

ACTIVE LEARNING IN THE LITERACY LEARNING PROGRAMME OF
THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN CURRICULUM 2005

by

HASINA BANU EBRAHIM

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SUPERVISOR: DR C J S VAN STADEN

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DECLARATION

I declare that "ACTIVE LEARNING IN THE LITERACY LEARNING PROGRAMME OF THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN CURRICULUM 2005" is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

HB Ebrahim

MRS HB EBRAHIM

2000-04-01

DATE

DEDICATION TO MY PARENTS

SARA

AND

ALLY OSMAN

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the concept of Active Learning (AL) and the related concept Active Learner Participation (ALP) as it features in the Literacy Learning Programme of the Foundation Phase of Curriculum 2005. The aim of the action research project, conducted at four schools in the Durban district of KwaZulu-Natal, was to find a model of AL in order to provide guidance on teaching for ALP. The study involved the researcher working collaboratively with five Foundation Phase educators over a period of four months. Results of the study indicated that teaching in the sequential stages of classbuilding and teambuilding, whole class discussion, group work and individual work increases learners' active participation and ownership in terms of the learning experience. These stages form the model of active learning. Due to the spirit of camaraderie and partnership that developed in each stage, the research team is inclined to call it "The *Tirisano* Model of Active Learning".

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LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE TEXT

| | |
|------|--|
| AL | Active Learning |
| ALP | Active Learner Participation |
| OBE | Outcomes-Based Education |
| LLC | Language, Literacy and Communication |
| SAQA | South African Qualifications Authority |
| ECD | Early Childhood Development |
| CO | Critical Outcome |
| SO | Specific Outcome |
| AC | Assessment Criteria |
| PI | Performance Indicators |
| RS | Range Statements |
| NGOs | Non-governmental organisations |

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In our new found democracy, we need an education system that will cope with the challenges of the future. We need people that are active, creative, independent thinkers that can retrieve information and apply knowledge to various situations. Curriculum 2005, introduced in South Africa in March 1997, moves education in this direction. “The introduction of this new curriculum will play a major role in helping us transform our country into one in which we all want to live, by producing thinking and caring learners” (Sunday Times, 22 February 1998:20). These inspiring words of our former Minister of Education, Professor Sibusiso Bengu, maps a vision that changes the face of South African Education. A major part of this change is promoting active learning (AL) as a medium for learners to demonstrate their mental, physical, social and creative competence.

Dreyer (1997:3) states that Curriculum 2005 attempts to bring about the change by aiming at:

- integrating education and training
- promoting lifelong learning for all South Africans
- focusing on outcomes rather than content

- equipping all learners with knowledge, competencies and orientations needed to be successful after completing their studies
- encompassing a culture of human rights, multi-lingualism, multi-culturalism and sensitivity to values of reconciliation and nation building

The above changes are crucial to creating a literate society. This means educators have to work from a broader perspective than they did in the past. It is evident that the traditional content-based approach to teaching and learning is inadequate to engage learners effectively for a democratic citizenry. This approach relies exclusively on content to direct and inform all teaching and learning activities (Van der Horst & McDonald 1997:28). Whilst we need content to acquaint ourselves with the realities of our new democracy, we are also in need of an education that emphasises skills, attitudes and values. In schools, this implies implementing a vibrant Literacy Learning Programme that promotes active learner participation (ALP) and experiences congruent with society at large. In this dissertation the focus will fall on promoting literacy by using ALP in an outcomes-based context.

1.2 OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION (OBE)

Curriculum 2005 promotes democratic principles to education by adopting an outcomes-based philosophy. Malan (1997:10) states that “Education – a process of teaching and learning is outcomes based when it accepts as its premise that the definition of outcomes should form the basis of all educational activity.” An outcome

is defined as anything that a learner knows and can demonstrate. It is the result of learning processes and is inclusive of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Department of Education 1997(a):32).

There are three kinds of outcomes-based education. These differ in the way in which outcomes are viewed and applied. The analysis that follows is crucial to understanding the need for AL in a literacy context.

1.2.1 DIFFERENT KINDS OF OBE

The three different kinds of outcomes-based education models that are adopted in international education systems are traditional, transitional and transformational. It is imperative to examine the three different kinds of outcomes-based education models in order to understand the rationale behind the South African choice and to examine its implications for AL.

Traditional OBE focuses on clearly defined outcomes that are directly drawn from an existing syllabus. It is similar to the traditional “objective” approach, where the educator sets goals at the beginning of a learning programme (Department of Education 1997(b):24). There is a strong emphasis on either doing or recalling content. Integration of skills, knowledge and values is ignored (Department of Education 1998(a):17).

Transitional OBE aligns itself with the qualities learners will need to operate competently in society as a whole. It begins by focusing on the knowledge, skills and values that society deems important for all its citizens. Once these outcomes have been identified, the educator can use the existing syllabus to assist learners to realise them. The integration of learning experiences is encouraged. This type of OBE, although limited in its approach to bring about major changes to an existing education system, can be quite useful as a stepping stone to transformational OBE (Department of Education 1998(a):18).

Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:19-20) view transformational OBE as a “collaborative, flexible, transdisciplinary, outcomes-based schooling system which is oriented towards empowering learners”. It arises from the premise that the current system and syllabus hinder the reconstruction of a new society and the holistic development of the learner. Rapid social change is desired in order to meet the needs of a transformed society (Department of Education 1998(a):19).

1.2.2 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHOICE

The demise of apartheid and the advent of democracy have led South Africa adopting a transformational outcomes-based system of education for the sake of equity, access and redress. The change in the education system is aimed at making more South Africans competent with marketable skills for a global economy. The transformation is also aimed at making learners active participants in the learning process so that

they will develop a thirst for knowledge, a love of learning and a determination to succeed (Department of Education 1997(b):4). These are essential attributes for citizens in a society that is reconstructing itself. In the context of the school, it could mean promoting literacy by making AL the bedrock of the learning process.

Transformational OBE in South Africa is organised around nationally agreed cross-field critical outcomes (see paragraph 1.2.3). The achievement of the following vision was the point of departure for these foundational outcomes:

A prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice (Department of Education 1997(a): Preface to Curriculum 2005).

1.2.3 THE CRITICAL CROSS-FIELD OUTCOMES

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), a body of people representing the major stakeholders in education and training, designed the critical outcomes (COs). These outcomes, according to SAQA, would best meet the needs of our developing democracy and should, therefore, guide all teaching and learning in all grades and in all subjects or courses. They are broad cross-curricular skills, knowledge and values which learners need to contribute to their own success as well

as the success of others. They are lifelong outcomes, which underpin all teaching and learning (Malan 1997:18).

The National Department of Education (1997(a):16) lists the COs developed by SAQA. The seven outcomes listed below are broad societal outcomes. Learners should be able to successfully demonstrate their ability to:

- CO 1 communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and or written presentation;
- CO 2 identify and solve problems by using creative and critical thinking;
- CO 3 organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- CO 4 work effectively with others in a team, group organisation and community;
- CO 5 collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
- CO 6 use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others;
- CO 7 understand that the world is a set of inter-related systems. This means that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The next five critical outcomes relate to the full personal development of each learner.

- CO 1 Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn effectively.
- CO 2 Participating as a responsible citizen in the life of local, national and

global communities.

- CO 3 Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
- CO 4 Exploring education and career opportunities.
- CO 5 Developing entrepreneurial opportunities.

1.2.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE CRITICAL OUTCOMES FOR ACTIVE LEARNER PARTICIPATION

The COs have far-reaching implications for the ways in which learning and teaching are structured in the new curriculum. The emphasis is on learner-centred approaches. Nunan (1988:2) views a learner-centred curriculum as one where there is a collaborative effort between educators and learners. Fone (in McKay (ed) 1995:88) states that a learner-centred approach implies that learners are active participants and that they have a share in the ownership of the learning process. The previous statement forms the basis of the discussion throughout the research.

Upon examining the COs numerous words that denote action come to the fore – communicate, identify, solve, collect, analyse, organise, evaluate, understand, team work and awareness. This indicates that the learners can no longer be passive observers on the periphery of learning experiences in a literacy context. They must become actively involved in decisions regarding their own learning (Department of

Education 1997(b):6). This aspect will be explored comprehensively in Chapter 3 (par. 3.4.3).

The COs also indicates the need for creating a meaningful context as a platform for ALP. According to Nagel (1996:3) this platform is created when the learner is subjected to experiences that relate to real-life problem solving. This type of learning requires learners to collaborate with each other.

