make sure that children have access to print resources and all the necessary literacy materials. Moreover, even though the school or parents may have all the necessary resources to facilitate literacy experiences, they could fail to use them effectively. Below is the summary of literacy challenges

facing each of the stakeholders involved, how they are affected by those challenges, and ways to circumvent them.

2.4.1.1 Learners

Diverse learners, particularly Grade 4s, experience high levels of anxiety as a result of the transition from the foundation phase, where they were taught in their home language, to the intermediate phase, where English is regarded as the LoLT. Learners find it difficult to understand and read text meaningfully (Davenport & Hannahs, 2010: 108). When learners are unable to read text meaningfully, they are at greater risk of experiencing difficulties with reading throughout the elementary school years (Neaum, 2012: 119). One of the main challenges is learners' inability to synthesise information, and this challenge relating to literacy proficiency is so daunting that most learners need plenty of help and practise to improve (Harvey & Goudvis, 2005: 272).

Synthesis occurs as a reader summarises what s/he has read and gives it personal meaning through the process of organising, recalling and recreating the information, as well as fitting it in with what is already known; it can be referred to as recording, editing, synthesising and thinking (Campbell, 2003: 3). One of the main problems that learners experience at school is the inability to make informed decisions (DBE, 2009: 16). Informed decision making is the two-way communication process between a learner and a teacher or other stakeholder that comprises a predominant communication process in a learner-centred learning environment (Christie *et al.*, 2011: 24). Teachers have grown increasingly concerned about the performance of learners with cognitive disabilities who are, appropriately, working towards grade-level achievement standards, but whose current performance is far from proficient on grade-level achievement standards as currently measured by Annual National Assessment (ANA).

Many special education advocates believe that subscribing to the same high standards of education expectations and accountability for learners' progress will ultimately lead to improved instruction and learning for all learners. McGrew and Evans (2004: 2) argue that a learner's disability prevents him/her from attaining grade-level achievement standards, even when these learners are provided with the

appropriate instruction and accommodations. Jussim and Harber's (2005: 131) claim that teacher expectations can raise learners' intelligence has been roundly criticised. However, most critics concede, and are supported by research, that expectation effects do influence teacher-to-learner performance and behaviour. Teachers' expectations of their learners are related to learners' subsequent achievement, even when teacher expectations do not conform to learners' prior performance (Jussim & Harber, 2005: 131). Most learners experience reading failure from an early age and this limitation results in learners being unable to organise words into meaningful thoughts.

Thus, we can say that the ability to think logically enables a person to reject quick and easy answers by empowering him/her to delve deeper into thinking processes and in that way to understand better the methods used to arrive at a solution (McLeod, 2013: 208). Overall, it has been shown that training in logical thinking processes improves a person's critical thinking and reasoning skills (McInerney, 2013: 186-211). That is why learners functioning at this level of maturity are said to be imaginative, spontaneous and resourceful. It is for this reason that the fundamental nature of critical thinking across the curriculum is philosophical and analytical (Meyer, 2009: 93). It is at this stage that learners synthesise, generate and apply their ideas. When creative thinkers apply their ideas, they are determining the effectiveness of their thoughts and ideas as well as those of their peers.

2.4.1.2 Parents

Parents are often nervous about approaching their children's teachers, as they are wary of criticising them, this applies especially to parents lacking educational background experiences. Feelings of inadequacy with regard to the education of their children prevents them from becoming involved; they believe that their own lack of skills may mislead their children if they try to teach them (Malebese, 2013: 33). The hardships brought about by extreme poverty may prevent parents from focusing on anything beyond the most urgent needs, reducing their potential interest in their children's learning (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003: 2). Parents may be eager to become involved in their children's education, but often do not know what is expected of them, or how to contribute to their children's schooling. Furthermore, the

school environment favours the involvement of middle-class families and the school is influenced to such an extent that it rejects the involvement of the lower class.

2.4.1.3 Teachers

Beckett (2011: 112); Campbell and Groundwater-Smith (2010: 3) are of the opinion that teachers are unable to improve their performance collectively by applying more effective teaching strategies. These teaching strategies are needed in response to complexities involved in working with learners of all abilities, especially disadvantaged learners. Teachers' experiences contribute to learners' learning in the classroom. Therefore, effective teaching begins with a teacher's good decision, and is not something that happens by chance. Another challenge is teachers' inability to uncover reality and create knowledge of the world, and lack of space for learners to develop a more accurate perception of their experiences (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011: 79).

Challenging the idea of the rote teaching and learning, and applying a method that emphasises comprehension and reasoning, transformation and reflection empower both teachers and learners (Shulman, 2011: 32). Shulman (2011: 33) points out that the challenge is justified by the resoluteness with which research and policy have so blatantly ignored those aspects of teaching in the past. Moreover, teachers' low educational levels and inadequate content knowledge may prevent learners from improving their learning capabilities (Brush & Saye, 2009: 1). Thus, teachers are encouraged to develop and adapt their roles, especially through classroom enquiry, with the help of parents and participating members of the community.

2.4.1.4 Community

The higher concentration of poverty, violence and crime in certain neighbourhoods limits learning opportunities, at home and after school, of learners who live and go to school in those neighbourhoods (Beckett, 2011: 112). Furthermore, Davis *et al.* (2008: 13) maintain that lack of time in families may make it impossible for parents to become involved at their children's schools. Even parents who have time for the school's activities may have trouble with transport, due to high transport costs faced by families in disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, parents wish to visit the

school may need to arrange for the care of other children while they are away (Bryan, 2007: 132) and this could cause strain, especially if they stay in violent neighbourhoods. These drawbacks deter many otherwise committed parents from making the trip to school after hours to attend meetings and other events (Bryan, 2007: 131).

2.4.1.5 Resources

It is no doubt that Freire emphasises that teachers should be forced to create a classroom experience that encourages learners to become active agents in their own learning and that this cannot be accomplished without the resources necessary to perform such tasks (Bowman & Callan, 2012: 64). A lack of resources will inhibit the development of a critical consciousness that will enable learners to evaluate the validity of education provided, and fairness and authority within their educational and living situations (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011: 80). Davis and Florian (2004: 11) maintain that undesirable mannerisms or negative teacher qualities and lack of teaching skills also lead to teachers being unable to help learners understand the reasons behind the facts.

2.4.2 Literacy teaching strategies

Various strategies have been designed and employed in response to the challenges discussed above (see 2.3.2), among which, speaking and listening, reading and writing, reading and viewing, read-aloud, guided reading and writing, as well as shared reading and writing teaching strategies. These strategies have been designed and used to enhance literacy, but have not been as successful as socially inclusive teaching strategies in achieving complete academic accomplishment among Grade 4 learners. The following section is a brief discussion of the above-mentioned teaching strategies.

2.4.2.1 Listening and speaking strategies

Purposeful speaking and listening is the foundation of reading and writing development, which learners should acquire primarily as a fundamental skill (Erasmus & Albertyn, 2014: 321). The study sought to use a range of strategies to help develop learners' speaking and listening skills, including engaging them in a

reflective conversation about their own writing, and encouraging self-talk when attempting reading and writing. Listening and speaking skills are essential for social interaction at home, school and in the community. Hence, the study strived to promote learners' ability to use the English language whilst acquiring new linguistic skills. Furthermore, Gardner (2006: 7) asserts that learners formally and informally comprehend, express and exchange ideas for a variety of true purposes.

Acquiring such skills enabled individuals to make relevant statements and ask appropriate questions. Thus, they were able to listen attentively and respond well to questions, share personal connections related to the stated topic and were able to elaborate and explain given texts or make an encouraging argument (CAPS, 2011: 15). Through listening and speaking, teachers are able to facilitate increased understanding for their learners. Jones (2007: 4-18) argues that it is critical for English language learners to listen and speak as well as read and write when they work independently, when they receive input on their work and when they give feedback to others.

2.4.2.2 Reading and writing strategies

Comprehensive reading and writing is the process of obtaining and creating meaning through interaction and involvement with written language (Johnson, 2008: 28). The power of logic and comprehension increases the child's ability to understand and appreciate more complex story lines and sophisticated humour (Johnson, 2008: 28). Thus, comprehension strategies can support readers to understand the meaning of a text and help them to visualise, determine importance, monitor and adjust predictions, make inferences, summarise, analyse, pose-questions and use fix-up strategies (Christie *et al.* 2011: 230). The following section briefly discusses the components of developing reading and writing skills.

i Components of developing reading and writing skills

Reading is a cognitive process of understanding a written linguistic message and writing is the activity of putting a spoken word in a written form, expressed by letters of the alphabet (McLane & McNamee, 1990: 2). Teachers are required to use a variety of skills and strategies to comprehend learners' learning capabilities. Thus, development of reading skills may be broken down into five major components,

namely, phonemic awareness, reading fluency, word recognition, vocabulary and phrase meanings.

- Phonemic awareness/phonics

In order for teachers to facilitate phonemic awareness and phonics development effectively and efficiently, they should, firstly, provide learners with the opportunity to hear individual sounds in speech and become aware that words are formulated from individual sounds known as phonemes (DBE, 2011: 2). Therefore, recognising printed words depends on the ability to map speech sounds to letter symbols and recognise letter sequences accurately and quickly (Hillman & Williams, 2015: 3). Haynes (2008: 1) postulates that an important teacher role is helping and guiding learners to hear and distinguish sound, as well as see the correspondence between the sounds (phonemes) and their written form (graphemes). At this stage, learners come across a variety of words, therefore, they exercise their knowledge of rhymes and letter sounds in words. This is done to incorporate different words by matching them to common letter-sound patterns in already-known words.

- Reading fluency and word recognition

It is thought that sound-symbol and word recognition usually occur quickly and automatically in good readers, that is why such readers employ little conscious attention when they identify words (Warrington, 2006: 52). To the contrary, less proficient readers are usually too slow and do not easily develop whole word recognition but, instead, decode each word as if it is seen for the first time (DBE, 2009: 17). Word recognition development enables a learner to recognise words instantly and effortlessly by employing prior knowledge gained from phonemic awareness (DBE, 2009: 13). Therefore, in facilitating fluency development, teachers ought to support learners to go beyond simply pronouncing, to being able to read and recognise words quickly and know what they mean. Resulting from this, learners should also be able to say words aloud, with feeling, whilst emphasising the right word or phrase, so that a sentence sounds natural (DBE, 2009: 17). Alternatively, oral reading of passages in small groups, reading with a tape-recording and choral reading can all support text reading fluency.

- Vocabulary acquisition

Vocabulary development is measured by learners' level of understanding as well as the size and scope of words a learner uses in listening, speaking, reading and writing (Camacho, 2003: 2). Thus, all the above-mentioned skills serve as a fundamental skill builder and improve vocabulary more than talking or direct teaching does. It also provides a glimpse into other cultures and places. Apparently, a resonant vocabulary is very important for fluency and comprehension development (DBE, 2009: 16). Regardless of where children are in terms of literacy, an essential step in further development is creating an environment that promotes active reading, writing, listening and speaking. Meanwhile, children learn to read by reading and participating in reading activities with readers who are more competent, in this way building their vocabulary (McLane & McNamee, 1990: 65). It is believed that children who are read to at home learn to read more easily and have a bigger vocabulary than those who are not read to regularly (Yates, 2014: 458).

ii Reading and writing

Positive effects of reading and writing strategies would not be visible immediately, but become one of the main stepping stones whereby the expected outcomes impact on learners' lives in the long run (Bransford *et al.*, 2000: 211). The most obvious impact of these efforts is clearly visible when observing learners improving the skill of skimming through a text for main ideas, scanning for supporting details and inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words and images by using word attack skills and contextual clues (CAPS, 2011: 16). Because oral language proficiency is widely acknowledged as critical for success in learning to read, reading is seen as a process in which meanings are constructed from print and, without meaning, there is no reading (Neuman & Dickinson, 2011: 10). With that in mind, reading appears to be important, because those who recall learning to read or have witnessed their learners discover the process will remember helping teachers to become involved in the lives of their community members and society in general (Yates, 2014: 459).

The main purpose of a SITS is to increase learners' concentration, focus, motivation and enthusiasm for reading, especially Grade 4 learners, as their capability in literacy has not yet been realised. It is for this reason that a literate environment requires learners to be surrounded by talking, reading and writing that is embedded

in everyday activities and interactions (Neaum, 2012: 122). Another way of viewing this is realising that reading to children, even for a few minutes each day, prepares them to read and encourages a positive attitude towards reading. Hence, reading books to young children is a powerful way of introducing them to literacy. For instance, when learners gain their lost voices and oppose prejudiced reproduction, they become active agents for social change (Nkoane, 2010: 317). In fact, reading is an active mental process, thus, it is never too early or too late to start, because literacy is measured by the understanding gained and attainment of true emotional, intellectual and spiritual emancipation (Degener, 2001:69).

It is believed that reading nourishes children's minds and imaginations and enriches their relationships (McLane & McNamee, 1990: 68). As such, reading builds self-esteem, improves quality of life and, generally, those who read have better intelligence and general knowledge than those that do not read (Cunningham & Allington, 2007: 106). Through their exposure to reading and writing in real and meaningful situations, learners will definitely begin to understand the reasons why it is important for them to know how to read and write.

2.4.2.3 Read-aloud strategies

Read-aloud strategy is a strategy that is used to stimulate learners' imaginations and aids in modelling learners' good reading behaviour by exposing them to a range of literature (Neaum, 2012: 122). By having learners read along while listening enriches their vocabularies and understanding of sophisticated language patterns, thereby improving learners' reading ability (Bransford *et al.*, 2000: 212). This strategy also makes it easy for learners to understand difficult text, as different genres are read differently. Moreover, it supports independent reading, leading to a lifelong enjoyment of reading. Neuman and Dickinson (2011: 10) argue that learners see and hear words and phrases together, which is a good way of reinforcing sight-word recognition. In this instance, the teacher should select books that appeal to learners' interests, evoke humour, stimulate critical thinking and stretch their imagination, and this can be achieved through high-quality literature (Johnson, 2008: 55).

In order to draw learners' attention to the illustration on the cover, the teacher should give them a brief summary of the book through its title, pointing out the main features

with a finger as s/he reads it to the learners. At this stage, the teacher should prompt learners for their predictions about the story. S/he should then introduce the story and identify where and what to read. The story comes alive for children only when teachers read with enthusiasm and vary their voices to fit different characters and the ongoing dialogue, doing so encourages learners to interact verbally with the text, peers and the teacher during the book reading. After reading the teacher should allow time for a discussion, as good books arouse a variety of thoughts and emotions in children (Christie *et al.*, 2011: 145-147; Yates, 2014: 460). Thereby, learners develop new vocabulary and syntactic awareness and build good reading habits.

2.4.2.4 Shared reading and writing strategies

Shared reading also provides an environment for the teacher to support learners at various levels of their reading development. It involves the usage of enlarged text, enabling teachers to scaffold learners' understanding clearly and explicitly, so that they can see the words and illustrations more meaningfully (Hossein & Sandra, 2011: 150). Learners can therefore read text with their teachers' and parents' support. In shared writing, the teacher works with learners to write down their oral language stories (Christie *et al.*, 2011: 130) through the use of the fundamental features of written, visual and spoken texts, including alphabet, phonics, spelling conventions, patterns of sentence structure and text (Dixon & Marchman, 2007: 191). These and many other teaching strategies have been designed and employed to enhance literacy, but have not been as successful as the anticipated teaching strategy, namely, a SITS, where learners and all the stakeholders involved are required to interactively and jointly guide, model, summarise, confirm, combine and synthesise learners' ideas as they talk to one another about real-life situations and where the use of language serves the purpose of communicating real ideas and solutions to real-life problems (Mahlomaholo, 2013: 2).

The following section discusses theories of literacy teaching strategies.

2.4.3 Theories of literacy teaching strategies

A number of theories relate to teaching literacy. The analytical focus of these theories is the way people use different ideas to learn literacy. Therefore, the discussion below introduces a range of theories. Even though some of these theories are accepted today, not every theory listed will reverberate with every teacher because a theory's effectiveness with regard to responding to challenges of literacy varies. Furthermore, most teachers have a tendency to collect and use elements of several theories in their teaching.

2.4.3.1 Behaviourist perspective

Behaviourism is based on the belief that behaviours can be measured, trained and changed (Schultz & Schultz, 2010: 2). Schultz and Schultz (2010: 2) further maintain that another way of viewing this is that behaviourism is a learning theory grounded on the knowledge that, as learners actively interact within environmental settings, shaped who they are, and how they portray themselves towards their own learning, acquired through conditioning. This approach suggests that nurturing plays a dominant role in children's language development through two basic processes, namely, classical and operant conditioning.

iii Classical conditioning

Classical conditioning is a method by which a naturally occurring stimulus is paired with a response (Nevid, 2013: 2), to simplify, an interaction with the environment facilitates and stimulates responses that enhance learning (Pavlov, 1927: 237; Moreeng, 2009: 74). In Ivan Pavlov's classical experiment with dogs we find a wholesome expression of the structuralist vision. In that case, learners' academic performance is directly influenced by a phrase called "a three-legged pot" whereby families and schools are enclosed in communities, thus influencing each other and the development of a child. This approach involves creating a favourable learning environment with all the necessary learning resources and information as well as proper guidance from the stakeholders involved. Improved learning outcomes will be achieved in an environment that is rich in resources. Behaviourists assert that learning changes individuals' behaviour for the better, as the learning environment

expects learners to take charge of their own learning and demonstrate the improved behaviour through acquired skills.

iv Operant conditioning

According to Skinner, operant conditioning is any active behaviour that functions upon the environment and is a consequence of that behaviour. Therefore, it embraces an opinion that learning is made up of the relationship between the response and reinforcement (Skinner, 1938: 3; Nevid, 2013: 3). Children learn language by associating words with meanings through reinforcement (Ambridge & Lieven, 2011: 2). Learners' thoughtful determinations and intentions to learn are acknowledged. With this in mind, teachers are encouraged to be passionate and to set high expectations for learners' perception of learning. In this approach teaching and learning are influenced by the speed at which people acquire new behavioural skills, knowledge and enhanced capabilities and how well learners can retain them (Moreeng, 2009: 76). Skinner explains that the main idea behind operant conditioning is that the consequences of our actions shape voluntary behaviour (Skinner, 1938: 3). Thus, we can see that, when children are surrounded and enjoy nurturing from caring and capable parents, a strong foundation of literacy will be built with ease.

2.4.3.2 Nativist perspective

The nativist perspective on learning and development emphasises nature. Nativists believe that a person's behaviour and capabilities are largely predetermined. The study incorporates Chomsky and Skinner's theories, because both contribute to the conducive, sustainable learning environment that the study sought to achieve. Chomsky (1959: 47) believes that, as long there are people available to speak to the child, the child's biological endowments will do the rest. Skinner (1957: 2), on the other hand, believes that children will learn by imitation and reinforcement that comes from the environment. According to Chomsky's theory humans are hardwired for language, the ability to learn language is natural and nature is more important than nurture (Chomsky, 1959: 3).

For example, when children first begin to use the past tense, they often generalise certain words, such as "go-ed" for went. On the one hand, cognitive development

emerges through observing others, through which the person acquires new behaviours and knowledge. The study used a cognitive constructivism approach, as it emphasises learners' prior knowledge being activated to construct new knowledge (Bandura, 1997: 1). On the other hand, social constructivism theory emphasises learning for social transformation, because an individual's language development arises from social interactions (Vygotsky, 1986: 143), whereby cultural meanings are shared by the group and eventually internalised by each participating member. Therefore, such a collaborative effort, which involves incorporating various theories, complements a SITS that aims to address English literacy problems.

2.4.3.3 Biological perspective

The biological perspective involves a way of looking at psychological topics by studying the physical basis of animal and human behaviour (Darwin, 1859: 428). This approach is a good choice for teaching in the early stages of life, as it focuses on developing oral language through physical response to commands. Thus, we can say that this approach not only allows for extended exposure to English before the learners begin to speak, but also enables learners to remember what they have learnt through muscle memory (Galton, 1883: 223). In a socially inclusive learning environment, such characteristics are easily comprehended because of the space created by learners' ability to learn the language, which depends comprehensively on interaction and the language being spoken in the children's homes. Therefore, parents and caregivers who constantly engage in conversation with their infants actually help their children to develop neural networks that lead to language fluency and proficiency. Christie *et al.* (2011: 42) maintain that these natural discoveries reveal that language learning is a shared dialogue between nature and nurture.

2.4.3.4 Social-interactionist perspective

Unlike Chomsky and Piaget, Vygotsky's central concern is the relationship between the development of thought and that of language. Hence, Vygotsky's theory views language, first, as social communication, gradually promoting the development of language and cognition (Vygotsky, 1978: 65). To put it more simply, social interactionists share the belief of behaviourists that the environment plays a central role in children's language development, but the former acknowledge the influence of

nature and nurture (Chomsky, 2006: 47). In addition, social interactionists emphasise the child's own intentional participation in language learning and the construction of meaning (Piaget, 1955: 1; Christie *et al.*, 2011: 40). The purpose of this study is to formulate a SITS to respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class. Therefore, this study builds on and contributes to work in a literate world that places a high value on reading and writing and, in so doing, justifies why all individuals ought to learn how to read and write well.

2.4.4 Socially inclusive teaching strategy

Strategies that have been employed range from teachers defining grammar rules to a whole class of learning, teaching independently through emotionally appealing scenarios that have been presented to them (Feiman-Nemser, 2001: 20; Tomlinson, 2014a: 24). A socially inclusive way of teaching creates a platform where learners and teachers, as well as participating members of the community, are required to talk to one another about real-life situations and where the use of language serves the purpose of communicating real ideas and solutions to real-life problems (Mahlomaholo, 2013: 2). The following section discusses the components of SITS, theories informing a SITS, the phases identified in the development of a SITS, the different forms of SITS and its impact on the education system.

2.4.4.1 Theories informing a socially inclusive teaching strategy

There are specific promising teaching strategies and approaches emerging and striving for enlightenment, and thereby informing a SITS. These are typically strategies and approaches that highlight the importance of providing opportunities to develop skills, social interaction and access to the child's local environment and independence. Therefore, these approaches reinforce learners' participation in learning. Below are the theories that inform a SITS.

i Social learning perspective (social constructivism)

Social learning theory facilitates our understanding of how individuals can learn from each other and informs us how teachers can construct active learning communities. Vygotsky states that individuals will easily make a promising progression to the next level of their expertise through interactions and communication with others

(Vygotsky, 1986: 224). Learning takes place through the interactions learners have with their peers, teachers and other stakeholders involved, therefore, creating a conducive learning environment that encourages the integration of emotional and social development as well as academic and cognitive growth (Vygotsky, 1978: 65; Tracey & Morrow, 2012: 110). Subsequently, teachers are capable of creating a learning environment that capitalises on learners' ability to interact with each other through discussion, collaboration, cooperation and feedback sessions.

Moreover, and importantly, culture plays a vital role in structuring knowledge as we learn the rules, skills and abilities shaped by our culture. Additionally, language plays a significant role in knowledge construction and serves as the main tool promoting thinking, developing reasoning and supporting cultural activities, like reading and writing (Davis & Florian, 2004: 27). Furthermore, teachers are required to provide an opportunity for learners to manage a discussion, making substantive comments that enhance a meaningful Socratic dialogue, which results in questions that promote deeper learning (Liu & Matthews, 2005: 389). These questions will also encourage and motivate learners to feel that their contribution is truly valued. Altogether, formulation of a SITS will cooperatively promote the distribution of expert knowledge, and enable learners to work together collaboratively in a socially inclusive learning community setting.

ii Freire's theory of education and literacy

Vygotsky highlights dialogue, therefore, to take the discussion further, Freire emphasises the importance of discursive learning, as well as concerns for the oppressed. Freire insists that dialogue involves respect, as individuals work collectively as a team, and one person does not act on another (Freire, 1970b: 94). Dialogue in itself is a cooperative activity involving respect, therefore, enhancing the community and building social capital leads us to act in ways that promote justice and cause humans to flourish (Smith, 2002: 2). Freire's concept of education and literacy involves making people aware of the power they possess as long as they work collectively as a team to overcome oppression (Freire, 1970b: 66). Avelar (2011: 2) asserts that Freire's perception of humankind and oppression leads us to

understand his method of consciousness-raising. Freire (1974: 165) distinguishes three levels of consciousness, namely, magical, naive and critical consciousness.

- Magical consciousness is regarded as a psychodynamic process that embodies a multi-way interaction of communication. People with this type of consciousness become reasonably accustomed to and do not question injustices. Such people reform themselves defencelessly and passively to the expectations of a superior force. They are not conscious of the socio-economic contradictions within a society, but are silent and submissive.
- Naive consciousness is a level above magical consciousness. People with this consciousness become aware of their own individualised problems but fail to make a connection with the outside world.
- Critical consciousness involves making connections with the socio-economic contradictions in society. Freire asserts that a collective learning community produces better results than an individual working on the same task. The life situation of people is made into a problem-posing situation, as a result, facilitating learning through dialogue. Thus, we can say that people have the right to ask questions on the how and why, mainly about the causes and influences in their lives.

In the problem-posing method, the teaching material emanates from the group members, and teaching and consciousness-raising are integrated with each other. Because education and literacy empower people to overcome oppression by giving them the ability to understand the manipulations and dynamics of the oppressor, it is crucial to develop literacy exclusively (Freire, 1985: 75).

2.4.4.2 Phases in the development of a socially inclusive strategy to teach literacy

The phases identified below optimise learning by active engagement and by creating opportunities for learners to experiment and discover things for themselves. Doing so appeals strongly to learners with bodily-kinaesthetic and visual learning styles (Guglielmi, 2012: 581).

i The natural approach

This approach seeks to help learners develop English in much the same way as they developed using their mother tongue or first language. Thus, this approach can be seen as being meaning-based learning, because it enables learners to receive extended language input by listening first and then, later, reading, before requiring language output, which is mainly in the form of speaking and writing later (Elish-Piper *et al.*, 2009: 4). Meaning-based learning refers to learners learning by beginning with single words and then moving on to two and three-word combinations; until they are, finally, able to structure full sentences (Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan & Willingham, 2013: 4).

ii The task-based and project-based approach

The task-based teaching approach primarily involves pair and group work rather than instructor-fronted instruction. In this approach the instructor provides learners with tasks that are intended to foster genuine and meaningful communication. As a result, co-researchers are forced to exchange information and opinions amongst themselves in order to reach a targeted goal. In addition, this approach encourages learners to speak in longer sentences and work harder to understand what others are saying (DuFour & DuFour, 2013: 29). In its turn, the project-based approach involves learners being involved in lengthy projects instead of short-term tasks. This approach depends heavily on a pair or a small group that is on a mission to solve a problem or produce a product. Learners are therefore obliged to communicate with each other using clear language and cognitive skills in order to achieve set goals (Dunlosky *et al.*, 2013: 9).

iii The functional approach

This approach involves a focus on life and workplace skills. Learners' outcomes are usually written as competencies and are sequenced according to priority. Since this approach is concerned with skills that learners need in order to function at all levels, communicative and behavioural skills are combined with linguistic objectives (Dunlosky *et al.*, 2013: 11) and community members to work collaboratively to achieve meaningful learning results for all learners. Boyd and Markarian (2011: 3)

postulate that this approach has a tendency to neglect the development of creativity in language and circumvent social issues.

iv The whole language experience approach

The whole language approach centres on requests of learners and considers the learner to be the driving force of his/her own educational learning that is, developing the required language skills. This approach accentuates the significance of collaborative learning. Hence, the teacher puts more effort into reading and writing strategies while other concerns, such as spelling and grammar, are taught in response to learner questions (Dunlosky *et al.*, 2013: 13). The language experience capitalises on the learners' background knowledge and allows teachers to concentrate more on experiences designed to enrich language learning and develop vocabulary lists (Davis, 2003: 2). Therefore, this technique capitalises on learners' ability to verbalise their learned experiences.

v The ethnographic approach

This approach combines aspects of the communicative and participatory approaches. The communicative approach focuses mainly on abstract concepts, claiming that culturally appropriate communication is at the core of the approach. This teaching method, however, tends to downplay the expressive and creative aspects of language (Moran, 2007: 3). The participatory approach, on the other hand, is highly learner-centred approach that seeks to build literacy through discussions of the learners' real life issues and concerns. Hence, Freire viewed education, and especially literacy teaching, as a process of empowering the oppressed. This approach considers learners and teachers as learning collaborators, because the teacher is seen as the learning facilitator and an equal participant with the learners in the class. Therefore, the goal is to enable learners to become equipped to transform themselves and society around them (Davis, 2003: 1).

Finally, the ethnographic approach considers the sociocultural aspects of language, and linguistic and cultural awareness to be the focus of language teaching. This approach enables learners to be aware of the way people communicate in their own lives and the community around them. It is therefore evident that this approach is

more effective with higher-level literacy learners who have the cognitive and oral language skills needed to analyse the language heard around them (Davis, 2003: 1).

2.4.5 Different types of socially inclusive teaching strategies

This section discusses the different types of SITS, namely, collaborative, cooperative and problem-based learning types. These forms of learning are effectively implemented under conditions that oblige team members to rely on one another to improve learners' learning capabilities.

2.4.5.1 Collaborative learning

Collaborative learning is a situation in which learners at various performance levels work together to achieve a common academic goal, thereby capitalising on one another's resources and skills, sharing experiences and taking on asymmetric roles (Chiu, 2008: 417). Although Dillenbourg (1999: 4) may have a good point by viewing collaboration as the mechanism that causes learning, Gentry (2010: 2), on the other hand, views collaborative learning as a naturally social act in which co-researchers engage in a conversation amongst themselves; it is through talking that learning occurs, thereby, creating a framework and meaning for the discourse. In this teaching approach learners are responsible for their own and one another's learning, thus, the success of one learner helps other learners to be successful (Mitnik, Recabarren, Nussbaum & Soto, 2009: 339). As a result, learners will benefit more when they are exposed to diverse viewpoints of people with varied backgrounds, and are required to process and synthesise information, rather than simply memorise and rehearse it.

Sharing learning by creating roles and mediating interactions while allowing flexibility in dialogue gives learners the opportunity to effectively engage in discussion while, at the same time, taking responsibility for their own learning (Dillenbourg & Tchounikine, 2007: 7; Kollar *et al.*, 2006: 162). Hence, all learners in a group are held accountable for doing their share of the work and for mastering the material that must be learned. Collaborative learning will also involve feedback sessions through face-to-face interaction, where learners will constructively challenge one another's ideas until they reach the favoured conclusions (Kollar *et al.* 2006: 163), thereby

encouraging and helping learners to develop and practise trust-building, leadership, decision-making, communication and conflict management skills. These goals can all be reached through proper planning and setting of goals, periodically assessing progression and identifying better ways to accomplish the goals (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1991: 1).

This approach is heavily rooted in Vygotsky's views, through his theory of the zone of proximal development. He portrays a cognitive process involving joint intellectual effort, by which teachers act as the facilitators of knowledge and children as receivers (Vygotsky, 1978: 65). There can never be true collaboration without equity, equality and respect, irrespective of individuals' background (Duke, 2004: 307). Hence, we can see that collaborative learning promotes emancipation and social justice, or reinforces the status quo and maintains systems of oppression (Duke, 2004: 312). Therefore, this approach encourages learners to examine the relationships between knowledge and power from the perspectives of previously marginalised groups (Freire, 1970a: 73). Furthermore, a collaborative learning approach is closely related to cooperative learning.

2.4.5.2 Cooperative learning

In this learning approach, the teacher splits work for learners by letting them solve sub-tasks individually and then contribute their individual results into the final product (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000: 2). Lee, Butler and Tippins (2007: 2) maintain that cooperative learning takes place when a small group of learners work together in the same place on a structured project. In a conducive, cooperative learning environment, learners should feel safe enough to speak, believing that their voices will be heard, and feel challenged to try and solve a given task, hoping that their efforts will be valued. Groups should be small enough to enable every individual learner to contribute actively towards his/her own learning (Duke, Pearson, Strachan & Billman, 2011: 206). Cooperative learning conveys positive results, such as a deeper understanding of content, increases overall achievement in grades, improves learners' self-esteem, and leads to a greater motivation to persist on given tasks until they are complete (Rogoff, Correa-Chavez & Silva, 2011: 157).

Therefore, cooperative learning helps learners become active agents of their own learning by becoming actively and constructively involved in content and resolving group conflicts, resulting in an improvement of the team's efforts (Duke, 2004: 312). Important in this approach is the way teachers compose the small groups: whether they group learners according to their learning abilities or mix more advanced with less advanced, in terms of their learning capabilities. However, I strongly believe that grouping learners by ability and culture will not benefit the overall achievement, but will lead to inequalities in achievement (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000: 36). During small-group interactions learners are able to reflect upon their prior knowledge and skills in order to reply to the diverse responses posed by fellow learners, thereby developing interpersonal skills (Paradise & De Haan, 2009: 192).

2.4.5.3 Problem-based learning

Problem-based learning is an educational approach and curriculum design method often used in higher education, from Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) settings (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows 2006: 51). Problem-based learning is a learner-centred method of instruction, where learners are positioned to work in groups to solve challenging problems (Hmelo-Silver & Eberbach, 2012: 3). In this learning approach, learners use "triggers" from the problem case to define their own learning objectives. They work individually before assembling individual results in the group to discuss and refine their acquired knowledge (Wood, 2003: 327). Problem-based learning is not only about problem-solving, but uses appropriate problems to increase learners' knowledge and understanding. Wood (2003: 328) asserts that group learning not only facilitates gaining knowledge but also helps learners to acquire several other anticipated qualities, such as communication skills, ability to work in a team, solving problems, taking independent responsibility for learning, sharing information and showing respect for others irrespective of their backgrounds (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows 2006: 52).

Moreover, instead of having a teacher providing all the necessary facts and then testing learners' ability to recall those facts via memorisation, problem-based learning encourages learners to apply knowledge to new situations (Chiu & Khoo, 2005: 618). Chiu and Khoo (2005: 618) explain that learners are faced with

contextualised, ill-structured problems, and are asked to investigate and discover meaningful solutions. Consequently, learners are able to develop creative skills and become critical thinkers with improved problem-solving skills. In order for learners to be actively and constructively involved in problem-based learning, teachers must carefully assess and account for the prior knowledge that learners bring to the classroom (Freire, 1970a: 73). This approach enables learners to apply critical thinking as they develop their ideas and discover solutions.

Thus, it involves asking questions, rather than being handed solutions without having to think hard to reach desirable answers to the question (Wood, 2003: 328). The main emphasis of problem-based learning is constructing flexible knowledge, which is coherently organised around deep principles in a domain, therefore, learners are conditioned understand when and why knowledge is useful (Hmelo-Silver, 2004: 3).

2.4.6 Development of the idea of a socially inclusive teaching strategy

Various strategies that have been employed have proven to be effective for teaching academic skills to learners, especially learners with learning difficulties, even though the strategies were developed for other purposes. Cooperative learning is one of the renowned examples of a mainstream practice that has had progressive effects on the accomplishments of learners with special educational needs (Rogoff *et al.*, 2011: 157). Thus, children with complex learning needs require support to a degree that is beyond what is normally required by their peer group. Davis and Florian (2004: 3) illustrate how the provision of additional support can lead to inclusive practice. This will most likely occur when specialist and mainstream staff work collaboratively, sharing their knowledge and diversifying their roles in learning communities, during which exercise a socially inclusive teaching strategy develops.

Davis (2003: 37) identifies effective leadership, involvement of staff, a commitment to collaborative planning, effective coordination strategies, attention to the possible benefits of enquiry and reflection, including a policy for staff development, as conditions for inclusive education (Rogoff *et al.*, 2011: 158). In order for inclusive education to become a more meaningful model for meeting special educational needs, all learners, irrespective of their backgrounds, should be awarded the opportunity to participate fully in decision-making processes that encourage them to

take ownership of their own learning. However, with this in mind, teachers should have a thorough knowledge of dealing with learners' learning difficulties, and must acquire the necessary skills to implement specific teaching methods that are relevant for learners with special needs (Brady & Bashinski, 2008: 62). Additionally, parent-teacher collaborations should be emphasised, as parents know their children best, especially children with certain disabilities (Florian & Hegarty, 2004: 22).

Davis (2003: 37) is of the opinion that many teachers face difficulties when trying to change long-established patterns of classroom behaviour. There are many benefits to collaborating with other stakeholders to help mould the child and encourage reflection on practice and experimentation. Florian and Rouse (2001: 36) claim that school structures have an important influence on this collaboration, and that influence must be considered for collaboration to be implemented effectively. It is thought that teachers' knowledge and ability to use teaching strategies effectively encourage inclusive practice. Contrary to our perception, the literature shows that teachers need to acquire more knowledge about inclusive practices – even if they are knowledgeable they fail to put knowledge into practice. This suggests that what teachers are able to do is constrained by the DoE, school policy and the availability of resources. Therefore, attempts to try new approaches to incorporate contextual factors, including the way practice develops within social contexts, fail (Davis, 2003: 37).

2.4.7 Obstacles to social inclusion education

The greatest obstacles to socially inclusive education are caused by influential members of society, with their negative attitudes, such as social discrimination, lack of awareness and traditional prejudices, which pose serious hindrances to learners' learning capabilities (UNESCO, 2015: 1). The general societal belief is that it is pointless to educate learners with disabilities without preparing them for life and leadership in the future. Few schools are equipped to respond to special needs, and the biggest challenge to learners with disabilities is physically getting to school, and the failure by the community to provide local support, due to a lack of awareness. A lack of leadership preparation and training inhibits the school's innovative networks and the possibility of teachers acquiring all the necessary help to perform their

teaching tasks (Wedin, 2010: 7). In addition, the curriculum is centrally designed and rigid, leaving little flexibility for local adaptations or opportunity for teachers to experiment and try out new approaches.

Moreover, English as a LoLT impedes Grade 4 learners' learning capabilities and creates a bottleneck due to a high failure rate. Grade 4 represents a transitional phase, because learners' are not accustomed to being taught in English, which places these learners at a disadvantage, and which often leads to significant linguistic difficulties, and even learning breakdowns (Scharer, 2012: 2). Learners who encounter problems while they are learning to read, read less or even fall behind completely. These problems are exacerbated by a failure to engage parents in the school (Jameson, McDonnell, Polychronis & Riesen, 2008: 347).

Improving pay and working conditions and providing an attractive career path are among the best ways of retaining good teachers (UNESCO, 2012: 201). Inadequacies and inequalities in the education system are most evident in areas that experience sustained poverty and high levels of unemployment. Violence and HIV/AIDS can also have adverse effects on the quality of education, as can a shortage of resources, namely, inadequate teaching facilities, a lack of qualified teachers, a lack of learning materials and the absence of support – all hindrances that inhibit change and initiative. For their part, policy makers who do not understand and/or accept the concept of inclusive education hinder the implementation of social inclusion.

2.4.8 Social inclusion in the education system

Not all learners, unfortunately, acquire literacy easily. Establishing a clearly stated policy characterised by social inclusion ensures that even the most vulnerable learners in the country have a right to education, and provide access to quality education, irrespective of learners' abilities. The Ministry of Education should work closely with socially inclusive learning communities to help facilitate the development, design and implementation of interventions, thereby improving reading instruction in primary schools (Jameson *et al.*, 2008: 356). Building dedicated, socially inclusive learning communities, strengthening capacity and managing funds to implement literacy activities effectively (UNESCO, 2004: 1), especially for learners

with severe disabilities, is paramount. These learners were most often excluded from the educational process in the past, due to people's assumptions about their ability to learn. However, productively promoting the deployment of special support teachers and personnel, who will provide intensive and personalised instruction for learners with special needs, will enable these learners to thrive at school. It has come to my attention that, in some schools today, learners with severe disabilities spend most of the school day in a specialised learning environment that does not allow any interaction with learners who do not have disabilities.

I believe an effective, meaningful, socially inclusive way of teaching and learning would ensure a successful socially inclusive programme. The successful implementation of an inclusive programme will ensure that even learners with severe disabilities will be able to learn and reach their full potential, and receive the instruction they deserve from highly trained and qualified teachers (Falkenstine, Collins, Schuster & Kleinert, 2009: 132). Since expectations for learning have been lowered in special education rooms, compared to regular education rooms for learners without disabilities, the practice of isolated and specialised environments for this population is being questioned (Brady & Bashinski, 2008: 62; Williamson, McLeskey, Hoppey & Rentz, 2006: 348). Therefore, teachers need to acquire exclusive skills and knowledge for each of these recommended practices, so that they can implement them in various school settings.

The interconnectedness of subject areas enables learners to use the knowledge and skills developed in one field, in another (DBE, 2009: 1-2). Developing teachers' confidence and repertoire of teaching strategies over time enables teachers to develop more knowledge and skills and improve their attitudes about inclusion positively (Florian, 2007: 324). The lack of highly qualified and trained teachers will no doubt have a negative impact on the potential achievements of learners with severe disabilities. Instead of separating learners with severe disabilities from their age peers on the basis of standardised test scores, such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and ANA, or developmental levels, I believe these learners can benefit extensively from learning with their peers in general education classrooms.

There is a perception that learning is more effective when learners see the connections and relationships between ideas, people, events and processes, as in real-life situations, and are able to apply their existing knowledge in new situations (DBE, 2009: 1). Teachers understand that the implementation of CAPS is a text-based approach to exposing learners to the way texts work, thereby enabling learners to become competent, confident and critical readers, reviewers and designers of texts. Consequently, readers will be in a position to incorporate all their other skills whilst reading (Frost, Elmer, Best & Mills, 2010: 1). In order to achieve the anticipated good results all the stakeholders involved in learners' learning should give their undivided support and attention. Of particular importance is active family involvement, implementing socially inclusive learning communities and promoting positive self-regulated learning behaviour among learners (Brady & Bashinski, 2008: 64).

Identifying barriers to learning for learners with severe disabilities and making a commitment to ensuring that these obstacles do not hinder learners' development are important goals in the field of education and for learners with severe disabilities.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This section demonstrated that CER is key to implementing a SITS in response to problems experienced with English literacy. The CER approach fits clearly within critical theory and is focused on empowering individuals and transforming societal systems and their policies, as well as processes that replicate oppression and injustice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: 37). The various contexts that I discussed in this chapter, namely, the historical origins of CER, formats of CER, steps of CER, objectives of CER, importance of CER, epistemology of CER, ontology of CER, rhetoric, the role of the researcher and the relationship between the researcher and the co-researchers, provide a comprehensive theoretical framework informing the study. My engagement with these issues enabled me to create the historical, contextual and conceptual frameworks within which my research is located. Through the process of outlining the relevant contextual factors, I was able to relate the inherent themes to the values and concepts that underpin my research.