Collaboration amongst learners is described as a situation where learners work together in pairs or in small groups to practice or refine aspects of their learning (Halpern 1991: 57). A collaborative learning environment helps learners to think as a team and learning becomes a co-operative affair (Adams & Hamm 1990:23-25). In South Africa, people have been historically separated by the previous dispensation. A democracy, however, needs a “collective moral perspective” in order to survive (White paper on education and training 1995:17).

According to our present minister of education, Professor Kader Asmal, this perspective is possible under the slogan *Tirisano* which means “working together”. The latter is viewed as a national mobilisation process in education (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education 1999:3). This study relates to the concept *Tirisano* as it applies to the practical implementation of AL in the Literacy Learning Programme (see Chapter Three par.3.5.2 and Chapter Four par.4.4.3)

The adoption of a learner-centred approach requires a redefinition of the role of the teacher and the term “educator” which is used throughout this research. An explanation of the difference between the two is provided in par. 1.11.6. The educator is now viewed as a ***facilitator** (see Chapter Three par. 3.4.4) and a *guide on the side* rather than a *sage on the stage* (McCown, Driscoll & Roop 1996:405). ****He** co-creates and innovates a classroom which is experienced as “an active, high challenge learning and performance centre” (Malan 1997:36).

1.3 THE LEARNING PROGRAMMES IN CURRICULUM 2005 – SITES FOR ACTIVE LEARNER PARTICIPATION

The junior primary phase under the old dispensation, viz., class one, two and standard one is replaced by the Foundation Phase in the new dispensation. The National Qualifications Framework (a structure that represents the learning pathways, locations of learning and qualifications level of learners) state that the Foundation Phase is inclusive of the reception year as well as grades one, two and three (Malan 1997:5-6). This will be discussed in detail later on in par. 1.11.4. The Foundation Phase is made up of three learning programmes - Literacy, Numeracy and Lifeskills.

*** Although the educator is known as a facilitator in the OBE context, we will still be using the word educator as we view facilitation of learning as one of the roles played by the educator in Chapter Three (par. 3.4.4).**

**** Throughout this research we will be using “he” for the educator and “she” for the learner.**

The Department of Education (1997(c):14) states that a learning programme is “the vehicle through which the curriculum is implemented at various learning sites at schools.” For the purpose of this research, the focus will be on the Literacy Learning Programme, as the researcher is of the opinion that it is basal to learners’ progress in Lifeskills and Numeracy.

The learning programmes provide platforms to design programmes for AL. They are integrated and allow learners the latitude to respond to topics in terms of their own experiences. This allows learners to interface with realities that are relevant to them. Chapter Five is a practical demonstration of the above.

1.4. THE LITERACY LEARNING PROGRAMME

The Literacy Learning Programme in the new curriculum moves beyond the narrow focus of the traditional definition of reading, writing and maths. The term “literacy” is viewed as a broad concept that includes various kinds of literacies viz. cultural, critical, visual, media, numerical, computer and language across the curriculum. This will be explained in detail in Chapter Four (par.4.2.3). It stresses “the issue of access to the world and to knowledge through development of multiple capacities within all of us to make sense of our worlds through whatever means we have, not only texts and books” (Department of Education 1997(c): LLC5).

The Literacy Learning Programme also includes eight learning areas, which is common to both Lifeskills and Numeracy. These learning areas replace the traditional subjects and emphasise integration of learning content (Van der Horst & McDonald 1997:48). The Department of Education (1997(c):8) has formulated the following learning areas: Literacy, Language and Communication (LLC), Human and Social Sciences, Technology, Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences, Natural Science, Arts and Culture, Economics and Management Science, Life Orientation.

The main aim is to provide “active literacy.” This would allow learners to achieve flexibility and vary the use of language according to different purposes, audiences and social settings. It will also give learners the opportunity to use literacy to think, create, question and not merely answer questions and follow directions (Weeks & Leaker 1991:14).

The present study looks at literacy in terms of the learner’s being active from the start. There is also a need to look at the social context in which learners perform in order to reach the outcomes of the Literacy Learning Programme. This will be elaborated upon in Chapters Three and Four.

Active learning in the Literacy Learning Programme of Curriculum 2005 has certainly brought about many changes to traditional teaching in the junior primary phase. These changes are best understood by elaborating on traditional teaching and

learning practices in general and then specifically to literacy in the junior primary phase. This is crucial to the understanding of the research problem.

1.5 NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

1.5.1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

The past curriculum was compartmentalised into various subjects. The syllabi prescribed the content to be covered rather than describe the type of learning that should be achieved. The definition of this type of learning was limited to the educator, the textbook and external examiners (Department of Education 1998(a):25). Some educators moved beyond the narrow definitions of outcomes as prescribed by the syllabi. They designed learning experiences that placed a high priority on learner participation (Van der Horst & MacDonald 1997:27). Whilst this was the case in some instances, many focused on the teacher-centred approach to impart content of the syllabi.

Fone (in McKay (ed) 1995:82) describes the teacher-centred approach as one where the educator assumes a controlling role in order to ensure that the outcomes of the syllabus are met. The educator teaches learners the facts that are necessary for reproduction in a test or an examination. There is repetition and constant revision of content by the educator in order to prepare learners for recall on demand.

The active role of the educator led to the learner assuming a docile, passive stance. In most instances, her role was limited to the concentration of memorising the facts transmitted by the educator. Freire (in Christie 1992:168) refers to this as the “banking system of education.” Educators “deposit” the relevant content into the “empty” minds of their learners. Learners and educators treat knowledge as a commodity of exchange rather than a co-creation. There is little scope for critical thinking or self-discovery. Rogers and Freiberg (1994:10) state that passive learners seldom participate in class, seldom discuss the reasons for their answers and typically work alone. This occurs because they are not shareholders in their own learning. Therefore it is imperative to examine the role of the learner as an active participant in the learning process. In order to facilitate this, the question of ownership amongst other characteristics of active learners will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three (par. 3.3.2).

1.5.2 THE LITERACY PROGRAMME IN THE TRADITIONAL JUNIOR PRIMARY PHASE

The term “literacy” in the traditional junior primary class was limited to the cognitive processes of reading, writing and maths (the three R’s) (Department of Education 1997(c):21). Each process was organised as a subject. These subjects were isolated from each other. Reading was housed in a subject called Main Language. Although there was a plea to include the four basic lines of communication (reading, writing,

listening and speaking) in the Literacy Programme many schools only emphasised reading and writing (Johnston & van der Merwe 1979:1-4).

Reading lessons degenerated into the “reading book” syndrome. For most junior primary educators reading meant the application of the basal reader programme. Educators used commercial prepared materials, viz., learners’ workbooks and educators’ manuals. The extensive use of the Gay Way, Bee Hive and Beacon Readers serve as good examples. Using the basal reader programme meant that educators looked at publishers as experts. Educators disempowered themselves by merely delivering predesigned materials. They taught discrete skills in a hierarchical sequence. Reading activities became the focus, rather than meaning making. Learners were given a limited range of options for reading and writing within the confines of set topics (Antonacci & Colasacco in Ellsworth, Hedley & Baratta (ed) 1994:214-217). There was also the repetitive use of particular activities, oral reading and the completion of worksheets in order to provide sufficient practice in skills learnt (Cairney 1995:68-69). If the learner’s response in terms of the above aspects was below the prescribed norm, then she was referred to a remedial specialist. The reasons for failure were misdirected, as educators did not evaluate the published programmes that learners were subjected to.

Writing was taught as a manual skill. The child was trained to perfect a technique of muscular co-ordination. They were required to trace over the educators writing, copy words and sentences from writing strips and use individual dictionaries. Instead of

continuing the natural progress of the learner from preschool, the learners were subjected to a set of rules to follow in order to mirror adult forms of writing. The emphasis was on good presentation and the correct letter formation. Whilst this instrumental function is important for initial writing, there has to be opportunities for writing as a tool for communication. This aspect was sadly neglected, as the emphasis was on products rather than the process of writing – an issue that will be dealt with in Chapter Four (par.4.5.3).

Within the traditional literacy context, a certain view of the learner emerged. Educators viewed the learner as a blank sheet who needs to be taught how to read and write from scratch. The host of experiences the learner brought to school was ignored and the focus was on a few wilful emotions, which was schooled into submission for proper learning to occur. This is typical of a transmissive mode of instruction. Chapter Two (par. 2.5) aims to provide more clarity in this respect. All of the above was instrumental in designing a learning sequence that promoted passive absorption of content.

1.5.3 THE LEARNING SEQUENCE IN THE TRADITIONAL LITERACY PROGRAMME

In the traditional Literacy Programme, learners were arranged in different ways in order to master content in the three R's. The typical literacy lesson began with a whole class discussion on a particular theme. The discussion was tailored around

objectives (refer to par. 1.2.1) that were to be accomplished at the end of the lesson. The educator presented some information and asked learners questions based on it so that the objective relating to the content could be achieved. The educator displayed his expertise in an authoritarian sense. The interaction was limited between educator and learner. Interaction between and among learners to make sense of the content being presented was regarded as disruptive to the lesson and was discouraged. The whole class discussion was also used to set occupational work - tasks for revision and consolidation (Johnston & van der Merwe 1979:113). This preceded group work. The whole class discussion was, therefore, seen as a goal in itself rather than a means to learn (Killen 1996:25).

The next stage in the sequence began with group work. The class was divided into several groups according to ability. Christie (1992:152) refers to this type of grouping as “streaming”. She states that educators used various checklists and tests to sift and sort out the bright ones from the slow ones. A typical sorting plan in the traditional junior primary class for elementary maths and main language took the following groupings:

- Group A: a group of quick learning pupils
- Group B: a group of faster-learning average pupils
- Group C: a group of slower-learning average pupils
- Group D: a group of slow-learning pupils

Children were sorted out according to their ability to write neatly for the subject writing. The educator taught one group at a time while the rest of the class was busy with occupational work. The major difference with respect to instruction of each group was pacing. The high ability group was paced through materials at the quickest rate whereas the lowest group took the longest time to complete the required material (Antonacci & Colasacco in Ellsworth et al (ed) 1994:215).

Learners often sat in their ability groups to complete the occupational work. They were arranged in clusters of four and six. Downey and Kelly (1987:6-7) state that although most infant and junior schools arranged their classrooms in favour of clustered arrangements, very little collaboration between learners were encouraged. This occurred because of educators rewarding learners according to their individual efforts. Group efforts and teamwork were rarely encouraged, as they did not meet the demands of a content-based assessment strategy.

Some activities in the three R's also used sexist groupings. Christie (1992:158) maintains that this occurs when boys were given "heavy work" (typical of their biological makeup). Girls were given more domestic roles like cleaning, sweeping and dusting. When learners were restricted to these types of roles frequently, it provided little scope for extending themselves beyond their biological definitions.

The exposition above has serious implications for AL in the Literacy Learning Programme. It is obvious that the sequence was designed to deliberately view the

learner as being deficient in constructing her own knowledge to make sense of her lifeworld. The learning sequence would have to be re-examined in order to allow the learner the opportunity to shape reality according to her experiences. The educator has to find ways to support this endeavour. Chapter Five is an attempt in this direction.

1.6 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The impetus to the research “active learning in the Literacy Learning Programme of the Foundation Phase in Curriculum 2005” is derived from the researcher’s experience as a junior primary educator for thirteen years. The researcher has also been appointed by the Department of Education as a district facilitator for the new curriculum. As such the researcher is required amongst other duties, to hold general advocacy programmes for Curriculum 2005, to form support committees to help educators to design learner-centred programmes and assist in promoting strategies for ALP.

The traditional Literacy Programme has to be readjusted as it fails to meet the challenges of a learner-centred curriculum. It presents a narrow view of literacy which is perceived as a discrete set of isolated skills that is defined in the daily reading and writing lessons in ability groups. The learner, working individually to complete worksheets, is incompatible to a collaborative perspective of learning that is highly favoured by OBE. Given the above situation it is obvious that there is very

little scope for the learner to apply knowledge, experiment, invent, hypothesise and predict events within a context that she finds meaningful. There has to be new focus on what the learner does, how these actions stimulates her thinking processes and the type of context and sequence of learning experiences needed to help her to gain ownership of the learning process.

1.7 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is clear from the previous paragraphs that Curriculum 2005 requires educators to remodel an outdated manner of teaching in the Literacy Learning Programme. This means embracing the paradigm shift also known as a “shift in orientation” (Van der Horst & MacDonald 1997:6). From the researcher’s experience of retraining Foundation Phase educators since 1997, it is evident that the “shift in orientation” is proving to be a difficult one. The **main problem** is that educators are unable to make a shift in orientation to the teaching of Literacy for ALP in Curriculum 2005. It is, therefore, essential to find a model of AL, which will provide guidance on teaching for ALP within the Literacy Learning Programme.

The following are the some of the **subproblems** that also need to be addressed.

- Educators are under the misconception that Curriculum 2005 means complete abolishment of traditional transmissive approaches. They need guidance on how

to remodel the transmissive approach to plan literacy learning experiences that encourage ALP.

- References made to the learner from par. 1.1 to 1.2.4 all stems from a constructivist philosophy. Educators in the Foundation Phase lack sufficient knowledge in the latter. This inhibits both the planning and implementation of outcomes for AL in the Literacy Learning Programme. More information needs to be provided on constructivist approaches to learning and its relation to ALP.
- Active learning has been partially explained in the COs (see par.1.2.3, 1.2.4 and 1.11.3) but needs to be clarified further for effective implementation. There is a dire need to define AL and penetrate deeper into ALP in terms of what learners do in this context.
- The role of the educator goes beyond a mere transmitter of knowledge (see par.1.2.4). More information needs to be provided on the different roles the educator will play in order to actualise AL in the Literacy Learning Programme.
- Finally educators require a model of AL within the Literacy Learning Programme using the relevant outcomes.

1.8 RESEARCH AIMS

- To examine learning theories within the transmissive and constructivist approaches and relate them to ALP in the Foundation Phase of Curriculum 2005.
- To define Active Learning.
- To examine ALP in the above context.
- To investigate different roles the educator plays in order to promote AL.
- To use the LLC learning area as a model to examine AL.
- To use action research in order to find a model of AL which will provide guidance on the teaching for ALP in the LLC learning area of the Literacy Learning Programme.

1.9 METHODS OF RESEARCH

1.9.1 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In a qualitative research approach such as this research, literature review is undertaken as suggested by Schumacher and McMillan (1993:140). A continuing literature review will be appropriate for the discovery orientation and inductive approach of this research. Relevant source materials comprising published books, research reports, theses, and articles from magazines, periodicals and journals are reviewed.

1.9.2 ACTION RESEARCH IN QUALITATIVE MODE

It has been decided to undertake a qualitative mode of research, which fits with the approach, and methods of Action Research. The choice has been made considering the basic characteristics of the qualitative mode of inquiry as pointed out by De Vos (in De Vos (ed) 1998:45). These characteristics are summarised by Creswell (in De Vos) as follows: “For the qualitative researcher, the only reality is that constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation. ...the researcher, the individuals being investigated and the reader or audience interpreting the study.” Creswell further states that “qualitative researchers interact with those they study, whether this interaction assumes the form of living with or observing informants over a period of time, or actual collaboration”.

As the researcher is concerned with a specific problem in a local situation – the classroom, action research will be the most appropriate method of gathering information. Best and Kahn (1989:21) view this method as a means to improve classroom practice, and at the same time, to improve the school practice as a whole.

Cohen and Manion (1989:220) state that action research occurs when an educator feels the need for some kind of change or improvement in the teaching, learning or organisation of his classroom. It bridges the gap between practice and research so that the educator becomes an educator -researcher.

Best and Kahn (1989:21) maintain that although action research does not aim to generalise its findings, it can nevertheless be used to shape habits of thinking, promote harmonious relationship with peers and instil a professional spirit. Bearing this in mind, the researcher formed a research team of five participants. They are all grade two educators in the Durban district of KwaZulu-Natal. Each participant has learners from three different ethnic groups, viz., Indians, Coloureds and Blacks. The number of learners per class ranges from forty-six to fifty. The participants in the research will test out ideas and reflect critically on their actions. Diaries, tape recordings, video recordings, photographs and document analysis will be used to collect data on the research problem (see Chapter Five par. 5.5).

The research will be conducted using the cyclical model as proposed by Zuber-Skerritt. According to Zuber-Skerritt (1992:11) the process of action research is a spiral of cycles of action and research consisting of four major moments:

- plan
- act
- observe
- reflect

These moments will be elaborated upon in Chapter Five (par. 5.2.)

1.10 PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH

The study will be undertaken with grade two learners in the Foundation Phase.