The most salient and consistent concept interwoven throughout the chapter is the idea of a socially inclusive learning community as a necessary condition for the equal treatment of all people in society. It will empower and restore respect to the researched and the researcher, because this approach advances the agenda of equity, social justice, freedom, peace and hope. Thus, until oppressed people know who they are or who they might be when all the wrongs have been righted, and all the rights have been won, their struggle against these wrongs and for these rights will be less than effective. The chapter discussed related literature on problems experienced with English literacy and the theories and strategies of literacy teaching. Moreover, the anticipated strategy by which theories that inform such a strategy, phases, forms, development of the idea, obstacles to such a strategy's development and success indicators for its formulation, were also discussed. Future explorations of how a SITS entrenched by CER can be incorporated into educational systems analysis, educational system change or reform theories, educational policy and knowledge construction, are needed to further this discussion.

The following chapter will explain the research methodology that informed this CER project to its next level.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY FOR FORMULATING A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study attempts to formulate a SITS in response to English literacy problems experienced in a Grade 4 class at a selected school in the Free State, Province. In pursuance of that aim, this chapter focuses on the research design and methodology guiding the study. The study uses PAR as its approach to design and methodology for data generation and its analysis. The fundamental components and themes defining PAR are discussed under the subheadings of the historical origin of PAR, its objectives, formats, steps, ontology, epistemology, the role of the researcher, relationships with the co-researcher, and rhetoric. Furthermore, PAR's cyclical steps are explained, namely, identifying and clarifying the problem, developing a plan for improvement, implementing the plan, observing and documenting the effects of the plan, reflecting on the effects of the plan for further planning, and informed action.

The chapter discusses the ethical considerations guiding all aspects of interaction with the co-researchers, which proceeded in ways that did not harm or pose a threat of any kind to their persons. Firstly, we constituted ourselves into an organising research team with co-researchers at the research site. We made sure that the vision and mission statements were collectively designed and developed to give direction and a common understanding to us all regarding the aim of the study. Then we collectively conducted the SWOT analysis, which led to a number of issues being raised relating to the vision of the study and the team as a whole. We identified five manageable priorities that we could achieve within the specified time. We then used these priorities as the basis for formulating the strategic plan that enabled us to achieve the aim of the study.

On the basis of each of the priorities, we identified and operationalised five powerful and meaningful activities spanning a period of six months in pursuance of each of the respective priorities. For each activity, we assigned responsible people who would ensure that the activities took place in a meaningful manner in relation to the identified priority. We also collectively identified, prepared and provided the required

resources to perform each of the tasks. The operationalisation of each activity was linked to particular and identifiable time frames. We also formulated mechanisms and opportunities for monitoring progress and initiating reflection by the entire team towards the achievement of each of the activities per priority. All the information per activity and per priority was audio and video recorded, in addition to being transcribed to serve as data for analysis at a later stage. CDA was used as the strategy to systematically and scientifically analyse, interpret and process the data generated, in order to present it in a meaningful and logical manner. The chapter concludes with a summary of processes implemented; I restate the purpose and aim of the chapter and highlight important points, thereby tying loose ends.

3.2 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

PAR, with its emphasis on grassroots empowerment and local control, has a long history as the research method of choice for conducting research with marginalised communities. This section briefly discusses the historical origins of PAR, objectives of PAR, formats of PAR, steps of PAR, including the spiral process of PAR, ontology, epistemology, role of the researcher in PAR, the relationships with co-researchers in PAR and rhetoric of PAR.

3.2.1 Historical origins of PAR

In this study, we employed PAR as a research approach and were guided by CER that evolved from critical theory. Gills and Jackson (2002, as cited by MacDonald, 2012: 37) assert that the origins of PAR emphasise a strong link between theory and practice. Lewin was considered the founder of action research and focused on issues of workplace democracy. PAR is an interpretive and qualitative method that combines social investigation, educational work and action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007: 339). Burns, Harvey and Aragon (2012: 1) maintain that action research has never been a cohesive methodology for conducting research, but has been developed as a tool for organisational learning and as a process for a critical and emancipatory community of learning. Thus, according to Brydon-Miller (2001: 77), who follows Lewin's line of argument, individuals are encouraged in their work if they are involved in the decision-making that affects their lives in a working environment.

PAR methodologies involve a cyclical process that ensures that the researcher and the co-researchers remain partners throughout the research process and that the co-researchers are authentically involved and have personal agency (McTaggart, 1997: 197). These PAR methodologies, therefore, inculcate a democratic way of living that is equitable, liberating and life-enhancing, by breaking away from traditional research, which forms coalitions with individuals with the least social, cultural and economic power (Brydon-Miller, 2001: 81; MacDonald, 2012: 37). The roots of PAR can also be traced back to Freire, who suggests that the key to social change is dialogue and conscientisation (Freire, 1974: 48). In this instance, the marginalised community becomes involved by critically analysing their situation and organising actions to improve it (Burnes & Cooke, 2013: 411).

PAR is committed to Freire's (1974) critical consciousness that is developed through dialogue to help people see differences and commonalities among various perspectives, then referred to as community action research (Freire, 1974: 49; Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008: 1). Freire used innovative methods to teach literacy to peasants and believed that critical reflection was crucial for personal and social change (MacDonald, 2012: 37). The PAR approach of Freire was concerned with empowering the poor and marginalised, by encouraging them to take action to change the oppressive elements of reality, and thereby liberating oppressed individuals (Freire, 1970a: 75). The other type of PAR is a participatory rural appraisal that began with studies by Robert Chambers, which was designed to improve the lives of subsistence farmers (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008: 1). However, Burnes and Cooke (2013: 411) compare the emancipatory associations of PAR with the influential use of action research as a tool of indirect rule. Similarly, Ozanne and Saatcioglu (2008: 1) are of the opinion that the real differences between institutional views of participation and realistic PAR theorists consider knowledge irrelevant if local people do not regard it as useful and believe in the strength of its emancipatory effects in their lives.

This was obvious when the teachers asserted that they could be more productive if a SITS was included in the design of the curriculum. As the curriculum keeps changing, the teachers do not know what to expect, but they just have to abide by the curriculum stipulations (MacDonald, 2012: 37). Even though the teachers initially

thought the research would exploit them, I helped them understand that the aim of PAR was to empower them to actively engage with each other and to work together to formulate a SITS. PAR was the best methodology to use for implementing, improving and evaluating learners' learning capabilities in pursuit of fairness, hope and equality through education in their learning environment (Freire, 1970a: 75). Burns *et al.* (2012: 2) indicate that PAR directs meaningful engagement amongst the authorities and teachers, as any action of research does, though, without co-researchers' involvement, PAR becomes meaningless. Whatever the focus of work and whichever methods and action research frameworks were used, including daily talks, everything was about learning. We took action and, as a result, we learned from our actions. Hence, we said that effective learning cannot be isolated from action and knowledge about change, which was rooted in systems thinking and complexity theory.

Individuals engage in a learning journey within a supportive group process, by which they bring expertise into their organisational and community contexts, because knowledge informs actions that are aimed at achieving a purpose (Burns *et al.*, 2012: 2). Wheeler and Wong (2014: 1) and Tanner and Seballos (2010: 12) worked with a group of community residents who mobilised other groups within their living sphere. As Kemmis and McTaggart (2007: 277) describe it, the best PAR involves a social process of collaborative learning realised by different groups of people who join up to change the practices through which they interact in a shared social world. With this in mind, therefore, I agree with Burns *et al.* (2012: 2) regarding the objectives of PAR, which postulate that PAR is helpful because it anticipates that co-researchers should not only act, but learn their way forward out of their complex situations.

3.2.2 Objectives of PAR

PAR is an approach that I postulate to be best suited for the formulation of a SITS in response to the English literacy problems of a Grade 4 class, as it facilitates information sharing between the researcher and co-researchers; therefore, offering an opportunity to share and learn (MacDonald, 2012: 35). Within a PAR process, communities of inquiry and action evolve and address problems of inequity, assisting people to resolve issues and initiating change while studying the influence of those

particular changes (Reason & Bradbury, 2001: 1; Chen, Poland & Skinner, 2007: 127). With this in mind, PAR addresses wider issues relating to social justice, inclusion and empowerment of marginalised communities (Tsetetsi, 2013: 141) while promoting collaboration between the researcher and co-researchers in the field of study.

PAR normally develops in situations where people want to make changes thoughtfully, mostly after critical reflection. It is for this reason that I decided that PAR was suitable for use with CER, which advances the agenda of equity and advocates social justice, peace, freedom and hope (Mahlomaholo, 2009: 226). PAR combines systematic research with the development of a practical intervention representing practical solutions to problems. The PAR approach is in contrast to other research approaches, which take away from researched communities without giving back to a significant extent what has been learned (Chapman & Dold, 2009: 1; Kassam & Tettey, 2003: 156). In PAR, co-researchers are not passive, but actively involved in the pursuit of information and ideas to guide their future actions. These positions scholars to become catalysts that connect the collaborative learning community's study (Chapman & Dold, 2009: 1). The aim of PAR is to make sure that knowledge gained day by day is applied to shape the lives of ordinary people.

These PAR methodologies generate information that is collaboratively analysed as knowledge rooted in social relations through social interactions, rather than knowledge being extracted for subsequent analysis by the academic researcher (Bargal, 2008: 17). We chose to use PAR as a research method to illustrate and challenge the inequality and exploitation of the co-researchers, and to help change co-researchers' social reality (Kindon & Elwood, 2009: 20). Therefore, PAR gives the co-researchers an opportunity to engage in acknowledging the existence of the problem, to study the problem, analyse it and design ways to address it. This participation can only be achieved by taking part in the act of change (Chen *et.al.*, 2007: 127; Lybeck, 2010: 91). The study is informed by the co-researchers, and by participating they are empowered to become experts in solving problems and bringing about a change in their respective behaviours through the set of skills that they develop and knowledge they gain (Boog, 2003: 426). The study is therefore in accordance with the principles of PAR, namely, that each individual has different

values that must be acknowledged and valued, as there are no right or wrong suggestions.

Furthermore, individuals learn by doing, strengthening their confidence in their abilities and resources as well as developing their skills in collecting, analysing and utilising information (MacDonald, 2012: 40-43). Bringing in different stakeholders with different expertise helps to mould learners much more than when there is only one teacher attempting to be a role model for too many learners in the classroom. From the foregoing paragraphs, we can deduce that the primary approach of PAR is participatory, as opposed to the researcher alone extracting information from the research population. With this methodology in mind, PAR goes beyond identifying and assessing difficulties and theorising on them by monitoring learners' learning abilities and engaging with solutions in order to accomplish the study goals (Lybeck, 2010: 91). PAR processes can be used to improve local situations, as they value discourses originating from a broad range of intellectual origins.

PAR can be viewed as a research methodology, and also as a philosophy of life that, as Lybeck (2010: 91) states, "converts those who engage in its processes to become thinking, feeling people". PAR involves three types of change, namely, the development of the critical consciousness of the researcher and the co-researcher, improvement of the lives of those participating in the research process, and transformation of societal structures and relationships (Reason & Bradbury, 2001: 1; Chen *et al.*, 2007: 127). At first, teachers, and especially parents, did not see the importance of their role in the study. They thought that the little knowledge they had was going to be exposed. However, in the end, the whole group realised that each individual had a meaningful role to fulfil in the formulation of the SITS. If a person has a problem, s/he also has the answer to that problem. PAR comprises vital components that distinguish it from other research methodological approaches.

3.2.3 Formats of PAR

Three themes can be identified by an analysis of responses concerning the benefits and drawbacks of PAR (Chapman & Dold, 2009: 10). The first theme concerns itself with the issue of empowerment, which relates to making the voices of the voiceless heard (Nkoane, 2010: 317), especially by establishing equal power relations,

fairness, freedom and hope in the relationship between the researcher and the co-researchers (Lind, 2007: 372; Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2010: 111). Empowerment was clearly considered to be a benefiting factor in this study, as Grade 4 learners' learning capacity was enhanced. These projects are more productive if learners are involved in the system of change and treatment plans, thereby guiding social development towards effective practices for promoting learners' learning (Gosin, Dustman, Drapeau & Harthun, 2003: 364). The second theme is that PAR tends to align with a non-positivist approach to research. In this study, we observed that learners were becoming confident about their abilities and more spontaneous and active towards their learning experiences.

The third theme that defines PAR relates to recognition. This recognition concerns the way all co-researchers view Grade 4 learners' contributions and reflects the fairness of their performance expectations (Chapman & Dold, 2009: 12). This recognition is concerned with unequal power relations, and the way older people fail to acknowledge young learners' capabilities, especially their potential for leadership and the usefulness of their input – some older people believe that learners have limited experience and have little education (Gosin *et al.*, 2003: 367). In order for the study to be successful, involvement by Grade 4 learners was crucial, as they were experts on the issues they faced – they knew how they felt and what they needed (Boog, 2003: 428). The active involvement of the Grade 4 learners improved data generation because they had the ability to encourage their peers, who hesitated take part in the study, to join in. They also had the ability and know-how to ask questions in a youthful, friendly manner, which yielded good data (Chapman & Dold, 2009: 12).

Therefore, the success of PAR depends on collaborative participation by all the co-researchers, originality of facts, education and collaborative action. Thus, what this study required was active intervention by all the co-researchers, who aimed to enhance the lives of the learners (Tagum, 2013: 5). It is evident that Grade 4 learners and all other co-researchers should be involved in identifying potential research priorities and specific topics. The study hints that the research process is more likely to be relevant to solving the problems that learners face, to increase their knowledge and ideas as well as improve the validity of the analysis of the social reality in an attempt to achieve relevant solutions (Tagum, 2013: 5; Cahill, 2007: 21).

3.2.4 Steps in PAR

Recently, MacDonald (2012: 39) revisited the seven steps in the PAR process. The first step acknowledges that the problem originates in the community itself and is defined, analysed and solved by the community. Grade 4 seems to be a bottleneck for the entire school – not only this specific school, as the majority of schools face this problem. Hence, the DoE is on a mission to see what can be done to alleviate this problem. With this problem in mind, the principal described the components of a SITS carefully to make sure that the school community worked with me closely and collaboratively to see this study through.

Secondly, the ultimate goal of PAR is the radical transformation of the social reality and improvement of the lives of the individuals involved (Foley, 2007: 79). PAR seeks to identify and change the root sources of oppression through collaborative participation, thereby involving all the co-researchers in the process of change (Ledwith, 2007: 599; Mahlomaholo, 2009: 226). PAR concerns investment, requiring all co-researchers to show commitment regarding their participation; thereby they take ownership of the research process to ensure that it yields good results through democratic engagement, transparency and openness. As a result, working together closely enables the co-researchers to conduct research the way they see fit, on the practices that affect their lives (Tsotetsi, 2013: 142). This process of change establishes a collaborative learning community.

Thirdly, PAR involves the full and active participation of the community at all levels of the research process, as co-researchers direct the study and are eager to see change manifesting. The researcher and the co-researchers ought to cooperate in questioning knowledge; the researcher helps the co-researchers discover how to move forward throughout the research process (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011: 80). Participation included the idea of engagement in the process of determining the input to and output of services (Chapman & Dold, 2009: 11).

The fourth component of PAR incorporates a range of powerless groups of individuals, namely, the exploited, poor, oppressed and the marginalised. Hence, the researcher is required to give up much of her power and be on the same level as the

co-researchers in order to gain their trust, so that all the co-researchers can actively involve learners in their own learning (Freire, 1998: 82).

Knowledge is generated through the co-researchers' collective efforts and action (Tagum, 2013: 2). As a result, learners are empowered and will be given a sense of self-worth.

The fifth component involves the ability to stimulate an awareness of the individuals' own resources, which can mobilise them for self-reliant development. This component links well with CER, which advocates for the power that individuals possess. Few people realise that they have power until they productively unleash the power invested within them to mobilise resources effectively for self-reliant development.

The sixth component states that community participation in the research process facilitates a more accurate and authentic analysis of social reality. Lastly, PAR enables the researcher to become a committed participant, facilitator and learner in the research process, which fosters persuasiveness rather than impassiveness (MacDonald, 2012: 39).

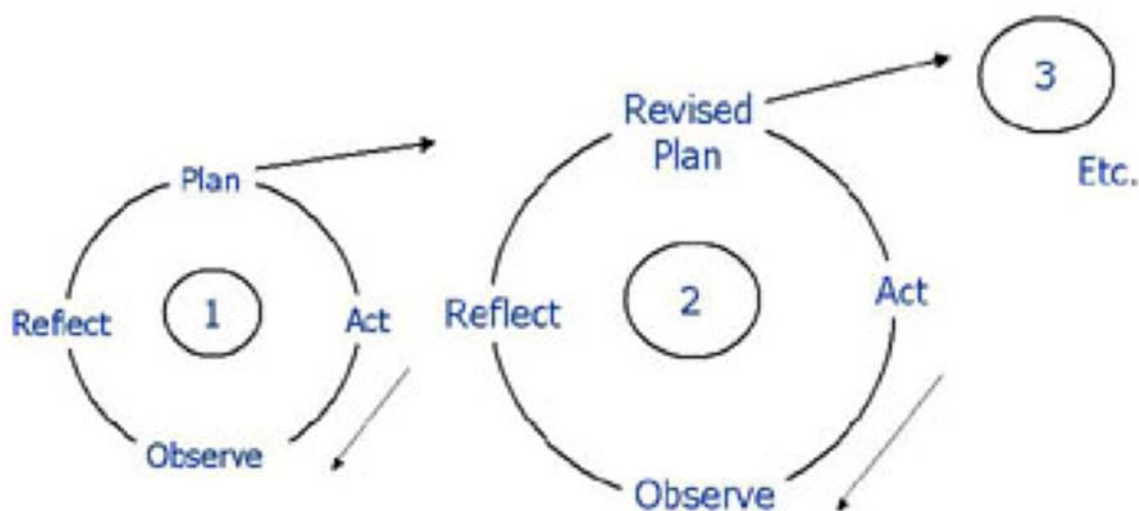


Figure 3.1: The spiral process of PAR (adapted from Jasper, 2003: 16)

In reality, the process is not as neat as the spiral of self-contained cycles of planning, acting and observing, and reflecting presented in Figure 3.1 suggests (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 2002: 21). The stages overlap, and initial plans quickly become obsolete in light of learning from experience (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007: 276-277) and, in reality, the process is likely to be more fluid, open and responsive. Kemmis and McTaggart (2007: 276-277) maintain that the criterion of success is not whether co-researchers have followed the steps faithfully, but rather whether they have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices, their understanding of their practices and the situations in which they practice. Co-researchers in the PAR process, guided by the research objectives, undertake each of the steps outlined in the spiral of self-reflection collaboratively. The process unfolds in a number of consecutive stages. Kemmis (2009: 127) proposes that the planning process sets the foundation for the communicative action of the study. In the case of PAR, it involves planning many additional tasks, including locating co-researchers and formulating a coordinating team. The coordinating team is responsible for advising on the study, arranging the logistics of communication, carrying out the communication, allowing sufficient time in advance for communication about preparation by co-researchers, and allowing sufficient time

after the communication for adequate reflection and feedback (Tagum, 2013: 5; Cahill, 2007: 21).

3.2.4.1 Initial planning stage

In the initial planning stage, the information session sets a foundation for the coordinated team, firstly, to be trained on how to conduct the PAR project, to find out what was expected of them and to ensure their freedom to take part in the study and to withdraw at any time if they so wished. Then, the next stage involved defining a SITS in detail, explaining what it is, describing the components of such a strategy and how could it be formulated successfully, stating who were the responsible persons to do the task, anticipating the threats that may hamper the project, and reverting back to see if the project had succeeded or failed. During this stage, the coordination team worked through the formulation of SITS by identifying the key aspects and issues, in order to ensure a common vision amongst the team members and structuring strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) pertaining to their involvement in the study.

The planning stage culminated in the strategic planning, with approved milestones directed by prioritisation of activities, which indicated that the coordinating team, co-researchers and learners understood and agreed on the details of the project plans. The main aim was to collectively develop, adopt and implement the plan. This assurance that all co-researchers were fully informed gave the co-researchers the authority to direct the study in an attempt to solve real-life problems. This kind of process promoted good relationships, teamwork and collaboration amongst the co-researchers (Cahill, 2007: 21; Tagum, 2013: 5), as every kind of collaborative problem-solving stage required time, which gave the co-researchers a platform to get to know one another while they created a sustainable learning environment.

All these stages are in accordance with CER, in the sense that the co-researchers provided rich information and enhanced the study with their powerful and valued participation. The coordinating team collectively conducted all the activities agreed upon, providing all the necessary tools, delegating relevant duties to the responsible persons, determining due dates for activities and agreeing on the appropriate methods for data generation and analysis. After proper planning, the co-researchers

began to put into practice all that had been planned during the information session. Section 3.2.4.2 discusses the implementation stage.

3.2.4.2 The implementation stage

This stage was often regarded as being awkward, because co-researchers did not always know what to expect. They were expected to revive their old knowledge and skills and engage in new processes, which led them to perform in an uncoordinated way. Running the project effectively by avoiding clumsiness and performing and implementing new skills with fidelity took time, hence the implementation process was broken into three stages, namely, a) initial implementation, when co-researchers expected the unexpected, b) full implementation, when the programme was in motion, and c) programme sustainability, which mainly involved maintaining the project's success.

In the initial implementation stage, the coordinating team guided the whole process; the problem was well defined but it did not have a clearly described end point (Mertler, 2011: 37). The team made sure that changes in the project were managed well, thereby helping to mitigate fear of the unknown and resistance by co-researchers. While the team worked to remove barriers, it addressed issues of power that surfaced, thereby helping to maintain the momentum of the initiative. The coordinating team helped to set realistic goals and expectations regarding project progress, timelines and the generation and use of the right data at the right time.

Ongoing, consistent preparation by the researcher and co-researchers was critical to the success of the project. By outsourcing various aspects of teaching methods, the team minimised resistance, increased positive perceptions of the project, enhanced proper implementation and promoted skills development. Challenges during the initial implementation stage involved resistance to change; initially, few of the eventual co-researchers were supportive of the idea of the study. Therefore, the study started from an uncertain position and was subject to criticism. However, eventually, people made major adaptations towards the improvement of the project, and the project became fully operational.

During the full implementation stage, the project was integrated into the service, organisation and system settings. The processes and procedures for providing the selected activities were put in motion. The aim was to maintain and improve the facilitation of the activities through excellent monitoring and purposeful improvement, thereby avoiding failure to create a sustainable learning environment due to a lack of commitment. At this stage, the activities that were performed were evaluated; the focus was on assessing project reliability and determining if the project had been delivered as intended.

In the programme sustainability stage, the aim was to maintain the project's success in creating a positive, sustainable learning environment. It was envisaged that, if teachers and learners as well as other stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes towards teaching and learning could change, then the enhancement and ease of acquiring knowledge and skill would follow. This stage was very difficult to achieve because the full implementation process had not been done satisfactorily at the initial planning stage. As soon as that had been corrected, everything went smoothly and the co-researchers truly owned the project. Therefore, sustainability was ensured through their commitment to the core activity components; they accomplished the setting of a sustainable learning environment and they faced the challenges. The best approach to circumventing the obstacles and challenges is to continue monitoring results and being alert to changes that might affect the progress of the project.

3.2.4.3 The reflection stage

In this stage, the evaluation process was performed to help verify if current practices were effective and, if not, how to adapt and modify them. In the case of this study project, the results indicated moderate success: some activities were done perfectly, better than expected, whereas other activities were not done to satisfaction and were reviewed and implemented again with a different approach. Therefore, this reflection led to in-depth learning, as it encouraged dialogue that included strong reasoning among the co-researchers and judgment about their knowledge on the subject matter through recapturing and connecting the experience and evaluating it. In order

to structure the reflection process, six fundamental stages were put in place (Jasper, 2003: 16-17). Figure 3.2 illustrates the six steps of the reflection process.

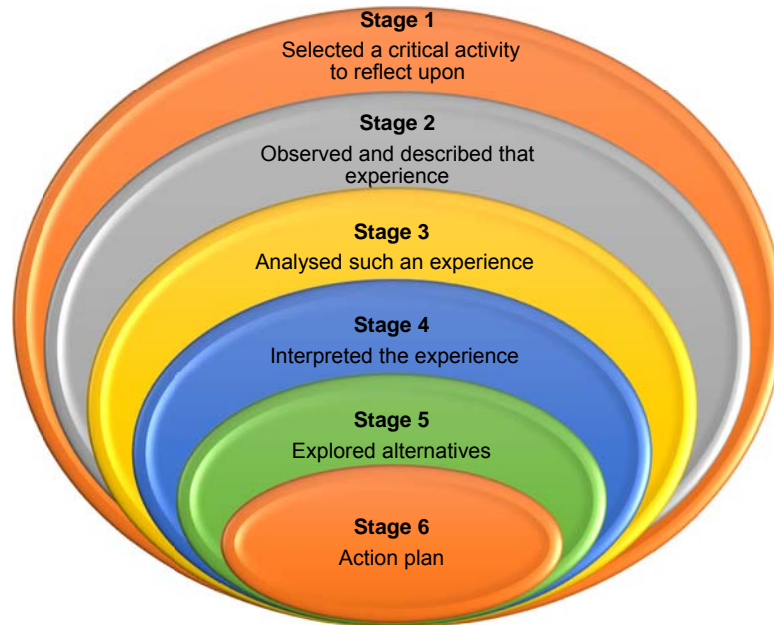


Figure 3.2: Stages of the reflective process (adapted from Jasper, 2003: 16)

Figure 3.2 illustrates the breakdown of the stages of the reflective process. First, a critical activity that truly required attention was identified and agreed upon (see 4.6.1). For example, learners failed to execute a given task because they did not know what a pancake was. The activity was carefully described and reviewed by clearly exploring where there might have been a problem, what the activity entailed and what the results of such an activity were. The results were then evaluated, with consideration of what had been done perfectly and what had gone wrong, leading to its failure. This effort was synchronised by analysing all the areas involved. As a result, we learned from previous mistakes and we intended to do it better in the next process of reinvention. This process enhanced knowledge and skill involved in manoeuvring around the activity.

The purpose of this step was to widen and deepen the activity content by exploring other ways of looking at what had occurred. This process, therefore, led to several possibilities, which were dealt with by meaningful consideration to select the most suitable action plan for implementation. Action is the final stage of reflection (Jasper,

2003: 19). At this stage, the co-researchers made sure that whatever had been implemented was being done correctly and precisely. In reality, it was already done, so co-researchers could only look back on the situation that had occurred. This meant being able to act spontaneously and being open to and welcoming any new ideas, being able to choose the right tool to use for the reflective process to continue with another spiral process, building up to developing the existing activities further, even creating new, interesting activities. The aim was to create a sustainable learning environment that was open, collaborative and supportive. Section 3.2.5 briefly discusses the co-researchers whose contributions made the study successful.

3.2.5 Ontology of PAR

Despite the considerable commonality evident in aspiration, a socially inclusive way of teaching literacy is grounded in several different ways of understanding reality (McTaggart, 1997: 8). Unlike other methods of conducting research, PAR assumes that social inclusivity will involve assistance to co-researchers, to help them develop new capacities and be empowered. While social change can lead to short-term losses and gains, it is believed that real long-term gains accrue in co-researchers' well-being while they strive to achieve the unrealisable goal of a more just society. The creation of discourses of PAR is, in one sense, strategic, simply reflecting the different social and linguistic contexts in which the struggle for rationality, justice, and coherent and satisfying forms of life is engaged (McTaggart, 1997: 8). Thus, we can say that the reality differs according to the social context. A SITS seeks to create a more equitable and effective environment that will enable the community to work harmoniously together in an attempt to solve literacy problems. Therefore, the reality was explored and constructed through human interactions and meaning of actions.

Society is a human construction that must be critiqued and changed in accordance with more inclusive interests (Murray & Ozanne, 2006: 2). "People cannot always see the same light on the hill nor seek to wander the same utopia" (McTaggart (1997: 9), but they can definitely see where there is a need for the improvement of practice. In this study, the reality was based on the collaborative effort of the co-researchers when they worked together to improve the situation of the marginalised. McTaggart (1997: 9) postulates that change is political and social, that life manifests

and cannot be broken into bits and pieces that can be changed one piece at a time. The reality is that learners cannot accomplish much change by themselves and may be unaware of constraints on their freedom, and nothing can be overcome unless they change themselves during their learning process. The advantage of using PAR is that it enables co-researchers to own the study, giving it a more meaningful direction and yielding productive results in the process of transforming learners' uncompromised situation.

3.2.6 Epistemology of PAR

Epistemology refers to the approach to understanding the knowledge that one adopts and the philosophy underlying the knowledge and efforts of gathering knowledge (Kendall, Sunderland, Barnett, Nalder & Matthews, 2011: 4). PAR embraces the notion that knowledge claims are socially constructed, embedded within systems of values, is understood through mental processes and promotes human interaction (Kendall *et al.*, 2011: 4). With this in mind, PAR reflects an investigation into the nature of knowledge and the extent to which knowledge can represent the interests of the powerful and serve to reinforce their positions in society (Thompson, 2000: 14). Power itself is an elusive concept about which there has been a considerable discussion (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003: 1) but, regarding knowledge, every individual conceptualises it a unique way. Thus, it cannot be generalised but can be shared by collaboration to improve an existing situation. PAR, therefore, affirms that experience can be a basis of knowing and that experiential learning can lead to a legitimate form of knowledge that influences practice (Herr & Anderson, 2005: 2).

In this study, knowledge is negotiated through a socially inclusive way of responding to English literacy problems. Conventional researchers assume that social reality is constructed and see the end product of research as a formal article published in a scholarly journal (McNiff & Whitehead 2006: 78). PAR practitioners believe that knowledge is owned jointly with co-researchers and must thus be shared with the community by culturally appropriate modes of communication. This perspective is strongly supported by the work of Freire (1974: 96), who used PAR to encourage poor and deprived communities to examine and analyse the structural reasons for

their oppression. Knowledge is therefore integral to the researcher's capacity to communicate respectfully and effectively in an attempt to avoid misunderstandings that can lead to failure. In this case, the inter-relationship between a socially inclusive way of teaching literacy and the influences involved transform the nature of the problem through learners' learning capabilities.

In the context of this study, real situations – mainly learners' inability to read text meaningfully, lack of logical reasoning, poor writing and inadequate presentation of facts – were scrutinised to construct new knowledge through a SITS by taking into consideration the level of learners' knowledge and finding the best ways of improving it. This approach is supported by McNiff and Whitehead (2006: 58), who assert that current knowledge represents our best efforts, as it is contextual, evolving and value-laden, but is likely to be revised because of its uncertainty. In contrast, PAR contributes to knowledge academically, and to social action in everyday life. The personal experience of learners was enhanced by making them feel that they are in control of their situations and were being given adequate time to explain how they feel about the socially inclusive way of teaching. The strategy, therefore, builds upon learners' learning capabilities, extending their knowledge and creating new insights that form the basis for improved practices. In this study, knowledge is disseminated using popular types of strategies in a collaborative fashion, including songs, radio, reading, dramatisation, storytelling and other learning activities.

3.2.7 Role of the researcher in PAR

The role of the researcher in PAR is that of facilitator and the most important research instrument, who works collaboratively to involve the stakeholders in every aspect of the research process (McTaggart, 1997: 198). Because of the leadership role, the researcher identifies with stakeholders and, by applying excellent communicative skills, influences relevant key stakeholders to take part in the study. Developing trusting relationships with key stakeholders is a crucial aspect of the research process, and requires cooperation and mutuality. The aim of the researcher is to obtain rich information on the core experiences of the co-researchers. Therefore, the researcher has to create a neutral environment for the co-researchers, within which researchers and co-researchers are equals, doing so by

depowering him/herself. In this manner, the co-researchers become involved in the study with a vision and hope that learning at their respective schools will improve.

The PAR researcher's responsibilities include contributing to research in terms of the substantiation or improvement of existing theories and to practice, by offering practical improvements to the problem situation that is explored (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007: 309). Lewin (1944: 195) asserts that consumer researchers who are interested in building a transformative research agenda can use these examples of existing theories and practice to improve their definition of their relationships with the people whose lives they hope to change, and to explicate a theory of social change to guide their research efforts and inspire creative methods of data generation. However, PAR then points to the improved educational conditions that foster and enable successful and confident learner identities (Ratcliffe & Newman, 2011: 108).

3.2.8 Relationships with co-researchers in PAR

PAR is a social process (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2007: 280). The root of PAR was to explore the relationship between individuals and the social understanding of how they are formed and reformed as individuals (Kendall *et al.*, 2011: 3). I was involved in preliminary visits to the community to establish a relationship and to determine co-researchers' written, oral and unspoken protocols and behavioural norms. The relationship between the researcher and co-researchers was bridged through one of the co-researchers, thereby eliciting input on the definition of the problem and suggestions for tackling the problem. In the context of this study, co-researchers, in the process of coming together and collectively sharing the same goal, had to evaluate themselves concerning their specialties and capabilities, in order to work together harmoniously. Kemmis and McTaggart (2007: 282) assert that PAR engages co-researchers collectively in examining their knowledge and their ability to present themselves in their social realm. The aim of the study was to create a more conceivable way of learning outside the classroom, whereby learners feel completely secure and relaxed, while at the same time improving their learning capabilities.

PAR therefore served as a way of helping learners to recover and release themselves from the constraints of an unproductive classroom setting that limits their

self-development and self-determination, and to bring hope and freedom to every individual, irrespective of his/her background. PAR is a reflexive and deliberate process through which co-researchers aim to transform their situation and learners' learning capabilities. Activities were performed through spiral cycles of critical and self-critical action and reflection (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2007: 282). The coordinating team collaboratively conducted the process of fact-finding, conceptualisation, planning, implementation and evaluation to simultaneously solve a problem of literacy and generate new knowledge. In these activities, the co-researchers prioritised and strategised their work by sharing meaningfully. Each activity was appointed to a particular person/s and was accompanied by the required and necessary resources, a stipulated time frame and mechanisms for execution. Opportunities for progress were closely monitored. These engagements, therefore, happened when equality of access and cohesive communities came together collectively in one spirit to enable learners to demonstrate levels of competence and achievement in ways that suited their needs best (DoE, 2009: 98).

3.2.9 Rhetoric in PAR

The language used in PAR has the power to empower, evolve or further marginalise the oppressed. PAR does not treat co-researchers as objects of research, but provides a space for growth by encouraging people to work together as knowing subjects and agents of change and improvement (McTaggart, 1997: 9). PAR is concerned with changing people's real-life situations and not just interpreting them. PAR helps us not only to learn from our mistakes and successes, but also to avoid the mistakes and emulate the successes of others. In order to manoeuvre the PAR process effectively and efficiently, the co-researchers have to realise the appropriateness of the process, thereby owning it. In terms of ownership, the co-researchers were given the right to receive feedback about the research findings, return raw data and control the publication of results in any format (Kendall *et al.*, 2011: 2). These rights demonstrated sustainable learning environments that were beneficial to the community and created sufficient community involvement in and control over the entire research project.

3.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Firstly, an ethical clearance number was obtained from and permission granted by the Ethics Committee and Committee for Title Registration of the University of the Free State. Furthermore, permission was requested from and granted by the Free State Department of Basic Education (DBE) to access the selected school premises. The first meeting with the principal was to negotiate access to conduct a research study at his school. A brief summary about the field and type of research to be conducted was elucidated. Thereafter, at a second meeting with the principal, an approval letter from the Free State DBE to conduct a research study was presented. Thereafter, the co-researchers were informed of the nature and purpose of the research as well as the procedures to be used and its benefits. The co-researchers were informed that PAR is time-consuming, as it requires time, relationship building, knowledge and commitment from the research team if it is to be implemented fully (MacDonald, 2012: 41). The consent forms were made available for learners' parents to complete and sign. Parents and learners were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study, and anonymity was assured.

English and Sesotho versions of the form were read out loud during the information session, so parents who were not familiar with English could be familiarised with the content of the consent forms. The names of the co-researchers and the school where the research was conducted will not be stated. The use of audio and video tape was clearly explained and agreed upon, as was who should get to see the captured information. After every meeting, we summarised key points and actions and circulated it to everyone to verify that all points had been captured. In the case of data storage, because the research involved people, we complied with the Data Protection Act to respect any concerns that the co-researchers may have had. All research carries risks. In our project, we anticipated good working relationships through careful discussion and planning and initiating how we could maximise the potential benefits of the study. The researcher remained responsible for the ethical quality of the study (Henning *et al.*, 2004: 213). The research findings and results will be open and available to the public in written form. Section 3.4 describes the research site profile.

3.4 RESEARCH SITE PROFILE

The school is situated in the Free State. The school mainly serves a disadvantaged community situated at a distance of kilometres from the school. The National Nutritional School Programme does not assist the school, thereby unjustly denying learners the opportunity to receive daily meals financed by the DoE. The school consists of 25 teachers including teacher aids and 1 007 learners, of which 559 are boys and 448 girls. Learners are divided according to their grades, and staff by a distinction between teachers and non-teaching staff members. There is good planning in the school as it strives to maintain its vision and mission through all involved members' commitment and dedication and involvement of the school community.

3.5 THE CO-RESEARCHERS

The coordinating team consisted of three learners, three teachers, the principal, a librarian, a parent, community members, the head of department for languages, a community development worker and a study coordinator. These are people who were involved in facilitating the steering group that represented the wider group affected by the problem that had been identified. In a later stage of the study, professional expertise that influenced change was invited to participate when we realised how important alternative knowledge and opinions were. Section 3.5 discusses the co-researchers' profiles and the roles they played in the study as coordinating team members. The co-researchers' profiles and roles are as follows.

3.5.1 The study coordinator

The study coordinator was a research student and is referred to as a coordinator for the purpose of this research. During the years of my education studies, I have experienced the design and application of many teaching strategies, but the rate at which learners underperform remained high, and I therefore wished to identify the core of the problem. The formulation of a SITS that aims to create a more equitable and effective environment in which learners become emperors of their own learning in partnership with the community, who work together collectively in an attempt to break learning barriers is a process that requires involvement and participation by all.

I consider myself as having sufficient awareness of the situation in the area of this study. If it is to be implemented successfully, the role a strategy such as this would be to enhance and transform learning, while involving issues and imperatives related to social justice, freedom and hope.

As the study coordinator, I identified and approached a school that would appreciate the effort and that had room for improvement (see 3.4). The process of identifying a school and persuading them to commit to the study required me to gain a thorough knowledge of the study content and the anticipated end results (see 3.2.6). After securing a research site and team of co-researchers, I explained what was expected of them as co-researchers by obtaining their informed consent to participate in the study freely (DBE, 2011: 217-219). The co-researchers and the coordinating team members signed the letters of consent, which also outlined the ethical issues relating to the University's provisions and requirements. I arranged brainstorming sessions to initiate the process of obtaining informed consent and presented a brief introduction about a SITS. I ensured that the study's operational matters were attended to and adhered to and that organising material and resource documents were available for members in preparation for and as part of the collaborative learning community (Kemmis, 2008:129).

After the first meeting with the principal and deputy principal, teachers, learners and parents, we agreed that most of the suggestions had been tested and tried, but had failed. We agreed to invite other stakeholders to take part during coordinating team sessions. I kept records of the meetings and reports and monitored the progress of the project. I became an activist during the process of investigation, thereby facilitating the use and innovation of research techniques, enabling the study to define and analyse the problem and determine ways of searching for appropriate solutions to enhance and empower Grade 4 learners' learning capacity. The other important reason for involving the co-researchers in the management of the research process was to provide them with information about the five objectives of the study, which they could share with other community members (see 3.2.8). Learning from the results enabled them to set new research objectives, adapt methods and ultimately act on the research findings.

3.5.2 Grade 4 learners

The Grade 4 learner participants numbered 18 in total. Ages of group members ranged from 10 to 16 years, with very few at the age that was generally expected for this grade, namely 9 to 10 years; 9 learners were above the age for Grade 4. Their gender representation was balanced. The learner-to-class ratio was 30:1. The majority of learners came from extremely disadvantaged families. The effect of historical inequalities on learners' socio-political, cultural and economic backgrounds was clear. During my first meeting with the principal at the school, when I negotiated access to do my research, he raised concerns with regard to English literacy problems, especially regarding the Grade 4 learners. Learners struggle with English during the intermediate to transitional phases, in the latter phase the medium of instruction is strictly English; English is regarded as the LoLT.

In the foundation phase, learners are taught in their home language, but in the intermediate phase English is used, which obstructs learners' conceptualisation of information. The intermediate phase also involves the addition of new subjects and an increase in school hours. Learners communicated information about the study amongst their peers and smoothed communication between the coordinating team and their parents. The learner participants engaged and interacted freely with one another to assist with the work involved (see 3.2.8). Learners were consequently supported in addressing their respective personal situations as it related to their perceptions about themselves as individuals and as members of the team.

While learners pursued various opportunities to enrich their learning outside the classroom, we wanted to produce learners who would be able to seek out recreational reading materials and multimedia works in English and their home language to extend their knowledge of the world around them (Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2007: 72). Learners' use of language can be promoted by engaging learners in conversation with parents, peers and teachers about what they are reading, writing and learning. Learners at almost any age are capable of taking charge of their own learning. However, the fact that almost all people are capable of self-regulation does not mean that all learners actually do take charge of their own learning

effectively (Kemmis, 2009: 132). The majority of learners rely heavily on support from teachers and parents and other appropriate stakeholders.

3.5.3 Teachers

The school in question had three Grade 4 classes, with three teachers sharing the responsibilities. In this case, two teachers had vast experience of working with learners with special needs. Their involvement in this study was based on their vast knowledge and patience of working with the most disadvantaged learners, who came from backgrounds with a variety of socio-economic influences and poor living conditions. Their patience helped learners feel welcome and free to learn. There were four other language teachers, one, a Sesotho teacher, taught Grade 4, and the others taught other grades. These teachers also highlighted the challenges they face with learners who pass Grade 4 without being fully transformed.

Teachers bring knowledge, enthusiasm and various teaching and assessment approaches to the classroom, they address individual learners' needs and ensure sound and challenging learning opportunities for every learner (see 3.2.8). They welcomed every strategy they believed would bring good results, so that they could reach their goals. To support learners being taught in English, teachers should learn about the learners' backgrounds, experiences and languages. Teachers should provide engaging and challenging opportunities for English language development for all learners, modified appropriately, as needed, by a variety of instructional, assessment and evaluation strategies that are designed to facilitate the success of Grade 4 learners (Cummins *et al.*, 2007: 47).