Chapter One

Introductory orientation

Chapter Two

Both the transmissive and the constructivist approaches will be examined. Views of proponents from these approaches will be presented and related to ALP.

Chapter Three

The role of the educator in the new Literacy Learning Programme will be examined in detail.

Chapter Four

An examination of the Literacy Learning Programme with special reference to the LLC learning area as a model of active learning.

Chapter Five

Description and analysis of the investigation using action research in order to find a model of AL which will provide guidance on the teaching for ALP in the LLC learning area of the Literacy Learning Programme.

1.11 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.11.1 OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION (OBE)

There are many definitions of outcomes-based education outside the South African context. For the purpose of this research it is necessary to look at the definition of South African scholars in an attempt to apply it to the Foundation Phase classroom. Van der Horst & McDonald (1997:7) provide a comprehensive definition that is extremely pertinent to this research. They state that OBE is a learner-centred and result-oriented approach. It requires educators and learners to focus on two things. Firstly, the focus is on the end results of the learning process. These end results are known, as outcomes of learning which learners need to demonstrate. Secondly, the focus is on the instructive and learning processes that support the learners in attaining the outcomes. Educators are required to work with the outcomes as a base to planning and designing learning experiences.

1.11.2 CURRICULUM 2005

Curriculum 2005 is the new education system of South Africa that aims at lifelong learning. Transformational OBE, which was defined earlier on in this chapter (par.

1.2.1), is the instrument by which this will be achieved (Department of Education 1997(b):38).

1.11.3 ACTIVE LEARNER PARTICIPATION (ALP)

For the purpose of this research the following definition is most appropriate and will be extended in Chapter Three (par. 3.2.3). The word “action” implies “doing”. The “doing” does not take place in isolation. When it is put into words, it transforms action into understanding and turns events into information that can be recalled and applied to various situations. It thus has a “thinking” aspect as well (Hohmann 1983:104). When there is ALP, learners are given an opportunity to investigate and explore, test hypotheses, discuss results and consider a variety of options (Fraser, Loubser & Van Rooy 1993:73). The learner has the opportunity to gain understanding by doing, and establish his own relationship with reality within the social context of peers and adults.

1.11.4 FOUNDATION PHASE

The Foundation Phase is part of Early Childhood Development (ECD). The White Paper on Education and Training (1995:33) defines ECD as “an umbrella term which is applied to the process by which children from birth to nine years grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially”. The goal of the curriculum at this phase is to develop the child and equip him /her with lifeskills to become a

balanced personality. The broader aim is to provide plenty of opportunities for children to develop their full potential as active, responsible and fulfilled citizens (Department of Education 1997(c):4). This phase includes grade R (reception year) to grade three. For the purpose of this research the focus will be on grades one to three. Chapter Five refers specifically to grade two learners.

1.11.5 GRADE TWO LEARNERS

These learners are in their second year of their formal schooling. They are generally between the ages six to eight (Sharma 1995:51-52).

1.11.6 TEACHER AND EDUCATOR

In the recent past the term “educator” is favoured as opposed to the term “teacher”. A teacher is viewed as one who imparts knowledge in a subject. His sole concern is the methodology to get the content across to learners. An educator, on the other hand, is more than a mere teacher of a subject. He demonstrates authority, trust, expertise and understanding. He is interested in the holistic development of the learner. There is a deliberate effort on his part to develop qualities that will enable the learner to reach responsible adulthood successfully (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1988:73).

1.12 SUMMARY

Curriculum 2005, the new education system in South Africa has adopted the outcomes-based approach to learning and teaching. This new system has brought about numerous changes in the way the educators and the learners are viewed. Educators have to transform their teaching from the traditional teacher-centred approach to one that is learner-centred. This entails taking on roles that extend beyond mere transmitters of knowledge. Chapter Three helps to clarify this.

Learners are now viewed as active and creative beings in the learning process. Their full participation is crucial to achieving the COs of Curriculum 2005. Chapter Three (par.3.4.3) provides details in this respect. One of the changes educators have to embrace is the transformation of literacy from the subjects of reading, writing and numeracy to one that is integrated to include a variety of ways in which the learner makes sense of the world. Chapter Four, which examines the LLC learning area as a model of AL, helps to clarify this.

In the Foundation Phase educators have to design Literacy Programmes to encourage AL. In order to fulfil the outcomes of the new curriculum this means going beyond the traditional ability grouping used in junior primary classes and developing a model of AL that will provide guidance on ALP. Chapter Five, using the action research model, helps to provide practical ideas in this regard.

Chapter Two will examine the transmissive and the constructivist learning theories in order to contextualise ALP. Revisiting the traditional transmissive approaches and examining the constructivist approaches will assist in this respect.

CHAPTER TWO

LEARNING THEORIES THAT RELATE TO ACTIVE LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN THE LITERACY LEARNING PROGRAMME

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to gain perspective on the child as an active participant in the learning situation, it is imperative to understand the real child. Fogel and Melson (1998:27) see the real child as a complex network of feelings, thoughts and processes. This influences the way a child responds to his or her lifeworld.

When educators focus on behaviour and appearance to assess children's participation, the image of the true child remains a blur (Fogel & Melson 1998:27). There is, therefore, a need to be exposed to the work of developmental scientists and educational psychologists, in order to become sensitive to the inner state of the child. Such an examination will also enable Foundation Phase educators to become sensitive to the actions of the learner in an AL context in terms of the outcomes of the Literacy Learning Programme.

The present study attempts to develop the sensitivity to the actions of the learner by revisiting the traditional transmissive approaches. These approaches are related to ALP in order to provide guidance on how they can be remodelled to facilitate active learning experiences in the new Literacy Learning Programme.

The in-depth look at the constructivist approaches is an attempt to provide knowledge of a philosophy relatively new to most educators. It is essential to look at both cognitive and social constructivism and relate them to ALP in order to provide educators with some practical hints that are grounded in the learning theories from these perspectives. By approaching the discussion in this manner it is expected that the dilemma faced by the educators in Chapter One (par.1.7) will be resolved.

The structure of examining the learning theory and relating it to ALP is also an attempt to help educators with a framework for examining learning theories in the context of AL in the Literacy Learning Programme.

2.2 THE PASSIVE/ACTIVE DEBATE

Throughout this chapter, it will be evident that learner participation is examined from the way in which the child is viewed. Most theorists agree that the child comes to know her lifeworld. They disagree in the manner in which this occurs. Some view the child as a passive absorber of knowledge, whereas others see the child as an active constructor of knowledge. This has led to the active/passive debate (Shaffer 1996:43).

Theorists that view the child as a passive organism, found that learning takes place by proper organisation of stimuli in the environment. They contend that children play a minor role in shaping their own development. To these theorists the child is

malleable and literally at the mercy of adults (Hetherington & Parke 1986:3). Rogers and Freiberg (1994:9) use the metaphor of a “tourist” to describe these learners at school. They argue that these “tourists” move from one idea to the next without a sense of comprehension, commitment or involvement.

Those that focus on the child as an active being sharply disagree with the view that children can be moulded in a passive manner. They focus on the child as curious information seekers that are capable of shaping, controlling and directing the course of their own development. When children relate to adults, they do not passively conform to adult direction. Instead, they participate in a two-way process by modifying actions of people around them (Hetherington & Parke 1986:3). Rogers and Freiberg (1994:9) view active learners as “citizens” in the learning environment. The “citizens” are described as learners who take responsibility for their actions and become shareholders in their own learning. This view is extremely pertinent to the research. The model of active learning proposed in Chapter Five aims to achieve the latter as the final outcome of the learning experience in the Literacy Learning Programme.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the learner in a South African context, it is imperative to examine the Transmissive Approach, which formed the basis for teaching and learning in the traditional apartheid education. More importantly, though, it is crucial to gain a broader understanding of the Constructivist Approach, which promotes the learner as an active meaning-maker.

2.3 TRANSMISSIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES TO LEARNING

Although this research identifies with the Constructivist Approach to learning, it will also be necessary to examine the Transmissive Approach in order to gain perspective on where the South African educator is presently grounded.

2.3.1 THE TRANSMISSIVE APPROACH

This approach focuses on the transmission of knowledge from knower to learner. It emphasises the ways in which the responses people make are influenced by the stimuli that follows that response (Biehler & Snowman 1993: 373). Within this framework knowledge is viewed as a fixed body that can be acquired by drill and guided practice (Woolfolk 1995:278).