In this case, the role of the English teacher in primary school is to instruct learners in the subject and to oversee and record their individual progress throughout the year (see 3.2.2). Teachers are expected to give out course work and grade learners' work and prepare learners for national examinations (Branch, Hanushek & Rivkin, 2013: 3). Their role also involve communicating the progress of learners to their parents through reports and parent-learner meetings. Teachers' roles foster leadership experiences and provide the individual teacher with an opportunity to develop positive leadership traits (Branch *et al.*, 2013: 3). A heartfelt request from teachers is to encourage children to read to their parents. Parents are progressively encouraged

to become not only consumers within education but also active partners in the production of educated children (Moran, 2007: 1).

3.5.4 Principal and deputy principal

The principal as the head and primary leader of a school have many responsibilities (Borg, 2009: 59). The principal had enormous experience and knowledge of his leadership role. His unique ability and skills landed him that principal role at a very young age. A good principal is able to balance all his roles and work hard to ensure that he is doing what he believes is best for all constituents involved (see 3.2.2). In this case, the principal's vision for the school was that the entire community should commit themselves to developing the full potential of all learners. He believed that the school should be characterised by respect, tolerance, democracy and a desire to learn and grow. Thus, learners should leave the school equipped with knowledge, skills and competencies that enable them to take their meaningful place in the development of their society.

Furthermore, it was important to him that parents and the wider community be involved in the activities of the school. His school's mission was to promote active participation amongst all co-researchers. He wanted to empower all his staff, especially teacher, and learners and recognise the best achievers (see 3.2.8). Thus, we can say that the principal's leadership qualities affect school success, staff effectiveness and learner achievement directly. It goes without saying that making himself available to his staff enhanced their motivation, self-esteem, a sense of security and morale, and his continued support for teachers encouraged them to attend training sessions, which coached them to use new teaching strategies more frequently so that they could enhance their skills (see 3.2.2). Hence, his involvement in this study was very emotional. Many other strategies and studies have been designed and employed to enhance literacy. However, they have not been as successful as socially inclusive teaching strategies, which require learners and teachers to talk to one another about real-life situations, and where the use of language serves the purpose of communicating real ideas and solutions to real-life problems (Mahlomaholo, 2013: 2).

3.5.5 Head of department (languages)

In this study, the head of the department for languages became the chairperson and was responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the study, which means making sure that all the reports required were delegated from and to the other participating members (see 3.2.2). He was expected to organise and monitor the progression of activities on the school premises, and should staff obstruct the progression of the study activities, he had to step in and resolve the matter (Rousmaniere, 2013: 87). He held an important position that provided for effective implementation of the school's programme. Through his leadership skills, the primary goal was to provide guidance for the development of quality instruction for learners and facilitate improved learner achievement. His position provided participating members with the opportunity to have a significant role in school-level planning, programme development and an opportunity to develop positive leadership traits further (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014: 2).

3.5.6 Parents

The focus group of the study comprised two parents, both of whom were homemakers and who brought their undivided attention to the project – they activated the knowledge and expertise that learners possessed (see 3.2.8). The parents who took part in the study had not undergone tertiary education, but they were all willing to support their children to improve their learning capabilities. The role of parents in the study was to instil and enhance learners' listening and speaking skills, as well as their reading and writing skills (see 3.2.2) through storytelling, creating home reading corners and daily literacy routines. This exercise promoted learners' critical writing skills by igniting their listening skills. Parents are the best resource when it comes to their children's schooling and learners benefited greatly from their parents' active involvement in their schooling, especially by promoting a love for reading, which they shared with their children.

Parental support and involvement are the most important factors in effective teaching and learning. Thus, it is true that a healthy parent-school relationship fosters lifelong learning (Du Plessis, Conley & Du Plessis, 2008: 2; Ndamani, 2008: 178). Parental support involves the maintenance of a physical bond and psychological closeness

between a parent and a child (see 3.2.8). Hence, we say that young children develop stronger early literacy and language skills when parents value their role in their children's literacy and language development, regularly engage their children in literacy and language-enhancing activities and organise their homes to support literacy and language (Fathi, 2014: 1049). Parents also have to become their children's role models for literacy, and partners of their childcare providers.

Furthermore, increased levels of parental influence when children need to be helped to adjust their own behaviour or develop social and intellectual competence is crucial in the early years of children's development (Abbeduto & Symons, 2008: 116). Parents involved in their children's education make an enormous difference to their children's chance of achieving success at school, at home and later in their lives. Hence, when we invited parents to give them an overview of what the study entailed, they were eager to commence the study and to start making a difference in their children's lives. Parents who work collaboratively with their children's school help learners to work hard and succeed in their learning. Parental support was vital, not only to individual children but also to the greater society, as parents used positive means to motivate and guide learners. Thus, children became better family members, partners and citizens. Parents and community members, together with the DoE, were actively involved in the education of children in order to improve children's learning capability.

3.5.7 Librarian

The first encounter with the University of the Free State librarian was a bit daunting, as he was expecting to fill in the questionnaire or answer few questions. Once I had introduced and explained the aim and the procedure of the research study to him, he was surprised, because he did not think involvement would take so much of his time. However, he quickly became supportive of this study, as he believed that the study is transformative, and offered the hope of bringing freedom to the marginalised. He realised that even university students could not all read text meaningfully and did not have a clear, logical way of reasoning and supporting their arguments. He made sure that there were literacy activities at the library throughout the year; he wanted this type of culture to be established in communities, as librarians play a key role in

helping the public find and use information. His involvement in the study involved providing knowledge and expertise regarding the value of literacy in society as it related to collaborative ways of learning (see 3.2.8).

3.5.8 Community members (community development workers)

Community members are an important resource for learners' development and success at school. The participating community members were retired teachers, nurses, a deputy principal, and community ward members. One of the community ward members and two parents were the only people who participated in the focus group. The meeting with the community development worker was fruitful, especially because she had a child in Grade 4. She suggested using food gardening as a transformative learning activity, whereby willing community members would come to school to work with learners on a food gardening project. The principal opposed the idea, because he was concerned that the community members would steal from the school, but the community development worker assured him that, if the community was involved, he had nothing to worry about (see 3.2.8). The principal also emphasised the problem of water usage and insisted the councillor help in that regard. The food gardening project was approved.

These members collaborated with the school board to offer community-based literacy programmes for Grade 4 learners in the school. The implementation of equitable and inclusionary practices in education influenced all aspects of school life. It promoted an academic climate that encouraged all learners to work hard to reach their highest performance standards, affirming the worth of all learners and helping them strengthen their sense of identity and develop a positive self-image. These collaborative learning communities encouraged learners to think critically about themselves and others in the world around them in order to promote fairness, healthy, active relationships and responsible citizenship (Cummins *et al.*, 2007: 79). Reading clubs were also formed in the community, whereby the Nal'ibali representative based in the Free State sent specialists to offer expert training to inspire the establishment of effective reading clubs to promote reading and incorporate reading for enjoyment practices into existing programmes at the school.

Nal'ibali is a national reading-for-enjoyment campaign that aims to spark children's potential through storytelling, reading and fun learning activities. Nal'ibali's involvement in this study helped to boost a culture of illiteracy, thereby promoting a literate society that uses reading and writing in meaningful ways and a setting where children and adults can enjoy stories and books together, as part of their daily lives (see 3.2.8).

3.6 CO-RESEARCHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE FORMULATION OF A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE STRATEGY TO TEACH LITERACY IN A GRADE 4 CLASS

Having identified and briefly explained the role, strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats of the co-researchers, this section attends to the way intervention to formulate a socially inclusive strategy to teach literacy in a Grade 4 class was put into operation. The intervention consisted of six components, which are discussed in this section.

3.6.1 Brainstorming session

The brainstorming session was a way of helping us collectively gather what the group already knew, determine where the gaps lay, and find out how things could be done differently in order to transform the learners' learning capabilities. The main reason for the information session was to encourage all the co-researchers taking part in the study to become actively involved by explaining to them exactly what the study was all about, so as to motivate them to participate and get to know one another while in the process of change (see 3.2.8). The information session yielded opportunities to develop a sustainable learning environment through the implementation of a SITS. The process of deciding collectively on valuable key issues required unity to produce freedom, thereby expanding learners' learning capabilities and enabling them to lead more meaningful and freer lives (Ratcliffe & Newman, 2011: 104). The SITS approach aimed to address human development as reflected in living, and reviving learning capacities at the level of everyday life.

The first meeting began with a dynamic way of getting to know one another. Each member introduced him/herself to the group in a fun, explanatory way by using the

first letter of his/her name to define his/her personality. The follow-up question was about who generally conducts a research study and makes decisions on issues like those we had identified. This question was asked to help establish how the PAR project is different from other methods of conducting research, and it was explained in detail (see 3.2.2). The list of issues that the SITS was currently concerned with was drawn up and discussed until the research was narrowed down to the research problem. We then defined the exact question that we thought would be appropriate to answer, spending time discussing the potential benefits and pitfalls and how we would deal with political sensitivities. Furthermore, we identified the responsible persons who were going to take part in conducting this research study, and we collectively agreed on clear roles and principles (see 3.2.6).

We then decided how frequently we had to meet and what activities needed to be done between meetings; we also appointed a facilitator to conduct meetings in an orderly fashion. We used a flipchart on the table in front of everyone to encourage people to make suggestions, and we organised our decision-making actions according to the five Ws, namely:

- WHAT will be done?
- WHO will be involved?
- WHERE will it take place?
- WHEN will each stage happen?
- HOW will we do it?

In the process we found it was important to make sure that everyone in the group had the same opportunities to suggest changes, and to avoid one person dominating the group, even though some of the co-researchers were sceptical about the value of their contributions. This precaution encouraged all co-researchers to contribute to meaningful learning activities with the aim of creating an enjoyable learning environment, thereby adding value to learners' learning capabilities. We planned activities to be implemented in small groups, and each group illustrated which activities were appropriate for enhancing learners' learning capabilities; we enabled each individual to act and bring about change through their own values and objectives and to strengthen their social lives. In order to address the challenge the

participating team agreed to create a common vision. Furthermore, co-researchers were requested to consolidate the various visions into a single one that served as a guide for the approved activities.

As a PAR team we were collectively involved in discussing and making sense of the findings and their implications so that we could draw on the conclusions and collectively create knowledge. I took a leading role in writing up the findings, while other group members had the opportunity to make inputs, thereby ensuring the collaborative nature of the research (see 3.2.7). This ensured that co-researchers were involved from the beginning of the process and they were aware of the research at an earlier stage; this meant that they were more likely to respond well once the research had been completed. The interest the co-researchers showed for the research topic made it clear that it affected their well-being directly, therefore they cared passionately about it and were emotionally invested in the research. After a participating team had formulated the common vision, the next step was to conduct a SWOT analysis.

3.6.2 SWOT analysis

The team used a SWOT analysis, which comprised an assessment of strengths, weaknesses, internal opportunities and external threats, to help the team assess issues within and outside the study and to conduct proper strategic decision making. The aim was to leverage our strengths, to focus on and exploit opportunities or employ them to counter the threats and understand the weaknesses in order to decide what areas needed serious attention. When properly applied a thorough SWOT analysis could serve as an irreplaceable strategic tool that has the potential to help navigate and implement a sound strategy to deal with English literacy problems. While all participating stakeholders, especially learners, were involved in collaborative work exercising a SITS across the whole school, collaborative learning communities became evident. Hence, our strategic planning logic required that the actions to be taken in future should match strengths with opportunities and ward off threats while we worked to overcome weaknesses.

3.6.2.1 Strengths

The team identified a number of strengths, which included cooperative, dedicated and determined members who were willing to learn and work collectively (Kemmis, 2009: 297) to achieve the anticipated teaching strategy (see 3.2.2). A number of professionals were deeply involved, including a retired professor who worked closely with the language teachers (see 3.2.8) to enhance their teaching skills and encourage them to develop extensive plans before teaching classes. Community members contributed various experiences and expertise to the study, creating an inclusive, cohesive society in which all were equal co-researchers with equal opportunities. The learners in the team were very enthusiastic and keen to participate and learn, as the SITS involved enjoyable learning experiences in a relaxed learning environment that was not bound to a classroom setting. This statement is in line with Belliveau and Kim (2013: 9), who affirm that people with problems are the ones who should solve those problems, and that is why learners were included in the study. Learners' reading ability in their home language was a source of strength, as they could, to some extent, read and were able to tell their version of a story after reading a storybook.

Thus, proper implementation of a SITS would capitalise on learners' minimal exposure to English language and linguistics. Parents were also a source of strength as they encouraged and assisted their children outside the team's planned activities. The team's discussions incorporated a variety of views, because there is no absolute truth (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 107) in research, and that is why the team comprised a variety of co-researchers with different skills. The school provided a rich space, as it was willing to host this study, enabling real-life task performance to come into being through a SITS that was learner-centred and which strived to promote a lifelong learning society and create a sustainable learning environment, thereby reducing illiteracy and poverty. We received resources from various willing co-researchers and other stakeholders. These resources included reading supplements from the Nal'ibali representative, reading books from the library, dictionaries and other learning materials.

3.6.2.2 Weaknesses

Weaknesses involved learners' lack of reading opportunities, secured spaces, and a climate that invited learners to engage in reading activities, especially in their home environments. Underperforming teachers, who, despite their best efforts, did not perform to the expected standard, weakened the school's academic development. Teachers were not knowledgeable about the requirements of providing proper support to learners with learning difficulties. Clinging to outdated teaching methods was problematic, as it involved emphasis on rote learning and the teacher acting as sole role model for a large group of learners in a classroom. Furthermore, self-contentment and exerting minimal effort to improve personal language ability compromised the rate at which the anticipated strategy could be implemented efficiently and successfully. A lack of creativity in formulating learning and assessment tasks, simulating real-life English tasks, and a lack of cooperation and mutuality were deterring factors. One of the causes of these threats was the principal failing to depower himself as director. This meant he was not on the same level as the rest of the group, and he did not necessarily listen to the other team members.

3.6.2.3 Opportunities

The Nal'ibali representative conducted a reading-for-enjoyment workshop to demonstrate, support and promote appropriate reading practices in communities (through reading clubs). By constantly monitoring literacy acquisition, learners who were immersed in great and well-told stories, especially in languages they understood better, became inspired, wanted to learn to read and, in fact, learnt many informal but essential literacy lessons. Creating a favourable home environment for learning, characterised by a positive parental contribution, exposed children to the richness of language and concepts they need for successful learning. As a result, personally rewarding learning and purposeful intervention was a recipe for successful literacy development. Another interesting trend was the ability to leverage the collective wisdom that encouraged teachers to learn to work together with their learners and other stakeholders to create a shared future, which enabled them to tailor their focus to exactly what they needed. Therefore, learners were forced to critically think on how to effectively find content and to discern reliable sources.

3.6.2.4 Threats

Even though the school possessed tremendous resources in teachers, the challenge was connecting teachers with each other to ward off isolation, and to leverage the power and the collective intelligence that resides in them to work with parents with the sincere intention to help learners. One parent was intimidated by a teacher who said, “*O kena jwang kopanong eo, nna ke le tichere ke sa mengoa*” [How can you attend the meeting when teachers like me were not invited?]. The parent ceased attending meetings due to the teacher’s discriminatory comment. Other learners were unmotivated, due to problems of poverty and abuse, therefore, they did not show interest in their studies, let alone allow anybody to come close to them. Another challenge was the lack of access to learners in the absence of the classroom teacher, as teachers who were not participating were not supportive.

3.6.3 Prioritising activities

Prioritisation is a management discipline that needs to be exercised successfully at all levels of strategic planning and implementation (Kerzner, 2013: 104). The co-researchers’ intention was to ignite learners’ listening and speaking skills with word recognition techniques, namely, phonics and sight words, in working to attaining reading and writing skills. Therefore, a variety of learning activities, such as games, stories, songs and dramatisations, were incorporated to boost a natural experience facilitating learners’ literacy development. The co-researchers, from their observation, highlighted that social inclusion boosts educational retention in the teaching and learning process. These activities enabled learners to learn through their senses, namely, seeing, hearing and touching, to make learning easier and more enjoyable, and they learned collectively as a team. Hence, activities were introduced that promoted learning in a way that develops these skills. Having prioritised the learning activities, the next activity was to draw up a strategic plan to operationalise the activities of each of the priorities.

3.6.4 Strategic planning session

The coordinating team strategised a plan that lined up all the agreed upon activities to be implemented, and set out details of socially inclusive responses to English

literacy problems. The team allocated tasks, showed what kind of activity was involved, identified a responsible person, the duration of the activity, resources needed and performance indicators. This showed that the team was in control and owned the project; as such, emancipation became reality. The following activities took place for each of the two priorities.

3.6.4.1 The first priority: Listening and speaking skills

Phase 1: Listening and speaking

River bank game: Listening skills and TPR; cumulative songs and stories; speaking skills.

The language teaching method is built around the coordination of speech and action. It attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity. TPR is linked to the trace theory of memory (Nadel, Samsonovich, Ryan & Moscovitch, 2000: 352-354). In TPR learners have the primary roles of listener and performer. They listen attentively, respond physically to commands given by the facilitator and are required to respond both individually and collectively.

Mantlwane (Wendy house): Listening and speaking.

It was played outside, where there was space. Learners used mud to “bake” cakes, using different shapes and sizes of containers. The cakes were dried in the sun and then eaten figuratively. Thereafter the children imaginatively act reading a bedtime story in preparation for the next day, when they are sent to school. Sometimes roles of family members, like father, mother, daughter and son, are modelled to enliven the activity. A multitude of literacy skills were developed, but mainly listening and speaking during modelling. While children were playing, community members and parents stimulated learners’ conversations by asking questions during their modelling. The questions tapped into learners’ imagination and worked on their listening and speaking intelligences.

Phase 2: Reflection on the lesson learnt

At the end of the activities, co-researchers shared their views on the outcomes of the lesson learnt during learners’ play. These activities made parents and community

members aware of concepts that could be used in teaching and learning activities to address certain learning skills. Moreover, parents and community members shared their observations, highlighting the skills demonstrated by learners and epistemological matters, specifically the way knowledge was assessed through play; that joy reflected on learners' faces as they interacted was beyond doubt. It was required of learners to reflect on the characters that had been created for them and to defend them. What was most important was their creativity and critical thinking. The purpose of this phase was to give learners the opportunity to work on their interpersonal, intrapersonal and linguistic intelligences, as well as to enhance their listening and speaking skills.

Phase 3: Presentation of the lesson

River bank game: Facilitator places a rope on the floor – one side of the rope represents inside and the other outside the water. Learners stand behind the rope (outside the water). The facilitator then shouts, “Simon says, in the water (or out of the water)”, and learners must jump in response of the instruction given.

TPR: Facilitated through role playing with cumulative songs and stories.

Wendy house: Learners integrate all the information on settings, adjectives and verbs into a story-sequencing format in six spaces: The first is the beginning of the story, the following three the middle of the story, and two final spaces for the resolution of the problem or conflict. This activity provided learners with a systematic and structured means of working and gave them the chance to be original and use their imagination.

Phase 4: Reflection on the lesson presented

In pairs, learners interacted with a peer, formulated and wrote a story based on their experiences of their play and then presented their stories to the entire class using the story-sequencing format as a guideline. The listening member of the pair asked questions and indicated whether the story was clear enough, if they were fluent in reciting a cumulative song or story. With this activity, learners generated language spontaneously.

Phase 5: Assessment

While learners presented their stories to the entire class, they mastered certain skills, namely, reading aloud in a clear voice, pausing for dramatic effect, and showing the illustrations to the audience. A wall display was set up in class with all the learners' stories, and a PowerPoint presentation was made with a few examples of these stories, to be shown to parents, teachers and other children. This served as a motivation for learners to see their work exhibited, and boosted their morale. It is through interaction and practise that the ability to listen and speak improves. Children pick up language better in activities that require their participation.

Table 3.1: Priority 1: Action plan: Listening and speaking skills

Activities	People involved	Resources	Time frame	Monitoring
Mantlwane (Wendy house) Role play=TPR River bank game	Parents, community members, Grade 4 teacher and learners	Empty containers, bricks, mats	1 hour 1 hour 1 hour	Attendance registers
Reflection on the lesson learnt from playing the game	Parents, community members, Grade 4 learners and teachers	Pens and paper	40 minutes	Feedback session
Presentation of the lesson	Teachers, Grade 4 learners	Lesson plan	40 minutes	Feedback session
Reflection on the lesson presented	Parents, community members, learners and teachers	Pens and paper	40 minutes	Feedback session
Assessment	Teacher and Grade 4 learners	Pens and paper	40 minutes	Test records

3.6.4.2 The second priority: Reading and writing strategy**Phase 1: Reading**

Reading habits produce the best results if they are instilled at an early age. Consequently it is crucial to introduce reading gradually for fun. Reading books to children stirs their senses, inspires their imagination and spark a love of reading that lasts forever. Parents are encouraged to set a good example for good reading habits, as children emulate the actions of their parents. In this phase, the Nal'ibali representative read a story aloud to learners during the reading period. His aim was

to ensure that learners knew, at the end of each session, the title of the book and names of author/s and characters, and were able to summarise the passage that had been read to them. This phase involved the teacher, while the Nal'ibali representative read, going around the class emphasising the important points and illustrating what has been read, so that learners understood and followed the passage being read. Learners were then encouraged to picture the events silently in their own way while the teacher demonstrated and the Nal'ibali representative carried on reading the story. After the reading session learners had to act out the passage read.

Girls often play *Kgathi* (skipping rope). In this game learners are taught verbal skills and reading fluency as they recite rhymes that accompany the revolutions of the rope. As they skip, they alternate with one another, reciting a rhyme and sometimes competing to see who could recite it three times in a row without stumbling. In this activity, learners' rhyming was accompanied by physical actions, which helped confirm that learners' "gripped" the language, and it aided memorisation. Literacy teaching took place in a context of presenting an English lesson that enhanced learners' interest in English as a subject.

Phase 2: Dramatisation

Dramatisation is a collective act and technique that can be used to develop language skills (Literat, 2013: 1). Learners were constantly confronted with demands to take responsibility, use their imagination, offer alternatives and present solutions in their own way and time. This happens when learners are provided with a conducive space for learning to occur and where work promotes enjoyable learning. Therefore, in this learning activity learners learned through all their senses. Dramatisation is said to positively develop children's listening skills. The storybooks were characterised by colourful images and the content was complemented by large pictures that drew the learners' attention and helped them to remember the stories (Literat, 2013: 90). Therefore, the presentation should involve checking to see if learners can predict the beginning and end of the story, whether they can draw inferences and summarise.

Phase 3: Presentation of the lesson

The teacher organised the presentation of the lesson in such a way that the most important points were that learners could identify and relate to the essence of the story after hearing it. The teacher created a space for learners to make them feel in control of their own learning by providing them with an opportunity to present their thoughts to the rest of the group. They were asked which characters they preferred, what they learned from different characters and what they would change if they could. This activity encouraged learners to take part in class discussions, critically reflect on their prior knowledge and come up with innovative and creative ideas. The trusting relationship, coupled with positive reinforcement, helped learners to overcome difficult situations, and the teacher's role of modelling for the learners was made easy.

Phase 4: Reading activities (word recognition)

This phase was about reflection on the lesson that had been presented. Learners were given a reading activity exercise and had to answer questions in writing. The major purpose of reading is the construction of meaning from a written text, enabling an individual to comprehend and respond to what is read. The process of this activity involved determining pronunciation and some degree of meaning of an unknown word. In other words, reading must end in meaning construction (Urquhart & Weir, 2014: 14-15). Learners used writing-to-learn activities, such as free writes, word associations, punctuation and sequencing, and then strived to master creative writing. After the implementation of writing-to-learn activities in the Grade 4 class, the expectation was that there would be a visible sign that fluency and confidence had increased from previous years. The Nal'ibali representative and a teacher were the key role players in guiding the reflection process, inducing learners to make sense of their ideas by acting like empty vessels awaiting to be filled with knowledge by those ones with the authority, as explained by Freire's banking model concept (Freire, 1970a: 59). Above all, learners made progress towards collectively developing phonemic awareness.

Phase 5: Assessment of the lesson

Assessment tasks were performed to assess learners' learning achievements in order to reinforce their learning capabilities in elements where they were lacking.

Assessment was implemented throughout the phases by constructive feedback throughout the learning process, to encourage learners to work independently, and to enhance the teaching and learning process. Table 3.2 outlines co-researchers' activities.

Table 3.2: Priority 2: Action plan reading skills

Activities	Responsible people	Resources	Time frame	Monitoring
Reading (jump rope/roll under the rope)	Nal'ibali representative, Grade 4 learners and teacher	Storybooks	6 months, done 3 days during the mornings	Attendance registers
Dramatisation (reflection after reading)	Nal'ibali representative, Grade 4 learners and teacher	Reading materials	1 hour	Feedback session
Presentation of the lesson	Nal'ibali representative, teacher	Lesson plan, pen and paper	40 minutes	Feedback session
Reading activities (word recognition)	Nal'ibali representative, learners, teacher	Pen and paper	40 minutes	Feedback session
Assessment of the lesson	Nal'ibali representative, Grade 4 learners, teacher	Marking sheets, pen	40 minutes	Records, feedback forms

3.6.4.3 The third priority: Writing skill

The best methods of teaching are derived from surveys, observations, interviews and practise. Learners exercised gardening methods with experts, resource persons, parents, teachers and the researcher, the latter providing a focus that encouraged parents and the local community to engage with and contribute to the school. Therefore, a lesson was based on gardening methods and conducted by learners. The process was rich and exciting and involved showing how gardening can contribute to a sustainable learning environment. The gardening activity encouraged inclusion and had the capacity to involve all the stakeholders involved fully in getting learners interested in gardening and undertaking the gardening activities

themselves. This learning activity examined the perceived learning outcomes of gardening activities classified under four learning areas, namely:

- Cognitive learning, concerning the acquisition of knowledge and understanding,
- Affective learning, which relates to the development of pupil attitudes, values, beliefs and self-perceptions,
- Behavioural and physical learning, involving personal behaviours, physical wellbeing and physical skills, and
- Interpersonal and social learning, which concerns communication, the ability to relate to others and teamwork.

Phase 1: Gardening activity

The teacher explained the objective of the garden project, gave a description and distributed tasks. Learners became aware of the task and made every effort to present the best garden. Learners studied the tools used for gardening, the climate and seasons appropriate for each crop. Accordingly they prepared seeds, tools and fertilizers. Thereafter, they applied gardening methods and were taught how to treat the soil, heal plants, monitor and water the plants. With a great deal of attention, learners were guided through the harvesting process, and ways to store and conserve the harvested crops.

Phase 2: Reflection on the lesson learnt from working in the garden

Teachers reported that working in the garden gave them an arena in which they could encourage pupils to become active and independent learners. The co-researchers were of the opinion that the experiences afforded by taking the learners outside the classroom setting and encouraging them to undertake investigative work involved a different kind of pedagogy, in which learners took greater control over their own learning and in which the teacher's role became more facilitative. The cognitive learning outcomes from such work were reported and learners gained new physical skills and self-esteem.

Teachers also identified social and interpersonal outcomes of engaging in gardening that related to relationships, using inter-cohort gardening clubs and curriculum

activities that involved the wider community. This learning activity gave learners new opportunities and environments for social interaction that widened their experience and raised their confidence. As one of the learners commented, “*ya re thusa hoba re entse metsoalle e metjha,*” [It does kind of help you make more friends]. Finally, schools reported how using the school garden encouraged community involvement.

Phase 3: Presentation of the lesson

The teacher incorporated garden-related literacy activities, ranging from reading stories about different types of writing to imaginative literacy work inspired by the garden, which the learners produced. All these activities included riddles and poems, some of which were entered into poetry competitions. Parents and other community members shared the opinion of the teacher, namely, that any outdoor learning activities, even those not specifically relating to gardening activities, contributed to literacy development.

Phase 4: Reflection on the lesson presented

Learners were much more committed to their work, especially those with attention deficit and other disorders, and were more relaxed, working very hard to show their parents that they could do it. The parents and teachers reported fewer discipline problems during the learning activity. Teachers developed useful concepts to create a sense of boundaries when learning in the garden and they incorporated gardening into their lesson plans. Teachers, parents and the community members also learnt useful gardening skills, because they had to teach learners the right and proper way of gardening.

Phase 5: Assessment

Using gardens promoted the development of active citizens and independent learners, and changes were observed, not only in the children, but also in the local community's attitudes towards the school. Learners' imagination and creativity were at work through visual, kinaesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal and linguistic intelligences (Wright, 2006: 57), while they were unconsciously thinking in English. The school invited parents and community members to participate in the lesson, and learners were allowed to take their portfolio of work home to share with

others, thereby aiding the recuperation process in the community and promoting reconciliation.

Table 3.3: Priority 3: Action plan writing skill

Activities	Responsible person	Resources	Time frame	Monitoring
Gardening	Community members, researcher, parents, teachers, learners	Gardening tools, seeds, fertilizers	6 months	Watering, suppressing weeds, harvesting, storing and conserving
Reflection on the lesson learnt	Community members, researcher, parents, teachers, learners	Pens and paper	40 minutes	Attendance registers and feedback session
Presentation of the lesson learnt	Teachers	Lesson plan	40 minutes	Feedback session
Reflection on the presentation of the lesson	Teacher, learners, researcher	Pens and paper	40 minutes	Feedback session
Assessment of the lesson learnt	Researcher, parents, teachers, learners	Pens and paper	40 min	Test records and feedback forms

3.7 MONITORING THE PROGRAMME

Schedules of studying and testing spread out over time produced better long-term retention than a single study session or test. Thus, presenting learners with step-by-step solutions to problems should be alternated with expecting the learners solve the problems by themselves. As a result, materials presented in verbal, visual and multimedia forms give a richer representation than those with a single modality. Using quizzes promotes learning, as learners benefit more from asking and answering deep questions that elicit explanations (e.g., why, why not, how, what if) than shallow questions (e.g., who, what, when, where). In other words, outlining, integrating and synthesising information produce better learning than re-reading materials or other, more passive, strategies. This suggests that learners need to allocate more time to difficult material and to repeat practise for some concepts and skills. Learning is better when learners actively produce answers rather than merely recognising answers, such as in multiple-choice questions.

Learners also learn better when teachers link concepts to concrete perceptual motor experiences, particularly at early stages of learning. Furthermore, learners tend to remember stories and example cases better than didactic facts and abstract principles. Learners benefit from feedback on their performance in a learning task and, as a result, learning incorrect information can be limited when learners are given immediate feedback. Learning materials should not overload working memory. Learning is stimulated by problems that create cognitive imbalance, such as obstacles to goals, contradictions, conflict and anomalies.

Cognitive flexibility is the human ability to adapt cognitive processing strategies to face new and unexpected conditions in the environment (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996: 112). It improves when learners are presented with multiple viewpoints that link facts, skills, procedures and deep conceptual principles (Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill & Joshi, 2007: 78). Incorporated assignments should be neither too difficult nor too easy, but at the right level of difficulty for each learner's skill and prior knowledge. At the same time, children learn by observing and by participating peripherally in their daily routines. Therefore, learning is deeper and learners are

more motivated when the materials and skills are anchored in real-world problems that matter to them.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

CDA was used to analyse the data generated; written and spoken texts were studied and analysed to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias (Van Dijk, 1993: 250). Fairclough (1993: 135) defines CDA as that which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices, events and texts as well as wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes. This is done mainly by investigating ways in which the utterance-type level and situated meanings are associated with social practices (Gee, 2011: 68). Therefore, power relations are ideologically shaped and struggles over power tend to explore how the difficulty of the relationships between discourse and communication tend to reproduce existing unequal power relations (Fairclough, 1993: 135). Thus, in this case, the focus of the study was for the researcher to depower herself and give power to the co-researchers.

CDA primarily deals with the discourse dimensions of power abuse and the injustice and inequality that result from it (Van Dijk, 1993: 252). As such, CDA agrees with CER in the sense that both strive to search for the origin of the problem at hand, thereby finding ways to alleviate the problem (Bloor & Bloor, 2007: 12). The critical targets of CDA are the power elites that enact, sustain, legitimise or ignore social inequality and injustice. In the formulation of a SITS in response to the English literacy problems experienced in a Grade 4 class, this study focused on ways to improve Grade 4 learners' learning capabilities. It also attempted to discover how those with knowledge or education banks, as stipulated by Freire, used their power to legitimise their acts, and in what ways those acts had been naturalised by the rest of the co-researchers.

The critical stance decision enabled the study to achieve some of its objectives, namely, describing and understanding the components and the contexts under which a SITS would respond to the literacy problems of a Grade 4 class, and its successful implementation. The expectation and assumption were that all the co-researchers

involved would collaboratively formulate a strategy to be tried and tested. Fairclough's three levels of discourse analysis (as interpreted by Gee, 2011: 90) were used to treat the findings of this study; the levels are textual analysis, contextual analysis and sociological analysis.

According to Fairclough (1993: 133) each of these dimensions requires a different kind of analysis. At the textual level (description), it involves linguistic analysis, while contextual analysis (interpretation) is the analysis of text production, distribution and interpretation, especially in terms of the way in which the readership is guided to a "preferred" reading. Lastly, at the level of social practice (explanation), analysis explores the extent to which the text upholds or reproduces hegemonic discursive or social practices, and how it stands in relation to certain prevalent conditions, which entail the way materials are used within social environments (Fairclough, 1993: 138; Gee, 2003: 89; Van Dijk, 1993: 250). In doing this, Fairclough attempts to establish a systematic method for exploring the relationship between a text and its social context.

3.9 CONCLUSION

PAR, despite some criticism, is used in many fields of human endeavours, such as social and health services, community development and education, to address a long history of difficulties in relation to successfully transferring research knowledge into changes in practice. PAR is also a means of combining the generation of knowledge with the professional development of practitioners through their participation as co-researchers. This suggests that the relevance of PAR to English language teaching and teacher education, as we can deduce from the foregoing discussion, is that it cuts across many disciplinary fields, including the field of applied linguistics. It is seen as a flexible research methodology suitable for research that supports change. Phasha *et al.* (2012: 4) state that PAR involves fluid and overlapping cycles of investigation, action planning, piloting of new practices and evaluation of outcomes, incorporated at all stages with the collection and analysis of data and generation of knowledge.

As a result, the outcomes of PAR are both practical and theoretical. The knowledge it generates has a direct and ongoing impact on changing the practice for co-researchers and for a wider audience through its publications and application. The data generation procedures were outlined by indicating the expected roles of the co-researchers and the researcher. Within these roles of confidentiality and privacy as they relate to qualitative research were ensured. Data generation instruments were listed and an exit criterion delineated. Furthermore, Fairclough's three levels of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1993: 1) were used to analyse the findings of this study. These levels are textual analysis, contextual analysis and sociological analysis. Textual analysis characterises discourse as a tangible object, while contextual analysis defines discourse as a single event. Sociological analysis defines the final product of this research by characterising discourse as information, ideology and a social product. Data generation and analysis also includes a participatory sequence of events in which preliminary findings are used cautiously to empower the co-researchers. The trustworthiness of this study was ascertained. In conclusion, this chapter summarised activities that occurred during the data generation and analysis phases of this study in the manner and sequence that they occurred. The next chapter presents a discussion of PAR and how it was used to generate data.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS TOWARDS THE FORMULATION OF A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY TO RESPOND TO ENGLISH LITERACY PROBLEMS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study aims to formulate a SITS in response to English literacy problems experienced in a Grade 4 class. In this chapter, data are presented, analysed and interpreted in accordance with the five objectives of the study. These objectives relate to the challenges of teaching literacy, formulating a SITS, understanding the conducive conditions under which such a strategy can be successfully implemented, and anticipating plausible threats towards the formulation of such a strategy in order to circumvent them. The final objective involves formulating indicators of success and lack thereof with regard to a SITS for teaching English literacy to a Grade 4 class. To achieve this aim, the challenges that were identified and categorised are divided into subheadings corresponding to the respective constructs generated from the literature.

Furthermore, the opening paragraph of each objective discusses policy, theory and findings from previous research. The extracts retrieved from empirical data are analysed in the context of the opening paragraph, proving its relevance for and influence on the formulation of a SITS. CDA is used to access the meaning of data (van Dijk, 2009: 68) in order to deepen our understanding of how these challenges influence the effective formulation of a SITS that responds to the problems of English literacy. The meaning of the text is uncovered at the level of discursive practice, which might have been informed by cultural practices and/or habits of the mind (Fairclough, 1993: 117; Gee, 2011: 197; Van Dijk, 2009: 68). Lastly, the social structural level unearths interpretations, which were informed by the way society is organised. CER is also used at the levels of analysis, to assess how power, hope, social justice and emancipation relate to the problems identified. In conclusion, I used empirical data to check whether the data confirm or refute what the literature says. The stated structure for analysis was applied to all the challenges and is repeated for all the objectives of this study.

4.2 THE NEED TO FORMULATE A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY TO RESPOND TO ENGLISH LITERACY PROBLEMS

This section puts together the data that are related to the challenges of teaching literacy that make the formulation of a SITS necessary. Each challenge relating to the expectations of moving away from the traditional methods of teaching to a more socially inclusive way of teaching English literacy is discussed. The challenge that was identified in the first objective, which uncovered the need to formulate a SITS that responds to the problems of promoting English literacy, relates to the lack of a dedicated team with a common vision to aid the meaningful presentation of the main language domain and develop a socially inclusive way of teaching. Therefore, in the absence of a dedicated team, there were no priorities to guide a meaningful way of teaching skills related to listening and speaking, reading and writing in a collaborative manner. These challenges are presented, analysed and discussed in Section 4.2.1.

4.2.1 Ineffective teaching of the four main language skills due to the lack of a dedicated team

In the context of this study, using best practices to teach listening and speaking skills effectively requires a dedicated team that shares a common purpose, values and principles (Martin & Peercy, 2014: 722). The aim is to enhance the level of preparation, presentation and assessment of phonics and sight word vocabulary (Terry & Irving, 2010: 9; UNESCO, 2004: 55). The team's common purpose eases the processes of delegation and division of labour amongst members according to their strengths and interests (Ehri, 2005: 125). Principles of respect, hope and social justice enhance the creation of space in which teachers and other stakeholders use various tools to work together (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011: 647; Bruce, 2011: 43) to promote teaching and learning, listening and speaking skills. The team's task in this context is to use learning theory on English sound systems and its acquisition, as formulated by problem-based, cooperative and communicative approaches, to develop learners' listening and speaking skills (CAPS, 2011: 13; Massey, 2013: 125).

During a school visit during which I attempted to collaborate, Mr Jam invited me to his class to comment on his lesson. He started his lesson as follows:

Take out your learning activity book and turn to page 42, do that exercise.

Figure 4.1 shows the exercise on page 42 to which Mr Jam referred.

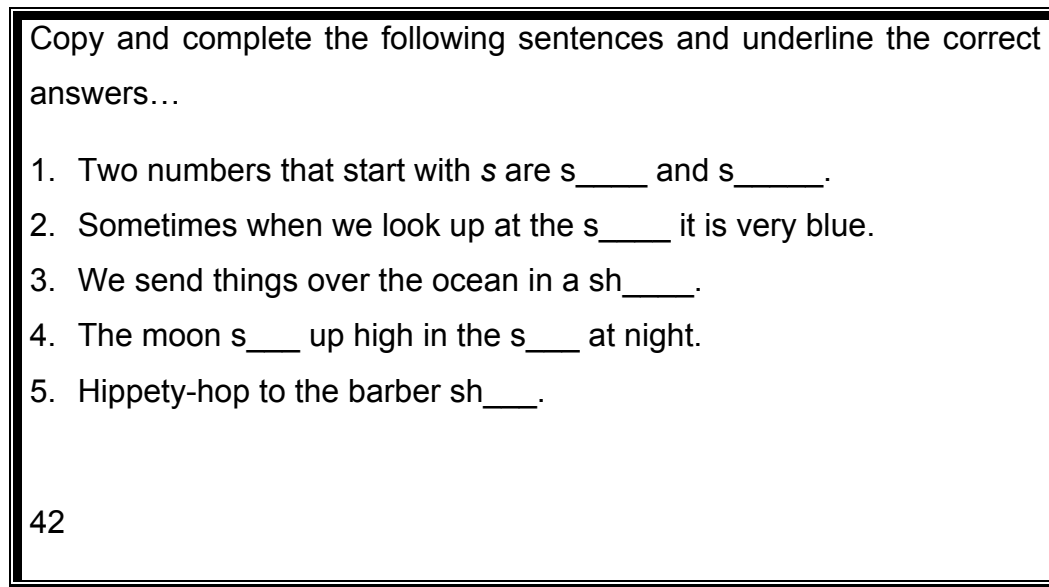


Figure 4.1: Learning activity 1

Considering the extract presented in Figure 4.1, Mr Jam's instruction appears to assume that learners have the prerequisite knowledge and skills to complete the task he gave them. Mr Jam's instruction contradicts the best practices captured in the literature, which state that learning is cumulative (Fox, 2013: 4). In the context of this study, it means that learning is constructed through integrating learners' prior learning with newly gained information (Jorgensen & Lowrie, 2013: 130). However, Mr Jam's presentation does not assess what learners already know and attempt to build on it. This was confirmed when I asked:

Ntate, have you done this work already/before?

Mr Jam responded by saying:

No, I just follow the workbook.

Thus, from Mr Jam's response it is clear that he did not teach the work that he seemed to be assessing. Furthermore, Mr Jam's lesson presentation does not concur with the principles of social inclusiveness and socially constructive ways of knowing, which assert that knowledge is a social human product (see Section 2.4.1.3). For instance, he did not employ best teaching practices. In my opinion, the manner in which he approached his class in an attempt to present his lesson displayed poor teaching practices. He did not explain the content of the learning activity by referring to life examples. He only instructed learners to *Take out your learning activity book and turn to page 42, do that exercise*. He took for granted and assumed that learners knew how to read and could complete the task easily. In reality, even the simplest question was problematic for most learners, as they had, until recently, been taught exclusively in their home language. Their problem was demonstrated when learners asked the teacher to clarify the questions, by pointing them out to him:

Tsholo: Teacher [pointing to the sentence].

Mr Jam: The answer is six and seven, right?

Instead of explaining, Mr Jam simply wrote down the answers for learners to copy in their exercise books. The teacher, as a pastoral caregiver and mediator, is supposed to demonstrate an empathetic relationship with learners, and to nurture and enable them to take a stand in their learning (Grove, 2004: 9). Contrary to the best practices, the way Mr Jam conducted his lesson did not give learners a chance to make crucial instructional decisions that gave them room for creative freedom, because he directed their behaviour. In addition, instead of giving a thorough explanation of the learning activity, the teacher solved most of the classroom problems, thereby failing to implement fairness, transparency, educational assessment, validity and reliability in the teaching and learning process (Tomlinson, 2014a: 25-26). These teaching methods include active learning, which is an aspect of best teaching practices, whereby learners solve problems, answer questions, formulate questions of their own, and discuss and explain concepts to one another. However, this behaviour was not evident in Mr Jam's lesson.