This has resulted in the learner adopting a passive stance. Her role is confined to a worker and a direction follower. At its worst, learning is merely an acquisition of facts, skills and concepts without much understanding. With regard to learner arrangement, it favours individualistic learning– see Chapter One (par. 1.5.3). Peer interaction is rarely encouraged. The educator, who is the primary source of knowledge, manages and supervises the learning experience (Woolfolk 1995:228).

The picture painted thus far is an antithesis of ALP. The researcher, however, is of the opinion that learning theories within this approach can accord learners varying degrees of opportunities for learner participation. This will be illustrated when examining learning theories within this approach – B.F. Skinner, Albert Bandura and The Information Processing Model. Examples of how the above theories can be used in a more learner-centred way will be examined after a brief description.

2.3.2 THE CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH

This approach views the learner as an active creator of knowledge. McDermott and Rakgokong (1998:33) define knowledge in this context as “the learner’s action upon an object”. It continually changes and is highly dependent on the child’s experiences. Von Glaserfeld (in Nagel 1996:5) sees this experience as a base for making sense of the world. The learner is acknowledged as an active thinker, a questioner, explainer, interpreter, generator and constructor of meaning. Subjective, personalised responses are highly valued. Educators in constructivist classrooms act as guides or facilitators to the learning process. They actualise prior knowledge to establish links and connections with the known and familiar before embarking upon the introduction of new materials. Chapter Five (par. 5.6.2.2) provides a practical way in which the prior knowledge can be used to familiarise the learner with the topic of *Advertisements* (Woolfolk 1995:278).

The Constructivist Approach to learning is divided into two categories, viz, the cognitive and socially constructed. The cognitive view of learning emphasises insights, thinking, and meaningful organisation of information on an individual level. The learner actively creates meaning and organises his field of operation (Mwamwenda 1989:146). The role of other participants, like peers, is not deemed necessary to the construction process (Woolfolk 1995:278). The learning theories of John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner will be discussed to illustrate the cognitive view.

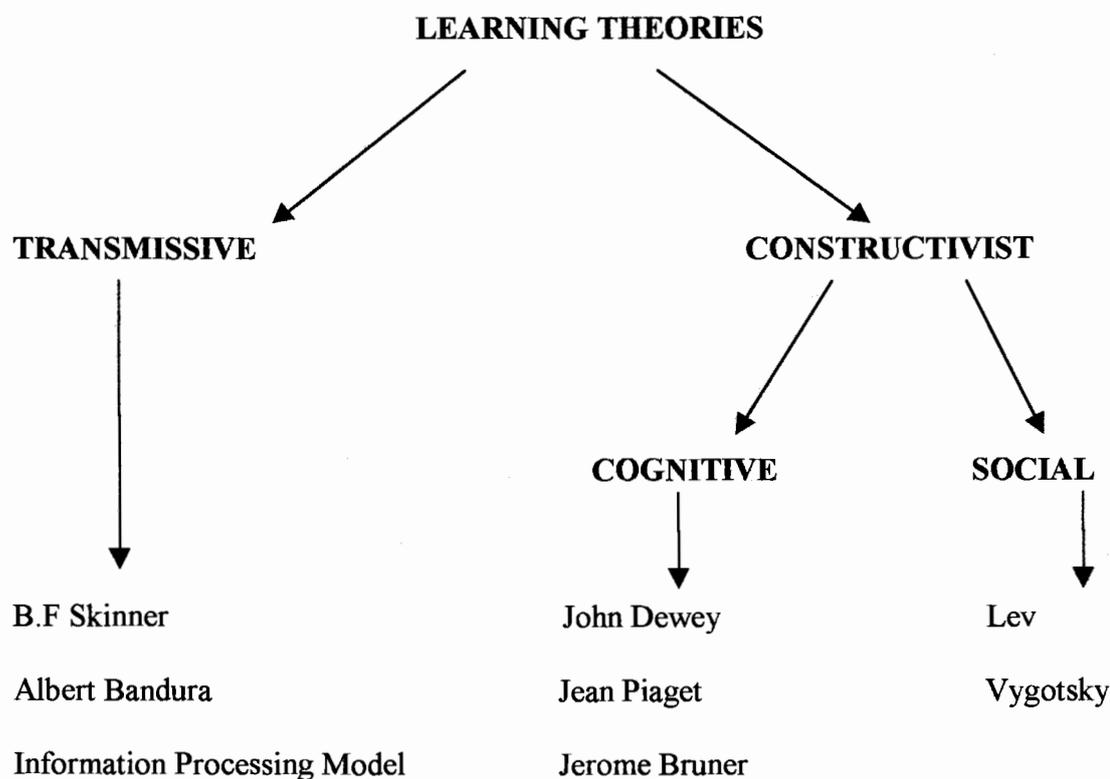
Social Constructivism builds on the idea of the learner as an active constructor of meaning. Psychologists have increasingly recognised that children do not do things in isolation. Social contexts, like attitudes and emotions, have a great impact on individual learning. Collaboration with peers and other adults allows the child to communicate and learn in a socially mediated way (Merry 1998:95). One of the key aspects of AL is collaborative behaviour (see Chapter Three - par. 3.2.1). The present investigation studies the work of Lev Vygotsky to illustrate the collaborative role of the learner (par. 2.6.4).

2.4 STRUCTURE OF THE DISCUSSION ON LEARNING THEORIES

The researcher has structured the learning theories in a diagram in order to facilitate a comprehensive discussion on ALP. The learning theories of B.F. Skinner, Albert Bandura and The Information Processing Model will be discussed as examples of the

Transmissive Approach. The Constructivist Approach will be divided into cognitive and social constructivism. The learning theories of John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner will feature in the discussion of cognitive constructivism. The views of Lev Vygotsky will be used as an example of social constructivism. The diagram that follows best clarifies the discussion.

FIGURE. 2:1 - STRUCTURE OF THE LEARNING THEORIES



Each of the proponents learning theory will be related to ALP in the Foundation Phase of Curriculum 2005. Strategies adopted by the researcher using the learning theories to encourage ALP will feature where relevant.

2.5. LEARNING THEORIES WITHIN THE TRANSMISSIVE APPROACH

The researcher has chosen to focus on the learning theories typical of the traditional junior primary class, as it is suspected that they can be modified to accord learners' varying degrees of responsibility to become active learners. B.F. Skinner, Albert Bandura and The Information Processing Model will demonstrate this as the investigation proceeds with the discussion of learning theories and its relation to ALP.

2.5.1 B.F. SKINNER

Skinner's theory of learning is based on Behaviourism. This is a typical example of science being applied to human behaviour. The focus is on experience, overt behaviour, action and reaction. The basic assumption is that people's behaviour is shaped, moulded and maintained by forces outside themselves (Hamachek 1990:17).

Departing from this base, Skinner argues that a human being is never free with personal dignity. Children, he argues, are always subjected to the controlling influences of the environment in which they find themselves. He argues that human behaviour can be understood in terms of an objective world by focusing on actions rather than feelings (Hamachek 1990:18).

Within this framework he developed the theory of Operant Conditioning – also known as Instrumental Conditioning. Skinner (1957:203-205) sees Operant Conditioning as a method of controlling the learning behaviour by responding to tiny parts of that behaviour. It proceeds by the experimenter observing the spontaneous behaviour. If he wants behaviour to be repeated it is positively reinforced by a stimulus that strengthens the behaviour. If he wants it to be negatively reinforced, a stimulus is withdrawn to strengthen a behaviour (Smart & Smart 1982:10).

The whole idea of reinforcers, which has been defined as stimulus which increases the probability of a response, is extremely valuable when considering ALP. This will be examined in the discussion below.

- **RELATION TO ALP**

The main aim of traditional educational theory based on Behaviourism was to instil facts. This is because knowledge is viewed as consisting of factual information which is derived from experience. In most of the junior primary classes this meant that educators used the “talk and chalk” method with the entire class or an ability group (Fone in Mckay (ed) 1995:85).

In the past Skinner’s theory on learning had little to do with ALP. Within the framework of Curriculum 2005, however, it is imperative to look at some of his views with the aim of including the learner as an active participant.

In a literacy context Skinner's ideas can be used to change the behaviour of learners. Educators can now work with learners to set behavioural goals, determine appropriate reinforcers, select procedures to change behaviour, implement procedures and monitor results (McCown, Driscoll & Roop 1996:202). Homme and Tosti (in Biehler and Snowman 1993:363) suggest the use of reinforcement menus to ensure that learners take ownership of class or school rules. In the Foundation Phase learners can be asked to brainstorm the rewards they should receive if they comply with the rules which were previously negotiated by them. A composite class menu can be drawn up from the responses received by learners. Chapter Five (par. 5.6.2.1) is designed to allow learners to involve themselves in the manner described above.