Though learners were not confident about the task due to the language barrier, they attempted the work to the best of their ability – a little teaching and support from a more knowledgeable other would have helped them to succeed in the given task. However, Mr Jam deprived learners of the opportunity to discover learning for themselves. Discovering learning encourages learners to explore, manipulate and wrestle with the questions for themselves, and remember the concepts and knowledge they discovered on their own (Bruner & Cole, 1990: 2). Through such experiences learners draw from prior knowledge while discovering and learning facts, relationships and new truths. However, if a teacher does not tap these possible learning experiences, the teacher displays negligence.

Another learner had the following response:

Two numbers that starts with s are supa and sheleng.

The learner's response, referring to *supa* (seven) and *sheleng* (ten), shows the transitional challenges involved in moving from being taught in the home language to using English as LoLT. In their mathematics class learners had been taught to count numbers in their home language, so they knew only one number that started with "s", namely *supa*. In an attempt to figure out the next number starting with 's', they suggested *sheleng*, thereby being influenced and relying on familial and cultural background (Castaneda & Isgro, 2013: 70-71). It was clear that the learners understood the question when the teacher explained it in their home language; the problem originated in the transition from home language to English as LoLT, hence, *supa*. In this case, learners were still in the beginning stage of their advancement towards successful mastery of sounds, letter-sound knowledge and word identification.

Vygotsky's social constructivist theory emphasises learning as a social activity that is integrated; it requires learners to interact and engage in classroom activities (Silliman & Wilkinson, 2007: 301). Thus, a socially inclusive learning environment stirs learners' prior knowledge into a specific direction, enabling them to discover seemingly unrelated concepts that are, in fact, related; for example, some learners referring to ten as *sheleng*, which is a word that refers to an amount of money in a certain culture. However, Mr Jam's classroom setting did not encourage learners'

interaction and cooperation, as his instruction was rigid (*Take out your learning activity book and turn to page 42, do that exercise*); he failed to ensure that the learners understood the instruction and the lesson, which would have enhanced learner participation. Instead, he could have worked in a collective setting with other teachers, learners and team members, using their mutual reflection, noble ideas, imagination and expertise. He could have learnt to co-create a meaningful lesson, by planning, presenting and assessing, through their participation, what they know to be real.

In so doing co-researchers could externalise their prior knowledge and reconceptualise their understanding to develop new ways of teaching reading (Martin & Peercy, 2014: 722; Prasad, 2012: 190). Therefore, when challenging learners to provide letter-sounds that start with “s”, an teacher who is teaching actively could introduce a peculiar feature of the language by explaining that “c” at the beginning of some words are pronounced as “s”. More commonly, “s” is the sound at the beginning of car, cat, and can. Challenged for more words starting with “c”, some learners mentioned kite and kick, others chiefs and Chevrolet.

Here was an opportunity to teach the “ch” sound of chiefs and Chevrolet at the same time as the “k” and “c”, so learners would be alert for an “h” after the “c” and the difference between short and long sounds of letters. The hard “c” sound often heads the non-front vowels “a” and “o”, except in letter combination such as [sc], [ch], and [sch] A silent “e” can occur after the letter “c” at the end of a word. To represent [k] before front vowels are to add “h”. But the teacher put less emphasis on enhancing learners’ learning capabilities and raising their awareness of letter-sounds. He failed to activate learners’ prior knowledge and expand their understanding of the importance of phonics in the area of teaching listening and speaking skills. Successfully promoting listening skill techniques that encourage learners to observe and apply their understanding is a key component of teaching and learning English literacy in a socially inclusive learning environment. Ineffective ways of teaching listening and speaking skills impede the flow of ideas in learners’ learning processes.

4.2.2 Ineffective teaching of listening and speaking skills

Listening involves the construction of a message from phonic material and it is a good way to develop vocabulary and comprehension while speaking. Listening involves a construction of meaning, and involves producing, receiving and processing information verbally (Bryan, 2007: 34). Speaking requires learners to know and be fluent on how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary, but also to understand ways of producing language, thus, gaining fluency in spoken interactions with others and improving their pronunciation skills. Two theories of speech perception portray the listener as having a passive role; the listener simply recognises and decodes sounds; an active role involves perceiving sounds by accessing internal articulation rules to decode speech (Kirsch, 2008: 13).

Whether speech perception is active, passive or a combination of both, Bryan (2007: 34) says that listening tasks are extremely important in the primary school setting for providing a rich source of language data, from which learners begin to build up their own ideas of how the English language works. The pedagogical sequence for development of one and two-way listening skills helps learners to acquire the metacognitive knowledge critical for success in listening, comprehension and interactions with others. A speech continuum is heightened for subtle acoustic differences between voiced and voiceless consonants. Mr Jam noticed learners' visual confusion between the letters "p" and "b" and he wanted to enhance auditory closure. Therefore, he decided to illustrate new sounds with reference to the first names of learners in the class; as learners rarely forget their friends' names he believed they would also remember the particular sound and letter pattern. This is how Mr Jam conducted his lesson:

Write down the names of your friends that start with p and b. What sound does the first letter make?

His instruction confirms that name association works well for boosting learners' memories. It was also a good technique for helping learners to hear and experience voiced and voiceless sounds. Auditory discrimination is essential for hearing subtle differences between sounds such as "p" and "b". For instance, in "pat", the "p" is

voiceless, and in “bat”, the “b” is voiced. However, to enhance his lesson on letters and establishing letter-sounds, which showed insufficient lesson planning, further, Mr Jam could have included teaching materials that would have enhanced the lesson. Percussion instruments, music, everyday sounds, CDs, puzzles, picture frames and games with CDs could have been incorporated to help reinforce auditory discrimination.

The above lesson did not give learners enough opportunities to practise listening and speaking skills; to receive, produce and process information in an attempt to build up their own ideas. The question, *What sound does the first letter make?* activates a schema, as the learners and the teacher are clear on what to do, even though the question is very distant and does not promote social inclusiveness. However, the lesson showed that the teacher had at least thought about the lesson before presenting it, even though he did not use supporting materials to stimulate awareness of listening and speaking skills to enable learners to become more attentive of language usage. As such, learners’ metacognition, knowledge, linguistic and sociolinguistic competence were destroyed. The lesson presentation did not encourage any learner participation that might have led to the free flow of communication. In addition, no proper guidance directed the learning activity effectively; this would have encouraged learners’ recognition of decoded sounds and encoded words.

Thus, a phonics lesson will be appropriate for assisting learners in decoding words quickly and easily, thereby gaining knowledge of a word’s meaning and the ability to recognise a word by either its shape, length or other features (DBE, 2009: 24). Section 4.2.1 demonstrates an ineffective phonics lesson, which was used as an approach to instruction in listening and speaking, to teach learners the principles of letter-sound relationships, how to sound out words and recognise exceptions to the principles.

4.2.3 Ineffective lesson planning for phonics and sight words instruction

The best practices for teaching sounds and patterns are built one by one and slowly into words, syllables, phrases and sentences (Hiskes, 2000: 17). The principles of CER regarding social inclusivity encourage virtues such as patience, perseverance,

honesty, kindness, compassion, courage, freedom and loyalty (Dutta & Prasad, 2009: 98). A socially inclusive learning environment also helps all learners, including those with learning disabilities or very short attention spans, by promoting their listening and speaking skills. A socially inclusive planning session of phonics instruction includes extensive examples, word lists and practise involving listening and speaking skills that are completely decodable and socially inclusive. It also uses a multisensory method that benefits all learning styles. Kirsch (2010: 1) states that listening activities should be based on meaningful, appropriate and authentic texts, such as stories, songs or poems, which stimulate listening and speaking skills. However, this is how the teacher prepared his lesson:

Ask learners to sing the letters of the alphabet. Challenge them to find things in the room that have the “r” sound. Then ask them to put other known sounds with the “r” to make blends.

The lesson preparation as it stands above does not meet the expectations of the DBE (2009: 5-19), which stipulates that, for the lesson preparation to be a meaningful and useful tool for learners and the teacher, the onus is on the teacher to have enough time to prepare and accommodate all the learners in the class. In the lesson introduction, which was not obvious in Mr Jam’s lesson, he could have made the most of Yosso’s framework by referring to learners’ familial and cultural backgrounds for support in teaching and learning (Yosso, 2005: 71; Castaneda & Isgro, 2013: 70-71). However, Mr Jam’s lesson preparation did not include stating the aim of the lesson, developing concepts, identifying resources and working out a detailed outline of the lesson. His lesson commenced with the learning activity, instead of stimulating positive interpersonal relations and establishing learners’ prior knowledge; this knowledge was neither integrated nor tested. Learner participation was minimal and learners were unable to demonstrate basic understanding of the importance of good listening skills, or to display understanding of spoken discourse (Watson *et al.*, 2008: 70). This lesson did not promote empowerment, hope or freedom for learners to take up ownership of their own learning. This proves there was no thorough planning prior to the lesson, as the context of the lesson content did not capitalise on levels of social inclusion.

4.2.4 Ineffective phonics instruction

Phonics refers to the connection between the letter symbols, the sounds that form letter-sounds and corresponding spelling patterns (Luke, 2012: 5). The aim of phonics instruction is to help learners quickly determine the sounds in unfamiliar written words. A socially inclusive way of teaching phonics incorporates all types of phonics instructions. Synthetic phonics builds words from the ground up; in this approach, learners connect letters to their corresponding phonemes and then blend them together to create a word (Silva *et al.*, 2010: 147). Silva *et al.* (2010: 147) further maintain that analytical phonics is the opposite of synthetic phonics, it approaches words from the top down and when the two types of phonics are used together they complement each other.

In addition, phonics uses the familiar parts of words to discover new words. The manner in which social inclusivity imparts such instruction is systematic in the sense that it is taught along a dimension of explicitness. However, contrary to the best practices, Mr Jam demonstrated phonics instruction ineffectively, by only linking an alphabet letter with a corresponding name. This is how he imparted his lesson, starting with “a” and proceeding to “z”:

Aa, ape, Anton, angry, alarm.

To use letter-sound information, learners need to be able to blend sounds together to decode words, and break spoken words into their constituent sounds to write words. When learners encountered the word “apple”, pronouncing it was problematic for them. Pronunciation should have been thoroughly taught by explaining the initial consonants, digraphs (voiced and voiceless), fusion, initial consonant blends, working through words by using consonants and digraphs and using the sound of vowels in the initial position (a, about, egg, eat, iron, oh, us, you). Mr Jam could have sounded out each segment of the word (*a/p//e*) and then blended these sounds together to say the entire word. Then, when learners encountered longer words, such as “caught” and “blight”, which could not be sounded out, they failed miserably; they even tried to pronounce it. In addition, when they encountered words like “stick”, even learners who are proficient in reading could not perceive that the second half of the word is the same as other familiar words, such as “kick” and “lick”. However,

within the social inclusion realm, the team could have identified this phase of learning as the “any clue will do” phase (This Reading Mamma, 2011), which involves the team incorporating any material to enhance and retain listening and speaking skills.

The scenarios set out above substantiate learners’ lack of knowledge of phonics and their inability to decode words with ease. This indicates hopelessness, inequality and social injustice with regard to learners’ learning capabilities. The empirical data confirms what Luke (2012: 5) says about teaching practices that emphasise the teaching of letter-sound relations, but do not emphasise the use of phonics instruction, a practice that is unlikely to be very effective. Hence, I believe that learners can learn the relationships between sounds and letters through phonics. Phonics also gives learners essential word attack skills and spelling skills. Word attack skills refer to the ability to take a previously unknown word, sound it out and make meaning of it (DBE, 2011: 27). Furthermore, phonics reinforces sight words (see 4.2.3).

4.2.5 Ineffective way of presenting sight words, reading and instruction for high frequency words

Sight words are words that are recognised immediately without further analysis (McElheran, 2010: 12). Many sight words do not sound out as their spellings might suggest, so sounding them out would be unproductive. They generally make up 50 to 75 per cent of the reading material encountered by learners (DBE, 2011: 27). Sight words help learners remember the forms and recognise the words instantly, and enhance reading speed. High frequency functional words are those that are grammatically necessary, and include articles, conjunctions and pronouns, verbs of being, and prepositions that bind together information-bearing words (Duke *et al.*, 2011: 53), and help in the functioning of the sentence, as they emerge repeatedly in a text. Nouns, action verbs, adjectives and adverbs are content words because they supply the content of the topic (McElheran, 2010: 13).

Sight words form the core of basal reading. In a socially inclusive learning environment, sight word lessons include whole-group activities that use various teaching techniques. This study encouraged the use of teams to promote social

inclusivity by enabling participation amongst members, thereby building an empowered community of learners (Miller, 2009: 7) and developing language throughout the study. There were also multimedia components, which enhanced the entire group lesson and provided background information for increased listening, speaking and reading comprehension, as well as decoding strategies. Moreover, the study's aim was to improve learners' learning using multicultural and social justice ideologies, which seemed to be lacking in the following classroom presentation.

When learners see words used in natural ways, rather than in isolation, they are more likely to remember the words, because they develop an understanding of the word's significance and meaning. For instance, learners remember the meaning of "look" because it has two "eyes" in the middle, or "dog", because it has a "tail".

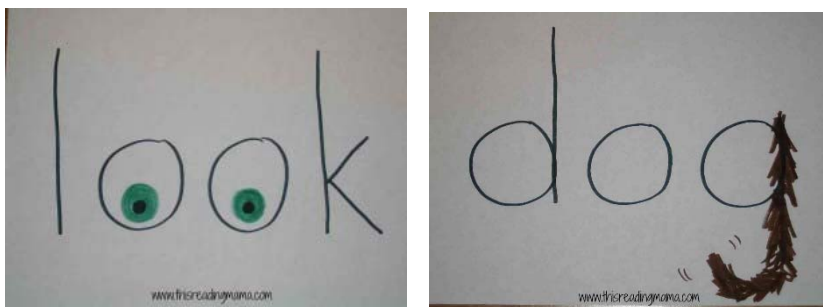


Figure 4.2: An illustration of sight words

However, after a while, the teacher realised that this method caused problems, because remembering words by their shapes did not provide sufficient visual difference. For example, when learners came across words like "cook", "took", "hook", and "book" they thought that those words would be pronounced the same as "look" because they all have "oo" that resemble eyes in the middle. Moreover, words like "big", "dig", "pig", "peg" and "sag" caused confusion, because of the "tail", and learners thought they may also be read as "dog". Hence, integrating letters, sounds, blends and visuals is crucial. Ehri (2005: 168) suggests that learners may even say "see" for "look", because they cannot read the actual word, though they remember the concept of the word. Mr Jam tried to use visual material to enhance his lesson, but because he worked alone, he did not anticipate criticism from anyone else for the purpose of strengthening his lesson. Therefore, this method caused plenty of problems and confusion, because learners were still not grounded in phonological awareness.

Furthermore, literature-based instruction used within a social inclusion paradigm is deemed to be an extremely effective method of helping learners learn sight words (Ehri, 2005: 142). Ehri (2005: 142) states that, once learners know the sight words, there is a good chance that they will know many of the words in whatever text they are trying to read. These small successes help build learners' confidence in reading. These words are often the guide-posts for comprehending entire sentences. Therefore, knowing these words is like learning to crawl before learning to walk (Gentry, 2010: 1). Sight words activate their pronunciation and meaning immediately in the memory and enable learners to focus their attention on comprehension rather than reading the whole word.

4.2.6 Ineffective teaching of reading and writing skills

Reading is the gateway skill that makes all other learning possible, from complex word problems and the meaning of history, to scientific discovery and technological proficiency (Gentry, 2010: 1). Firstly, good reading practices include knowledge of the ways reading and writing skills are used as tools for learning (CAPS, 2011: 13). Reading is not only a cognitive psycholinguistic activity, but also a social activity (Luke, 2012: 5) – this encouraged the idea of developing a SITS. A socially inclusive learning environment seems to focus primarily on learners' understanding of the idea that reading and writing are meaningful processes. Therefore, to make these processes meaningful, technical systems for encoding and decoding meanings are vital. Hence, a socially inclusive way of teaching English literacy uses various teaching strategies to offer learners reading experiences (Bruce, 2011: 43), such as group reading, paired reading and taped books, reading games, reading in role play, reading environmental print, browsing among a range of books, and silent reading. In so doing learners externalise their prior knowledge and reconceptualise their understanding, thus developing new ways of teaching reading (Martin & Peercy, 2014: 722; Prasad, 2012: 190), which learners are familiar with from their home environment.

The above-mentioned reading activities give learners access to a world of knowledge, ideas and situations outside their own experience, which can help consolidate and extend all aspects of their learning. Furthermore, the use of

cooperative group learning and problem-solving approaches emphasise the development of learners' writing and reading comprehension skills. Therefore, group learning requires learners' interaction and engagement in classroom activities (Silliman & Wilkinson, 2007: 1). However, in this study, there appeared to have been no dedicated team, as evidenced by gaps in respect of the roles of the effective team members in lesson preparation and presentation, as well as assessment of teaching and learning activities. What follows is an example of a problematic reading lesson that I observed in the school under investigation. As the teacher reflects on his lesson, this is what he said:

Previously I had been snobbish about the pronunciation of English, particularly vowel sounds, with this class, I just encourage familiarity with words rather than enunciation accuracy.

By saying, *Previously I had been a snobbish about the pronunciation of English, particularly vowel sounds*, indicates that the teacher had been paying systematic attention to the goals of reading and writing, as well as technical processes, such as phonic knowledge, spelling, grammatical knowledge and pronunciation. However, for some reason, he lost motivation, as evident from the phrase, *with this class*, which shows signs of resentment, hopelessness and a lack of initiative. He forgot that the aim was raising awareness, because learners preferred first-hand learning, that is, learning by what they do, and were inspired by engaging in productive learning (Barth, Godemann, Rieckmann & Stoltenberg, 2007: 12). The teacher denied learners the opportunity to freely engage in their own learning by failing to teach a range of literacy skills and knowledge through demonstration and modelling of decoding and spelling, in a systematic way that clarifies why these aspects are necessary and useful to teaching and learning reading and writing skills.

Once again, the teacher did not place great emphasis on learners' knowledge of the purposes and function of reading and writing, and on the strategies used to enable learners to read and write. Furthermore, he did not assess if the lesson was easy or difficult for learners to comprehend due to the background knowledge that was presumed by the text. Most importantly, his statement, *I just encourage familiarity with words rather than enunciation accuracy*, shows that he did not exert his

emotional commitment to activate learners' prior knowledge and to help them incorporate it with gained knowledge (Novak, 2011: 1). He excluded learning and teaching support materials that is, teaching aids that might have consolidated the teaching and learning and provided elements to help learners comprehend the content with ease. Therefore, the teacher was unable to guide learners in their learning and work towards a satisfactory outcome, he could not create an environment conducive to successful and sustainable learning.

Not all the talents, strengths and experiences that learners bring to their classroom environment was captured. The empirical data confirms what the literature reports, namely, that learners may have known the learning outcome, but could not know that they were aware of the result of such a learning exercise, because they had not been involved in the lesson preparation and presentation, and there had been no assessment to test their prior knowledge. Inadequate lesson presentation did not encourage learner participation that might have led to the free flow of communication, and there was no guidance directing the learning activity effectively (Ehri, 2005: 168). In general, amongst both teachers and learners, this kind of attitude towards lessons meant that classroom teaching and learning remained isolated from the life of the learners.

An example of this feature is the way Mr Jam began his lesson introduction to the class.

Right, today, we are going to look at one of the features of The Demon Headmaster which you might not have noticed. That's the dialogue. What is dialogue? Can someone find the definition in the book? [He writes the word "dialogue" on the board, with the answer, without giving learners a chance to respond to his question.] The characters speaking to each other. It's one of the things that makes a character interesting and it is really important that we, the readers, understand exactly what the characters do say to each other. So we are going to see how that speech is set out in the book, so that the readers know who is speaking and how they are speaking.

Learners benefit from practise with stories that contain a high proportion of familiar words. Unfortunately, in this case, learners were not exposed to meaningful teaching of reading and writing. Learners were not proficient due to limited practise, because

a limited range of books were readable to them. Therefore, they were unable to read words, sentences and stories fluently and accurately. They even struggled to identify words and they could pay attention, but they could not understand word meanings, in spite of the attention. Mr Jam's lesson aim was to encourage learners to reference imagery and dialogue to support the lesson learnt (Freire & Macedo, 1987: 97), broadening the circle of influences and causing ripple effects that extend beyond the classroom. However, due to a lack of planning and because he worked alone, his good intentions failed. Education, in general, is only possible if words and voices cross the boundary of the self, so that learners can learn to speak in new ways (Shenk, 2014: 369) and be new people.

Shenk (2014: 369) further maintains that dialogic theory helps learners understand how things happen, enabling them to listen to one another and see through one another's eyes. Such skills, when transferred to learners, help them to acquire critical thinking skills and help them to digest what they have learnt. Usually, when creating a conducive learning environment, teachers should use a variety of instructional methods, contents, materials and assessments, depending on the individual learner's cultural and linguistic background (Lee *et al.*, 2007: 43). Dialogue can also be referred to as the creation of a culture of peace and peaceful understanding between learners, the participating members and information literacy. This means accepting the elementary principle that no one exists without dialogue and there is no peace without freedom and justice. The basic language skills, such as speaking, reading and writing, should be taught as processes.

4.2.7 Ineffective word recognition instruction

Word recognition is referred to as the accurate reading of words (Ehri, 2005: 167). Lin and Hui (2008: 185) suggest that word-recognition strategies can be divided into those that foster reading fluency and those that foster accuracy. As learners learn to read more and more complex stories, effective word-identification strategies enable them to figure out the pronunciation of unfamiliar words and enable them to pronounce words fluently. Learners' semantic and syntactical knowledge, in turn, help confirm the accuracy of their attempts at word identification (Ehri, 2005: 142). With a socially inclusive way of teaching, more advanced word-identification

strategies focus on structural analysis that elicit the identification of root words, prefixes and suffixes and help to read multisyllabic words (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011: 492). This section focuses on word recognition instruction and enhancing reading and writing skills, specifically for learners who need instruction in reading multisyllabic words. Good practices could help learners overcome difficult challenges and achieve basic literacy and communication competencies in a multicultural society and a global economy.

This was evident from Mr Jam's classroom practices. Due to the way he did planning, presentation and assessment – the critical pillars of quality education – his practices did not have the results good word-recognition teaching should have. He commenced his lesson by placing words on the white board, which the class read together, then he said:

I want you all to close your eyes.

When the learners' eyes were closed, the teacher moved the words to new positions, and removed one word.

Now children, can you tell me which word is gone?

The above lesson can be viewed in two ways: it can either be a good or bad example of word recognition. In this case, it resembled a bad example of teaching, because learners had not been trained to read words accurately, therefore, they were not able to demonstrate basic operational knowledge and the capacity to learn in a disciplined manner and a well-structured learning environment (SAQA, 2012: 6). When a learner sees a word as a whole, s/he has no way of knowing in which direction it should be viewed until the correct direction is shown. This method of learning leaves out the important distinction between meaningful learning and rote learning. Learners were actually looking at words in whatever direction their tendencies dictated. For example, words that were misspelled included "ten", which learners read as "net", and, instead of "run", some learners saw *nur*. Essentially, most of the learners guessed the answers because they had only been exposed to rote learning guided by superficial texts that were on a very low cognitive level.

However, in Mr Jam's defence, his approach correlates with the way Vygotsky views learning. Vygotsky says,

no matter what artistry we employ as teachers, learning is still something that learners have to do for themselves (Meirim, Jordan, Kalleinbach & Rijhumal, 2010: 1).

Learning in this sense is still not meaningful, because working alone mostly leads to rote learning but, in a socially inclusive way of teaching, learning becomes more meaningful; in such a system learners cooperate, construct or even direct their own learning. This emphasis on learners' role is founded on the constructivist view of learning, which says that, regardless of how neatly the lesson preparation and presentation is, in the end learning is a process that is instigated and managed by the learner (Christie *et al.*, 2011: 41). Bouma's theory (Barnbaum, 2008: 1) maintains that learners construct their own learning. Bouma and Bouwhuis (1979: 13) further suggest that learners recognise words from the shape of letters made in a group relative to each other.

As such, the theory differs from the idea that letters are read individually. The following was the teacher's recommendation, what he thought would be the best guide for selecting instructional materials for intervention with learners who experience severe difficulty reading words.

Words were written besides each learner's name who had trouble during the reading period. Those were his/her words for the day. They may trace over them at any time and ask for help but they are to be checked before going home.

Research studies confirm that writing words *besides each learner's name who had trouble during the reading period* is a technique designed to strengthen the frequent feedback that learners receive about their learning, which yields extensive learning attainment. The perception of learners and their role in self-assessment, namely, *they may trace over them at any time and ask for help* is considered along with the analysis of the strategies used by the teacher and the formative strategies incorporated in such systemic approaches as mastery learning (CAPS, 2011: 11). With that in mind, a couple of caveats were discussed, because the strategy was certainly not the entire answer to bringing learners who have more severe word

reading difficulties to high levels of structural analysis. Instead, the strategy suggested caused struggling learners' peers to ridicule them for failing to achieve the same level as everyone else even though some learners were the bullies of the class. This caused struggling learners to withdraw from the exercise.

A SITS has been coupled with expressions of hope that improving classroom assessment contributes to the improvement of learning. However, the review of empirical data provides evidence that hope is not justified. The manner in which the lesson was presented did not promote justice, hope or enjoyment, nor did it enhance learners' ability to build up their own ideas and learn. Although the teacher was competent, dedicated, caring, a mediator of learning and flexible regarding methodologies, the teacher worked independently, without a supporting team that could have assessed the situation and suggested a better strategy, thereby avoiding misconceptions that impeded learners' smooth learning attainment. Nevertheless, the purpose of the lesson was to promote academic learning and to reach the goal of educational equality.

The difference between learners' home language and the LoLT required complex multilingual teaching (Miller, 2009: 1) and resulted in negative achievements across the learning areas (McLeod, 2012: 3). Also, low socio-economic status seemed to correlate with learners' poor performance: Learners' parents were often unable to support them to improve proficiency in first and second languages, or even give the time needed to support their children (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012: 59). The lack of parental involvement was clearly seen when learners were given work (to create a recipe) to prepare with their parents. The task was set up to enable learners to follow a recipe, give them an opportunity to realise the need to read carefully and follow through on what they comprehended from what they were reading. Mr Jam asked learners to skim through the passage on creating their own recipe to scan the important points of what was required:

Answer the questions that follow, writing the correct ingredients with the correct measurements for your recipe. Then clearly illustrate by drawing the utensils with the correct equipment as you write the cooking method of your recipe.

Mr Jam's instruction, *as you skim through the passage read on creating own recipe*, illustrates an ineffective way of conducting a word recognition lesson to teach beginners to read and write. At this stage, learners were unable to demonstrate an understanding that one's own knowledge of a particular field developed through active participation in relevant activities (SAQA, 2012: 6). In this case, even though learners have helped their parents in the kitchen numerous times, they somehow failed to incorporate their prior knowledge with the actual learning activity in the classroom. The learning activity, expressed as, *answer the questions that follow, writing the correct ingredients with correct measurements for your recipe*, made what they knew sound different and difficult to the learners who could not read text meaningfully.

However, having incorporated other noble ideas during planning and presentation of the lesson, the learning activity could have been disseminated carefully, and proper learning could have been targeted and directed towards groups of learners according to their current learning objective or specific needs. Davis (2003: 61) affirms, regarding the statement, *then clearly illustrate by drawing the correct utensils as you write the cooking method of your recipe*, that teachers are struggling to respond adequately to the increased linguistic diversity among learners, which is the result of their underpreparedness (Maybin, 2013: 2). As in most schools where the majority of learners are English second language speakers, the situation causes a higher rate of educational failure amongst Grade 4 learners who also face impediments relating to self-confidence. Moreover, most teachers do not know how to help their learners successfully in order to bridge this gap (Blackledge, 2000: 7). Grade 4 learners' knowledge of words used in the instruction, *creating own recipe*, is poor, particularly among those who have been marginalised by socio-economic factors.

Hence, a large proportion of these learners displayed reading comprehension and creative writing difficulties when confronted with the ANA test. Therefore, for literacy to be taught effectively in the context of this study, there has to be a dedicated team that shares a common purpose for good and effective teaching of English literacy to enhance the level of preparation, presentation and assessment of literacy content (UNESCO, 2012: 55). There was no team with the common intention of sharing

learning objectives or preferable intentions. The word “intention” emphasises the process of learning rather than the resulting product. The teacher alone did not have enough time to plan or evaluate where learners are, to strategise what learners need to know, understand or be able to do by the end of each lesson. His lesson introduction was mostly directive, and not cooperative. He never informed learners of what they were going to learn and why they should learn it. Therefore, he did not give them the tools they need to take greater responsibility for their own learning and to achieve learning independence.

Thus, a team with a common purpose facilitates the processes of delegation and division of labour among team members according to their strengths and interests (Ehri, 2005: 13). During discussions they realised that everything big starts small; by selecting just one aspect of the curriculum at a time they could ensure that learning was separated from the task or activity. The objective was for learners to focus on what they will learn and not on the activity, with the proper use of language reflecting collaboration. The team’s task in this context was to use text-based and communicative approaches to develop learners’ literacy skills (CAPS, 2011: 13). The literacy skills prescribed by CAPS include listening and speaking; reading and viewing; writing and presenting as well as language usage and sentence construction. These skills are all taught and learnt simultaneously, the processes complementing one another by using a variety of learning support materials and techniques.

It is also important to have a dedicated team of people with different expertise from diverse backgrounds and interests, who are charged with the responsibility of enhancing the Grade 4 learners’ literacy skills (Massey, 2013: 125). Therefore, a socially inclusive way of teaching will create a favourable space for learners, allowing them to internalise and explore what is required of them. Doing so will encourage them to use the language of thinking and learning when they reflect on whether they have attained a learning objective or not. Therefore, creating a dedicated team builds a meaningful and genuine relationship with other participating members and among the learners. It is an essential aspect of creating a learning environment that supports learners’ learning, and promoting positive classroom behaviour (Gardner,

2006: 11). Collaboration and good communication with others foster an acceptance of individual differences and friendships, and employ cooperative learning.

Section 4.3 responds in detail to the challenges stated above and suggests ways of improving the unsatisfactory teaching and learning conditions that were described. Cooperative learning will be enforced in the presence of the team, thereby promoting independent learning, communication and support in the classroom. When a diverse team with noble stakeholders come together with a common vision, noble ideas for the formulation of a SITS in response to problems relating to English literacy are implemented successfully. These ideas are modelled, developed and supported, and enable learners to reflect on what has been learnt, so that the way they learn best can be discussed and understood.

For this reason alone, it made sense to involve learners in discussions, assessment and evaluation of their own work. This creates independent learners, increases their self-esteem and develops their ability to recognise quality work, thereby improving their understanding and strengthening their voices in the classroom. Thus, working collaboratively contributed to the creation of a sustainable learning environment. When learners are provided with a conducive learning space, with support that enhances their ability to look at their own work and that of their peers critically and constructively, they become perfectionists and produce quality work. They see where their own work requires development by recognising themselves in the work of others through shared knowledge.

4.3 COMPONENTS OF THE SOLUTION TO FORMULATING A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY TO RESPOND TO THE PROBLEMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH LITERACY

Section 4.3 is about the solutions to the problems that were identified in Section 4.2. These solutions include the establishment of a functional, dedicated team for facilitating teaching English literacy in a socially inclusive manner to reach higher National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 2 level descriptors for Grade 4 learners, so that they attain the four main language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing.

4.3.1 Establishing a dedicated team for a socially inclusive teaching strategy for teaching within the main language domain

The team for the SITS mainly focused on ensuring that learning takes place in the diverse contexts and situations that the learners bring to class (DBE, 2011: 93). These contexts and situations are unavoidable, and may include but are not limited to the way learners access and create new knowledge of and through English literacy because language facilitates comprehension (Meirim *et al.*, 2010: 43). Thus, the learners' diverse and varied experiences, learning styles and backgrounds are at the centre of teaching English literacy in a socially inclusive manner (Terry & Irving, 2010: 110-111). The variety of contexts and situations facing learners fundamentally explains why a teaching and learning situation is complex and dynamic (Perkins & Wirth, 2008: 12-14). Based on this complexity, a variety of teaching and learning approaches become inescapable (Grundy, 1987: 19; Bartlett, 2012: 63); thus, a SITS becomes imperative. This strategy is multi-layered, multi-tiered and interdisciplinary in nature.

In order for the team to achieve a SITS, the team conducted a SWOT analysis to assess their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, to find the best ways of responding to the multiplicity of English literacy challenges that had been identified in a Grade 4 class (Rogoff *et al.*, 2011: 155). The SWOT analysis was an instrument of measurement, for gathering relevant information needed for learning to happen. The team ensured desirable learning instructions in a socially inclusive learning environment using essential learning resources. In addition, informing learners about the lesson before its commencement resulted in learners who were more focused, motivated, involved in their learning and better able to take responsibility for their own learning, even prior to the learning activity, and offered opportunities for key interactions between the facilitator and learners.

Furthermore, the team used the SWOT analysis to ensure that learners meet the rigorous challenges of the curriculum, helping them to become critical thinkers and use reasoning skills to solve problems and make decisions related to issues of fairness, equity and social justice. Doing so provided learners with situations that promoted well-rounded development and progress in all areas of language learning,

including in other subjects. In this way, team members prioritised teaching and learning as the central purposes of schooling and demonstrated an enthusiasm and dedication to learning that learners should reflect in their own behaviour and practice.

Team members automatically demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to our daily endeavours (Bowman & Callan, 2012: 300) to develop the skills needed for listening, speaking, reading and writing, which are the foundation of any creative and purposeful expression in language.

4.3.2 Efficient way of teaching listening and speaking skills in a socially inclusive manner

Listening is an essential skill for understanding spoken language, a skill that is present in most of the activities we conduct throughout our lives (Moloi & Chetty, 2010: 188). This argument proves that listening goes hand-in-hand with speaking. When someone listens, it is due to the echoes made by any kind of sound. Moreover, effective listening incorporates a significant effect on listening carefully and understanding the instructions provided, or what others say. This section demonstrates how listening and speaking skills can be presented successfully in a socially inclusive way by using various aspects of teaching methods. This approach was evident when a crèche guardian/teacher suggested using the river bank game to enhance learners' listening skills, as it would help improve concentration, imagination and listening:

Mokhantsho: In my experience, "in the river/on the bank" is one game that has never failed to excite, since players can more easily imagine that they are jumping into the river or back on the river bank, through listening.

The leader explains that one side of the line is the river and the other side of the line is the bank. It is essential to be at the right spot at the right time. Players line up, shoulder-to-shoulder, on the bank. The facilitator then shouts out one of two commands, either "river" or "bank". If the facilitator calls "river", players must jump forward across the boundary line, into the "river". If the facilitator calls "bank", players must jump back to the "bank". The facilitator can call bank or river multiple times in a

row. If players jump when they are not supposed to, they are eliminated from the game.

The explanation of the game shows that listening is an essential skill. In this game learners care about understanding what has been said by the instructor; when they play the river bank game, learners have to listen attentively and respond to the instruction instantly. In order to make it more interesting and confusing, various types of instruction are issued. For instance, the instructor pointed with his hand, sometimes he used his head or used body gestures opposite to what he instructed. As the game progresses, learners are trained to listen and respond by doing, paying attention to the instructed verbal cues and learning to eliminate distractors like non-verbal cues. Therefore, while learners listen, they also have to perform a certain task, and so they listen and do. The explanation, *since players can more easily imagine that they are jumping into the river or back on the riverbank, through listening*, proves that they have to be creative and deal with confusing messages. For instance, when asked how she excelled in the game, Thuto, the girl who won the first round of the game, explained:

Thuto: I closed my eyes, I listened.

Thus, Thuto suggests that non-verbal cues are perceived through sight and may interfere and distract one's attention. This game also stimulates learners to use their imagination, and it challenges them to creatively and critically think of ways to deal with distractions that may cause delays or non-compliance with the teacher's instructions. Therefore, the TPR method of teaching language in a socially inclusive learning environment complements and enhances learners' motivation and confidence in developing their listening skills and breaking up the routine through brain switching (Richards & Rogers, 2014: 127). The game is socially inclusive in the sense that it can be played by different ages and genders, and serves as a learning tool and as a sport.

Speaking, on the other hand, is the most challenging skill for learners because of the set of features that characterise oral discourse. Thus, teachers need a variety of methods and strategies to support learners' strengths and address their needs. However, it is impossible for one person to possess the knowledge, ability and

creativity to meet the needs of every child in the classroom (Bryan, 2007: 32). Hence, social inclusion involves other stakeholders, with different expertise and strategies, to motivate learners to enhance their performance and achieve learning outcomes. In this regard, the team, together with the teacher as a researcher and classroom practitioner, established that the classroom materials do very little to develop metacognitive knowledge and raising learners' consciousness of listening processes. Therefore, it was decided to teach learners how to listen through creative songs. To assess the level of learners' listening and speaking skills, the team formulated a pre-set task, namely, a cumulative song, where each verse borrows words from a previous verse:



Figure 4.3: Illustration representing the elements of a cumulative song (adapted from the traditional Christmas song, *Partridge in a pear tree*)

Figure 4.3 illustrates a cumulative song that was used as a tool to enhance listening and speaking skills. The repetitive verses were sung clearly and directly in words and phrases, and it incorporated physical actions that engaged learners in acting out the song. For example, *the first learner held a picture of a partridge in a pear tree, the same pattern followed with other learners taking part.* A particularly fruitful application of this visualised cumulative song had the potential to stimulate self and collective empowerment. It was a comparatively expressive, engaging and fun activity, which turned into an enjoyable learning experience for learners and helped to maintain their attention in situations where their enthusiasm or concentration levels were of concern. The learners sang:

On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love sent to me: twelve drummers drumming; eleven pipers piping; ten lords a-leaping; nine ladies dancing; eight maids a-milking; seven swans a-swimming; six geese a-laying; five golden rings; four calling birds; three french hens; two turtle doves; and a partridge in a pear tree.

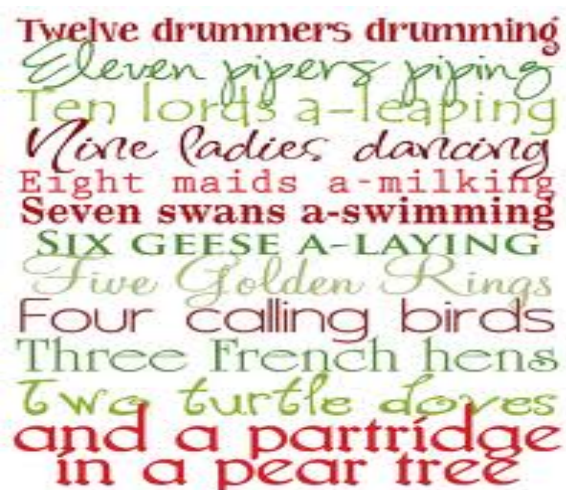


Figure 4.4: Learners' colouring book

The repetition is seen clearly when learners reach the verse referring to the twelfth day, as they have to recall words from the previous verses until they reach day one. According to Seymour Papert's constructionist paradigm, learners learn effectively when they are engaged in making things (Gillespie, 2004: 1). Thus, the very act of generating a creative drawing and colouring was a valuable learning opportunity (Literat, 2013: 90). It was an effective lesson for learners, as they were able to recite with their eyes closed. It prepared minds for listening and speaking, as they owned their learning and, in turn, it led to familiarity (Fox, 2013: 4). By providing learners with some idea of what they were going to hear and what they were asked to do helped them succeed in the task; it also motivated and interested them. This was clear when they were given a puzzle to complete in order to assess their level of gained knowledge. Figure 4.5 shows the puzzle they were required to complete.

sheet

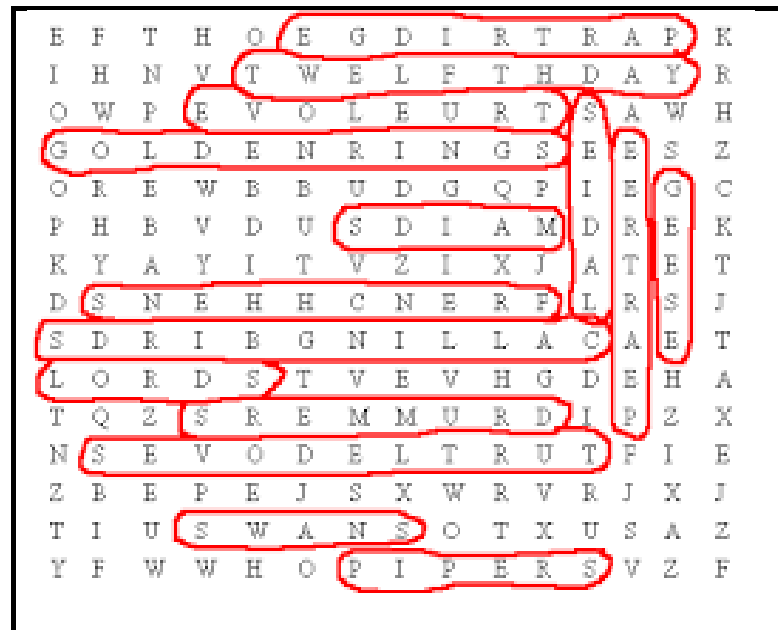


Figure 4.5: Word puzzle learners had to complete after the cumulative song

Figure 4.5 shows how learners performed when they were given a word puzzle to solve after the learning activity. This good learner performance proves that the lesson was presented well, and that it held vast potential to stimulate and empower learners' self and collective efficacy. Literat (2013: 90) states that self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in his/her own skills and the ability to produce desired effects by his/her actions. Self-efficacy is not perceived as a skill, but rather as what can be done with own skills under certain conditions. Collective efficacy, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which individuals within a system believe they can effectively organise and perform courses of action in order to achieve collective goals (Literat, 2013: 90). In this case, a crossword puzzle was used to help improve word power in an enjoyable way, emphasising word pattern recognition, which is regarded as a key cognitive tool.