Once learners are involved in this type of decision-making, self-reinforcement is encouraged. Wray and Medwell (1993:85) view this type of learning as a booster to the learner's self-image. This occurs because performance to earn a reward is encouraged by demands set by the learners themselves. Ownership of learning now falls in the hands of the learner.

Timely feedback, as proposed by Skinner, is invaluable in the Foundation Phase. Learners are at an elementary level and are often unsure of themselves when a task is complex. The educator can still intervene by explanations, cues, prompts, praise and questioning (Biehler & Snowman 1993:356-357). Since this research is concerned with collaboration of learners as a crucial aspect of AL (see Chapter Four par. 4.4.3), providing of feedback can also be designed to include learners' response to their own

work or that of their peers – see Chapter Three (par.3.4.7). Albert Bandura also favours this social aspect of learning.

2.5.2 ALBERT BANDURA

Albert Bandura is the acknowledged spokesman for the Social Learning Theory. He is regarded as a neo-behaviourist as he focuses on not only the definable behaviour but also internal acts and events (Lindgren & Suter 1985:231-232). Bandura (in Shaffer 1996:56) argues that operant conditioning cannot be applicable to human beings, as they are cognitive beings. As active information processors, human beings reflect on the relationship between how they behave and the consequences of their behaviour. Hence, they are influenced by what they believe will happen instead of the events they actually experience.

This view of human beings formed the basis for the Social Learning Theory. This theory is also referred to as imitation, modelling or observational learning (Biehler & Snowman 1993:346-352). Bandura (in Bandura & Walters 1963:711-712) defines social learning as learning that occurs in a social context that is highly dependent on the rapport between the learner and the model. He clarifies modelling as a situation where the learner copies the behaviour of people around her. Mwamwenda (1989:144-145) states that once a child does this she makes inferences from it and later attends to it in her own behaviour.

Bandura's analysis of the way social learning takes place indicates interplay of cognition and observation within the framework of four processes. Firstly, *attention* is focused on the model's action. Secondly, the observation is committed to *memory* with the view to imitate it at a later stage. Thirdly, the new response patterns that are to be used are integrated from *motor acts*. Finally, the *motivation* determines the choice of action pattern that is to be used. Thus, the focus is on the person who actively observes, remembers, judges and responds (Smart & Smart 1982:12).

Although Bandura has been criticised for being vague on how various environmental contexts interact with the individual's cognitive structure to promote learning, his contributions on social learning are, however, extremely pertinent to initiating ALP at an elementary level.

- **RELATION TO ALP**

Learners in the Foundation Phase are between the ages six to nine years. At this age they are highly dependent on the educator to take them to the task of becoming acquainted with new learning experiences. This will be made explicit when the researcher examines the role of the educator as a model in Chapter Three (par.3.4.6). In an AL context this investigation looks at working modes that initially utilises modelling or observational learning as proposed by Bandura.

The first mode is the ‘community mode’. This is similar to the “community of enquiry” proposed by Lipman et al (in Merry 1998:115). This mode is extremely beneficial when introducing a new topic. The educator demonstrates the useful processes of working by using cues and prompts. Procedures such as listening to various points of view, sharing and justifying ideas are impressed upon the learners by the educators’ example (Wray & Medwell 1993:143). Learners then participate actively in discussions relating to the topic.

The next mode is the “fish bowl” mode. If the topic requires learners to work in a group the educator chooses one group of learners to model the roles that are required for successful completion of a task in a group. The rest of the learners stand around in a circle and observe the key role players. Everyone then comments on the roles they are about to play (Schmuck & Schmuck 1979:51).

The final mode is the “group mode” where each learner now takes on a role that was observed. This forms a platform for brainstorming ideas and making group decisions.

From the above modes it is evident that the observational learning can be used to familiarise the learner with thought processes required for completion of tasks. Working in the various modes can also help learners develop more confidence to work individually.

The learner's experience is enriched and this influences the way in which information is processed. In order to gain more clarity on the latter it will be imperative to examine the Information Processing Model.

2.5.3 THE INFORMATION PROCESSING MODEL

The Information Processing Model uses the computer metaphor to explain how details are absorbed from the outside world, how it is stored in memory and how it is actualised when required (Hamachek 1990:210).

The application of the Information Processing Model in the traditional school took the form of rote learning. Learners were required to reproduce information from memory with little understanding. Facts were stored as meaningless information making the formation of links and connections very difficult (Fone in Mckay (ed) 1995:82-83). In Curriculum 2005, however, the Information Processing Model can be used to actively engage learners to develop learning strategies that strengthens the storage of meaningful information as will be illustrated in the following paragraph.

- **RELATION TO ALP**

One of the critical outcomes aiming at personal development relates to the development of effective strategies for learning (Department of Education 1997 (a):16). A learning strategy is defined as “ideas for the accomplishment of a goal”

(Woolfolk 1995:271). In the Foundation Phase learners are beginning their scholastic careers. They need to learn how to learn. This is referred to as metacognition (McCown et al 1996:50). The researcher has modified the Information Processing Model to help learners to achieve this goal.

The “SPAC A WAC” strategy was developed by the researcher in the Literacy Learning Programme to encourage spelling and serves as a good example. This strategy is based on ideas of Nisbet and Shucksmith (in Edwards 1991:71). The acronym stands for the following words:

| | | |
|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| S study | A and | W write |
| P play | | A and |
| A and | | C check |
| C cover | | |

2.6 LEARNING THEORIES WITHIN THE CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH.

As mentioned earlier in par. 2.3.2 the learning theories within this approach are divided into cognitive and social constructivism. The aim of examining these learning theories is to deepen the insight of Foundation Phase educators on the constructivist philosophy and show them its application in an AL context.

The cognitive constructivists, viz, John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner all stress the active role the learner takes in her own learning. They contend that learners assimilate environmental events into their own cognitive structure and this results in an active system of knowing. In order to understand this active creation of knowledge it is imperative to examine each of the proponent's view on learning and understanding as an active process and relate this to ALP. The research first takes up John Dewey's views, as they are foundational to the other two proponents.

2.6.1 JOHN DEWEY

John Dewey is considered as one of the leading representatives of the theories of cognitive learning. He rejected the idea that learning was a series of connections between nerve impulses. The computer metaphor of the Information Processing Model is also rejected, as it does not consider the role of feelings and emotions of learners. Dewey discovered that a child's learning is inclusive of intellectual, social, and emotional events based on real-life experiences. The learner is viewed as an active constructor of meaning (Nagel 1996:3).

In Dewey's model of education, life and society are closely linked. He viewed the school as a microcosm of society. The function of the school is to prepare learners as future citizens and workers (Myers & Myers in Van der Horst & McDonald 1997:128). He proposes that schools should be a testing ground for *reflective* thought. Reflection is identified as one of the important actions associated with ALP

(see Chapter Three par.3.2.3). The learner must be given the opportunity to exercise her own choices and then devise a plan of action. This type of active involvement allows the learner to discriminate between conditions that bring about success and those that result in failure. She is provided with a platform to test her ideas (Hamachek 1990:222-223). Within the context of this research the real-life situations that relate to the learner's experience is the platform to exercise her thinking.

Dewey describes thinking as a state that is characterised by perplexity, doubt and mental difficulty. He describes this as the first step in problem solving. This is followed by locating the source of the problem and defining it. After a brainstorming session various hypotheses are suggested and finally tested (Klausmeier 1971:302). The value of Dewey's model for this study is the thinking aspect. It is an important component of AL. It is described in detail in Chapter Four (par. 4.4.2) within the context of the Literacy Learning Programme. It is now proposed to consider the broad application of Dewey's ideas to ALP.

- **RELATION TO ALP**

Dewey's ideas on thinking and problem solving are pertinent to ALP as it directly relates to CO 2 of Curriculum 2005 (see Chapter One – par.1.2.3). Educators are urged to view problem solving as a teaching strategy that can filter through every aspect of Curriculum 2005 (Van der Horst & McDonald 1997:138).