Lei and Huang (2012: 204) explain that, by singing songs, learners gradually internalise the structures and patterns of the English language and the specific language items stipulated in the CAPS document for learners to learn. Lei and Huang (2012: 205) further support the team's suggestions that they should carefully choose relevant songs that link well with a topic or vocabulary, providing the

opportunity to emphasise literary meanings. Using songs set a starting point for teaching learners listening and speaking skills, as some learners were still unable to pronounce words correctly, but enjoyed listening to music in the classroom. This affinity with music made songs vital tools for creating a socially inclusive classroom ethos that curbed feelings of shyness and hesitation through listening. Songs were integrated into a scheme of work selected to complement the cognitive and linguistic needs of learners (Zheng, 2012: 543). Consequently, a thoroughly socially inclusive plan was made for the facilitation of listening and speaking skills, demonstrated under the following subsections: phonics (see 4.2.4) and sight word vocabulary (see 4.2.5).

4.3.2.1 A socially inclusive lesson plan using different ways of approaching word-study through phonics

In order to ensure that the suggestions were for a socially inclusive lesson plan, the team coordinated and adequately determined the aim of teaching listening and speaking skills through phonics. This ensured that the relevant participating stakeholders had a thorough understanding and knowledge of phonics. Secondly, the team determined learners' prior knowledge, using it as a point of departure for a lesson and learning objectives. They decided on socially inclusive phonics instructional methods and learning activities, including the creative intellectual voices of the marginalised, which would address learners' needs successfully while providing deep learning opportunities through social networking (Jorgensen & Lowrie, 2013: 130) and indigenous knowledge. Finally, they designed socially inclusive assessment criteria to assess learners' mastery of what had been taught. The design of the assessment created the opportunity for mutual learning, ensuring that every member's input was considered while working towards enhancing learning phonics. Thus, taking stock of learners' knowledge and understanding is the first key component of the successful social interaction.

Hence, we believe that the social act of discussing learning material with others beforehand improves learners' understanding of what they are learning. The team's discussion focused on phonics and sight word vocabulary, and stipulated ways of

approaching word study. Monica, the chairperson, resumed their discussion as follows:

Monica: The aim of all this meeting is to follow up on how we agreed to help learners to, first of all, be able to analyse and then to synthesise new words, correct? So with good practice and emphasis, we believe that they will learn to deal with new words quickly. So, what learning activities can we suggest and in which ways can we help them?

The above extract shows that the team's initial step was collaborative lesson preparation aimed at teaching phonics skills by strategising ways to enhance learners' learning capabilities further. The phrase, *is to follow up on how we agreed*, confirms that the team made arrangements before they conducted a lesson preparation meeting to set the ball rolling. Furthermore, *how we agreed*, exposes the co-planning that involved all the relevant stakeholders in reflective and collaborative dialogue about the teaching and learning process, which is an ideal way of enhancing learners' learning. Snow *et al.* (1998: 2) are of the opinion that the statement, *we believe that they will learn*, represents the starting point for social inclusiveness and a conducive, sustainable learning environment that will enable sustainable learning to take root and flourish.

Thus, *what learning activities can we suggest*, attests to collaboration and recommending a structured sequence for planning to teach phonics. Lastly, drawing on prior knowledge, norms and social networks, the team made predictions of success when they involved learners in working things out for themselves by creating a favourable space and allowing them to choose and take risks (Sisimwo *et al.*, 2014: 3). These initiatives enhanced sincerity and were expected to produce more efficient and equitable outcomes.

4.3.2.2 The efficient way of doing phonics instruction

Phonics is the application of phonetic elements; it consists largely of associating letters with the speech sounds they represent (Duke *et al.*, 2011: 53). The aim of a SITS is to encourage learners to know the right sounds of words; they gain this knowledge through listening skills, and it facilitates understanding (SAQA, 2012: 6).

Phonics is a letter-sound relationship based on a listening-saying background of experience (Noltemeyer, Joseph & Kunesh, 2013: 121-122). Social inclusion promotes the purist notion of enforcing the right pronunciation of English words through the attainment of speaking skills, which enables learners to become aware that speech sounds are retained within words (Duke *et al.*, 2011: 53). Cunningham and Allington (2007: 2) are of the same opinion, they declare that proficiency in phonics is essential to reading success. Therefore, sounding words can be referred to as the formation of words while imitating sounds. It is important that learners not only learn phonics as sounds, but also use phonics.

By far the best way to teach phonics is systematically. This means moving learners through a planned sequence of skills, rather than teaching particular aspects of phonics as they are encountered in texts. The use of phonics as described above was operationalised in class. The learners were expected to form words from the letters they were given after they had discussed the sounds of the vowels and consonants. The aim was to ensure that the teachers and learners were synchronised regarding the sounds associated with certain letters, as illustrated by the exercise below, in which Mr Jam used an apple to show learners how to open the mouth when saying “a”. This is how he introduced his lesson while holding an apple:

Mr Jam: Can any of you tell me what is this that I’m holding? As you say it, come and write its spelling on the board. Apple, āpel, apole.

Thuto: Apple.

Queen: āpel, with an “a” as in “ape”.

Nkaiseng: Apole.

Learners looked in a mirror and focused on their lips, teeth and tongue, using an elastic band to show the difference between long and short sounds. All three learners associated the actual fruit with its corresponding name, but with different spelling, namely, “apple”, *āpel*, *apole*, using visual closure and sound-letter connections to write the word. The differences in the words used by the three learners refer to the same item, which they seemed to have common knowledge of,

though their diverse backgrounds, and this knowledge influenced the spelling. For instance, Sesotho speakers commonly use *apole* to refer to this fruit. It seems to be a borrowed term, which may confuse learners, as it is did this case. In the same way, the learners who use *āpel* seem to have been influenced by other cultural realities that may be associated with interactions and daily spoken language. These experiences led the teacher to solicit support from other teachers. It subsequently became necessary for the team to be considerate of the practical aspects of training learners to position the tongue in accordance with the word. This is clear from the views expressed by Mr Jam during the class when they were considering phonics. He said:

Now, I want you to hold your apple and act as if you are biting it, and sound out the first letter of the word apple and pay attention to that sound. Tell me, what sound did you make?

In response, the learners sounded out the letter “a”, which was a “relaxed”, open sound which involved lowering the front of the tongue and jaws – it sounded the same for all of them. None of the learners sounded o the letter “ā” as the “a” in “ape”. The teachers and learners concentrated on the differences in the sounds they made by focusing on the different positions of the tongue, including the vocal apparatus and articulatory phonetics. The exercise was repeated with various letters and with various words. By enabling learners to visualise simple and complex information, animation made it easier for the learner to make sense of the content in a way that required less processing (Mayer, 2005: 61). Furthermore, the learners were also made aware of other body parts (e.g. pharynx, larynx, velum, hard palate, alveolar ridge, lips and teeth), referred to as articulatory phonetics, and the nose, which is referred to as the vocal apparatus. These are key for sounding out the letters and resulting words (Davenport & Hannahs, 2010: 1). Engaging learners in their learning activity seemed to help to activate an existing schema by creating a new schema (Gee, 2005: 7).

This schema made it easier for learners to absorb the new information and facilitate the transfer of knowledge, from working memory in English language learning to other subjects, to establish long-term memory. The schema also became vital to

afford learners an opportunity to discover the significance of the order of letters in forming words. The team were of the opinion that teaching phonics provides learners with relevant tools for learning thousands of words without having to depend on memorisation. Doing so by means of a socially inclusive approach brought a group of people with noble ideas together, and provided the right tools to teach phonics efficiently. When phonics instructions are disseminated properly, learners have the necessary tools to decode words and when they are able to decode words, they can understand what they are reading. For instance, “apple” and *apel* have the same vowels and consonants, but the order of letters is different; also, the number of “p’s” is also different. Such differences are significant in that they inform the correct spelling of words but also influence their actual meanings. In this case, *apel* will not carry the same meaning as the word “apple” and may not refer to the same fruit. As practise, the learners are given exercises to reorder the letters in a word to give its meaning: *p/pea*, which should be “apple”.

These exercises were intended to determine the extent to which learners mastered and demonstrated basic operational knowledge regarding word formation, spelling and pronunciation. The variety of methods and exercises afforded learners the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the meanings of the words, and use of a variety of common tools and instruments to apply known solutions to well-defined, routine problems. Therefore, when they understand what they are reading about, speaking anxiety diminishes, and confidence, fluency, spelling and grades improve. In the same manner and simultaneously with the word identification, the teacher focused on the correct spelling of words. This is important because the letters in the word influence not only how it should be pronounced but also how it is to be spelled; the spelling of words cannot be separated from their meanings. In this regard, Mr Jam advised the teacher about the spelling of words with long and short sounds with a view to supporting the teacher to understand better and determine the best possible teaching method. Mr Jam said:

The words that are spelled with a single letter before the –le, carry a long sound and those that have double letters before the letter -le, carry a short sound.

For instance, the letters “i” in “title” and “i” in little are followed by single “t” before the –le and double “t” before –le respectively. This influences how the letters in the words are pronounced. In the word “title” the “i” sounds long, whilst in the word “little” it sounds short. For the learners to realise this distinction, the teachers asked the learners to sound the letters and to note their differences in relation to the spelling thereof. The learners were subsequently given tasks to identify long and short sounds; they were asked to write down the correct spelling of sounded words (dictation). For example, the following words were given for this purpose: idle/middle, beetle/settle, trifle/shuffle, table/apple.

When learners had conceptualised the use of the short sound of “a” the teacher introduced the short “i” sound and taught learners to sound out as many of the given words as was necessary to provide enough practice. The words selected were mostly suitable for the purpose of the lesson and learners took turns using each word in a verbal sentence. The class continued in the same manner with the short “o”, short “u” and short “e”. The sound of the short “e” is easily confused with the short sound of “i”. For example, some people say *git* for “get” and *ingine* for “engine”. In the same way, “u” also has two long sounds. One sounds like “you”; the other is like a long “oo” sound. Thuto managed to write the correct spelling; he was guided by the right sound and letter-sound relationship. Thus, the vowel sound is short where there are double consonants between the vowel and –le and, those with a long sound only have one consonant before –le. Therefore, learners pronounced the word “apple” as *āpe/* using a long sound, like in “ape”.

Learners became confused when they only listened, lacked certain background experience, had no idea how the words are spelled, and did not know whether the letter is long or short. On the other hand, Queen was influenced by culture and background, influences that need to be addressed sensibly by emphasis on the use of letter sounds indicating the correct pronunciation of words. However, this study reveals that the teacher accommodated learners’ diversity with regard to pronunciation, spelling and word formation. This gained knowledge was the result of the conducive space that had been created, which offered an opportunity for them to express their level of knowledge openly and transparently. Moreover, the teacher was very patient and did not ridicule them, but respected their knowledge and

freedom of speech. This encouraged self-regulated learning behaviour among learners and they began to excel in their learning. The empirical data confirms what the literature says, namely, that knowledge of the alphabet is a strong predictor of short and long-term reading success (Nevid, 2013: 381-382). However, its influence on later reading does not concern knowing the letter names, per se. Rather, the learning of letter names mediates the ability to remember the sounds associated with the letters (Ehri, 2005: 1; Neuman & Dickinson, 2011: 7). Once again, there is a reciprocal relationship between skills: Letter knowledge plays an influential role in the development of phonological awareness and higher levels of letter knowledge are associated with learners' abilities to detect and manipulate phonemes. As such, learners' gained knowledge regarding the way to put sounds together to make words and to get to know different words was enhanced. This statement aligns with Freire (1985: 72): Only through engaging learners in the terms of their own experiences can the teacher incorporate concepts of learning that work together with those experiences to create a more dynamic, empowered, liberating educational experience. The team introduced another approach, which they believe could enhance what Mr Jam has already established.

A retired English language teacher (Mrs Moyo) subdivided learners into smaller groups. She began a phonics lesson by talking about word families learners had been learning with Mr Jam, such as *ap*, *an*, and *ag*. She then introduced a new book and completed a picture walk with her learners, explaining that the book had several words from the *at* word family, including the words "cat" and "hat" in the title. As she read the book aloud, she asked learners to be detectives and to find words with the phonogram *at*. The words were placed in a magic hat. After the read-aloud, the class discussed the story. The teacher then gave each learner a magnetic board, an *at* chunk in magnetic letters and magnetic consonants. She asked them to build *at* words on their boards. When they had finished, she asked them to tell her the words they had made. Napo said "bat" Tsholo said "at" and Kabelo said "sat". She asked learners to select an *at* word and compose a sentence using it. Learners dictated their sentences aloud and she wrote them on sentence strips, then cut the sentence strips into individual words so learners could work in pairs to rebuild the sentences for practise.

Okay, class, let us continue and complete this phonics lesson practise on page 43 that features common short “a” phonograms, including many “at” words.

The above exercise, which contained *ap*, *an*, *ag* and *at*, was an exemplary phonics lesson. Learners were involved and informed about the learning activity. They were in a comfortable, child-friendly setting, searching for and creating words from the *at* word family, and truly feeling part of the learning. The focus of the instruction was clear and explicit and the teacher, in conjunction with the team, planned the lesson to ensure learners were actively engaged, using various tools, such as a mirror and other multimedia learning tools. The teacher further explicitly expressed one of the learners’ suggestions:

When we pronounce the sound of a consonant in isolation, it is necessary to add schwa sound, even though when the consonant is blended with the vowel, the schwa sound is elided. For example, b says b-uh; a says ă; blend b-uh and ă to make bă. The uh sound (schwa) disappears.

The great advantage of this technique is the fact that the learners have received directional guidance and have been taught, step-by-step, to look at the word from left to right. Hence, after Napo blended, *ba* it was possible to add the letter “t” to form the word “bat”. Most of the learners were now able to demonstrate their ability to use a variety of tools, showing an understanding that one’s own knowledge of a particular field is developed through active participation in relevant activities (SAQA, 2012: 6). Each learner was motivated to compose a verbal sentence using the word s/he had found. The active and social nature of learning places learners at the centre of their education, and this process begins with an understanding of the educational contexts retrieved from learners’ prior knowledge (Liu & Matthews, 2005: 387; Meyer, 2009: 332; Tobias & Duffy, 2009: 2). This is how Mrs Moyo guided Napo to formulating a sentence with the word *bat*:

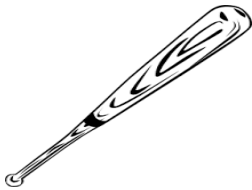
Mrs Moyo: If you have a ball, Napo, what do you do with the bat?

Napo: Batman.

The utterances above show that the learner subconsciously demonstrated a word analysis clue. Word analysis is the process of taking words apart and putting the

known parts together to make a meaningful whole (Merz *et al.*, 2015: 16). Therefore, the learner's learning style was triggered to direct a sense of own control over his learning, which was achieved by introducing a picture to stimulate prior knowledge and, notably, to empower him. Mrs Moyo was astonished by the response, as it was going to be her next learning session, but at that moment, she knew that the learner was influenced by the media (cartoons). This was her response:

Mrs Moyo: Well, that sounds about right to me, but think of a sport [holding up a bat].



Napo: Oh, I hit the ball with the bat.

In this case, the bat was ideal to help relate pictures and content. A teacher in a socially inclusive learning environment, coached by an interactive theory of reading, does not teach in the sense of transferring knowledge, which Freire and Macedo (1987: 81) refer to as the banking concept of education. Rather, the teacher serves as a mediator to assist learners to become consciously aware that they already possess knowledge. Furthermore, this technique creates a conducive learning environment that involves a socially inclusive process of inquiry and self-improvement through action, which allows learners to discover answers for themselves. A socially inclusive learning environment promotes in-depth knowledge of reading and ways to teach the required skills effectively through a diverse knowledge of the various participating members.

Thus, a teacher as a pastoral caregiver in such a favourable learning environment is able to demonstrate expertise and critical knowledge:

If you have a ball, what do you do with the bat?

This activity stimulates learners' intellectual curiosity (SAQA, 2012: 12). Moreover, the team and teacher, as a researcher, explored learners' self-understanding by using multimedia learning and stimulating their visual and auditory channels, which encourages problem-solving. By setting high expectations of themselves and their

learners team members connect knowledge and learners. According to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development learners cannot go outside the zone they started off in before they received help from the teacher and team (Tobias & Duffy, 2009: 1); that is to say, learners need to be guided to reach the outer zones, and guidance scaffolds on the knowledge and skills they already possess.

Hence, by declaring that,

words from the at, ap, an and ag word family, formulated in a sentence,

is high-quality learner literature. Learning activities focusing on oral language, phonics, writing, spelling and social inclusion were integrated in the lesson. The learning materials the team used for teaching phonics, like big books and small readers, were integrated with the textbooks. The phrase, *learners dictate their sentences aloud, and she wrote them on sentence strips*, confirms that blended phonics encouraged learners to do most of the work by composing sentences. This exercise provided learners with opportunities to practise and apply the skills frequently and so they were able to demonstrate their ability to use their own knowledge to select and apply known solutions to well-defined, routine problems (SAQA, 2012: 6).

Furthermore, the team's lesson planning structured the learning experience in a way that provided immediate feedback to monitor learners' understanding. Previous research studies have repeatedly found phonics instruction to be a key component of effective listening and speaking, reading and writing instruction (Noltemeyer *et al.*, 2013: 121-122). The above argument correlates with what the team and Tracey and Morrow (2009: 3) observed, namely, that programmes that place early emphasis on phonics were more effective than those that did not, and were positively associated with learners' learning achievement. Thus, after the acquisition of letter sounds, the team agreed to increase the level of the phonics learning and to proceed to sight word vocabulary.

4.3.2.3 The efficient way of teaching sight words and high frequency words

Sight word reading competencies are a critical element of developing early foundational skills (Ehri, 2005: 2). A socially inclusive way of teaching sight words

encourages learners to learn a word as a whole, by sight, and not just memorise it, so that they can automatically recognise these words in print without having to use any strategies to decode them (Ehri, 2005: 2). McElheran (2010: 3) suggests that beginner readers need direct instruction and frequent practise to lead them to understand that spoken words are made up of smaller units of sound. They also need to become familiar with spelling-sound correspondence, common spelling conventions and the way these conventions are applied to identify printed words. Recognising sight words automatically is said to be advantageous for beginner readers because many of these words have unusual spelling patterns (Everson, 2011: 196). Ehri agrees that the method of sight word reading differs from using phonics (2005: 37), and that memory processes, not decoding processes, carry on the act of reading.

Therefore, the advantage of sight word reading is that reading is much faster (Ehri, 2005: 38), and that it promotes fluency in reading. This was evident when learners were asked to read aloud a passage during reading lesson. Parents and a teacher working with other teachers presented sight words in short sentences, thereby helping learners to write their own sentences incorporating sight words. The first procedure expected learners to give a list of sight words. Learners were challenged to dictate all the sight words they knew, including words with capital and lower case letters, so that, when they write sentences, they will be able to emphasise when and how to use words. We wrote the words on the board in alphabetical order. The exercise helped learners learn words that appeared different from each other with regard to length, size and shape of letters, and by getting a feel for how the words can be used in different ways in sentences, as well as how to spell the words correctly. Thus, the challenge for the learners was using a rope to find the letter that was the first letter of the greatest number of words.

Learners stood in a line on one side of a rope held by two parents at a height that learners could jump over. On the other side of the rope, facing the learners, we spread out some picture cards. We showed the first learner a letter. S/he had to jump over the rope, pick up the picture card of the word starting with that letter, and identify the sound of the letter. For other rounds, we varied the height of the rope, so learners had to crawl or roll under it.

While there are many different approaches to teaching a child to read, sight word instruction combined with phonics worked well for our learners. Learners were able to demonstrate a basic operational knowledge of phonics, and they gained foundational skills, which enabled them to apply phonics skills to familiar contexts. Their ability to identify sight words when reading a book provided them with confidence in their reading capability. They could easily identify over half the sight words in a sentence. Therefore, they typically possessed the confidence to attempt to read the word as a whole throughout the entire manuscript (Marzano, 2006: 3). Thus, using different strategies gives learners the opportunity to not only decode words, but also to learn the words' meanings. Therefore, they understand all that they read. Initially, before acquiring the skill, a book with many words discouraged them, and they only paged through it. However, once they have been grounded with the relevant skill, instant recognition of more than half the sight words challenged them to tackle the text without strategies to decode words. Knowledge of these words assists them greatly to understand the meaning of a sentence.

For example, the ability to quickly read and understand the meanings of the pronouns "I" and "you" is essential to comprehending many sentences. The team noticed that, when learner(s) have to decode each word in a sentence, they quickly become frustrated. They also quickly forget the meaning of the text, thus the rope challenge shifts their focus to the individual words and not on the sentence as a whole. The ability to recognise sight words improves reading comprehension. Mr Jam had this to say about his Grade 4 learners and their ability to recognise the initial letters of words:

The Grade 4 learners are beginning to read words in English and shows new facility in memorising stories read to them. Their ability to pick out words which they know at random as they were listening are correlated with their proficiency in reading. But, while reading, most have difficulty in holding to a horizontal line like other peers. This difficulty shows that these learners are not mature yet, but gaining knowledge through generalising what they know, moreover, their ability to put sounds together in words, such as the following:

dr (drink)

sk (skate)

fr (frog)

cr (cry) pr (price) scr (scrap)

bl (black) ph (telephone) spr (spring)

br (bring) gr (grass) str (street)

sh (friendship) sm (smell) sw (swing)

Sight words are not only frequently used in writing, they are also essential for conversational English. A SITS aims to produce and convey critical knowledge that enables learners to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection. As most sight words are already in their verbal vocabularies, learning to read them is simply a matter of connecting the printed word with the oral version in their prior knowledge reservoirs. Parents and teachers helped learners to make clear connections between the print version of a word and its sound by pointing to a word and text as they read. As long as care is taken to ensure that each learner looks at the first letter of the word when the sound is heard, learners were able to learn the consonant sound. However, this is not enough, as they must learn the vowel sounds too. Moreover, early directional training was imperative.

In addition, the participating members of the team ensured that learners said the sight words in order to help them become actively involved in their learning. Most importantly, learners were encouraged to repeat a sight word while writing it. Learners were challenged to search through a pile of index cards and sentence strips containing sight words to find the word that completes a sentence given to them best. For example, after learners showed proficiency in relating the sound to many words, they were challenged to use knowledge gained in the context (from a reading and writing exercise):

The w__n__ was blowing.

Plants need w__t__, light and food.

It is fun to blow up a b__ll__n.

Smoke goes up the ch__m__y.

Using a critical-cultural approach, a socially inclusive way of teaching English literacy seeks to extend and supplement the learners' prior knowledge and teaches them to

be critical analysts of words/texts, regardless of their prior experiences. This gives power to the powerless by setting up a platform and creating a favourable space to promote their creativity. Doing so also reveals gained knowledge relating to producing, understanding and communicating literary information, by being fully engaged, and comprehending and managing their learning within time constraints, using pictures as a guide to complete given sentences. Many learners think in pictures. Furthermore, even older people, whether they realise it or not, often visualise what they are attempting to learn to help solidify the information in their memories. Therefore, by presenting learners with illustrations of sight words along with print versions helps learners make important connections between the object and the word.

In addition, the team encouraged learners to draw their own pictures of each word on the same page as the printed word to help them link the printed version to the visual image, as learners do not learn new words by being exposed to them only once, but through repetition. In this case, learners were asked to extract different words from the word *beautiful* and were motivated to write down as many words as they could.

Learners firstly took out their various tools, such as drawing books, with bold letters wrote “beautiful” while others thought of dictionaries. Then, resume by writing up words down, as they emerge, another strategy unfolded of making small alphabet letter pieces (puzzle pieces) from the word “beautiful” done with a hard paper. Creatively tossing up the pieces as they formulated words and checking them against the dictionary. The exercise was engaging and it was more a hands-on learning activity aiming at improving conceptual understanding of word recognition skills.

Learners gave the following words derived from the word *beautiful*:

beau	eat	beat	ate	tea	fate	late	lit	leaf
bat	bet	fuel	tail	tab	table	bit	fiat	fit
lab	fail	fat	feat	let	teal	bait	blue	fable
lie	lift	fault						

The learners' ability to extract a long *"list of words derived from the word 'beautiful'"* shows that learners are able to demonstrate basic operational knowledge, which was supported by various methods of teaching and learning to accommodate diverse learners irrespective of their home backgrounds. Learners also demonstrated their enhanced literacy knowledge of consonant blends, e.g. *t_ea, b_eat, f_ate, l_ate*, confirming learners' competency in using a variety of common tools and instruments, and a capacity to work in a disciplined manner (SAQA, 2012: 8). The team, in this case, solicited learners' preferences for selecting the order to complete a given task, the place in the room where they wanted to work and the strategies, methods and materials they needed to complete a learning activity. The phrase, *"learners firstly took out their drawing books, with bold letters wrote 'beautiful'"* demonstrates learners' strategic planning and the ability to use their discretion to select and apply known solutions to well-defined routine problems.

Furthermore, the statement *"while others thought of dictionaries, making small alphabet letter pieces done with a hard paper"* shows the creative ways learners applied prior knowledge to assess, process and manage the given task. Doing this built confidence, because learners' ideas were encouraged, and showed motivation and self-regulation in learning. To practise spelling sight words, parents and teachers persuaded learners to write and say words aloud several times, to commit the words to memory. Therefore, to help learners repeat sight words mentally, the team created pizza word walls. Learners had to write a sight word that they were able to read on each crust of the pizza slice on the word wall. Learners colour a pepperoni slice when a word that they had written is called out. Once all the slices have been coloured, the learner calls out "word wall pizza" and reads all their words to the class.



Figure 4.6: An example of learners' exercise of sight words

Not only does repetitive glancing at the word reinforce it in the learner's memory, the word is also easily accessible for the parent or teacher to refer to when talking to learners about it. The aim of the play-based classroom is to encourage learners to engage in the teaching and learning process. Games are one of the most trusted techniques of a socially inclusive way of teaching that helps to strengthen learners' retention of the lesson learned. These games are easy to create at home or at school and can be modified according to the particular sight words learners are learning at the time. Therefore, the game provides an opportunity for other participating members to demonstrate their specific knowledge of the rich linguistic concepts (Marzano, 2006: 8), focusing on the knowledge that learners bring to a learning situation. Learners also suggested numerous games that they play at home, and they facilitated it amongst themselves. These games were played in pairs, while some learners cheered. However, to avoid some learners being excluded, the team supplied each learner with a game board and its pieces and had them each move their game piece on their own. The game proceeded as follows: Learners placed their game pieces on the start space and took turns reading a word card, rolling the die and moving on, following the directions on the game board. Where their pieces landed on a particular space, they had to name the word, look at it once, spell it and use it in a sentence.

The team also used music as a teaching strategy to reinforce the teaching of sight words. They created songs that incorporated sight words and practised them frequently with learners. This afforded the team the opportunity to use multiple modalities for learners to learn the new words. Music became the perfect tool for teaching and learning sight words, as learners learnt to identify numbers and shapes of letters and spell words through song lyrics by just listening to music. It was very engaging for quick learners. Moreover, peer observation and constant sharing enriched learners' knowledge and learning and evaluated the effectiveness of different teaching strategies. As a result, learners' listening and speaking skills were refined and this enabled them to listen for information, communicate critically and confidently with gained knowledge, as well as communicate effectively with spoken language (Tomlinson b, 2014: 11).

Therefore, to create a more socially inclusive learning environment, a revised method was employed. Learners also practised reading and writing sight words by participating in movement activities set to music. Before learners can begin to read, they need to understand the relationships between a symbol and a combination of symbols and the sound or sounds they represent. When learners correctly sound out a word, they are able to map it to their listening and speaking vocabulary and, with practise, learners can begin to recognise many words automatically. The more words learners recognise, the easier it is for them to read. This proves how important word recognition is in reading (Liu & Matthews, 2005: 387).

The understanding of symbol relationships is complicated by the fact that some sounds in English are represented by more than one symbol or a combination of symbols (Tracey & Morrow, 2009: 3). For example, the /f/ sound can be represented by the single consonant *f*, as in *fat*, the consonant combination of *ph* as in "phone" or *gh*. There are many exceptions, especially when it comes to vowel sounds. For example, the long *e* sound can be represented by *e* as in "me", *ee* as in "bee", *ei* as in "receive", *ie* as in "believe", *ea* as in "leaf", and the e-consonant silent *e* pattern as in "Peter".

4.3.3 The efficient way of instructing reading and writing skills

Reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency and motivation (Scharer, 2012: 2). Meaning is made from print through a process called word recognition, which is the process of constructing meaning from written texts. Word recognition is a process of determining the pronunciation and, to some degree, the meaning of an unknown word (Scharer, 2012: 2). Succeeding in pronouncing a printed word constitutes word recognition in the most minimal sense. However, reading must end in meaning construction. This section demonstrates a successful way of teaching reading and writing skills within a socially inclusive paradigm using different aspects of theory and teaching of word recognition skills. For the purpose of this study, the team decided to use an interactive theory of reading that combines a bottom-up and top-down theory of reading, which suggests that learners simultaneously use their background knowledge and decoding skills to find meanings in the text.

To acquire reading and writing skills, the team focused on the areas of problem-based learning and social inclusion within a constructivist orientation of learning, striving to create a physical and sustainable learning environment. The team applied the unfolding theory to learners' reading situation, using games and role play to enhance reading development (Tellez, 2014: 1). Learners' behaviour unfolded, showcasing stimuli that occurred through the process of association. In other words, learners' reading distress can be viewed through a classical conditioning theory lens. After a brief explanation by Siphon (Nali"bali representative) the teacher asked the following question:

Siphon, this perspective suggests that learners' in-class oral reading has become associated with failure. The intervention suggested by this theory would be paired with learners' reading efforts with success.

The conclusion above gave the team the idea of helping parents to establish reading corners in their homes to begin or enforce reading for their children, and to build positive associations with reading in that context. In addition, the teacher and learners could take turns reading easy material (Big Books) to each other, and when learners start improving, gradually introducing more difficult texts and giving learners

greater responsibility for their reading. Learners' readiness was exhibited by their ability to take turns and read aloud to the class. This approach incorporated the transactional theory of reading, which has a circular relationship (Barchers, 2001: 1). Effective word-recognition strategies enable learners to recognise syllable patterns of written words and use them in speech sounds quickly and automatically, thereby rapidly gaining access their meanings (Duke *et al.*, 2011: 53). Learners must connect the material that they read with background knowledge on the topic that already exists in their minds.

Learners learn to read more and more complex stories and use effective word-recognition strategies that permit them to figure out the pronunciation of words they have never seen in print before. Learning word recognition is regarded as base knowledge, which progresses to skills acquisition and application when learners are ready to advance to reading and writing skills. Once learners had mastered the basic knowledge of letter-sound relationships and had acquired the individual sounds quite well, the team decided that more effort should be spent on helping learners apply phonics skills to reading and writing. The focus changed to the acquisition of word recognition skills. In order to design effective word-recognition instruction, it was crucial for the team to know how to plan and implement successful effective word-recognition instruction for beginner readers.

4.3.4 Efficient way of conducting word recognition instruction

Word recognition refers to the ability to associate a printed word with its meaning (Phala, 2013: 32). It is a process whereby learners match written representations of words with the words' letters, sounds and spelling in their memories. Furthermore, it enables learners to translate the letters or spelling patterns of written words into speech sounds quickly and automatically, so that they can identify words and quickly gain access to their meanings (Martin & Peercy, 2014: 723). This argument is supported by Bouma's theory, which suggests that learners recognise words from the shape the letters make in a group relative to each other (Bouma & Bouwhuis, 1979: 13) – this suggestion diverges from the idea that letters are read individually. This process does not refer merely to recognising words on a flash card, but requires rapid retrieval from memory, which is triggered by letters and application

of letter-sound knowledge. Matthews and Cheng (2015: 3) see word recognition as the foundation of the reading process, because, before meaning can be attributed to what is read, the reader must first recognise the word.

Words that learners initially sound out through word analysis or phonics come to be recognised as whole units after learners encounter the words repeatedly in a connected text. To understand word recognition, it is important for learners to recognise syllables in words. Here is a sample dialogue from the team when they demonstrated to learners what a syllable is:

All words have syllables. A word might have one, two, or even more syllables... To demonstrate, we clapped as we say each syllable. The word "reading" has two syllables: read [clap]—ing [clap]. Also, "blue" has one syllable: blue [clap]. "Pumpkin" has two syllables: pump [clap]—kin [clap]... Now you try [learners]. Clap your hands for each syllable in the word "pig"... How many syllables does "pig" have?

Learners [echoing]: One syllable: pig [clap].

The response learners gave shows that they will be able to pronounce new words through applying the relevant rules. Learners were guided to discover words and to participate actively in the learning process, thereby enhancing their ability to recognise words, master printed words and become fluent readers. This happens when learners are able to say one syllable at a time and their spelling improves. The experience and culture of learning empower teachers to create a context for learning that results in purposeful engaged participation that is socially inclusive (Marzano, 2006: 9).

A socially inclusive classroom empowers learners in the sense that they are allowed choose what to study, what to read, how to be evaluated and who to work with. A socially inclusive classroom is based on mutual respect and shows learners an open, caring, welcoming, respectful, culturally sensitive, understanding, non-judgemental and honest character that they can trust. Involving families in making decisions that affect their children at school empower those families (Malebese, 2013: 20). By Grade 4, learners are able to recognise most words they read without conscious attention to spelling-sound relationships. This ability to read words at sight enables learners to allocate more attention to higher-level meaning-making processes.

Therefore, effective word-recognition strategies help learners learn to identify words quickly and effortlessly, so that they can focus on the meaning of what they are reading. Learners were then challenged to match words and then formulate sentences with the following clues from the story being read to them.

Mr Jam: In a group of four, put together the words into pairs based on associations. For example, you can match astronaut and spaceman or hurt and pain – there are no correct answers here, I want you to use your imagination.

<i>a spark</i>	<i>Night</i>	<i>heart</i>	<i>light</i>	<i>in the sky</i>
<i>the sun</i>	<i>Hurt</i>	<i>pain</i>	<i>rain</i>	<i>flying high</i>
<i>spaceman</i>	<i>a match</i>	<i>love</i>	<i>stars</i>	<i>the moon</i>
<i>the sun</i>	<i>too soon</i>	<i>day</i>	<i>dark</i>	<i>Astronaut</i>

Answers:

spaceman___astronaut *dark___light*

astronaut___the moon *night___day*

In the sky___flying high *hurt___pain*

heart_____love

The learning activity above motivated learners to familiarise themselves with special words, which encouraged the development of their word-recognition ability and eventually helped them to become fluent readers and skilful writers. This corresponds with Bandura's (1997) social learning theory, which states that sharing writing through the act of verbal or other forms of self-publishing becomes an active mastery experience that provides learners with feedback on their own writing capabilities (Driscoll, 2005: 38). On the other hand, the instruction, "use your imagination", from a constructivist viewpoint, enabled learners to participate in the production of their knowledge in the classroom, rather than the learning outcomes being decided for them. Moreover, a social cognition learning model emphasises that learners learn through interaction with problems and develop what Vygotskians call

the tools of intellectual interpretations (Vygotsky, 1986: 1). Learning individual words in isolation is one thing, but words become more meaningful to learners when they can construct and read them in the context of a sentence. Such as:

The moon gives us light at night and it sits high in the sky.

The pain starts again at night but during the day she was all over, flying so high.

Briefly, learners' phonetic approximations of words and their invented spellings stimulated their writing skills. This stimulation was influenced by the benefits of a socially inclusive approach to learning that created enriched learning environments, more interactive settings, the promotion and use of deepened inquiry, differentiated instruction, enhanced experimentation and investigative approaches to learning (Rogoff *et al.*, 2011: 158). For cooperative learning, therefore, learners started reading the words more intuitively and learnt how words come together logically to produce meaning. This cooperative learning increased their awareness of spelling patterns, hastening their learning progress in reading and writing. Although they are separate skills, reading and writing share many cognitive processes that connect these two domains of written language.

In a socially inclusive classroom, writing is viewed as a support skill used to reinforce the acquisition of language skills (Chomsky, 1971: 298; Gentry, 2010: 3), thereby encouraging learners to communicate their own written words while simultaneously developing their literacy skills in speaking and reading. Even though writing occurs much later in development, the developmental sequence of writing is parallel to the sequence of speaking, in that learners first have to produce letters, words and then sentences (Gentry, 2010: 3). Montessori's method of teaching strongly disagrees with this notion. She believed that writing must be taught before reading, as writing is caught up with meaning making (Montessori, 1966: 207). Therefore, Montessori teaching methods of writing give learners control over letters and texts, giving them an understanding that they ultimately need for reading (Elbow, 2004: 1).

Thus, the purpose of this study is suggesting ways of moving away from teacher-centred classrooms to a socially inclusive learning environment that encourages equity, cooperation and learner empowerment. In a socially inclusive classroom,

learners examine real-life problems that connect to their prior knowledge and experience. In order to challenge learners' thinking and writing skills, learners were challenged to refine their thinking and writing in ways that make school-related issues come alive. Therefore, in integrating reading and writing, the team encouraged cooperative writing. Cooperating with peers involves a concerted effort to work together with other learners on a writing activity (DBE, 2011: 5,18,19). Learners can ask and help each other improve their writing tasks. In this case, learners were asked to work together to construct a convincing dialogue. After discussing the details of the conventions of dialogue, Mr Jam reinforced the point by introducing the task to the learners.

I want us to be able to write out dialogue so that we can make our characters interesting. We need to use this way of setting out speech to write a convincing dialogue, so we all need to write a dialogue today to practise these points. I want us to write a dialogue between two characters from the book, setting it out so that a reader can easily see who is speaking. What are we going to use to set this out? [writes down the words, capitals, commas, inverted commas, exclamation marks, new lines on the board as learners call out the words he writes].

The utterance above confirms that dialogue, as the manifestation of language in human interactions, or what Habermas (1984: 34; 1987: 3) refers to as communicative action, can be the basis for expanding knowledge through the intersubjective transformation of reading and writing. The phrases, *I want us*, and, *we need to*, strengthen that collaboration by valuing the others' strengths, occupations and concerns. This vision then transforms from two ideas, you and me, to a pluralistic format, us and we. Such dialogue and collaboration are key principles of social inclusion, which are enhanced by teachers' ability to demonstrate expertise and critical knowledge of the subject matter. Moreover, the ability to create new knowledge stimulated marginalised learners' voices. In successful group talk, learners' minds develop as they take charge of their own learning, by questioning their own positions when they are sharing information or being critiqued by their peers.

This is in line with Freire's assertion (1970a: 83) on the problem-posing method: it regards dialogue as indispensable, it bases itself on creativity, and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality. Dialogue can invent and co-create the socio-political consciousness in which learners live (Turner, 2012: 264) and ensures successful experiences in inclusion. Thus, Hlalele *et al.* (2014: 64) emphasise that the production of knowledge, the power relations and the hierarchical structure of schools optimise learners' development according to the existing norms.

At the end of the session, Mr Jam went over the main points of setting out direct speech and concluded with the words:

OK, now we have practised setting out dialogue with characters we read from the book, we'll have to go on and write some for the characters we made up. And I want us to remember how to set out the speech so that we can write clear, interesting dialogue. So that a reader can understand easily. Good dialogue that's easy to read brings a character alive. It's vital to a good plot.

Not only was Mr Jam teaching his class about a specific punctuation rule (*capitals, commas, inverted commas, exclamation marks*) he was signalling to them why it was important and what purpose it served. He was helping them make a connection between word level and text level knowledge and his teaching clearly drew upon knowledge shared amongst the members of the team about the features he was teaching. The function of words and correct expression are developed using manipulative activities and, therefore, working with these activities gave learners further practise in reading and comprehension through dialogue and visualisation (SAQA, 2012: 6). The team placed a high priority on teaching and writing skills for communication and composition. They also emphasised the importance of connecting word level, sentence level and text level aspects of reading and writing in this construction. The effective team generally identifies teaching activities that are consistent with their stated beliefs about the teaching of literacy. From our observations of the ways the team translated their beliefs into classroom practice it was clear that the team also made explicit to the learners the connections between word, sentence and text level aspects.

Monica (a language specialist) challenged learners to find words that have been omitted from the sentence. The beginning and final letters of the missing words were given and all consonants appeared in the missing word. A line represented the missing letter and the letter had no relationship to the length of the word.

Please help me read this sentences with only the consonant sounds [learners read aloud, filling the blanks as they read]

1. Th_ b_ ll r_ ll_ d_ nt_ th_ p_ _l.

2. Th_ b_ y r_ n_ ft_ r th_ b_ ll.

Monica: Wonderful, as we recap from Mr Jam's previous lesson on vowels [a e, i, o, u and sometimes y] are voiced by modification of the intonation jet by the throat, palate, tongue and lips.

When the lesson activity was put into practice, *learners read aloud, filling the blanks as they read*, the ability to form close interpersonal relations was highly valued and there was a strong emphasis on individual learner creativity and independent learning. After the lesson, learners discussed their findings in a colloquium through a multiplicity of assessment strategies. Discursive and emancipatory learning engages learners in creating a dialogue learning activity without coercion (Schwarz, 2006: 34). The discursive and emancipatory learning methods challenge power asymmetry, mistrust learning and enable learners to understand how knowledge has been transmitted to them, given an opportunity to find their own voice, develop their own identity and discover their human dignity as part of owning their learning. Empowerment through emancipatory discourse produced a true freedom of consciousness among learners. In its critical form, it also has the intent of freeing learners in a classroom environment from unnecessarily restrictive traditions and power relations that inhibit opportunity for learning fulfilment. Dialogue is the manifestation of language in communicative action (Habermas, 1987: 38), thereby expanding knowledge through intersubjective transformation.

In conclusion, the empirical data confirms what the literature says, namely, that learning flourishes more when it is entertaining (Duke *et al.*, 2011: 52), forcing the team to discover and rediscover more skills and knowledge of language teaching.

Thus, the team was forced to build on the knowledge learners brought to a learning situation and to manoeuvre ways to use that knowledge to construct new knowledge. The following section deals with conditions relating to solutions under which a SITS responds to problems of English literacy in a Grade 4 class, if those conditions can be implemented successfully. The team and learners' self-confidence about social inclusion improved and everyone involved had acknowledged and addressed difficult learning tasks in a friendly and meaningful manner.

4.4 UNDERSTANDING CONTEXTS UNDER WHICH A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY CAN BE IMPLEMENTED SUCCESSFULLY

The previous section provided a detailed and illustrative discussion of the contexts of a SITS intended to respond to the problems of promoting English literacy in a Grade 4 class. This section describes the results of implementing a SITS as a sustainable, cooperative, educationally viable, high quality, enjoyable learning initiative that involves elements of socially inclusive learning in a Grade 4 class. What is proposed in this section is that the construct of inclusion becomes one part of a general theory of education (Shenk, 2014: 370). The principles of social inclusion become an indication contributing to addressing the problems of English literacy in a Grade 4 class.

The key implementation partners were Grade 4 learners, their parents, the school, the community and other stakeholders, who brought noble ideas to the implementation of the strategy, thereby collectively ensuring the success of the anticipated strategy, and integrating education with economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions of sustainability in community life and in harmony with nature. Open-ended problems and problems requiring critical or creative thinking, which could not be solved by following text examples, were assigned and resolved by involving learners in simulations and role plays using self-paced and/or socially inclusive learning. It is the way each of these components are entwined that will determine whether the school becomes more inclusive educationally and socially. Furthermore, through this entwining, learners were provided with the opportunity to instil the necessary principles of social inclusivity. This prepared learners for the informed, responsible, collaborative and socially inclusive participation that is

required in a sustainable learning environment. A SITS appeared to be more powerful than the prescribed school curriculum. It introduced concepts for learning that take place within a socially constituted setting involving co-researchers with a common vision, collaborating to develop new knowledge and skills. It is a given that learners learn more when they work in groups, because they get more opportunities to talk amongst themselves. Moreover, error correction works best when learners monitor their own language rather than having to depend on teachers' approval all the time. A properly implemented SITS can lead to increased motivation to learn, greater retention of knowledge, deeper understanding and more positive attitudes towards the subject being taught (Attard *et al.*, 2010: 20-41). In discussing these concepts extensively, I refer to following the same rule (see 4.1, second paragraph).

4.4.1 Conditions conducive for meaningful teaching in a socially inclusive manner within the four main language skills

Most learners were unaware of the similarities in the way words started and fewer actually knew initial word sounds from the incidental teaching. The learners needed plenty of incidental teaching to help them make the necessary associations that give phonics meaning. An example of how this kind of collaboration can happen involves a socially inclusive approach, whereby a dedicated team co-plans a lesson to address and focus on a particular section of the syllabus. It also gives other stakeholders an opportunity to demonstrate their specific knowledge of the rich linguistic concepts. Throughout the planning process, the team drew on outside resources, social networks, media, textbooks, research, and teaching theories, and engaged in extended conversations while focusing on learners' learning and the development of the four main language skills.

At the research site, the team worked together in a socially inclusive manner to teach and learn English literacy in a Grade 4 class. Among other things, the team's focus was ensuring that the subject matter was accessible to the learners. By incorporating and relating the background experience of the learners to the classroom environment, a series of meetings was conducted to get the support of interested members. The everyday interactions and involvement by parents and other participating members contributed significantly towards the learners' learning

attainment (Barron, 2013: 32). Fathi (2014: 1052) claims that these benefits frequently increase incrementally during learners' educational process if parents are more intensively and actively involved at an earlier stage. One parent, Mr Samuel, explained his commitment to being part of the team:

It is clear that, as parents, we need to play a major role in enhancing our children's literacy prowess, in and outside the classrooms. For instance, even when planting, we can invite them so that they can conceptualise the process.

Mrs Cecilia supplemented this by saying:

I've realised there was a learning activity about recipes, so this came to my attention that I can also invite my daughter as I prepare meals.

The above utterances confirm parents' involvement in enhancing learners' learning attainment. What made it easy for them to take part was the fact that they did not have to change their daily activities to create literacy activities for their children within their daily schedules. The statement, *even when planting, we can invite them so that they can conceptualise the process*, shows that learners were involved in planting and harvesting, and they incorporated teaching and learning elements in a socially inclusive manner, thereby ensuring that learning does not necessarily take place only at school, but continues to take place at home too. This establishes a sustainable, socially inclusive learning environment. With this in mind, the comments above show that parents and the participating community members possess an enormous amount of knowledge. The team also instilled literacy development through play.

A complementary benefit to the above views is echoed by the following words by members of the team:

When they jumping rope, I was not aware that the activity was helpful, later that day after supper, I asked my girl some words they were learning, to my surprise, she remembered all. I am in a position to assist my own children and other children around.

I liked the idea of implemented reading corners for our children at home, that they will use them regularly as reading spaces

The working team, especially parents, realised that they need to make an effort by providing conducive reading spaces in their homes, give their children time to engage with reading materials, and avoid discouraging their children when the children give incorrect answers or read incorrectly. Instead, parents need to appreciate and love their children and communicate more, as children learn from them as parents. Moreover, the team enhanced a more socially inclusive and conducive learning space for self-learning, peer learning and learning from role models. All these efforts required respect, humility, modesty, hope and freedom. The study was aimed to make all participating members, especially teachers and learners, conscious of the positive role they can play in establishing a cognitive, problem-based and democratic theory of education that merges into the education system that corresponds with broader epistemological principles. A SITS forms a collage, bringing together a variety of expertise to solve problems of English literacy, thereby benefiting teachers, learners and parents.

4.4.2 The socially inclusive way of teaching listening and speaking skills

Listening and speaking skills lie at the heart of the teaching and learning process, but involves one of the most difficult tasks for teachers to disseminate. In a socially inclusive teaching method, listening and speaking skills are the most critical skills in learning development and motivation that empowers learners to develop their communication and critical thinking skills. Many language learners regard listening and speaking ability as the measure of knowing the language. This is supported by Cummins *et al.* (2007: 72), who discovered that listening and speaking ability is important for appropriate interaction within a socially inclusive realm, as that ability fosters communicative competence in and outside the classroom, thereby ensuring effective teaching and learning of English literacy by means of multiple and new literacy. Multiple and new literacy studies have moved literacy beyond the school (see 2.3.1.1 iv) in an attempt to enhance learners' personal growth and self-improvement, and their engagement in the teaching and learning process.

Once the plan has been developed for a type of learning activity, one knowledgeable member of the team or an expert on the subject matter volunteered to teach it in the presence of the teacher, who observed and served as a teacher aid. When this was

put into practice, the ability to form close interpersonal relations with learners was highly valued by the team and there was a strong emphasis on individual learner creativity and independent learning. In this instance, learners were encouraged to question and challenge what they had been taught.

Nceba (a learner) commented as follows in this regard:

At first, the song was difficult, but Mistress made it easy when she writes it on the board and gave us pictures to see what happens each day as we sing, some words goes up and others down.

The use of cumulative songs was experienced positively, although the words, *at first the song was difficult*, prove that hearing sometimes needs to be supplemented by visual features. This claim was supported by the statement, *but Mistress made it easy when she writes it on the board and gave us pictures to see what happens each day*, which confirms listening and doing is the best strategy, as it keeps learners busy and helps them conceive and interpret information and manipulate words. In addition, this method of teaching helped learners to become aware of the soft and loud; short and long sounds. This was evident from the phrase, *some words goes up and others down*. The song also helped learners to formulate various aspects of sounds that were depicted, as each consecutive verse of the song repeated words from the previous verses.

After the lesson, the group discussed their findings in a colloquium. Typically, the team which had planned the lesson focused on their planning and evaluation of the lesson, particularly learners' reaction to their learning. The team also gave learners an opportunity to talk about listening experiences they had had, to determine the quality of listening, thereby revising the lesson to seek a more interesting way of presenting it, perhaps to let learners take charge of a relevant activity and then letting a different teacher teach it to another class. This feedback encouraged the team to build on the knowledge learners bring to a learning situation and to consider ways to use that knowledge to construct new knowledge. Remembering what has been heard and the exactness of detail are important aspects of listening. The different ways in which good listening and speaking skills were understood were

reflected in the cumulative songs, where each verse borrows words from a previous verse, and in follow-the-directions games.

It is believed that language learning is cumulative. Therefore, it must be consolidated in and outside the classroom.

Tenele (a learner) supplemented Nceba's remarks by saying:

She even brought example of each to let us role model it and the fun part crossword puzzle to help us identify words we have been singing, and that made us not to forget the lyrics.

Tenele's words prove that learners' listening skills can be fostered through songs. Wonderful word sounds were also found in books that tell cumulative stories, which also facilitated words through music. Songs helped improve learners' pronunciation skills, hence we can say that listening and speaking skills are enhanced through music (Egan, 2013: 3). Learners come to school already having acquired discriminative listening skills, which are referred to as background knowledge. However, teachers still have a lot of work to do to enhance learner's selective, informative and effective listening skills, and to direct learners into proper channels during the teaching and learning process through the theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2006: 35). Thus, the teacher has to involve learners, because if learners do not succeed, it reflects badly on the teachers' image and deprives the learners of the rich knowledge that can be instilled in them.

Therefore, learners' involvement in the planning and actual teaching forced the team to discover and rediscover more skills and knowledge relating to language teaching. This spiral cycle of teaching and learning culminated in the team publishing a report that includes lesson preparations, lesson presentation, observed learner behaviour, teacher reflections and a summary of the team discussions. Songs, shared reading, poetry recitals, reading aloud and oral presentations are some of the interesting and effective ways of learning phonics. Some learners, however, require more practise to reinforce their skills. Learners of very low reading abilities benefit the most from explicit instruction in phonological skills, paired with explicit instruction on how to apply those skills in a meaningful context within social inclusiveness.

4.4.3 The socially inclusive way of teaching reading and writing skills

Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning (Luke, 2012: 5). It is a means of language acquisition, of communication and of sharing information and ideas. On the other hand, writing is a medium of human communication that represents language and emotions (UNESCO, 2013: 24). The purpose of a SITS is to sharpen learners' writing skills using various aspects of teaching. Thus, proper teaching of reading and writing skills requires knowing the enforced requirements as laid down by CAPS (2011: 8-9), and knowing what the learners will need to learn in the intermediate phase. Teaching children to read is an exacting task that demands skill, patience and ingenuity. However, this task is incomplete if it does not awaken in learners a love of books and of reading. Thus, introducing a SITS should involve noble ideas from diverse backgrounds coinciding to stimulate reading satisfaction and a sense of achievement when the skill has been mastered successfully.

A parent (Maki) commented as follows:

We need to make sure that reasons for our methods are sound... thus, we should also take time occasionally to ask ourselves if we are giving our children the widest and fullest approach to reading that is possible in our circumstances.

The state of mind reflected by Maki's spoken words show that parents tend to take ownership of their children's education if they are involved in their children's learning activities, to enhance their children's learning attainment. This is emphasised by Mahlomaholo (2012: 3) as one of the benefits of parental inclusion in their children's education. Parents make a big contribution to helping learners develop reading and writing skills when they suggest activities that they can do with their children. They suggested cognitive games, such as games involving visual perception, whereby the team used matching games, finding differences and missing parts, in an attempt to improve learners' visual discrimination, which is an essential building block for differentiating between "f and t"; "b and d"; and "saw and was". This learning activity was enhanced by using a mirror that shed a light on the mirrored words. Furthermore, auditory perception was taught with pegboards, tricky fingers and brainy blocks, which enabled learners to become aware of sequences, patterns and

the concepts above, below, next to, before, after, diagonally etc. These are skills that are necessary for the formation of letters and the recognition of letters and words. One of the parents' said:

If enthusiasm for reading arises in some measure from the sense of achievement, our methods must be such that right from the beginning the child has a feeling, not of frustration and failure, but of achievement and success.

This teams' contribution encouraged and gave learners the satisfaction of reading aloud to an adult. It also gave parents and other participating team members the satisfaction of contributing to their children's education.

The study enabled the team to develop an appreciation of the value of collaborative work and other people's viewpoints. The SITS also used crosswords puzzles, which were regarded as essential for developing visual discrimination, part/whole concepts and figure ground perception. When reading a sentence from a paragraph the reader's eyes must focus on the letters and words that make up that sentence and should not be distracted by other words on the page. Therefore, to avoid distraction, reading was taught through play. The following sub-skills were identified as important when teaching reading:

- Syllabification, which uses clapping to divide words into syllables. The teacher started by teaching and helping learners to illustrate the positive meaning of each letter of their names. It is a good idea to use this technique when introducing vocabulary. Using musical instruments reinforces the idea. Learners could also be asked to count the number of syllables.
- Compound words are words made up of two parts e.g. tree house, rainbow, sunshine. Cards with pictures can be made or bought to depict constituent words, and learners have to match them to make a compound word.
- Rhyming words are easy to teach because one can pair (and spell) "mat" with other rhyming words, e.g. cat, rat, fat sat, hat, etc. Teach by reading books with rhymes, singing songs and reciting rhymes. Make cards with pictures and instruct children to match rhyming pictures.
- Symbols represent a word or an action and using percussion and dance are two ways of introducing learners to the concept of symbols. Start with

squiggles and lines and then symbols for the various musical instruments; and progress to music notation.

- Letter-sounds teach children that letters have names and sounds. Sing songs, identify what words start with which sounds; find objects in the class that start with a certain sound; bring objects from home that start with the sound of the week; play, I Spy, feel and identify letters while blindfolded. Hand out Letterland cards and ask learners to post them in the post box when their sound is called out. Play Froggie froggie may I cross your golden river, but use letters instead of colours; play Pass the letters pass them on, and ask, who has the letter “a”, for example; make bibs with the letters and give learners opportunities to become a certain character during the Letterland lesson.
- Analysis refers to the ability to break (analyse) words into sounds, e.g. *dog* = d-o-g. Use bibs/cards and the robots to read three-letter words. Also teach rhyming this way (i.e. the first letter changes); learners should know their left and right sides, so make a green and red dot on their left and right hands respectively.
- Synthesis is the opposite of analysis – it involves the blending of sounds into words: *What am I saying/spelling?* Then, give learners opportunities to think of their own words.
- Words and sentences: Some words are sight words, e.g. “was”, while others can be sounded out (phonetically) e.g. “man”. Play the Wishy washy game to show learners how words are made of letters and sentences are made up of words; count the words in the sentence. Learners become familiar with the configuration of words, e.g. “crocodile” looks different from the word “lay” – use this concept for percussion rings and music notation.

A learner had the following response about learning phonics:

I enjoy using the cards to blend the sounds, since this helps me learn more new words. I find it interesting. When I forget how to pronounce the word “hen” but I know how to read “pen” and the sound of letter “h”. So I substituted “p” with “h” and read the word “hen”.

These actions invited learners to step forward, blend sounds, pronounce the words and tell the class clearly how they did it. The extract, *when I forget how to pronounce the word “hen” but I know how to read “pen” and the sound of letter “h”. So I substituted “p” with “h” and read the word “hen”*, shows that learners have acquired all the level descriptors they are required to achieve. Moreover, this approach shows creativity and imagination in analysing the text. As learners engaged in the learning activity, we learnt that they discovered the explicit instruction we used in blending the very useful (*I find it interesting*), and they turned out to be quite competent regarding such skills. Teaching in this way, *I enjoy using the cards to blend the sounds since this helps me learn more new words*, gave learners power in the ability to attack unknown words, vocabulary development and comprehension. They used the sounds in words and phonetic strategies to figure out spelling of words, and then tried other approaches, including applying common spelling patterns.

Phonemic awareness developed learners' ability to hear sounds in words when they are involved in shared reading of poems, chants, songs and big books with repetitive refrains and rhymes. The team also adjusted the language items and enriched the input in order to make sure that learners have adequate stimuli and they can use what they have learnt in authentic and meaningful ways. This was evident when learners were asked to extract words from the word “beautiful” and were motivated to write down as many as they could. The team managed to promote and value care, respect, cooperation and diversity. In addition, the team developed and implemented policies and programmes through processes incorporated in a socially inclusive learning environment that nurtured a safe and supportive school environment.

The team realised that quality leadership is an essential element underpinning the creation of a SITS. The team ensured that the roles and responsibilities of all the members participating were explicitly clear, well understood and disseminated. Moreover, a SITS provided co-researchers with the opportunity to learn – the formal curriculum learners gained the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to maintain positive relationships. Constant supervision, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes encouraged evidence-based practice for team decisions and improvements. The empirical data confirms what the literature says, that when a

group of people with noble ideas and best interests at heart for promoting learners' literacy problems work together, the best results are achieved.

Parents and the community were able to set the best examples for good reading habits as learners emulated the actions of their parents. Parents are their children's greatest and most influential teachers (Malebese, 2013: 23). When a child sees his/her parents reading for enjoyment, he/she assumes that reading is a fun and natural experience. That emancipatory belief empowers learners to be critical, self-reflective learners (Hetland, Skogstad, Hetland & Mikkelsen, 2011: 1) who are empowered to make informed decisions on the basis of logical reasoning. This ability places them in a position to criticise the beliefs and practices that are alleged to dominate in the teaching and learning process. This proves that learners are not passive recipients but active participants in the process of acquiring knowledge.

It was noted that a SITS really motivated learners to learn. The strategy developed critical thinking and reasoning processes and also stressed the specific language content knowledge that learners were expected to acquire. It also automatically encouraged and enhanced teachers' self-esteem, forcing them to work harder at their duty of supporting learners properly and responding to the problems of English literacy. The teachers and team members, therefore, continued to suggest alternative ideas and sources for more engaging lessons, creating a friendly learning space in which to make learning activities of their own creation.

4.5 PLAUSIBLE THREATS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY

Section 4.3 researched and extensively analysed the components involved in formulating a SITS to respond to the problems of teaching English literacy. In Section 4.5 the discussion centred on plausible threats that might hamper the implementation of a SITS to respond to the problems of English literacy in a Grade 4 class, and the steps taken to circumvent the threats. A detailed discussion of the components were categorised as follows: the most meaningful way of teaching within the four main language skills, the most efficient way of teaching listening and

speaking skills in a socially inclusive way, and the most efficient way of teaching reading and writing in a socially inclusive way.

Smith shows how Freire's (1921-1997) work, thoughts and vision helps to clarify misunderstandings and outline other risks. Smith makes reference to Freire's theory that no education is neutral, and suggests that this could hinder the implementation of a socially inclusive way of teaching English literacy (Smith, 1997-2002: 1-14). Smith (1997-2002: 5) further maintains that there is a need to recognise the threats and problems involved in current approaches to consciousness-raising. With this in mind, the study employed Freire's teaching method in an attempt to incorporate the learners' perspectives into the teaching and learning of literacy. The aim was to engage marginalised and oppressed learners and raise their consciousness, to free them from the oppression of not being able to listen, speak, read and write English in a socially inclusive way.

Hence, Guglielmi (2012: 735) suggests that, by utilising a sociocultural theory, the team might have realised clearly how to use various tools to create a mediational space that would help learners outside the confines of the classroom. Furthermore, teachers should be encouraged to observe learners' attitudes and assess their current knowledge, then find ways to build the lessons from this existing band of knowledge.

4.5.1 Factors that hinder teaching and the formulation of a socially inclusive teaching strategy within the four main language skills

This section deals with the risks and threats encountered in pursuit of the formulation of a SITS in response to the problems of English literacy in a Grade 4 class. Learners and parents at the school under investigation came from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds, with little opportunity for education in their home environment. These children experienced social and emotional barriers to learning English and a lack of self-esteem in class during teaching and learning. Problem posing is a group process that draws on personal experience to create social connectedness and mutual responsibility (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003: 20). A SITS is centred on the shared nature of conflicts and problematic interactions and enables

learners to envision various working conditions which give them courage to respond to problems. This is a comment by one of the members:

Seboka (community member): Tichere o inkela diqeto ka rona, hore na re thabile, ha rea thaba, hana taba (the teacher creates both the content and structure of learning without considering the learners' needs).

The statement, *the teacher creates both the content and structure of learning*, does not concur with the principles of a SITS, which asserts that true knowledge evolves from the interaction of reflection and action. This opinion contradicts the anticipated strategy on which the community-based approach is anchored, and which focuses on the knowledge learners bring with them to a learning situation, and the way that knowledge is used to construct new knowledge (Harvey & Goudvis, 2005: 112). Moreover, the community-based approach occurs when people participate in a transforming act. When formulating the SITS, much of the content should come from learners' lives, which was overlooked, because they were never given a platform to take ownership and create their own learning. However, because of its societal and emotional effect, social inclusion in the teaching and learning process became a powerful motivating factor for language acquisition.

We confronted a major threat when we tried to integrate phonics into the daily teaching and learning process. The teacher complained about time – a key element of effective literacy teaching and learning and critical to learners' success. Monica confirmed this, suggesting that the time learners spend reading and writing affects the acquisition of literacy skills.

Monica: We don't have time, come to think of it, we need to make the time for all this suggested activities and critically think through various strategies in the teaching and learning of literacy. When?

The extract, *we don't have time*, emphasises that sufficient time must be allocated to literacy development. In word recognition and reading, whether aloud, shared, guided or directed listening and thinking, sociolinguists and psycholinguists focus more on communicative effectiveness and real-time performance than on the nature of language itself (Ma, 2009: 41). Some learners who were slow beginners were relentlessly presented with whole sentences when a whole-word method or a phonic

bias would have suited them better. Timing the teaching of reading and writing differently, or using other content for the reading material would have been more helpful. Tshepiso commented in this regard:

Tshepiso: Eish! And working within time constraints, you need to consciously make a hard decision to maximise time on task.

Moreover, for most learners, school was a terrifying place. Luyanda, a Grade 4 learner, is a very bright girl who has experienced major hardship in her life and who has been taking care of herself since a young age. However, she and some of her peers felt compelled to talk only if they know the correct answers, rather than engaging in practical thinking, and according to them, it also happens outside the school boundaries. Their major fear was failing to win their teachers' approval and love, and this fear seemed to be more powerful than the threat of physical punishment (McLeod, 2012: 33). Therefore, to circumvent this intimidation, the team put an end to unnecessary obligations in the classroom and took full advantage of inclusive and cautious learning. The following is one of the comments that were made:

Marlene: Much of what we say and do in the classrooms, mostly make learners feel like they do not know things that, in fact, they knew perfectly well before we began to talk about them.

The comment, *in fact, they knew perfectly well before we began to talk*, demonstrates a clear need for the teachers in the team to make an effort to understand learners' level of consciousness much more than they usually do in the classroom setting. Furthermore, teachers need to eradicate the perception that the teacher is the source of all wisdom and is always correct, as suggested by the remark, *make learners feel like they do not know things*; this is a situation that threatens most learners. Only when the teacher disempowered him/herself were the learners able to engage more in the teaching and learning activities. It was evident that learners were able to correct their own mistakes and avoid repeating them, unlike what would have happened if the teacher had corrected them.

Furthermore, it seemed that learners would be more successful in learning to read if the timing and method of learning and the actual reading material related more

closely to their needs and their interests. Therefore, this study concludes that there was a need to build capacity in literacy teaching and, in order to be an effective team, there was a need to know how learners learn to read, how to assess reading and how to use assessment to design and implement effective interventions, thereby avoiding possible threats.

4.5.2 Factors that threaten the acquisition of listening and speaking skills

The acquisition of knowledge (listening and speaking skills) took place through formal and informal professional development in the teaching and learning of English literacy. Most of the participating members had had trouble acquiring effective teaching strategies, particularly understanding some of the most technical aspects of phonological awareness. As learners had poor comprehension, the participating psychologist suggested that phonics instruction alone would not maximise outcomes of learning to read. She discovered there were no books with colour clues, and she helped the team to see that meaning did not start with sounds alone, but from meaningful wholes. Teaching listening and speaking becomes part of personal growth and introduces the heritage of the culture. Furthermore, the teacher should focus on the knowledge the student brings to a learning situation and how that knowledge can be used to construct new knowledge.

I did not see any relationship on the use of a pendulum during the phonics instruction, when swung and you say a word to illustrate a short or long sound.

One team member discovered that initial sounds might have provided valuable clues, along with other clues in letter sounds and patterns.

The team overlooked the diagnostic test of the proper approach to the instruction of a phonics class. The remark, *I did not see any relationship on the use of a pendulum during the phonics instruction*, shows that the lesson had not been disseminated well. Therefore, to clarify the confusion, the team used an elastic band to show the difference between long and short sounds, still conveying the same message as a pendulum. The aim was to help learners move their eyes along with the consonants and digraphs as the pendulum swung to its furthest end and to encourage them to pay attention to each phonic element. This was especially helpful for learners who

rated very low on word recognition or rated high in vocabulary and low in comprehension. In the words of teacher:

The focus was always on phonics as knowledge but not on applying phonics skills. So, it was very difficult for all of us to agree on how phonics was related to other aspects of learning and whether it could be used as a meaningful tool for learning.

The phrase, *it was very difficult for all of us to agree on how phonics was related to other aspects of learning*, shows that there was doubt whether integration would work. The words, *for all of us*, also proves that the team really worked together to weigh options and meaningful ways of integrating phonics skills into practice in shared reading and vocabulary building activities. Furthermore, the spoken words, *to agree on how phonics was related to other aspects of learning*, confirms that the team did not have adequate exposure to various ways of teaching, especially regarding social inclusion, and were not exposed to teaching aids. Moreover, the team still found it difficult and failed to see possibilities beyond the materials they had at hand. However, as they started to put their phonics skills into practice in shared reading and vocabulary building activities when they designed that application, learning followed. Learning became a meaningful whole and their improved performance changed their perceptions about learning English language. In other words, as teachers and team members, we learnt to be more open-minded and continued observing learners, reflected critically, adapted our strategies and continued to ensure that we were on the right track.

However, the manner in which things were done was becoming more complicated, and therefore, it was difficult for the team to use a single chapter or story to cope with a particular sound or skill. This was evident from learners' comments:

Pontsho: But having to write a summary of what we read to tell enough about the story yields a lot of writing of which sometimes I feel like I'm writing the book all over again.

Fifi: I never know how to do it, because there's so much words in a book that needed to be covered, and she only wants us to write it in one sentence.

The utterances above reflect learners' frustrations about conceptualising the lesson. The team had to look for different resources; they were willing to gain greater exposure to various teaching materials and strategies, but faced limitations regarding time and resources. However, a subject expert helped to bring in resources and offered ideas. Because of her, the team had the chance to hear about the experiences of other schools. Owing to a SITS, the team managed to develop their own ideas and materials for their learners, which placed them in a better position than other schools, which were dependent on what CAPS gave them.

In addition, the team, and especially teachers, had this to say:

Mr Jam: I've never been able to develop a form that would fit all the books that learners read, and some books are really difficult to summarise briefly. True, some books could really be a challenge in most adults, and when do these learners need to apply phonics skills?

The team's ultimate goal was to use phonics as a tool to help the learners learn, so that they could read and spell words. Learners had the greatest problems with reading, spelling and writing and these challenges have been the major obstacles to their language learning. It was expected that phonics learning would eliminate these hindrances and enable learners to become more confident language learners. However, after six months' experience, the team realised that many more factors had to be considered before this could happen.

4.5.3 Factors that threatened the acquisition of reading and writing skills

The co-researchers had some emotional moments as they engaged in professional conversations to share effective ideas for the creation of a learning organisation. Owing to a lack of specific abstract knowledge of linguistic concepts, the team used such knowledge unconsciously, particularly in the teaching of reading and writing connected to phonics. As Sesotho, the home language of the co-researchers, is not predominantly phonetic, trying to stimulate reading lessons using phonics involved a mechanical approach to teaching words that are not frequently used by learners. The phonic approach did not use learners' known ability to recognise the shapes of words, phrases and sentences, nor did it harness their interests, which was a

powerful force that could help them learn to read and write. However, to anticipate this challenge, learners were taught, in phonics and word analysis, to tackle new words fluently and with understanding. The development of reading and writing skills is regarded as part of personal growth into the heritage of the culture (McKenna & Robinson, 2013: 12). The team observed that learners struggled to know which parts of unknown words may or may not be phonetic, and that made using phonics even more confusing.

The following feedback was extracted from the debriefing sessions and contributed to an ongoing debate about the efficacy of whole language approaches versus phonic approaches to the teaching of reading:

Mme Sabi: Well, even the simplest written form does not really tell much about learners' actual interpretation of what was read. Moreover, there isn't time for much oral reporting and written reports have no reliable purpose other than making sure learners have read the book.

Maki: We can still examine the effectiveness of enriching whole language instruction with systematic phonics, rather than eliminating whole language from the beginning of reading instruction because, so far, we have not reached our set goals.

Therefore, through professional development, teachers can be taught the theory, the technicalities and the teaching of English literacy: *even the simplest written form does not really tell much about learners*, but it is the application of this understanding, especially a socially inclusive way of teaching, that delivers the best quality classroom programmes, which had a huge impact on learners' learning outcomes. While professional development was designed to include classroom application, classroom contexts alone are so diverse and dynamic that it is not possible to cover every possible situation. So, the admission that, *we have not reached our set goals*, gave the team the impetus to provide immediate and context-relevant responses and to support the teachers as they continue to acquire knowledge and skill in literacy teaching, embedded in a socially inclusive manner.

Serapa concluded that:

It is important to underscore the place of phonics at the beginning of the reading programme. Systematic phonics instruction by itself does not help learners to acquire all the processes they need to become successful readers.

Again, the statement, *phonics instruction by itself does not help learners to acquire all the processes they need to become successful readers*, confirms what literature says, namely, that the teaching of phonics should not be a long and arduous process, as phonics is only a part of the knowledge that learners need to tackle new words (Mohr & Mohr, 2007: 443). The words, *by itself does not help learners*, shows that phonics needs to be combined with other essential instructional components to create a complete and balanced reading programme. By emphasising all the processes that contribute to progress in reading, the team strived to ensure that every learner had the best chance of becoming a skilful reader. The systematic phonics instruction, when combined with language activities and individual tutoring, tripled the effect of phonics alone and included the benefit of giving slower learners the chance to take part. So, the team decided on the type of phonics instruction and the timing of such instruction for the further development of learning activities that incorporate sound and letter associations.

4.5.4 Factors that threaten the teaching and learning process through a socially inclusive teaching strategy

This section identifies the threats that were impediments to the formulation of a SITS in response to the problems of teaching English literacy in a Grade 4 class. It also elaborates on the techniques that were employed to reinforce and circumvent the impediments. Although the community strived for better achievement of learning outcomes for their children, the greatest threat faced by learners was the lack of time to complete their assigned homework due to home chores and other responsibilities. Firstly, they had to clean their houses, fetch water and wood, and search for wild vegetables for their supper, some walking for more than 10 kilometres. They had to prepare supper for their families, as some learners were in charge of the household due to a lack of parental support, as a result of their parents indulging in irresponsible behaviour, not even caring for their families on a basic level. Thus, by the time learners sit down to do assigned homework, they are tired, it is already time

for bed and then they are scolded for wasting candles. This is one of many similar conversations we experienced with learners:

Patsy: So, Mpho why didn't you do my homework?

Mpho: Mistress, mama a re ke qeta k'hantlele, ke ngole mot'seare, empa ha ke tswa sekolo ke tlameha ho etsa mesebetsi le ho hlokomela bana (Mistress, Mom said I finish the candle, I should do my work during the day, but when I come back from school I have to do a lot of house chores as well as look after my siblings).

The explanation above shows that learners lack parental support, some even take up the role of parenting both their parents and siblings. This impedes the focus of their learning practices. So, to address the situation of, *Mom said I finish the candle, I should do my work during the day*, the teacher and the book club leader came up with the idea of establishing homework centres. The teacher stayed after school for at least an hour every day to work with learners whilst they engaged in their homework, to assist them to regain a sense of comfort, belonging, respect and support. Learners were requested to show their work to their parents and ask them to sign their homework journals. Signing learners' homework journals was still a problem for most parents, as they were usually intoxicated.

Therefore, from a critical perspective, the situation that, *I come back from school I have to do a lot of house chores as well as look after my siblings*, forced the team to focus on the constitutive role of practices and attend to creating sufficient safe spaces dedicated to teaching and learning processes. Non-governmental organisation (NGO) groups, in consultation with the parents who were not employed, created a strategic partnership that pursued a holistic approach to food security and nutrition, sustainable livelihoods and community well-being, by working together to build a positive future for the children. This project helped to minimise the problem of alcoholism, and working hard every day increased parental involvement in their children's schoolwork and gave parents dignity because they had a reason to wake up every day. Previously, they had given up hope of a good life by burying their shame in alcohol abuse. Parents encouraged their children to work hard at school to attain the best positions in high-profile institutions and not end up being limited to doing strenuous manual labour for their entire working lives.

Furthermore, the phrase, *Mom said I finish the candle*, made the NGO donate 35 Waka Waka lamps for learners, thereby fighting energy poverty and helping children to do their homework and study for their exams – this donation brought hope, freedom and respect to the hopeless. Community members were overjoyed when, through the help of the NGO, the Ministry of Water and Land Affairs delivered a drilling machine to sink a borehole. The community received access to clean borehole drinking water in their village. Thus, the learners' journey to fetch water was shortened, giving them enough time to do their homework. Through the Working for Water project, most of the community members secured employment, thus contributing to their human dignity, minimising alcoholism and giving them purpose in life. In addition, when the water project members cut down the trees, some of the unwanted pieces of wood were passed to the community for use as fuel and this, too, helped learners to concentrate on their studies.

The other challenge was the implementation of effective literacy teaching practices. Most of the games played during lessons were noisy, which disturbed other classes. As a result, all the teaching and learning activities that were facilitated through games were performed after school, which attracted other members of the community, who joined in and shared the experience. Most of the community members were amazed that there were so many games. They had grown up playing games, but their games lacked the emphasis that yielded the results that these games did. As learners were playing, their conversation through play was always pleasant, mostly they imitated what happened at home, so they presented whatever they experienced at home in class during the Wendy house class activity. Learners commented as follows:

Learner: Hei wena mosadi towe, ngwathele ke lapile, kapa o se o batla thupa (Hey, you, wife, you must dish me some food before you get what you deserve if you don't do your duties).

The threat, *before you get what you deserve*, shows that learners were exposed to violence in their homes and that affected them subconsciously, to the extent that boys thought this was the right way to treat women. Thus, few boys had respect for the girls in their class; they thought girls could be pushed around. When learners

entered the class after break, Monica sensed feelings of tension and anger, especially amongst the girls.

Monica: What's up, Vuyiswa? You look very cross. [noticing her agitation].

Vuyiswa: Mees, Thabo and David are always saying things to make us angry. They always talk about our bodies, whispering to each other and...

To deal with comments like, *always saying things to make us angry... always talk about our bodies*, Monica found it necessary to address the issue whilst it was still fresh. Therefore, she prepared a related learning activity to teach and show the whole class the proper way of treating women and respecting others' wishes. The lesson became so emotional that most of the learners cried when they realised the pain that their parents (especially their mothers) were going through, though, in some households, wives abused their husbands. After this lesson there was an amazing improvement in the boys' behaviour; they became loving, caring and respectful towards everybody in their class. They carried on with this respectful behaviour, even at home, and that made a difference to the atmosphere and behaviour in most of the families. The empirical data confirms the literature, that parents, by virtue of their influence on their children, are in a better position to ensure good, moral behaviour, and that teaching and learning is sustainable.

4.5.5 Hindrances encountered in a monitoring and evaluation process

The study aimed to accentuate the importance of creating a spiral cycle for improvement of teaching English literacy in a socially inclusive way by using monitoring and evaluation techniques – these techniques should be essential mechanisms of all teaching and learning activities from their inception. Thus, the team was encouraged to monitor their progress and think of ways they could enhance what they have been doing in a system of continual self-evaluation and quality enhancement (Hetland *et al.*, 2011: 166). Learners, in this case, were the expected beneficiaries of the evaluation process. As part of the curriculum, learners should frequently ask, how are we doing? A member of the NGO used one of these moments to tell a learner, who loved horses and who was an extremely skilled rider, that he was a poor reader and that a low grade on his report card would motivate

him to work harder. However, the NGO member (Patsy) had an ulterior motive – she planned to encourage this learner to leave school and work for her. The following is an extract from the conversation:

Patsy: If progress is not satisfactory, an analysis must be made in order to know what can be done about it.

Gcina: It is important for the learner to know what next steps one must take in his or her learning and how one can go about taking them than to merely know where she or he stands.

Patsy: That is why I suggested that Thabo must give it all up, drop his school career and just come and work for me, because he is uneducable, but can make the best sportsman this community has ever seen.

This conversation shows that not all participating members had the learners' best interests at heart. Patsy was not interested in the success of this young man, but wanted to satisfy her own needs. The extract, *must give it all up, drop his school career and just come and work for me*, shows the harsh assumptions that would demotivate instead of encourage learners to strive for higher learning attainment.

Learners attended afternoon classes as a way of enhancing their English literacy acquisition. However, there was no convincing, purposeful plan that actively engaged learners in a wide range of literacy learning experiences; the classes merely convinced the sponsor that learners were doing as the team had promised. The statement, *he is uneducable*, signalled an intention to disempower the learner, social injustice and disrespect.

What was disappointing is that some of the NGO members participated in a bid to maintain the aim, vision and mission of the anticipated strategy, but they failed to ensure that the learners could be actively responsible for their own literacy learning. The team created learning contexts in which all learners were supported and encouraged to participate in powerful curriculum literacy activities, and the staff taught curriculum literacies explicitly, including vocabulary, comprehension strategies, genre and critical analysis skills. In conclusion, the empirical data refutes the slogan of the team, namely, that we are working harmoniously together to create

a happy, literate community of beautiful, free-spirited hearts that are divided into different working hearts.

4.6 INDICATORS OF SUCCESS AND LACK OF IT IN THE FORMULATION OF A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY

In this section, indicators of success and lack of it will be discussed; I will provide examples of accomplishment resulting from formulating a SITS. The success of the team was generally traced back to motivated learners; without motivation at some level, nothing could be accomplished. The study's aim was to facilitate learners' subject integration and language learning in a socially inclusive way of teaching literacy in response to their specific, individual learning needs (Intxausti, Etxeberria & Joaristi, 2014: 2). The team adopted a broader perception, viewing the school and social inclusion of all learners irrespective of their backgrounds as the main backbone of the educational intervention. The study's specific objectives were to investigate the challenges and English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class, which necessitated the formulation of a SITS, and to describe the components of the SITS that respond to the English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class.

Therefore, it is essential to understand the contexts under which such a SITS will respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class. We need to know if it can be implemented successfully, and we have to anticipate plausible threats to a SITS in order to circumvent them. The study's final objective was to formulate indicators of success and lack of it with regard to a SITS to respond to the English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class. The team's best efforts were directed to promoting intercultural education, based on equality of access, social cohesion and respect for learners' cultural diversity, thereby contributing to their academic success by helping them learn through academic and social influences (Intxausti *et al.*, 2014: 2). Furthermore, the success indicators were located within the socially inclusive paradigm and aimed to infuse best practices in the policies and multicultural ideas, legislative imperatives and educational praxis (Ratcliffe & Newman, 2011: 43).

The extracts provide evidence of the effective establishment of a team dedicated to addressing the problems of English literacy through a socially inclusive way of

teaching. The extracts were analysed using CDA and theories of literacy. They were also checked against previous research to determine if it supports the literature I reviewed.

4.6.1 Successful way of teaching in a socially inclusive teaching strategy within the main language domain

Successfully teaching in a socially inclusive way was guided and evolved through social interaction that occurs during the learning activity, which is activated by a dedicated team with a common vision. The team evaluated the strengthened intercultural approach characterised by innovative initiatives in the school organisation. Therefore, the approach resembled updated regulations and social inclusion, in accordance with criteria that enabled inclusive schooling for all learners (Jacobson, 2005: 116). The team lead members to address the question of multiplicity in the teaching and learning process fully, and to consider the importance of other variables in an attempt to understand the full extent of social inclusivity in the teaching of English literacy (Jones, Miron & Kelaher-Young, 2012: 37). In this sense, the team's expectations constituted a key variable of a SITS, namely, experience through an open, trusting and enjoyable learning environment. Attempts to achieve their main aim of generating conditions that were conducive to success – learners' learning accomplishments were based on good communication amongst team members. Learners thrive in the kind of learning and home environments that provide the following elements:

Monica: I'm truly happy that our learners, after working on their personalities, have gained self-preservation and felt accepted amongst the team, as most learners felt not being tolerated due to their lack of learning ability, coming from a marginalised background and misbehaving.

By stating, *I'm truly happy that our learners, after working on their personalities, have gained self-preservation and felt accepted amongst the team*, Monica reports that it was a challenge for the team to help learners do their best, *as most learners felt not being tolerated*, to accept ability limitations and to encourage desirable behaviour without appearing to reject the child completely for bad behaviour. The team had to resolve difficult situations, in which only skilful members were able to stifle

undesirable behaviour, which was mostly caused by the socio-economic backgrounds learners came from. Team members had to maintain learners' confidence and assure them that they were loved. The teacher who has been coached in social inclusivity does not allow inequity to serve as an excuse for poor learner performance in the classroom and pushes learners to work hard to attain what their parents could not afford. In addition, the team repeatedly emphasised that misbehaving, careless work and laziness indicate dislike of the negative images. The team mediated a process to monitor their own actions until they had gained self-awareness and self-control through constructing a reality through language and initiating learners into their culture. The best results were achieved by constantly reassuring learners that their efforts were worthy of praise – doing so caused a tremendous change. This change meant learners felt the thrill of success, and their behaviour, attitudes towards their work, themselves and others improved.

Luyanda: Mistress, I was not aware I can find this so easy. The first time when we were to create our pancakes recipe in class with Mr Jam, I was not paying attention because I did not know a pancake, but in Mme Monica's evening class, we made and tasted a pancake and so it was now easy when it appear in the test, to write the recipe, ingredients and method as well as to draw the entire procedure.

The above extract was reported after the final examination and shows that it was easier for learners now attempt this question once they had learnt it by doing. By saying, *I did not know a pancake, but in mme Monica's evening class, we made and tasted it*, in essence, means the process was initialised and constructed, using all the senses, to enhance gained knowledge. Luyanda transformed remembering into an internal and external activity. This also confirms that goals were set in accordance with learners' potentialities and, thus, learners displayed the signs of empowerment and hope. As such, evaluation could only be done in accordance with learners' capabilities. Achievement encouraged learners to enjoy going to school, to enjoy any activity they performed in relation to their learning and that resembled positive learning attainment. Figure 4.7 shows how this attainment was displayed in learners' work.



Figure 4.7: Learners' improved learning attainment

This illustration from the empirical data given in Figure 4.7 confirms that learners could move beyond the concrete operations of learning experiences and develop the ability to extricate concepts from their context. Moreover, they learned to examine the learning experiences at an abstract level, engaged in a process of reflection and then inserted that learning into new practises (Guglielmi, 2012: 1). Hence, the potential of a SITS lies in decontextualised material or ideas giving rise to new and/or different meanings. Doing so creates a conducive space that gives freedom and hopes to thrive, by encouraging learners to soar like eagles. This argument confirms the literature, which states that a learning environment that is open, trusting and fun encourages new ideas, initiatives and creativity (Wilson, 2012: 4). Vygotsky (1986: 175) and McLeod (2013: 27) imply that a SITS does not consider language to be a tool that functions to enable people to organise their thoughts. For that reason, language is regarded as the most important tool in the teaching and learning process, because it carries the concepts of people's culture. Hence, we say communication is the primary functional tool used to facilitate social relations with other people. Most importantly, children started to perceive the world not only through their own eyes, but also through their speech.