The major aim of teaching problem solving is to help learners to develop and use strategies to solve problems. In the Foundation Phase learners often lack problem solving skills. This results in poor learner participation (McDermott & Rakgokong 1998:13). Dewey's steps in problem solving can be used as a plan to guide learners in their thinking. Learners must be encouraged to identify, define and represent a problem. They should also be provided with the opportunity to try out and evaluate their solutions (McCown et al 1996:232-233). Within the context of this research this may mean arranging learners in large groups, small groups and individually to make meaning. Problem solving and decision-making also underpins the learning theory of Jean Piaget. Crucial to these aspects is the four stages of cognitive development as identified by Piaget.

2.6.2 JEAN PIAGET

Jean Piaget contributed tremendously to the understanding of children's thought. He maintains that individuals are active biological beings who continuously interact with their environment. This interaction provides knowledge about external objects, the self and self/object relationships (Piaget 1974:25-30). As a constructivist, he argues that children construct themselves and the world around them. Unlike inanimate objects, like cameras, they do not passively record what they perceive. There is active transforming and organising of data into the cognitive structure (Klausmeier 1971:139).

The four stages of cognitive development as defined by Piaget have become virtually legendary in educational theory and practice. They are defined so as to guarantee an order of succession. The four stages are the **sensorimotor (birth to two years)**, **preoperational (two to seven years)**, the **concrete operational (seven to eleven years)** and the **formal operational stage (eleven to adult)** (Shaffer 1996:248). In the Foundation Phase we are dealing with learners in a transitional period between the preoperational and the concrete operational stages. These two stages will be discussed in detail.

The preoperational stage (two to seven years)

Children at this stage develop concepts that are incomplete. These concepts are referred to as precepts. Language continues to undergo rapid growth and speech is used more often to express concept knowledge (Charlesworth & Lind 1990:8). Children do, however, find difficulty in solving problems that require consideration of various facets of a situation. Empathy and consideration of others' point of view is also regarded as problematic, as children are still very egocentric at this stage (Klausmeier 1971:143). This view has been recently challenged. Research has shown that children are less egocentric when thinking about familiar issues. This indicates that Piaget had overlooked children's early capacity for logical reasoning (Shaffer 1996:281).

The concrete operational stage (seven to eleven)

At this stage the learner can think about real, concrete things in a systematic way. He orders, counts, classifies and thinks in terms of cause and effect. The development of a new concept of permanence takes place. The learner assimilates the concept of conservation when she realises that the amount, weight, volume and number remains the same even though the outward appearance of an object changes (Smart & Smart 1982:51). At this stage it is evident that learners come to rely more on cognitive operations than appearances. By careful observation of others' behaviour, learners become more proficient at inferring motives and the circumstances in which it takes place (Shaffer 1996:63).

The development of thought

It is imperative to examine Piaget's views on the development of thought as we are dealing with ALP. McDermott and Rakgokong (1998:34) state that Piaget's reference to the term "operations" although referring to actions must not be perceived as a mere physical act. These actions are carried out in the mind and organised into a system. This point will become more apparent when we examine the definition of AL in Chapter Three (par. 3.2.1). Piaget elaborated on the system of mental actions when he examined the basic tendencies in thinking.

The first tendency is referred to as *organisation*. This requires the learner to arrange information and images into the mental systems. It is also referred to as schemes, which serve as building blocks of thinking. *Adaptation* is the second tendency and it refers to how learners adapt to their environment. It is inclusive of two processes, viz., assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the linking of new information to existing schemes. Accommodation occurs when existing schemes are altered or new ones are created.

Piaget states that all of the above tendencies can be viewed as a type of balancing act. There is a search for a mental balance between the cognitive structure and the information coming from the environment. He states that once the search is stabilised a process of equilibrium occurs (Woolfolk 1995:30-31).

- **RELATION TO ALP**

Piaget's theory assists educators in becoming familiar with how learners organise and synthesise ideas. This provides insight into planning learning experiences in the Literacy Learning Programme according to the developmental stage of the learner. In the early Foundation Phase this means planning enough group work for social interaction. This type of learner arrangement has plenty of scope for group and self-assessment (Biehler & Snowman 1993:72). Learners have the chance to be self-directed in the goals they want to achieve as a group.

Piaget's ideas on the accommodation and assimilation of knowledge are very useful when considering how learners develop and make sense of their environment (Beetlestone 1998:13). By embarking on many hands-on classroom activities learners are given the opportunity to be active learners where they can explore, manipulate, question and solve problems. Charlesworth and Lind (1990:53) stress that a hands-on science programme allows learners to engage in the type of discovery mentioned above. During the science experiences learners use the thinking skills of science to match, describe, discriminate, sequence and classify objects. Once the learner develops basic reading and writing skills they can apply their knowledge to support their experimentation in science by reading background material and recording their observations. Hence, the development of literacy takes place in an integrated manner.

Piaget's theory on the development of thought is extremely useful when planning problem-solving activities in the Literacy Learning Programme. In order to encourage learners to develop logical, analytical thinking, educators can use mind twisters, brainteasers and riddles. Open-ended questions can also be used effectively to stimulate thought during class discussion (Woolfolk 1995:39).

2.6.3 JEROME BRUNER

Jerome Bruner, like Piaget, has developed a theory of cognitive development. He is concerned with the way learners make sense of their world. He stresses the manner

in which meaning is ascribed to language and thought. He states that the acquisition of knowledge and understanding is based on three learning modes (Beetlestone 1998:13). They have been described as the enactive, iconic and symbolic modes. This is crucial to our research as they relate very well to the key actions associated with AL – *experience, interaction, reflecting* and *communication*. These actions will be examined closely in Chapter Three (par. 3.2.3).

The enactive mode refers to actions or events that are represented through motor responses. In the iconic mode the events are relatively independent of action. The mental images or spatial schema is of importance. The symbolic mode is abstractions that permit complex problem solving. Language and words are important (Lindgren & Suter 1985:51).

Bruner's research on thinking emphasised the importance of understanding the structure of the subject being studied. He is opposed to the idea of memorisation of names, dates, and places as isolated bits of information. Rather, he suggests that learners should be able to discover what they need to know. This stresses the need for AL as a basis for true understanding (Biehler & Snowman 1993:425).

He argues that the three modes the enactive, the iconic and the symbolic, are not only a means of representing experiences internally but they also operate in one's environment. Hence, Bruner is also mindful of the cultural context in which learning takes place. He states that the interaction between the individual and the social

environment accounts for the wide difference in knowledge and understanding. This has led Bruner to criticise Piaget's idea of "readiness" of learners for successive stages. He argues that the three learning modes of representation operate at the same time. If the learner is provided with an appropriate approach to learning, "any learner can learn anything at any time" (Beetlestone 1998:14).

- **RELATION TO ALP**

The three learning modes formulated by Bruner are important to consider when planning learning experiences for Foundation Phase learners. In order to stimulate ALP, educators must allow learners to use concrete objects to facilitate explanations. Wherever possible, the senses can be drawn into explanations of concept, relationships and cause and effect. This will assist in facilitating learners' understanding of more complex and abstract ideas.

The learning modes also help educators in sequencing instruction and moving learners from the known to the unknown in a literacy context. Learners can begin a new topic by physical manipulation of objects related to the topic (enactive mode). The distinctive features of an object can be elaborated upon in the iconic mode. In the Foundation Phase role playing and drawings can develop this. This can be followed by a problem-solving activity, which is supported by some concrete examples. The latter is advisable as Foundation Phase learners are still on the road to abstractions (Mwamwenda 1989:75-76).

Bruner (in Woolfolk 1995:317) suggests the use of systematic guessing to nurture intuitive thinking which is basal to inductive reasoning. In the Foundation Phase this can be effectively used to develop literacy in all learning programmes and encourage ALP. During class or group discussions, learners can be encouraged to generate new ideas by using guesswork. This type of activity assists in showing learners that there can be various responses to a problem. It also provides a platform for prediction. The social setting enhances the chances of gaining a variety of perspectives on a problem. Hence, the scope for learners to work in large and small groups. The social dimension is regarded as crucial to the AL process and it will be examined by focusing on the learning theory of Lev Vygotsky.

2.6.4 LEV VYGOTSKY

In the past decade, the Western view of early literacy development has given greater importance to the social and functional perspective of learning. This perspective emphasises the claim that most of what a person knows about language is learned through use of it in the presence of others. Learning is seen as a result of internalisation of social interaction (Dixon-Krauss 1995:45).