4.6.2 Successful way of teaching listening and speaking in a socially inclusive teaching strategy

Listening and speaking skills are vital for interaction and interpersonal communication, through which learners and the entire team worked together meaningfully in a socially inclusive learning environment (Lei & Huang, 2012: 205). The active elements of listening and speaking skills in a SITS are mainly active learners, active teachers and an active social environment in which they all come together for the production of knowledge. The team used Gagne's cumulative theory to actively teach listening and speaking skills through cumulative songs, stories and poems. Kucan and Palincsar (2013: 2) emphasise the cumulative nature of learning intellectual skills, by which mastery of high-level skills depends primarily upon the prior mastery of cognitive skills (see 4.3.2 together with Figures 4.2, 4.3 and f,4.5). This was evident in the learners' progress regarding cognitive development.

One of the learners commented:

Mahase: I am now able to even listen and understand the lyrics of other songs that are similar to the Twelve days of Christmas song and knowing the letter-sound, letter patterns and words helped us to pronounce them better. I know how to separate verse with the help of the music instrument.

Thuto supported Mahase's statement:

Yes, Mahase you are quite right. The cumulative songs, such as the Twelve days of Christmas, made it possible for us to understand the patterns as well in the mathematics lesson, and also then being able to identify words and characters that are similar.

Ms Moroesi, after marking the activity, explained:

My dear learners, I am so impressed about your performance on the work I gave you. You performed extremely well. These are the progressive learning steps that normally, most learners find them hard to learn, especially, I liked Thuto's remarks that he managed to see the correlation in the mathematics lesson; sequences and patterns.

The report that *I am now able to even listen and understand the lyrics of other songs that are similar to the Twelve days of Christmas song and knowing the letter sound, letter patterns and words helped us to pronounce them better*, signifies that learners are empowered by the socially inclusive way of teaching listening and speaking skills through cumulative songs and other rhymes. As a result, learners have gained hope for a brighter future by learning to listen and speak, which enables them to be more assertive about learning words. They ended up challenging each other spelling words, until they formulated a successful Spelling Bee Club. As their teacher commented,

These are the progressive learning steps that normally most learners find them hard to learn.

This shows that cumulative songs address the gradual development of knowledge and skills that improve over time, but learners managed to acquire the skill in a more enjoyable way, using the musical instruments to form patterns as a way of breaking up the verses which they liked. This confirms that the approach helped them to understand the abstract concepts, which were difficult for them to make sense of.

On the other hand, the words, *made it possible for us to understand the patterns as well in the mathematics lesson, and also the being able to identify words and characters that are similar*, demonstrates that the linguistic capital the learners possessed helped them to understand the concepts and terminology used in the mathematics class. It also enabled them to understand mathematics language easily and translate mathematics sentences into symbolic form. The teacher was astonished that learners were aware that they could relate the patterns they learnt in English to what happens in the mathematics class.

In conclusion, it can be noted that, before the inception of this strategy of social inclusion, teaching listening and speaking skills had never been an easy task. Thus, cumulative learning that was fun, and which incorporated songs, games and hands-on education, such as rewriting song lyrics using different colours for each verse, made it easier and more enjoyable for learners, as well as more memorable. This also confirmed that cumulative learning is the accumulation of knowledge and abilities that serve as building blocks for subsequent cognitive development (Keistin

& Stichter, 2011: 65). Jonsson (2014: 119) maintains that the learning that takes place in each problem-based learning phase is cumulative and strongly synchronises the process of teaching and learning.

4.6.3 Successful way of teaching reading and writing in a socially inclusive teaching strategy

Reading is a process that is very close to memorisation – the two processes are equivalent, if not identical. Reading and writing are also closely interwoven. Thus, by teaming reading and writing techniques with memory development methods can be advantageous and can make what is read more vivid and more effective. Thus, the aim of a SITS was to emphasise the importance of social influences and social interaction, to break away from rote learning to enhance the development of learners' knowledge and skills in the English literacy teaching and learning process. A SITS is rooted in the domains of anthropology, linguistics and literary analysis. The anthropological way of Ratcliffe and Newman (2013: 41-47) provide an assessment that reading and writing can be viewed as cultural events.

The field of linguistics claims that the ability to read is also related to social basic life functioning (Terry, 2010: 1). Literary analysis, which was a crucial fragment of the team's strategy, added the understanding that, during the reading process, meaning is constructed by, and located in, the reader (Kucan & Palincsar, 2013: 106).

In order to expect learners to recognise a word, the team had to ensure that they either remembered it from somewhere, were able to identify it by its structure and most importantly, were able to write it. This was evident from Queen's comment:

When I forget how to pronounce the word "hen" but I know how to read "pen" and the sound of letter "h". So I substituted "p" with "h" and read the word "hen"

The above statement shows that the learner's phonemic awareness skill had improved, leading to her ability to master the relationship between letters and sounds. The team was responsible for seeing to it that every learner had equal opportunities to develop this skill. Therefore, the team's caveat was to simulate the same experiences for other learners. Sociolinguistic theorists believe that oral language is the foundation upon which learners' reading and writing achievement are

built, and that knowledge provides learners with an intuitive understanding of the structure of language, which helps them predict text and read fluently at a later stage (Nag, 2014: 1). Therefore, to make sure that the teaching and learning process is enjoyable and memorable, the team, using a SITS, sought ways to ensure that learners' interest in what they read was stimulated. Learners' interest was observed in remarks such as:

I enjoy using the cards to blend the sounds, since this helps me learn more new words. I find it interesting.

This remark confirms that interest is essential in every case. The team's way of encouraging learners to maintain interest in tougher reading assignments was to advise them to visualise the story as it appears on the cover page and to sustain that interest by retaining the picture while they continue reading. If that does not work, they must think back to some picture that aroused their interest in connection with the book, and to apply even more imagination to the current story. This approach really worked to encourage learners to use their imagination, thereby linking reading to remembering, and strengthening their interest. This approach blends well with Vygotsky's social constructivism, that claims that learners learn during experiences within the zone of proximal development, because of others' scaffolding (Tracey & Morrow, 2006: 106). Learners were trained to experience higher mental functioning in social situations, before they could internalise such functioning and use it independently. They were also encouraged to think while they read and turn ideas into visualised actualities. Thus, learners were given everything they needed to tackle the given task, but an amount of thought was required to learn more about what they had to accomplish.

Furthermore, for rapid reading, attention and recognition must be spontaneous and newly acquired words must be remembered for future reference and use. In this case, failure by learners to pay attention was frequently problematic, but the team developed techniques to sustain their attention and to make them read and re-read the poem until learners could recite the passage from memory, enhancing that with role play, music and dance. Repetition, which incorporated various teaching tools, increased efficiency, and catchwords, phrases, technical terms and formulas

appeared numerous times in new or different connections, linking with old memories and being identified on sight (Kucan & Palincsar, 2013: 107). By this stage, learners had gained a strong word attack, were accurate and possessed a wide span of word recognition. Therefore, graduating from word-by-word to duplex, triplex and finally multiplex speeds of word recognition enabled learners to link words, form phrases and gather context clues automatically and without unnecessary word analysis.

The team disagreed about the value of finger pointing during reading. Some considered finger pointing to be a bad reading habit that should be discarded, while other members argued in its favour, raising instances where it is useful, such as when looking up a word in a dictionary or telephone directory, checking the pronunciation of words that could not be vocalised until they were pronounced well. In the end, team members agreed that finger pointing might be helpful in helping learners concentrate on difficult text, for noting long and unfamiliar words, or emphasising difficult phrases. Team members became aware of the improvement during the last meeting session for feedback and reflections. Below are comments by Mr Lesapo:

Ruri rea leboha ka tshebetso e matla le ntlafalo eo re e bona baneng ba rona. Oona ke mosebetsi o tsoileng matsoho. Ha kesa sokola hae kwana, moradi ke eena ya re ballang le ho re ngolla mangolo, esita le bibeke kamehla (We are really thankful for the job well done, this strategy really made valuable changes in our lives and for our children. My daughter is now responsible for helping us read and write letters, as well as read the Bible for us every day).

Mr Lesapo's report confirms that a SITS dismantled persistent inequalities in a contemporary society and provided opportunities, through education, to empower learners to overcome social oppression. Gee (2005: 13) emphasises that teachers, as researchers and assessors, must investigate ways in which the teaching and learning of English literacy have been used to solidify the social hierarchy. They must also investigate when it is used to empower elites and ensure that learners, especially those from the poorer socio-economic backgrounds, accept the values, norms and beliefs of the elites, even when it is not in their interest to do so. Critical literacy theory merges well with the principles of a SITS. The strategy, implemented

by a dedicated working team, started by examining the concept of power in relation to English literacy learning.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter illustrated how teaching listening and speaking, and reading and writing as a social process can either foster or inhibit the empowerment of learners. The team worked hard to find ways of reading and writing instruction that might help learners acquire a critical perspective on how written language is used to promote a particular cultural ideology. Bronfenbrenner's sociocultural theory (Gentry, 2010: 13) emphasises the broader effects of communities and cultures on styles of interaction and subsequently on learners' learning. Bandura's sociocognitive theory guided the team on how to role model human learning in a socially inclusive learning environment (Gentsch, Spengler & Schutz, 2015: 419). Moreover, all these theories share the common view that a SITS for English literacy learning is social in nature and the theories are all used interchangeably to articulate their implications for instruction.

CHAPTER 5: SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study aims to formulate a SITS in response to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class. This chapter summarises previous chapters of this study. The chapter describes the challenges that justify the formulation of a SITS that responds to the problems of English literacy in a Grade 4 class. The study focused on the effective implementation of a SITS that strives to achieve a sustainable socially inclusive learning environment. This chapter will present the main objectives that guided the structure of the study, a summary of the literature review, research design and methodology, and will present the data analysis and findings. Lastly, recommendations will be made, presenting conclusions and making inferences for future research as well as highlighting important points and tying up loose ends.

5.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The purpose of a SITS is essentially the accommodation of diversity as far as it relates to people's cultures, knowledge and experiences, and the acquisition of skills. It encourages the incorporation of various teaching methods and shares experiences originating from diverse backgrounds, disciplines and learning environments, in order to generate new and unifying characteristics for the affected people. To achieve the purpose of the SITS, the mode of communication and/or commonly understood language is pivotal. Thus, the foundations and/or basics of language acquisition processes and language usage are imperative. A SITS is applicable to a situation where the following are improved: listening, speaking, reading, writing, technical functioning and critical thinking, and enriching culture and knowledge of individual learners (Ehri, 2005: 167). Therefore, equity, equality, social justice, freedom, hope and fairness were enhanced by offering learning opportunities for all, irrespective of their diversity (Devereaux, 2013: 1; Faulker, 2011: 19; Munger, 2010: 1).

As a group, teachers are the strongest link in the educational chain, yet an individual teacher trying to improve literacy instruction is often powerless against educational

bureaucracy in his/her school or the community s/he serves. Thus, employing a SITS creates cohesive communities and provides equal access to all community members, thereby enabling learners to demonstrate competence and achievement in ways that suit their needs (DoE, 2009: 98). Tracey and Morrow (2012: 85-86) corroborate the theory of literacy development presented in literacy growth as a natural process that begins in learners' home environments. All young children deserve the opportunity to explore, play with other children and create their own world – it is fundamental to the growth of their personalities. Teachers must use appropriate teaching techniques and relevant reading materials that match the needs and interests of the children, to activate learners' background knowledge and create a classroom learning environment that is conducive to yielding successful results in learning to read.

In 2007, the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) instruments were field tested by the Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy (MILL). A USAID meeting in June 2009 reported the results of EGRA and other tests in South Africa, namely, that Grade 4 learners were unable to read text meaningfully. These Grade 4 learners also had problems with a range of literacy skills, including synthesising information, making informed decisions, communicating effectively, reasoning carefully and logically and expressing their thoughts clearly (DBE, 2011: 45; Government of Alberta, 2010: 1). Some of the reasons for this poor performance include issues such as learners' difficulty with the transition to English as a medium of teaching and learning, teachers' inability to teach literacy efficiently and low parental involvement (DBE, 2009: 40, DBE 2011, 7). While these challenges were rife in South African schools, literature shows that, in many schools nationally and internationally, the ability to use language effectively, such as in communication and to access knowledge, continues to be a big problem among learners (Phasha *et al.*, 2012: 320; UNESCO, 2012: 2; Ofulue, 2011: 12).

Various strategies have been employed to respond to these challenges, ranging from teachers defining grammar rules, to entire classrooms of learners expressing themselves independently through situations where emotionally appealing scenarios are presented to them (Olaniyi, Moletsane, Stofile, Moolla & Sylvester, 2014: 12). These and many other strategies, such as comprehensive reading and writing, have

been designed and used to enhance literacy. However, these strategies have not been as successful as socially inclusive teaching strategies, which require learners and teachers to talk to one another about real-life situations and where the use of language serves the purpose of communicating real ideas and solutions to real-life problems (Mahlomaholo, 2013: 2). Similarly, in the *tabula rasa* theory, all learning results are viewed as an outcome of the individual's interactions, especially within the learning environment (Tracey & Morrow, 2012: 18). The aim of this study was to create a socially inclusive learning environment that includes all learners. In this environment, they were allowed to voice their views in freely (Shepherd, 2012: 1), promoting engagement and motivation in their learning activities.

A SITS is derived from a social learning stance that integrates numerous theories. These theories emphasise the pivotal role of collective participation in developing knowledge and learning of the four main language skills, namely, listening and speaking; reading and writing; these skills are promoted much more in a collaborative setting than when there is a single teacher role modelling to many learners (Woolfolk, 2007: 47; Shintani, 2012: 39). In countries where the culture of doing things is democratic, the emphasis of learning literacy has been more socially inclusive, while in less democratic countries, the approach has been more rote and memory oriented. Shepherd (2012: 1) maintains that knowledge is conveyed and gained through collaborative work. Therefore, it is imperative to incorporate various teaching and learning resources, as well as relevant services, and to offer additional support to school staff, children and their families in developing and implementing healthy school learning initiatives (Nazir & Pedretti, 2011: 4; Das & Kattumuri, 2011: 4; Eggen & Kauchak, 2008: 331; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003: 78).

One of the threats that hinder the successful implementation of a SITS is school management team members who are unable to provide meaningful curriculum leadership (DBE, 2011: 7). A socially inclusive learning environment requires well-structured discussions that ensure a measure of agreement between all the stakeholders involved regarding the diverse aspects of teaching strategies and materials used. However, even where there is collaboration of this kind, some written guidance is helpful for inexperienced teachers or for those who had not been working with the school for long (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011: 490). Furthermore,

teachers are resistant to becoming involved in the implementation of fruitful changes, as they think they were being evaluated, or are overwhelmed by the additional workload (Elish-Piper *et al.*, 2009: 12).

Parents with very low levels of literacy feel incapable of supporting their children's literacy, emphasising that they do not know or understand anything about the methods the school uses to educate their children. However, a socially inclusive learning environment devises ways that are appropriate to their situation by empowering parents with activities that help them support their children's literacy. In this study, many parents realised the importance of their contribution, especially during the early years of child development, and their confidence and literacy skills improved as they helped their children (Akerman & Bird, 2005: 12). Socio-economic factors, namely, the stresses of daily life, poverty, unemployment, family breakdowns and poor health, also impeded the success of the anticipated strategy.

The success of the implementation of a SITS was judged through improved literacy and socio-economic factors in the participating communities. Luke (2012: 4) maintains that civil society, human relationships and freedom are dependent upon emancipated streams of knowledge. Learners became teachers of their understanding and experiences through gaining knowledge and being able to choose the correct vocabulary that is understandable and appropriate for describing texts, rephrasing words, clarifying context and using grammar structures accurately (Bazo & Cabrera, 2002: 2; Poole & More, 2005: 1). As learners became more successful, they made it clear that they were able to listen attentively and speak fluently. Moreover, they enjoyed reading aloud to their peers and families. The parents were proud that their children could read fluently and write legibly, thus, for parents who could not read and write, their children could do this on the parents' behalf. Learners enjoyed being fully engaged in a more mature conversation and managed to express themselves in a much more personal way (Bransford *et al.*, 2000: 25). Both teachers' and learners' knowledge, skills and confidence were enhanced.

Having provided a detailed but abridged study background, Section 5.3 briefly summarises the theoretical framework informing it.

5.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study used critical theory as a base and CER as the lens, because I was persuaded that this was the best theoretical framework for designing a SITS. The SITS sought to establish a lifelong learning society, with the aim of reducing levels of inequality by providing empowering learning opportunities for all, in spite of their diversity (Devereaux, 2013: 1; Faulker, 2011: 19; Munger, 2010: 1). The democratic principles of equality and justice in action were witnessed amongst the members of the team. Even though equality and justice did not come easily, every participating member showed growth in knowledge, self-confidence, love and respect for one another and improved education. Critical theory approaches to literacy teaching, as used in this study, were based on the use of literacy for social justice in marginalised communities, to enhance social transformation for children through language development (Luke, 2012: 5; Norton & Toohey, 2004: 1). Hence, the study achieved one of its major aims, which was to empower and motivate learners, and the whole community, to change and become competent in literacy (see 2.3.3.1).

The formats and steps of CER were entwined with the social learning perspectives adopted to guide this study (see 1.4.2-1.4.3; 2.4.4.1). Hence, when applied to the teaching and learning process, social learning perspectives emphasise the significance of social transformation and interaction for literacy teaching and learning. The following learning models influence teachers the most: (a) behaviourism, (b) cognitive/information processing, (c) constructivism, and (d) sociocultural learning. The major objective of CER was improving the ability of the team to critique certain aspects of teaching, particularly those aspects that were fundamental to reflecting on issues of power and emancipation (Ferguson, 2013: 1) (see 1.4.4; 2.2.4). This commitment to emancipatory values directed the team to recognise the obstacles to human liberation, i.e. the conceptual frames and unequal power relations that exist in the actual social systems, which are frequently overlooked. This commitment helped the researcher to acquire cross-cultural knowledge of the stakeholders who were involved, so as to confirm the environmental compatibility of the methods chosen.

This section also summarises the nature and grounds of knowledge (see 1.4.5; 2.2.6) and what we believe constitutes social reality, and expressing, nurturing and expanding learners' learning capabilities in a shared praxis (Mertens & Wilson, 2012: 172). The role of the researcher was to create a space in which people could work collaboratively in an attempt to solve a problem and initiate network connectivity, which enabled the researcher and the co-researchers to be the driving forces of the research progress (see 1.4.6; 2.2.8; 2.2.9). Lastly, CER relies heavily on language to engender interactions through a meaningful dialogue that encourages participation by all, with mutual respect, trustworthiness and harmony (see 2.2.10). In this setting, we do not have a sample population and do not refer them as objects but work collectively as co-researchers who generate data instead of collecting data.

Having provided a detailed summary of the theoretical framework informing it, the following section briefly summarises the problem statement.

5.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

It became evident from the explanation of the background to the study that competency in literacy remained a major challenge. Poor academic performance is related to teachers' failure to prepare learners for the transition from the foundation phase to intermediate phase. Teaching strategies that have been employed focus on memory and comprehensive reading and writing, but they have not been successful, because they focus on individual stakeholders. Hence, the study seeks to develop a SITS to address the English literacy problems experienced in schools.

The study is centred on the following research question'

5.4.1 Research question

Based on the scenario explained above, this study's research question is:

How does a SITS respond to the English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class?

5.4.1.1 The aim of the study

To respond to the above-mentioned question, the study aimed to formulate a SITS to respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class. In order to elaborate on the above aim, the following sections provide a list of objectives to be realised by this study.

5.4.1.2 Objectives of the study

The following were the objectives addressed by this study:

- To investigate the challenges and English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class making the formulation of a SITS necessary;
- To describe the components of such a SITS that responds to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class;
- To understand the contexts under which such a SITS that responds to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class can be implemented successfully;
- To anticipate plausible threats towards a SITS, to circumvent them; and
- To formulate indicators of success and lack of it with regard to a SITS that responds to the English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class.

The following subsections explain how each of the objectives assisted in reaching the aim of the study. These challenges justify the need to formulate a socially inclusive teaching strategy to respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class in the absence of a dedicated team.

The first objective of the study demonstrated and justified the need to formulate a SITS to respond to the challenges posed by literacy in a Grade 4 class. The following challenges were identified in line with the first objective, and resulted in the need to formulate a SITS that responded to the problems of English literacy:

- There was no dedicated team with a common vision to aid meaningful presentation of the main language domain and proceed to a socially inclusive way of teaching;
- Ineffective way of teaching listening and speaking skills; and
- Ineffective way of teaching reading and writing skills.

This subsection discusses the best teaching practices as opposed to ineffective teaching practices witnessed during data generation (see 4.2.1-4.2.3). The discrepancies revealed by the literature and the data justified the establishment of a dedicated team to formulate a SITS to respond to the English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class.

- i. Ineffective way of teaching the four main language skills due to the absence of a dedicated team

Many significant barriers to effective teaching of the four main language skills and the learning process arise from teachers' incorrect assumptions about learners' learning ability and teachers' failure to determine the best ways to teach. Many learners were unable to grasp the concepts being taught and failed to attain learning outcomes merely because teachers exercised inappropriate strategies during the teaching and learning process. This study examined the impact of a comprehensive literacy instruction model, known as a SITS, that was used to respond to the problems of English literacy in a Grade 4 class. So, formulating effective recommendations for a SITS required a dedicated team of people with various types of expertise, who were from diverse backgrounds and had different interests, who were charged with the responsibility of enhancing Grade 4 learners' literacy skills. However, lack of commitment to directing learners towards mutual learning, prevents them from making sense of their own ideas.

I noted that learners observed and interacted with their learning during the teaching and learning process, internalised relevant vocabulary, developed approaches to problem-solving and encountered action schemes, all of which enabled them to become critical thinkers and producers of their own learning. Hence, the presence of a dedicated team was an important prerequisite for creating a sustainable learning environment that supported learners' creative minds, thereby promoting conducive classroom performance. Collaboration and good communication with the participating members fostered confrontation of individual differences and relationships and employed cooperative learning. In this instance, the literature (see 2.4.1) and data (see 4.2.1-4.2.3) indicated the lack of a dedicated team; neither did

the teacher sufficiently involves any other help but, instead, relied upon his/her own strength, hence, producing a lesson that was inadequate and superficial.

ii. Ineffective way of teaching listening and speaking skills

A SITS targeted phonological awareness, learning the alphabet, phonics, sight words, an effective way of teaching listening and speaking skills, reading comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and creative writing, including coaching and sustained monitoring as a fundamental component of developing professional teachers. The SITS' major contention was high levels of poor academic performance due to the transitional phase, which was attributable to an insufficient preparation of school-based transitional literacies. Moreover, there was growing awareness among the co-researchers that learners had trouble listening to information, disseminating and responding, and being part of their learning, and I was persuaded that a SITS would help to transform the teaching and learning of English.

The teacher alone could not address the processes involved and teach listening and speaking skills effectively. The emphasis of the study was on getting and/or attracting the right or willing individuals to define the processes and skills needed to learn the proper ways of teaching listening and speaking skills and their constituent parts. Phonics instruction was emphasised, because it lent itself to deliberate and planned repetition (4.2.2). One and two-way listening skills development helped learners to obtain the metacognitive skill that is important for listening comprehension and interactions with others. A speech continuum was heightened for subtle acoustic differences between voiced and voiceless consonants. Speaking is obligatory for learners to understand when, where, why and in what ways they must produce language, and not only to comprehend how to construct specific aspects of language, such as grammar, pronunciation or vocabulary, through which they gain fluency in spoken interactions with others and improve their pronunciation.

iii. Ineffective way of teaching reading and writing skills

Reading makes learning possible, from the meaning of complex history to scientific innovation and technological expertise (Gentry, 2010: 1). Hence, reading is regarded as not merely a cognitive psycholinguistic activity, but also a social activity (Luke, 2012: 5), thus, encouraging the idea of a SITS. Fourth grade learners who

participated in a socially inclusive learning environment had faster growth rates than learners who did not participate in this study (see 4.2.3). The results suggest that the presence of a SITS had a positive impact on learners' literacy acquisition, hence necessitating the establishment of a dedicated team to guide their progress in reading and writing skills acquisition.

iv. Recommendations and suggestions for future research

Teaching learners English literacy in a socially inclusive way promotes the scope of knowledge with regard to listening and speaking; reading and writing skills, and understanding that learners are expected to demonstrate a basic operational knowledge that has a wide applicability in and outside the classroom (SAQA, 2012: 6). Teachers, heads of language departments, principals, learners and parents worked together and responded to specific kinds of challenges, namely, listening and speaking, reading and writing, which learners bring with them to the classroom (Muthukrishna & Schluter, 2011: 123) and which are improved through active participation in phonics teaching. Through such learning activities learners are helped to acquire cognitive acquired language proficiency (CALP), which refers to learners' ability to demonstrate problem-solving, analytical and abstract thinking in the classroom (Cummins, 2008: 2).

Moreover, the teaching and learning process must be disseminated properly with a wide range of learning materials, so that the best quality teaching reaches all learners and makes learning possible and meaningful. Therefore instituting a national project that incorporates the principles of a SITS to support foundation phase learners when they are introduced to a new LoLT. These learners need to be assisted in developing proficiency in their home language and English if they are to excel when they enter the intermediate phase. Moreover, I recommend that researchers explore and develop the link between the role of a teacher and the linguistic development of learners by emphasising hands-on education.

5.4.1.3 Solutions for the challenges facing the formulation of a socially inclusive teaching strategy

This section identifies solutions to the problems set out in Section 4.2. These solutions include the establishment of a dedicated team to facilitate teaching in a socially inclusive manner, and effective teaching of English literacy in a socially inclusive manner, to ensure that learners reach NQF level 2 level descriptors and attain the four main language skills, namely, listening and speaking and reading and writing. The findings were as follows.

- i A meaningful way of teaching the four main language skills in a socially inclusive manner

Teaching in the main language domain was supported by various teaching methods through multiple approaches, in an attempt to improve the school climate, physical safety and learning. Also, meaningful teaching was facilitated by interdisciplinary collaboration, and building on a multitier system of support, aided by a SWOT analysis (Duckworth, 2013: 1). This instrument was used to gather information required for learning to occur. Hence, the team ensured desirable learning instructions in a socially inclusive learning environment, with essential learning resources for learners to meet the rigorous challenges posed by the curriculum. This helped them to become critical thinkers able to apply reasoning to resolve problems and make best decisions characterised by fairness, equity and social justice. In this way, learners prioritised teaching and learning as the central purposes of schooling. Learners' behaviour and practice demonstrated enthusiasm and dedication to learning.

Hence, a socially inclusive way of teaching English literacy used various teaching strategies to improve learners' learning capabilities; from group to paired reading, reading aloud, shared, guided and silent reading, games and role play, all done in an enjoyable and engaging manner. In so doing the team externalised their prior knowledge and reconceptualised their understanding to develop new ways of teaching reading that learners are familiar with from their home environment and which strengthened all aspects of their learning.

ii An efficient way of teaching listening and speaking skills

This section explains an efficient way of teaching listening and speaking skills within a SITS using different aspects and concepts of teaching methods related to a common goal. Listening is an essential skill relating to understanding spoken language, and which is present in most of the activities we perform throughout our lives (Moloi & Chetty, 2010: 188). Speaking, on the other hand, is a challenging skill for learners to acquire, because of the set of features that characterise oral discourse (see 4.3.1). Hence, social inclusion incorporated other stakeholders who possessed different expertise and strategies, to motivate learners and enhance their performance and achievement of learning outcomes. Therefore, it was imperative to teach learners to listen and speak effectively by incorporating various teaching and learning strategies.

iii An efficient way of teaching reading and writing skills

This section explains an efficient way of teaching reading and writing skills within a socially inclusive paradigm using different aspects of theory, and teaching word-recognition skills. The team used an interactive reading theory that combined a bottom-up and top-down theory of reading, activating learners' background knowledge simultaneously with decoding skills to find meanings in the text. Our approach incorporated the transactional theory of reading, which has a circular relationship in which each step affects the other (Castells, 2010: 127). Learning word recognition was regarded as a base knowledge (see 4.3.2), which proceeded to skills acquisition and application when learners were ready to advance to acquiring reading and writing skills. Thus, the team focused more on the acquisition of word recognition skills. So, in order to design effective word-recognition instruction, it was crucial for the team to know how to plan and implement effective word-recognition instruction for beginner readers successfully.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Reading and writing are a foundational, necessary skill for academic learning and success. At a distal level, societal and administrative policy factors contribute to learners' success in literacy acquisition. Regarding curriculum content for literacy,

evidence suggests the importance of incorporating specific and well-organised drilling in the curriculum to promote phonological awareness, vocabulary, fluency and reading comprehension. Therefore, a socially inclusive way of teaching can create a conducive space for learners to internalise and explore what is required of them. It also encourages learners to use the language of thinking and learning when they reflect on whether they have attained a learning objective. Therefore, the creation of a dedicated team built meaningful and genuine relationships among participating members and with the learners. Without the contribution of a more knowledgeable other, the teacher alone was not in the position to help learners to reach the required NQF level 2 descriptors.

5.5.1.1 Understanding the contexts in which a socially inclusive teaching strategy can be implemented successfully

This section describes the results of implementing a SITS as a sustainable, cooperative, educationally viable, high quality, enjoyable learning initiative that involves elements of socially inclusive learning for a Grade 4 class. The principles of social inclusion introduced factors that address the problems of English literacy in a Grade 4 class and collectively the team ensured the success of the anticipated strategy, integrating education with economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions of sustainability in community life and in harmony with nature. The manner in which each of these components was entwined by creatively involving cooperative and collaborative learning in a classroom learning environment determined whether the school became more educationally and socially inclusive. Furthermore, through this entwining, learners were provided with the opportunity to acquire the necessary principles of social inclusivity.

This prepared them for the informed, responsible, collaborative and socially inclusive participation required of a sustainable learning environment. A SITS appeared to be more powerful than the prescribed school curriculum, as it introduced concepts for learning that took place within a socially constituted setting (see 4.3.3). It was confirmed that group work increased learners' learning capabilities because a group provides more opportunities for learners to talk amongst themselves. Error correction works best when learners scrutinise their own expressions, instead of learners being

governed by their teacher's approval all the time. A properly implemented SITS could increase motivation to learn and a multifaceted understanding of the subject being taught, with remarkable knowledge retention coupled with positive attitudes (Attard *et al.*, 2010: 20-41). The findings were as follows.

- Conditions conducive to meaningful teaching in a socially inclusive manner within the four main language skills

Not all learners were conscious of the similar way in which words started and even fewer actually knew initial word sounds from the incidental teaching that had interested them. Thus, plenty of help, provided in an incidental way, was required for learners to make the associations that give phonics meaning. A dedicated team co-planned a lesson to address and focus on a particular section of the syllabus. The planning also gave other stakeholders an opportunity to demonstrate their specific knowledge of the rich linguistic concepts. Throughout the planning process, the team drew on various teaching resources obtained from extended conversations, such as social networks, textbooks, research and teaching theories focusing on learners' development of the main language skills.

At the research site, the constituted team worked together in a socially inclusive manner in the process of teaching and learning English literacy in a Grade 4 class. Among other things, the focus of team ensured that the subject matter was accessible to learners. To incorporate and relate the background experience of the learner to the classroom environment, a series of meetings were conducted to obtain the support of interested members (see 4.4.1). The everyday interactions and involvement by parents and other participating members contributed significantly to learners' learning attainment (Calkins, Erenworth & Lehman, 2012: 312). Fathi (2014: 1052) states that the benefits of a collaborative effort in a teaching and learning process frequently increase incrementally in learners' education, especially if parents are intensely and actively involved at an early stage of their children's learning.

- The socially inclusive way of teaching listening and speaking skills

Teaching listening and speaking skills is one of the most challenging tasks for teachers. With a socially inclusive way of teaching, listening and speaking skills are the most fundamental aspects of educational development and motivation. These skills empower learners with communication and critical thinking skills. Many language learners regard listening and speaking abilities as the measure of knowing the language. Cummins *et al.* (2007: 72) believe that listening and speaking abilities are important for appropriate interaction within a social inclusion realm, as it fosters communicative competence in and outside the classroom, thereby promoting effective teaching and learning in English literacy. Multiple and new literacy studies have moved literacy beyond the school (see 2.3.1.2 iv) in an attempt to enhance learners' personal growth and self-improvement.

Once a plan for the type of a learning activity had been developed, a knowledgeable member of the team or an expert on the subject matter volunteered to teach it, in the presence of the teacher, who observed and served as a teacher aid. When this was put into practice (see 4.4.2), the team emphasised individual learner creativity and learners' independent learning, encouraging them to challenge what was taught.

- The socially inclusive way of teaching reading and writing skills

A SITS helped to sharpen learners' writing skills by means of various approaches to teaching. Teaching children to read was an exacting task, requiring skill, patience and ingenuity. The task could not be fulfilled if it did not awaken in learners a love of books and of reading. Thus, a SITS was introduced; this strategy involved noble ideas from diverse backgrounds coinciding to arouse reading and achievement senses that evoked satisfaction when the skill was mastered successfully (see 4.4.3). This mastery confirmed that, without the dedication and commitment of the team to work beyond the call of duty, the strategy would have not been successful. Participating members were allowed to express their thoughts and ideas in ways they saw fit, without being labelled, they received respect and their contributions were valued.

Owing to a common vision, challenges identified by a SWOT analysis were prioritised and lead to the successful implementation of the SITS. The open communication and positive approach to the conducive conditions for effective

teaching also served to promote the implementation of the strategy. The co-researchers' thorough preparation ensured that the strategic planning was creatively outlined in the formulation of such a strategy. Monitoring and evaluation succeeded because of the cooperation of the entire team.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The school curriculum and the entire education system should focus on and address not only the diverse needs of various learners, but also reinforce equality. System behaviours and dispositions that reproduce the existing oppressive structures should be dismantled. Educational research projects that promote innovation and contribute to various social and educative programmes that strengthen social inclusion within the communities should be promoted. To escalate other specialised skills, such as braille, sign language and communication boards, additional plans must be prepared to make services more accessible and create a conducive space for full learner participation in mainstream society. What I propose with this research study is the construction of a SITS that eventually becomes part of a general theory of education.

Having presented the aim and objectives of the study that guided the structure of the data and findings in order to make recommendations for future research, the next section briefly discusses the value of research.

5.7 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

The major purpose of this research was to work with and understand co-researchers' experiences and to conceive learning improvement within a socially inclusive learning environment. Analysing the data showed that participation in the study was a beneficial and fruitful experience for all the co-researchers. The greatest advantage of PAR appeared to be the active involvement and collaboration by and engagement and empowerment of stakeholders in the process of bringing about change to the teaching and learning of literacy. In many instances, the language expert recommended changes to the teachers and learners in the hope that they would implement them. This study reveals that the active engagement and empowerment of teachers, parents and learners in educational innovations and

changes lead not only to acceptance, but were also sustainable. Effectively engaging all stakeholders and partners in educational innovation was one way of cultivating cooperation and collaboration in a socially inclusive learning environment.

Furthermore, PAR is likely to advance a culture of collaborative inquiry, cooperation, continued learning and taking responsibility for actions within a community. In this study, the teachers and learners cooperated as a team to outline and design the feedback form. This cooperative approach probably contributed to a sense of ownership of the intervention introduced. Furthermore, most co-researchers considered their participation to be a learning process, which made PAR a type of educational procedure, where members did research that prompted insightful scholarly work and learning in a truly contextual work environment. Participation also empowered co-researchers to gain the skill of taking control of the teaching and learning needs in their environment – these skills could be applied when further needs arose. The idea of including learners in this type of research provided them with the opportunity to contribute to the changes and innovations that impacted and influenced their learning.

PAR is one way of achieving the best from a SITS, as educators, parents, learners and other co-researchers cooperate to actualise new thoughts about the teaching and learning process in a socially inclusive learning environment. Despite the fact that PAR was a rewarding and fulfilling experience for all co-researchers, it appeared new to every one of them, probably because PAR was a new paradigm to numerous teachers and learners in the school. The process of PAR involves continued active participation and engagement of all stakeholders, who were almost all affected by the research outcomes. This approach has not known at the school under investigation, which may explain why some of the co-researchers terminated their participation in the study. It was interesting to note that many co-researchers drew long-lasting lessons from the activity and even those who withdrew from the study, declaring that it was an exercise in futility, returned to participate fully later.

After participating in this study, teachers and learners were able to transfer the knowledge and skills they had gained to other circumstances within their contextual surroundings, in which they could use a comparable collaborative and engaging

approach to initiate change. The major contribution of this study was that a SITS responding to the challenges of literacy was implemented effectively and acknowledged by the teachers and learners within the context of a resource-limited setting using a participatory and collaborative approach.

5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite all the aforementioned achievements, the study recognises the key qualities of PAR that were likely to influence the successful implementation of a SITS to respond to the problems of English literacy in a Grade 4 class. Further studies, utilising the same methodology in other settings, are needed to supplement the observations made in this study. Studies are needed to compare the worth of educational innovations using PAR. The major shortcomings of this study was the small number of co-researchers, the fact that these co-researchers had inadequate knowledge of the subject matter, and that they sometimes lacked patience and dependability. Even so, this study may conceivably serve as a foundation for applying PAR in other contexts.

5.9 CONCLUSION

The term collaboration was mentioned often in our engagements. Engaging and involving others in the project went a long way to compelling others to commit to the project, in part because their inputs were valued and appreciated. The study identified a common problem and sought a solution by involving people within the school environment to work together in a team to address both common and individual problems. The team's collaborative effort established a common purpose for the team, after which further consolidation of the context of the project were outlined through the SWOT analysis, which generated ideas that needed to be addressed. These ideas were critically evaluated to develop a strategic plan that could be converted into an action plan. The last step of the planning process is ongoing, namely that of continuous evaluation and monitoring.

The study demonstrates that a SITS to respond to English literacy problems could work – it was implemented and has proven to be comprehensive enough for the

school under investigation. This study taught me that nothing in life comes easily; I had to go out there and make things happen for this study. I also learnt that, for an educational activity to take place, team effort is required. Throughout the study it was clear that, when PAR is involved, its aim is to gain a close working relationship with the participating members through intensive involvement in the teaching and learning process over an extended period of time.

It also became clear that the answers to research questions were not readily available, but required a thoughtful output and much deep digging to obtain answers. There were no shortcuts or fabrications. The reflection process involved in data analysis validated the interpretations of the generated data. The research journey was never easy, but a humbling experience that was painstaking though rewarding, particularly when I realised that I had contributed to the community. This research journey changed the way I view people in my community; I realised that everyone can contribute when they are well informed, regardless of their background, and can bring the richness of culture into the daily living of classroom life.

5.9.1 Summary of the socially inclusive teaching strategy

A SITS refers to a variety of teaching approaches, as well as diverse knowledge of various stakeholders, which aims to address the needs of learners who have diverse backgrounds and learning capacities. These strategies contribute to a socially inclusive learning environment, in which learners feel equally respected and valued, and which intends to advance equality, quality and equitable education for all, irrespective of individuals' backgrounds. The strategy's goal is to eliminate impediments to accomplishing the required learning outcomes through a multi-layered approach. Moreover, it creates an opportunity for empowering the school, as the strategy is a change element that promotes dialogue and participation, and creates conceivable prosperity by providing quality education for all and being dedicated to the community. Following are the steps that guide the formulation of a SITS.

Step 1: Set up a dedicated team

Identify the people who are affected by the current situation and determine a time and place to hold meetings. These people play a fundamental role in planning and

implementing a SITS and setting up a coordinating group. In the initial meeting, determine what people already comprehend and what they must still learn if they are to promote learners' learning attainment. Team members need to understand learners' educational needs if they are to make good plans for social inclusion, which can only succeed with the help of parents (see 3.5.6). The team also has to identify existing resources in the school and community and describe teaching and learning processes in the classroom, so as to create a vision for the formulation of a SITS.

Step 2: Create a vision

Describe the desired socially inclusive learning environment, school environment and education programme that can help to promote learners' active involvement in their own learning. Think about the kind of support that will be most needed from the community, from local government and from education officials, and determine how the support can reach the team as well as involve learners. The question, Who can help raise the support? Shows that social inclusion requires a large vision; this is one of the questions that must be answered when seeking guidance for realising the vision.

Step 3: SWOT analysis

Develop a schedule of activities for creating and implementing a SITS. If the skill at hand is insufficient, find additional resources as needed and consider encouraging the learning and participation of all learners so that learning takes place in two ways, mainly through detailed analysis and planning. Strategic planning elicits strong self-regulation, and requires skills for planning, guiding and assessing the learning of the curriculum. Mostly, chaos and disorder are the requisite precursors that cause people to face uncertainty with creativity when transforming and improving livelihoods.

Step 4: Roles and responsibility

A researcher searches for clarity about the educative realities and has the intellectual skills to make suggestions, solve problems, generate innovation and confront challenges in the field of education. The researcher provides technical assistance for staff, as needed, for instance, if the project needs an expert in a

certain subject or any other type of assistance, the researcher determines who will provide it, how it will be implemented and how often will it be provided. The collaboration promoted active parental involvement by encouraging their input through the planning and implementation process. Also, the team has to plan how to deal with resistance and lack of support from other identified stakeholders and participating members, whether parents or teachers.

Step 5: Plan of action

To successfully implement a SITS, all the stakeholders involved must be equipped or at least be informed about the subject matter, which incorporates a great deal of social and community content, because they need to be sensitive to the needs of learners and the environment. This kind of social inclusivity advances understanding among every one of the members, and significant interactions among the components of the strategy that impact learners' learning. The strategy promotes dialogue, participation and collaboration, encourages full awareness by all and ensures successful involvement by continuous improvement and continuous values. Most importantly, the collaborative effort of the participating members help to identify individual variances and implements learning strategies for all. The participating members, especially the team and teachers, discuss amongst themselves the idea of moving beyond what others have accomplished and therefore, encourage concurrent participation, promote cooperation in the learning activity and understand the concept of diversity.

Step 6: Prepare and present collaborative lessons and assess all endowments

A socially inclusive teaching strategy emphasises the knowledge, skills and attitudes of all the involved stakeholders' interventions that enhance learners' learning. The preparation and presentation of lessons need to promote sharing of knowledge among team members, decision making, solving problems collaboratively and generating actions to enhance the school and create a sustainable learning environment for all. To achieve these aims, every involved stakeholder needs four critical educational angles for social inclusion, namely,

- **Equality:** promoting the same opportunities and learning strategy for all, with thorough content knowledge of a subject matter;

- **Quality:** being in a position to provide practical and meaningful learning;
- **Equity:** responding to learners' needs irrespective of their diverse skills and backgrounds; and
- **Social cohesion:** partly social capital, referring to the collective value of all social networks.

Generally, the team, especially teachers, learn when they are teaching, and learners teach when they learn (Armstrong, 2011: 52).

Step 7: Teaching in a socially inclusive manner

These are some of the questions that the teacher needs to be asked before the preparation of the lesson:

- How could culturally bound assumptions influence interactions with learners?
- How do the backgrounds and experiences of learners impact their inspiration, engagement and learning?
- How can course materials, exercises, assignments and/or exams be changed so that they are more accessible to all learners?

These questions lead to the team to employ a variety of teaching strategies, activities and assignments, to accommodate learners' needs irrespective of their diversities, thereby creating a safe, conducive, sustainable, socially inclusive learning environment. Social inclusion can be successfully implemented in every educational system, but the team needs to understand the real meaning of the concept of education for all with equality, quality and equity. Doing so will help the team to recognise the major role of teachers in the development of social justice, human rights and opportunities that promote learners' well-being, and consolidate social inclusivity.

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APPENDIX A

APPLICATION LETTER TO REGISTER RESEARCH PROJECTS IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

APPENDIX A

Enquiries: Pepenene MJ
 Tel No : 051 404 9259
 E-mail Address: pepenene@edu.fs.gov.za
 Ref. no. : 21/10/2 - 2013



APPLICATION FORM TO REGISTER RESEARCH PROJECTS IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- ⚡ Please complete all sections of this form that are applicable to you. If any section is not applicable to you please indicate this by writing N/A.
- ⚡ If there are too few lines in any of the sections please attach the additional information as an addendum.
- ⚡ Attach all the required documentation so that your application can be processed with ease.

Send the application to:

DIRECTOR: STRATEGIC PLANNING, POLICY & RESEARCH
 Room 319
 Old CNA Building **OR** Free State Department of Education
 Maitland Street Private Bag X20565
 BLOEMFONTEIN BLOEMFONTEIN
 9300 9300.
 Tel: 051 - 404 9283/404 9221
 Fax: 086 6678 678

1. Title (e.g. Mr, Ms, Dr, and Prof):

M	s		
---	---	--	--

2. Initials and surname:

M.	L.	'M	A	L	E	B	E	S	E						
----	----	----	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

3. Telephone: Home:

N	/	A												
---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Work:

N	/	A	-											
---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Cell:

0	7	9	-	3	8	3	0	8	7	8				
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--

Fax:

N	/	A	-											
---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E-Mail

motsilisimalebese@yahoo.com -

4. Home Address:

4	2	1	L	O	N	G	R	O	A	D					
D	O	O	R	N											
W	E	L	K	O	M										
											9	4	6	0	

5. **Postal Address:**

4	2	1	L	O	N	G	R	O	A	D					
D	O	O	R	N		W	E	L	K	O	M				
												9	4	6	0

6.1 **Name of tertiary institution/research institute**

UNIVERSITY...OF...THE...FREE...STATE.....

6.2 **Occupation:** SCHOOLAR.....

6.3 **Place of employment:** N/A.....

7 **Name of course:**

CURRICULUM...STUDIES...(PhD).....

8. **Name of supervisor/promoter:**

Prof...MG...MAHLOMAHOLO.....

Please attach a **letter from your supervisor** confirming that you have registered for the course you are following.

9. **Title of research project:**

A...SOCIALY...INCLUSIVE...TEACHING...STRATEGY...TO...RESPOND...TO...THE PROBLEMS...OF...LITERACY...IN...A...GRADE...10...CLASS.....

10. **Concise explanation of the research topic:**

A formulation of a Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to respond to the problems of literacy in a Grade 10 class aims to empower and achieve the stimulation of a lifelong learning society. Therefore reducing levels of inequality by improving learning opportunities for all irrespective of their diversity.....

11. **Application value that the research may have for the Free State Education Department:**

This research study envisaged to contribute to the efforts made by the DoE in enhancing the inclusive way of teaching literacy in schools. Specifically, increasing learners' literacy competence and confidence as well as improving educational outcomes. SMT's will be able to provide curriculum leadership effectively and teachers' ability to teach literacy will be enhanced. Parental confidence and skills around literacy will be enhanced as well as

active community engagement emboldening children to stay in schools and fight against crime.

12. The full particulars of the group with whom the research is to be undertaken:

Grade 4 class ranging from 9-10 years of age with 70 boys and 68 girls. 2 female teachers and 1 male teacher, 1 HOD male , principal male, 5 identified parents, librarian, 6 safety committee members with one cop included, 1 counsellor.

12.1 List of schools/Directorates in the Department/Officials:

Karabelo Primary School
.....

12.2 Grades:

Grade 4 learners.
.....

12.3 Age and gender groups:

9-10 years of age.
.....
Males 70 and Females 68
.....

12.4 Language groups:

Sesoth, Isixhosa and Setswana but English as a medium of instruction.
.....

12.5 Numbers to be involved in the research project:

There will be at least a group of 150 participants which will be divided according to the anticipated tasks.
.....

13. Full particulars of how information will be obtained eg questionnaires, interviews, standardized tests. Please include copies of questionnaires, questions that will be asked during interviews, tests that will be completed or any other relevant documents regarding the acquisition of information.

Participatory Action Method of research using Free Attitude Interviews
.....

14. The starting and completion dates of the research project: (Please bear in mind that

research is usually not allowed to be ⁴ conducted in the schools during the fourth term.)

3rd March 2014 until 30th May 2014

15. Will the research be conducted **during or after school hours**?

During school hours and sometimes after schools or weekends.

16. If it is necessary to use school hours for the research project, **how much time** will be needed?

30 minutes

17. **How much time will be spent on the research project** by individual educators and/or learners?

I will be part of the class and then after class I will work together with the teacher on some effective teaching strategy to improve learners' learning outcome. In the morning before the class and after school, I will have one-on-one reading session with learners to improve on their reading skills, let each learner read a book of their choice as during the class a teacher only reads to the whole group.

18. **Have you included:**

- | | | |
|------|---|--------|
| 18.1 | A letter from your supervisor confirming your registration for the course you are following? | Yes/No |
| 18.2 | A draft of the letter that will be sent to the principals requesting permission to conduct research In their schools? | Yes/No |
| 18.3 | A draft of the letter that will be sent to parents requesting permission for their children to participate in the research project?..(If applicable) | Yes/No |
| 18.4 | Copies of questionnaires that you wish to distribute? | Yes/No |
| 18.5 | A list of questions that will be asked during the interviews? | Yes/No |

19. The Departmental research ethics are herewith attached for your consideration.

I confirm that all the information given on this form is correct.


.....
SIGNATURE

11/02/2014
.....
DATE

APPENDIX B

APPROVAL LETTER TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

APPENDIX B

Enquiries: Motshumi KK
Reference:
Tel: 051 404 9290
Fax: 086 667 8678
E-mail: motshumikk@edu.fs.gov.za



**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR:
STRATEGIC PLANNING, POLICY & RESEARCH**

17 February 2014

Ms Malebese ML

RE: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. This letter serves as an acknowledgement for receipt of your research request in the Free State Department of Education.
2. **Research topic: A Socially inclusive teaching strategy to respond to the problems of literacy in a Grade four (4) class.**
3. Approval is granted for you to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education.
4. This approval is subject to the following conditions:-
 - 4.1 The names of participants involved remain confidential.
 - 4.2 The structured questionnaires are completed and the **interviews are conducted outside normal tuition time or during free periods.**
 - 4.3 This letter is shown to all participating persons.
 - 4.4 A bound copy of the research document and a soft copy on a computer disc should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education (Strategic Planning, Policy & Research).
 - 4.5 You will be expected, on completion of your research study, to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - 4.6 The attached ethics document must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. The costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.
6. You are requested to confirm acceptance of the above conditions in writing, within seven days after receipt of this letter. Your acceptance letter should be directed to:

**DIRECTOR: STRATEGIC PLANNING, POLICY AND RESEARCH;
Old CNA Building, Maitland Street OR Private Bag X20565, BLOEMFONTEIN, 9301**

Thank you for choosing to research with us. We wish you every success with your study.

Yours faithfully,


MJ MOTHEBE (DIRECTOR: STRATEGIC PLANNING, POLICY & RESEARCH)

Directorate: Strategic Planning, Policy Development & Research - Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300 – Room 301, Old CNA building,
Charlotte Maxeke, Bloemfontein 9300 - Tel: 051 404 9283/ Fax: 086 6678 678 E-mail: research@edu.fs.gov.za

APPENDIX C

ACCEPTANCE LETTER TO FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



UFS
UV

P.O. Box 11286

Maseru 100,

Lesotho

19 February 2014

Mr. MJ Mothebe

Director: Strategic Planning, Policy and Research

Free State Department of Education

P/Bag X20565

Bloemfontein

9300

To Whom It May Concern:

I, the undersigned hereby accept research conditions that are set in the letter dated 17 February 2014.

Best wishes

Ms M. L. Malebese

APPENDIX D

ASSENT FORM

APPENDIX D

Mofuputsi:
Mot'selisi L. 'Malebese

421 Long Road,
Doom
WELKOM
9460

C: 079 383 0878

motsilisimalebese@yahoo.com

Baeta-pele:
Prof M.G.Mahlomaholo
Dr. B. B. Moreeng
Faculty of Education
University of the Free State
BLOEMFONTEIN
9300

T: +27(0)51 401 3420
T: +27(0)51 401 3586

mahlomaholomg@ufs.ac.za
moreengbb@ufs.ac.za

Letsatsi: Loetse 2013

Sehloho: A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to Problems of Literacy
in a Grade 4 Class

Ngoanaka e leng,.....ke a
molokolla / ha ke molokolle ho nka karolo dipatlisisong tsena.

.....
Tekena mona

.....
Letsatsi

.....
Ngola Mabitso

APPENDIX E

CONCENT FORM FOR PARENTS

APPENDIX E

Mofuputsi:
Mot'selisi L. 'Malebese

421 Long Road,
Doorn
WELKOM
9460

C: 079 383 0878

motsilisimalebese@yahoo.com

Baeta-pele:
Prof M.G.Mahloholo
Dr. B. B. Moreeng

Faculty of Education
University of the Free Sta
BLOEMFONTEIN
9300

T: +27(0)51 401 3420

T: +27(0)51 401 3586

mahloholomg@ufs.ac.
moreengbb@ufs.ac.za

Letsatsi: Loetse

2013

Motswadi ya hlomphehang

Ka boikokobetso o kopuwa ho nka karolo ya patlisiso tlasa sehloho se latelang: *A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to Problems of Literacy in a Grade 4 Class.*

Morero wa patlisiso ena, ke hotla ka mokgwa o bobebe wa ho matlafatsa tsebo ya baithuti yah o bala le ho ngwala haholo ho ban aba qalang ho rutwa ka senyesemane lithutong tsa bona. Ka ho sebetsa le batho ba tsebo tse fapaneng ho thusa mesuwe ka ho ruta bana ho mamela, ho bua, ho bala esita le ho ngwala senyesemane e le ho aha setjhaba s aka moso se matlafetseng.

Ho nka karolo ha hao dipatlisisong tsena, ke ka boithaopo ba hao le kutlwisiso ya molemo wa hao, oo ho nkeng karolo hwa hao ho ka thusang ban aba rona ho ka matlafatsa tsebo ya bona ya ho bala le ho ngwala. Motswadi o lokolohile hore a ka ikgula dipatlisisong tsena haeba a se a sa dumellane le tshebetso ya yona.

Mabitso a lona a nnete a keke a tlhahiswa tlalehong ya dipatlisiso.

Kea Leboha

Mot'selisi L. 'Malebese

Prof M.G.Mahloholo- Promoter

Tlatsa dikheho tse latelang, 'me o boloke lengolo le ka hodimo.

Sehloho: A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 Class.

Mofuputsi: Motšelisi L. 'Malebese

Lebitso le Fane: _____

Dilemo: _____

Nomoro ya mohala: _____

- Ke a dumela mona hore ke nka karolo le ho dumella ngwana ho nka karolo dipatlisisong tsena ka boithaopo
- Ke a utlwisisa hore dipatlisiso tsena di ikemiseditse ho fitlhella eng, ke utlwisisa le hore hobaneng ke nka karolo. Ke tseba le mathata a ka tlhahang tsamaong ya dipatlisiso tsena.

- Ke dumela mona hore ke fana ka tumello ho mofupotsi ho sebedisa tsotlhe tse a ka difumanang di le molemo mabapi le dipatlisiso tse na ha fela a ntse a ipapisitse ka ditumelano tsa sethatong tsa ho etsa dipatlisiso.

Motswadi, ka ho tekena tokomane ena, e bolela hore o utlwisisa hantle seo dipatlisiso tse na di leng ka teng mme o fana ka tumello hore ditaba tsa teng di ka sebediswa. Mme lebitso la hao le ke ke la tlhaiswa.

Tekena mona: _____

Letsatsi:

APPENDIX E

Researcher:
Mot'selisi L. 'Malebese

421 Long Road,
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9460

C: 079 383 0878

motsiisimalebese@yahoo.com

Study Leaders:

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Dr. B. B. Moreeng

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T: +27(0)51 401 3420

T: +27(0)51 401 3586

mahlomaholomg@ufs.ac.za
moreengbb@ufs.ac.za

Date: July 2013

INFORMED CONSENT: SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY GROUP

Dear Parent

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project: A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to Problems of Literacy in a Grade 4 Class. We would like you to participate with us in this research because the proposed strategy happens when equality of access and cohesive communities come together collectively in one spirit allowing learners to demonstrate levels of competence and achievement in ways that suit their needs best.

This study aims at formulating a socially inclusive teaching strategy (SITS) to respond to problems of literacy in a Grade 4 class. Such a strategy refers to a situation where the following are improved: listening, speaking, reading, writing, technical functioning and critical thinking bringing a richness of culture and knowledge to individual learners. Therefore, equity, equality, social justice, freedom, hope and fairness in terms of learning opportunities for all irrespective of their diversity will be enhanced.

There are no risks to you on participation in this study. Indeed, your contribution will add value to this field of teaching and help to deepen the understanding of educational value of the discipline. While I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and the valuable contribution you can make, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do choose to take part, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop your participation with no further implications.

If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my study supervisors (indicated above).

Your real name will not be used in my publications or reports on the study

Yours sincerely

Motšelisi L. 'Malebese

Prof M.G.Mahlomaholo- Promoter

Please fill in and return this page. Keep the letter above for future reference

Study: A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 Class.

Researcher: Motšelisi L. 'Malebese

Name and Surname: _____

Age: _____

SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY GROUP (Field of practice)

Contact number: _____

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations he/she has indicated in the above letter.

By placing your signature below, you declare that you are fully informed about the research project, and give your permission that the information may be used for research without identifying you as an individual.

Signature: _____

Date:

APPENDIX F

CONCENT FORM FOR PRINCIPAL

APPENDIX F

Researcher:
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C: 079 383 0878

motsiisimalebese@yahoo.com

Study Leaders:

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Dr. B. B. Moreeng

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mahlomaholomg@ufs.ac.za
moreengbb@ufs.ac.za

Date: October 2013

Re: Permission to undertake Research in Your School

I am a PhD student at the University of the Free State presently working on my thesis. I am involved in a project which is aimed at formulating a socially inclusive teaching strategy (SITS) to respond to problems of literacy in a Grade 4 class. Such a strategy refers to a situation where the following are improved: listening, speaking, reading, writing, technical functioning and critical thinking bringing a richness of culture and knowledge to individual learners. Therefore, equity, equality, social justice, freedom, hope and fairness in terms of learning opportunities for all irrespective of their diversity will be enhanced.

Thus, the project is likely to provide interesting and useful information which could be of a supportive nature to Free State Department of Education in general, and teachers and learners in particular. Permission to undertake the study from Free State Department of Education is being applied for at the same time. This project will be done outside working hours. The name of your school, teachers and learners involved will remain completely anonymous. Your assistance in this regard will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Mot'selisi L. 'Malebese

Prof M.G.Mahlomaholo- Promoter

APPENDIX G

CONCENT FORM FOR HoD

APPENDIX G

Researcher:
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moreengbb@ufs.ac.za

Date: July

2013

INFORMED CONSENT: SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY GROUP

Dear Sir/Madam (HoD)

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project: A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to Problems of Literacy in a Grade 4 Class. We would like you to participate with us in this research because the proposed strategy happens when equality of access and cohesive communities come together collectively in one spirit allowing learners to demonstrate levels of competence and achievement in ways that suit their needs best.

This study aims at formulating a socially inclusive teaching strategy (SITS) to respond to problems of literacy in a Grade 4 class. Such a strategy refers to a situation where the following are improved: listening, speaking, reading, writing, technical functioning and critical thinking bringing a richness of culture and knowledge to individual learners. Therefore, equity, equality, social justice, freedom, hope and fairness in terms of learning opportunities for all irrespective of their diversity will be enhanced.

There are no risks to you on participation in this study. Indeed, your contribution will add value to this field of teaching and help to deepen the understanding of educational value of the discipline. While I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and the valuable contribution you can make, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do choose to take part, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop your participation with no further implications.

If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my study supervisors (indicated above).

Your real name will not be used in my publications or reports on the study

303

Yours sincerely

Please fill in and return this page. Keep the letter above for future reference

Study: A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 Class.

Researcher: Motšelisi L. 'Malebese

Name and Surname: _____

Age: _____

Contact number: _____

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations he/she has indicated in the above letter.

By placing your signature below, you declare that you are fully informed about the research project, and give your permission that the information may be used for research without identifying you as an individual.

Signature: _____

Date:

APPENDIX H

CONCENT FORM FOR TEACHER

APPENDIX H

Researcher:
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Date: July 2013

INFORMED CONSENT: SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY GROUP

Dear Teacher

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project: A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to Problems of Literacy in a Grade 4 Class. We would like you to participate with us in this research because the proposed strategy happens when equality of access and cohesive communities come together collectively in one spirit allowing learners to demonstrate levels of competence and achievement in ways that suit their needs best.

This study aims at formulating a socially inclusive teaching strategy (SITS) to respond to problems of literacy in a Grade 4 class. Such a strategy refers to a situation where the following are improved: listening, speaking, reading, writing, technical functioning and critical thinking bringing a richness of culture and knowledge to individual learners. Therefore, equity, equality, social justice, freedom, hope and fairness in terms of learning opportunities for all irrespective of their diversity will be enhanced.

There are no risks to you on participation in this study. Indeed, your contribution will add value to this field of teaching and help to deepen the understanding of educational value of the discipline. While I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and the valuable contribution you can make, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do choose to take part, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop your participation with no further implications.

If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my study supervisors (indicated above).

Your real name will not be used in my publications or reports on the study

Yours sincerely

Mot'selisi L. 'Malebese

Prof M.G.Mahlomaholo- Promoter

APPENDIX I

CONCENT FORM FOR SGB

APPENDIX I

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moreengbb@ufs.ac.za

Date: Phupu 2013

Motsoali ea Khabane,

Ka boikokobetso o memeloa ho nka karolo ea patlisiso tlasa sehloho se latelang: *A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to Problems of Literacy in a Grade 4 Class.*

Morero oa patlisiso ena, ke hotla ka mokhoa o bo bebe oa ho matlafatsa thuto ea senyesemane (sekhooa) haholo ho bana ba qalang ho rutoa ka senyesemane (sekhooa) lithutong tsa bona. Ka ho sebetsa le batho ka ho fapana ho thusa mesuoe ka ho ruta bana ho mamela, ho bua, ho bala esita le ho ngola senyesemane (sekhooa) e le ho haha sechaba sa ka moso se matlafatseng.

Re ka thaba haholo ha uena le ngoana le kaba karolo e tlang ho tlisa phethoho thutong, etsoe ha re ka iketsa khokanyana phiri ho loant'sa bofuma ba ho hloka tsebo sechabeng lefat'se kakaretso le tla rua molemo o sa feleng. Ka ha ho ruteha ha bana ho tlisa phethoho e kholo sechabeng. 'Me tlatsetso le t'sebelisano 'moho ea lona e tla amoheloa ka liatla tse peli. Re ka se behe maphelo a lona tsietsing ha le nka karolo ho ntlafatseng bokamoso bo botle sekolong sena.

Ha ke ntse ke leboha t'sebetso le t'sebelisano 'moho ea lona, ka ho etsa tlatsetso tse matla, tse hahang, ho kenya letsoho morerong ona ke boithaopo ba lona ha hona likotlo qobello hobane ha le se le sa batle ho tsoela pele, le ka tlohela ntle le liqobeshano tsa mofuta ofe kapa ofe. 'Me ke le netefaletsa hore ha lona le tletlebo le lumeletsoe ho hlalosa bothata boo le kopanang le bona ho motsamaisi oa lipatlisiso.

Mabitso a lona a 'nete a keke a hlahisoa tlalehong ea lipatlisiso.

Kea Leboha

Mot'selisi L. 'Malebese

Prof M.G.Mahlomaholo- Moeta-pele

APPENDIX J

CONSENT FORM FOR LIBRARIAN / NALI'BALI REPRESENTATIVE

APPENDIX J

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Date: July 2013

INFORMED CONSENT: SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGY GROUP

Dear Librarian

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project: A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to Problems of Literacy in a Grade 4 Class. We would like you to participate with us in this research because the proposed strategy happens when equality of access and cohesive communities come together collectively in one spirit allowing learners to demonstrate levels of competence and achievement in ways that suit their needs best.

This study aims at formulating a socially inclusive teaching strategy (SITS) to respond to problems of literacy in a Grade 4 class. Such a strategy refers to a situation where the following are improved: listening, speaking, reading, writing, technical functioning and critical thinking bringing a richness of culture and knowledge to individual learners. Therefore, equity, equality, social justice, freedom, hope and fairness in terms of learning opportunities for all irrespective of their diversity will be enhanced.

There are no risks to you on participation in this study. Indeed, your contribution will add value to this field of teaching and help to deepen the understanding of educational value of the discipline. While I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and the valuable contribution you can make, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do choose to take part, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop your participation with no further implications.

If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my study supervisors (indicated above).

Your real name will not be used in my publications or reports on the study

311

Yours sincerely

Please fill in and return this page. Keep the letter above for future reference

Study: A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 Class.

Researcher: Motšelisi L. 'Malebese

Name and Surname: _____

Age: _____

Contact number: _____

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations he/she has indicated in the above letter.

By placing your signature below, you declare that you are fully informed about the research project, and give your permission that the information may be used for research without identifying you as an individual.

Signature: _____

Date:

APPENDIX K

**CONCENT FORM FOR COMMUNITY
MEMBER / COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT WORKER (CDW)**

APPENDIX K

Researcher:
Mot'selisi 'Malebese
C: 079 383 0878

Study Leaders:
Prof M.G.Mahlomaholo
Dr. B. B. Moreeng
Faculty of Education
University of the Free
State
BLOEMFONTEIN
9300

Date: July 2013

Informed Consent: Socially Inclusive Teaching strategy group

Dear Participant

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project: A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 Class. We would like you to participate with us in this research because the proposed strategy happens when equality of access and cohesive communities come together collectively in one spirit allowing learners to demonstrate levels of competence and achievement in ways that suit their needs best.

This study aims at formulating a socially inclusive teaching strategy (SITS) to respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 class. Such a strategy refers to a situation where the following are improved: listening, speaking, reading, writing, technical functioning and critical thinking bringing a richness of culture and knowledge to individual learners. Therefore, equity, equality, social justice, freedom, hope and fairness in terms of learning opportunities for all irrespective of their diversity will be enhanced.

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If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my study supervisors (indicated above).

Your real name will not be used in my publications or reports on the study

Yours sincerely

Motšelisi L. 'Malebese
Promoter

Prof M.G.Mahlomaholo-

Please fill in and return this page. Keep the letter above for future reference

Study: A Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy to Respond to English literacy problems in a Grade 4 Class.

Researcher: Motšelisi L. 'Malebese

Name and Surname: _____

Age: _____

Contact number: _____

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations he/she has indicated in the above letter.

By placing your signature below, you declare that you are fully informed about the research project, and give your permission that the information may be used for research without identifying you as an individual.

Signature: _____

Date:

APPENDIX L

TRANSCRIPTIONS

APPENDIX L

DISCOURSE TRANSCRIBED FROM RECORDED SESSIONS

The following are transcriptions of recorded sessions used as data in this study. The utterances below demonstrate a normal class conducted using a traditional way of role modeling a large group of learners. The teacher pays attention to a participating group and ignores those who fall behind, displaying lack of support, collaboration and dedication, thus conforming to a single-handed lesson preparation, presentation and assessment without use of different teaching methods and varying learning activities to enforce learning. In an attempt to create a sustainable learning environment, there has to be a dedicated team to guide the smooth implementation of the anticipated strategy. The example below was a result of the lack of a dedicated team which encouraged the participating members to establish a dedicated running the entire project.

An example of a lesson that was conducted without a supervision of a dedicated team

Teacher stands in front of class, and begins to speak to learners immediately.

Teacher: Take out your learning activity book and turn to page 42, do the exercise that follows. You see there is a first letter to an answer provided as a hint, so all you have to do is to finish that word. Where you do not understand come to me and ask for clarity. Do you all understand what to do?

Learners: (The entire class was quiet)

Study Coordinator: So ntate, have you done this work before/already?

Teacher: No, I just follow the workbook.

Study Coordinator: Yes, but did you at least teach them first, because right now they all look puzzled.

Teacher: They are always like this; they should come for clarity if they do not understand. Do you all understand what you have to do?

Learners: (muffled confirmation as they began completing the task)

Learner (Tsholo): Teacher (pointing at the sentence)

Teacher: The answer is six and seven, right Tsholo! Because as you can see they start with the letter “s”.

Learner: (Inaudible question by other learners)

Teacher: (Inaudible answer by other teacher)

(Teacher moves around – supervising work done by learners)

Teacher: The next class; write down the names of your friends that start with p and b...*inaudible*...what sound does the first letter makes.

(Learners busy completing task. Teacher moves around and supervises)

Teacher: Are we all together? Do you all have the word?

Learners: (*Together*) Yes, Teacher.

Teacher: Mark by underlining the letter p or b on every given name. Have you marked/underline your word?

Learners: (*Together*) Yes, Teacher.

(Teacher looking at work done by some of the learners).

Teacher: Okay. Let’s go to the next one. This person is flying an airplane. What is an airplane/aeroplane?

Learners: (A few learners respond at the same time) fly machine.

Learner (Thuto): A transport that fly in the sky.

Teacher: Good. What do we call a person flying an airplane?

Learners: A pilot.

Teacher: A pilot, yes. See if you can find a word “pilot” and mark it.

(Learners look for the word)

Teacher: By show of hands, how many of you have found the word?

Learners: Few raise their hands. ... (*Inaudible response*).

(Learners complete the task as the teacher supervises. A learner puts up his hand. The teacher, who moves around all the time and usually addresses learners from the middle of the classroom, does not notice this since his back is turned at that particular learner. The learner changes his mind about asking the teacher as he realised his moving away from the point he needed clarity on. The learner seemed confused and did not know what to do. He then decided to ask his neighbor the point he needed clarity on).

Teacher: (*inaudible question*)... (*Address the class again*)... Do you all have the word now? Have you marked it?

Learners: (*Together*) Yes, Teacher.

Teacher: Let's go to the next one. What do we call a person who bakes and sells bread?

Learners: A baker.

Teacher: Yes, a baker. Let's now find the word and make sure that your spelling is correct, then mark it by underlining it.

(Learners complete the task unsupervised, until to the letter z).

Teacher: Just ask me questions if you don't understand something. Are we all together?

Learners: (*stifled response by learners*)

Teacher: Okay, this is quite a difficult one. We look with our eyes and the two round o's or circles look like eyes looking at you. Can

identify only five words that have two round o's (*Inaudible*)...or two circles that look like eyes looking at you?

Learner (Thabi): Cook

Teacher: Correct, yes. Somebody?

Learner (Lucky): Book

Teacher: Wonderful, yes. Another one.

Learner (Puleng): Took

Teacher: I thought this was a difficult task, ok. Let's carry on. Queen can you give us an answer.

Learner (Queen): Yes, teacher. Hook

Teacher: Beautiful, last one.

Learner (Thuto): Room

Teacher: The word dog can be easily remembered because of its tail, mention few words that ends with a tail.

(Learners complete the task, while teacher supervises)

Teacher: The previous examples are all the family of the configuration clue. So today, we are going to look at one of the features of the Demon Headmaster which you might not have noticed and that is the dialogue. What is dialogue?

Learners: (No response from learners)

Teacher: Can someone find the definition in the book?

(The teacher writes the word "dialogue" on the board and the answer without giving learners a chance to respond to it)

Teacher: Dialogue is when...(*inaudible*) the characters are speaking to each other...(*inaudible*) It's one of the things that makes a character interesting and it is really important that we, the

readers, understand exactly what the characters do say to each other. Are we all together?

Learners: *(Together)* Yes, Sir.

Teacher: Okay, so we are going to see how that speech is set out in the book, so that the readers (*inaudible*) know who is speaking and how they are speaking. The learning activity, page 43 is your homework. Understand?

Learners: *(Together)* Yes, Sir.

(The period elapsed. On our way to staff room Mr. Jam asked if I can join him again the next day. I was looking forward to the next class hoping that the preparation, presentation and assessment would be different from the previous class of which none existed.)

Teacher: Good morning class.

Learners: Good morning Sir.

Teacher: Did you do your homework?

Learners: *(Together)* Yes, Sir.

Teacher: I want you to exchange your work with your neighbor.

(Learners swapped their work with their neighbours for marking)

Study coordinator: May I ask why you use the same method of lesson presentation and assessment? ...*(Inaudible)* there are better and simpler ways of improving your classroom learning environment, you know. The question is would you like to give it a try and let more hands to work with you (*Mosotho o ye a re ntja-pelihaehloloekesebata*); simply saying more hands are better than one.

Teacher: Well mme, it doesn't hurt by trying, we can try this model you are referring to. It sounds interesting but you know I always struggle to get help from parents. I want to if they'll come on board this time around.

(Later that day after class the principal and head of the department joining the conversation)

Principal: Like you said it doesn't hurt trying. So where do we start from.

(The principal with the department head set a date for a strategic meeting to initiate and implement their ideas; the first meeting attendance was very successful with good ideas being raised. Attendees were the principal, deputy principal, head of department, study coordinator, two members of the school governing body, parent, community development worker and two learners. The same day they voted for three members to be their coordinating team running the project after they have gathered what the group already knows and where the gap lies as well as finding ways to do it better. Each member was assigned to their task according to their level of strengths and opportunities to anticipate plausible threats and weaknesses by answering the following questions: What will be done?; Who will be involved?; Where will it take place?; When will each stage happen? And lastly how will we do it?).

The session commenced with warm welcoming and greetings.

Principal: Allow me to firstly greet you in the name of the Almighty Jesus Christ Amen.

(Together) Amen.

I take this opportunity to welcome everybody in here. Fellow colleagues, learners and parents you are welcome.

(Together) Clapped their hands.

We have gathered here to tackle this huge problem that we are facing of which together we can overcome. I'll give our Department Head to share some light what has been observed and suggested by the Department of Basic Education, so as to align ourselves with the specificity needed as we conduct our discussions.

Department head: Thank you Mr Principal for the warm welcome. Will it be okay/ appreciated if we may conduct our sessions in English especially because the aim is to enhance the fluency of English speaking, I know we have the parent component of the school governing body, but I believe we are all good.

Parent: No, we are all good, but where we do not understand I think we'll need some clarifications, correct.

(Together) Correct.

Department head: Now, that it is out of the way may we all have a look at the agenda as a guide in our discussion. Thank Mr Principal and Deputy for attending to the first two items, namely opening and welcome. The aim for this meeting is for us to collaborate work together to help our Grade 4 learners with the problem they are facing as the Principal has explained the problem of transition causing a bottle-neck in a Grade 4 class. We are all going to learn collectively to improve learners' learning capabilities and promote the schools' learning environment. Before we start with everything we have to make sure that each of us is on board with the idea, and so there are consent forms to be filled to show our commitment.

(The study coordinator handed out some consent forms and explained the purpose they serve, as she was explaining a learner raised her hand after being handed with a form).

Learner (Thuto): May I please ask something mme?

Study coordinator: Yes.

Learner (Thuto): *(Inaudible)*...Do we also sign?

Study coordinator: No love, you have to give the form to your parents to fill it for you that will show us that the parents agree and allow you to take part in the project.

Learners: *(Unsure, mumbling)*

(The session paused for about ten minutes in order to give co-researchers time to go through the consent forms. With the exception of consent from language expert who was not present at the time the forms were handed out and for learners who were to give them to their parents to sign on their behalf, all other consent forms were signed on the spot).

Department head: Okay then, if we can start by strategising to guide all the activities that can firstly help us to improve classroom teaching and learning environment. Then allocate tasks accordingly showing what kind of an activity with a responsible person, the duration of the activity, resources needed as well as the performance indicators.

Teacher: Listening and speaking skills should be our first priority. So as when it comes to reading and writing, learners have already mastered such skills.

Study Coordinator: The major problems we identified ... *(Inaudible)* are two priorities mainly listening and speaking skills; reading and writing skills.

Teacher: Yes, and then we suggested to have at least five phases in each priority.

Principal: Correct, so let's bring to speed activities on each phase.

Teacher: I'll suggest we start with listening and speaking skills as our first priority... *(Inaudible)* so phase one? What can we include in that phase?

Study Coordinator: The Total Physical Response, in my opinion will be a good example for a listening and speaking skills... *(Inaudible)* maybe games such as the River bank game.

Community development worker: How about the cumulative songs even stories, don't they fall under the same category with the Total Physical Response activities?

Teacher: Guess so... *(Inaudible)*.

Principal: So we can incorporate that under the same priority then. What else do we have?

Learner (Thuto): Wendy House, I've seen that after playing my mother once asked me if I can write a composition about what I learned during play,*(Inaudible)* and as I recall all the faces and their utterances, I managed to write.

Teacher: Good girl, so you remember most of the conversation. So you listened as they were speaking?

Learner (Thuto): I was also part of the play but when I was asked to write the composition, all that I had to do was to think back and create a story based on what I've experienced during that play.

Study Coordinator: Wonderful, so how can we implement such in the classroom?

Learner (Tsholo): In the classroom we can make a space for Mantlwane, I mean Wendy house.

(After a well thought decision concerning learning activities and realising that we (team) know only up to level B, we invited the English language expert to confirm and help us with the suggested learning activities for their relevancy in certain priorities).

Language Expert: The Total Physical Response learning activities are very good and sustainable if administered well. *(Inaudible)*...so what we can do is to check our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) towards the suggested learning activities and the anticipated strategy. Moreover, this will help us find the best ways of responding to the identified multiplicity related to English literacy challenges with regard to the English literacy problems in a grade four class.

Principal: Correct, so we have to make sure that our strategic planning is in line with the future patterns of actions to be taken and that strengths match with opportunities and ward off threats as we work on overcoming weaknesses.

Study coordinator: Well said nate, *(Inaudible)* so this side *(pointing on the board where suggestions were made)* indicate our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats ... *(Inaudible)* and the other side the activities.

The team: *(Together)* Correct.

Study coordinator: So that means, each participating member will be assigned in correlation with his/her strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

(The team finished with their strategic planning and lined-up learning activities, allocating the time, resourceful resources, strategies, proper ways of interventions, appropriate learner support systems and of course, can do attitudes).

Language Expert: Remember in everything (learning activities) you do, firstly establish learners' prior knowledge and incorporate sensory elements such as visual, auditory and kinesthetic or anything to enhance a sustainable teaching and learning process. *(Inaudible)* provide opportunities for success to build learners'

self-esteem by varying types of instruction and assessment, with multiple intelligences and cooperative learning...okay!

(Some of the crucial points the team raised were to relate learning to learners' real-lives using interesting sets of learning activities. And also by establishing a pleasant classroom environment that encourages learners to ask questions and become actively involved in their learning).

Principal: So now, we have to implement all these meaningful, fruitful and promising ideas for a successful collaborative work and experience. ...*(Inaudible)*...so in our next meeting we will see how the strategy should have unfolded and tighten-up loose ends.

(After the team has established a common purpose by evaluating a common goal, expectations and interests as well as realising their realities. Also building and creating an understanding about participation so that every participating members knew all the actions to be undertaken effectively. Then it was implementation process).

Department head: You know, the other thing that we have to base ourselves on is a well thought and set time frames for each activity. We have to see to it that the length and manner in which each activity can give a room for effective dissemination creating a sustainable learning environment.

Teacher: So how many sessions and phases do we plan to have?

Language Expert: I think we can have at least three session and always build on that other as we interact monthly. The first session will be our base namely initial stage, then implementation stage and lastly reflection stage. Incorporating five phases broken down as follows: **phase one**; listening and speaking learning activities being implemented, **phase two**; reflection on the lesson learnt,

phase three; presentation of the lesson, **phase four;** reflection on the lesson facilitated, and lastly **phase five;** assessment on the lesson learnt. The same phases were also adapted for reading and writing skills.

Attached is a lesson sample for a listening and speaking learning activities:

Lesson 1

Lesson Focus

- Familiarizing the learners with one another and their teacher.
- Conveying simple greeting dialogues to each other in an inviting environment through games and activities.

OUTCOMES:

LISTENING AND SPEAKING:	
1	Listens for the main idea and for detail in stories and answers higher-order questions, e.g., "Do you think the title is the best one for this story? Why?"
2	Expresses feelings about a text and gives reasons, e.g., "I really feel that the author could have given a happier ending to the story. The dolphin tried so hard to escape."
3	
4	
5	
6	
READING AND PHONICS:	
1	Recognises that some sounds are represented by a number of different spelling choices (play, pain, plate; feet, read, key; boat, blow, note; tiger, like, sigh, fly)
2	Learns to spell ten words a week taken from phonics lessons and sight words
3	Reads book as a whole class with the teacher (shared reading) and describes the main idea and the main characters
4	Recognises apostrophes in contractions showing both possession and contractions such as "Sipho's book, can't"
5	Reads both silently and out loud from own book in a guided reading group with the teacher, that is, whole group reads the same story on the instructional reading level of the group
6	Uses phonics, contextual and structural analysis decoding skills when

	reading both silently and aloud
WRITING:	
1	Uses phonic knowledge and spelling rules to write unfamiliar words
2	Uses present, past and future tense correctly
3	Builds own word bank and personal dictionary using initial letter of words such as apple, book, cat, etc.
4	
5	

GRAMMAR, VOCABULARY, SIGHT WORDS:

GRAMMAR:	
1	Who are you?
2	I am...
3	You are...
4	He/she is...
5	How old are you?
VOCABULARY:	
1	Shapes: oval, circle, round
2	Height: tall, taller, tallest; short, shorter, shortest
3	
4	
5	
SIGHT WORDS:	
1	Who?
2	You?
3	I
4	We
5	Me

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Enough of the SAME newspaper for each pair of children (PLEASE ensure to remove all inappropriate content in the newspaper before giving it to the learners)
- Learner workbooks
- Stationery:
- Construction toys, puzzles, colouring in, collage or books

LEARNING SEQUENCE

	CONTENT	METHOD	TIME
ADMIN + Attendance Register and greeting			
1	LETS RECAP: What happened last week?		5 min
2	ICE BREAKER		
3	WHATS THIS?		
4	CORE CONTENT: Story, poem or rhyme linked to thematic grammar, vocabulary and sight words.		
5	WORKBOOK ACTIVITY		
6	CLOSING OFF		

The next scheduled progressive session was based on the reflection of what the team have implemented and observed, to see what worked and not as to re-plan the alternative methods.

The progression meeting was scheduled after a month of implementation stage to evaluate actions to see how and how much have we advanced. To see if what agreed on is functioning or to see if every member managed or battled to impart their assigned tasks. This meeting was based on determining what needs to be modified, strengthened or discarded. To suggests other/new ways for improvement.

Principal: So now that we have all realised our discrepancies and that the Department of Education has intervened by providing materials and ideas to be adapted and incorporated in our daily activities, (*inaudible*)...so when we facilitate now we have to ensure that as we provide mutual learning and listen to learners unspoken grievances or concerns, encourage and clarify those disputes. Our aim is to improve the quality of learning activities in the teaching and learning processes.

Study coordinator: Cooperation at this stage is critical. As we have shared responsibility adhered to ensure that materials and ideas are developed together.

Community development worker: Also there has to be shared leadership amongst us to promote learners' interdependence of which somehow it was not so permissible. (*Hape*), also reciprocity, collegiality and solidarity were also not so observable. The teacher still practices dictatorship as well as the principal.

Principal: That's not true.

Community development worker: Principal, you're the first person to receive information, but you are selective in sharing it. You are acting as if we are in a competition. How can we build collaborative network, yet we are divided?

Study coordinator: May I intervene please; remember the aim is to improve learners' learning through innovation. We are proposing to develop a socially inclusive teaching strategy of which that cannot be attained by a one-man-mission kind of an approach, but we have to work together as a collective team. And that, can only be possible through good communication practices.

Teacher: Honestly, I'm so used to doing things alone; I didn't do that to be spiteful. I promise to share my work and report the activities.

I thank mme for raising this issue because sometimes I do things in a certain way.

(The team discussed certain priorities and promised each other that they will refrain from hiding crucial information from each other instead, support collaborative work by sharing knowledge and enriching a socially inclusive way of teaching English literacy along the curriculum plan. The term “collaboration” was tossed around often in all sessions.)

Study coordinator: Colleagues remember that we promised each other to work closely and know what the other hand is doing at all times whenever possible and pledged that we are the “Omo Micros – Dimonyollane” and that we will cooperate, collaborate and communicate issues effectively to make sure that we do not leave any stone unturned.

(This collaboration did not go as smoothly as there were so many obstacles and tensions that surfaced amongst members due to the power dynamics and interplay between the various players involved. To circumvent that, the team established mechanisms enforcing learning communities that fostered collaboration, honest talk, and a commitment to the growth and development of individual members and to the group as a whole.)

(After confirming on how to re-strategise some of the learning activities, the team was now ready to give it their best shot and improve to the identified discrepancies.)

(The principal answers the door.)

(Abrupt end.)

The last session was about the discussion of the findings and the gap identified.