Vygotsky (1962:27-40) stressed that the social environment the learner is subjected to is crucial to his cognitive development. He claims that all the capabilities that the learner assimilates actually appear twice. First, it occurs among people in the child's environment and then within the child's mind. Vygotsky's ideas are consistent with

social constructivism. Children are viewed as curious explorers who actively seek discovery of new principles. This discovery does not, however, occur by the child on his own. Vygotsky developed the important concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), to explain the actual and the potential development of the child. The actual development is determined by what the child can do on his own. The potential development refers to what the child is able to do with the assistance of an adult or more capable peer (McCown et al 1996:44).

One of the implications of Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development is that learning and understanding develops in an environment that promotes interaction and conversation. Learners need to work with problems within their zone of proximal development and they need the support provided by the educator and their peers. This support is referred to as "scaffolding" (Woolfolk 1995:49). The four stages proposed in the model of AL in Chapter Five (par. 5.8) attempts to allow the learner to receive support in the manner proposed by Vygotsky.

Vygotsky also elaborated on the relationship between language and thought. He sees language as an important tool for cognitive development. He states that language and thought, although separated initially, merge after the child has been exposed to communicating in a social context.

Within this context, he also commented on the role of audible self-talk. He regards this as being very important as it guides the child's thinking and actions. This is

evident in Chapter Five (par. 5.6.3.4). As the child matures these verbalisations become silent inner speech (Woolfolk 1995:47-48).

- **RELATION TO ALP**

The Vygotskyian perspective is extremely helpful when understanding how learners make sense of the world around them. By focusing on the collaborative role of learners, Vygotsky's theory directly relates to the research topic. In the Foundation Phase learners have not yet reached a mature level of independent internalised thought. They can benefit from activities that encourage a high level of social interaction and peer collaboration. This is best explained by using an example of a study conducted in the Foundation Phase.

Dixon-Krause (1995:47-63) used Vygotsky's ideas on the concept of the zone of proximal development to develop reading, writing and abstract thinking among learners from grade one and grade two. The learners were paired to create a multi-grade class. During the research the educator acted as a scaffold by providing intense support at the beginning and gradually reducing support as the learners became au fait with the relevant procedures. Grade two learners also acted as scaffolds to grade one learners. She found that partner reading and writing activity helped to improve learners word recognition, writing and higher level thought processes involved in reading.

Vygotsky's theory implies that the educator's task now, goes beyond the mere arrangement of external stimuli for self-discovery. The learners must be guided in their observations by demonstrations and explanations. There must be adequate opportunities for learners to work co-operatively with their peers (Woolfolk 1995:50). The research team was sensitive to these ideas when the programme for AL was planned (see Chapter Five par. 5.6.1)

2.7 CONCLUSION

In Outcomes-Based Education, a philosophy adopted by Curriculum 2005, learners are regarded as active participants in the teaching-learning process. AL focuses on a learner-centred approach. This indicates that learners characteristics and levels of competence must be taken into account when planning and implementing learning experiences in literacy (Van der Horst & MacDonald 1997:213).

The paradigm described in the foregoing sections is quite a challenge to educators in the Foundation Phase. It was, therefore, necessary to revisit the traditional Transmissive Approach to build on favourable aspects that promote ALP. The discussion of the learning theories of B.F Skinner, Albert Bandura and the Information Processing Model helped to focus on aspects that can be used in a learner-centred way.

Educators are also faced with broad COs (see Chapter One par.1.2.3) and specific outcomes (see Chapter Four par. 4.3.2). Merely revisiting the Transmissive Approach cannot develop these outcomes. We, therefore, examined cognitive and social constructivism. The discussion of learning theories by John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Jerome Bruner and Lev Vygotsky was an attempt to help Foundation Phase educators in understanding the paradigm shift from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred one. More importantly, though, it helps in broadening the understanding of the relatively new philosophy of constructivism and what it means for ALP.

The overall aim in this chapter was to examine learning theories that are relevant to ALP. All attempts to do this, however, should not be viewed as a “medicine cabinet” approach (Bower and Hilgard in Clarizio, Craig & Mehrens 1987:59). Educators should not expect to take a psychological principle and apply it to an educational “sore spot”. Effective application will require greater knowledge, good judgment and experience. Educators need to probe the different learning theories in order to find useful starting points for exploration of learning as an active experience. The structure that was provided in this chapter, viz., study of the learning theory and relation to AL is an attempt in this direction and can be used by educators when examining the relevance of learning theories for ALP.

Chapter Three will define the term AL and ALP with a view to contextualising it within the Literacy Learning Programme in the Foundation Phase. A comprehensive discussion on the role of the educator will follow.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR IN PROMOTING ACTIVE LEARNING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Two AL was contextualised within the philosophical framework of constructivism without elaborating on the concept itself. This chapter looks at the concept in order to foster greater understanding of what it entails. Active learner participation, a related concept, is examined in terms of the actions learners engage in within an AL context.

The researcher views the understanding of both AL and ALP as the first role of the educator – the role of developing expertise. A comprehensive discussion on the developmental milestones of learners, characteristics of active learners and the relationship between the learner and educator in an AL context is aimed at equipping the educator with knowledge to develop expertise in AL.

In the new Literacy Learning Programme the role of the educator moves beyond the authority of transmitting knowledge. The researcher will focus on the different roles the educator will play in order to help Foundation Phase educators to familiarise themselves with the role demands in an AL context. Although the educator plays many roles in order to guide and support the learner, this study will focus on four of

them, viz, the *facilitator*, the *expert*, the *model*, and the *assessor*. These roles have been specifically chosen as they relate very well to Foundation Phase learners.

The role that the educator plays is supported by the teaching strategy he uses. The last part of this chapter examines the teaching strategies that educators can use to promote AL.

3.2 UNDERSTANDING ACTIVE LEARNING

As a district facilitator for the new curriculum, the researcher found that most Foundation Phase educators lack the knowledge of AL. Many viewed it as lessons where learners are subjected to a host of activities. Very little reference was made to the thought processes and the context in which the concept operated – see Chapter One (par. 1.7). Bearing this in mind, the researcher views the first role of the educator as one where he develops expertise in understanding AL and subsequent roles attached to it in the Literacy Learning Programme.

The researcher, therefore, begins by looking at the definition of AL. This is followed by the identification of the key aspects that govern the concept. This is used as a base to understand ALP. Skills that are normally associated with the key aspects are explained in order to provide educators with identification of processes associated with AL.

3.2.1 DEFINITIONS OF ACTIVE LEARNING

The term active learning has been broadly defined by Brandes & Ginnis (1996:1-12) as a term that is equated to participatory learning using a learner-centred approach. The scholars are partial to the term learner-centred, as they found it to be more graphic in describing a learning system that has the learner as a focal point. In this type of learning the ownership of learning is with the learners. They are responsible for choosing and participating in the planning of the curriculum. Inquiry based and discovery learning are highly valued. The educator acts as a facilitator and a resource person in this context.

Colton (1995:113) views AL as learning by doing. She also sees this type of learning as an important part of “learner-centred, work-based, competency-based and experiential learning.” Colton states that although these types of learning contexts stress the need for practical activities it should always aim at involving learners’ mental activity. When this occurs, it is viewed as a process that enhances the long-term memory of learners as they claim a personal stake in their learning and thereby develop personal ownership of new knowledge.

The personal dimension of AL is also emphasised by McCown et al (1996:390). Their view is consistent with the constructivist philosophy that learners construct meaning through their interaction with the environment. Hence, AL is defined as “a

general term for learning that occurs when the learner is mentally involved in a task.” They focus on the thinking dispositions of learners in order to promote AL.

The researcher identifies most with the definition proposed by Schwartz & Pollishuke (1990:6). They see the concept of AL as an integral part of creating a child-centred classroom in the elementary school. Like Colton, they contend that AL is learning by doing. They go further by stating that it also includes experiencing and interacting with people and with varied materials. This presents another view that stresses active learning as both mental and physical actions. The authors state that learners are active participants in the learning process when they are *experiencing, interacting, reflecting* and *communicating*. Meaning and understanding is the driving force behind such actions. Learners come to knowledge by reflecting on the experiences and by sharing and relating to others around them in numerous ways.

Upon examining the foregoing definitions it is evident that three aspects are basal to AL. They are the doing, the thinking and collaboration aspects. They call for some sort of action on the part of the learner. These actions need to be clarified in order to identify ALP and deepen the understanding of the three key aspects.

3.2.2 EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF ACTION

The idea of action relates to the process of coming to know the world. From a constructivist perspective, discussed in detail in Chapter Two (par. 2.3.2), the way in

which we come to know the world is not directly through our senses, but mainly through our material and/or mental actions. This reminds one of the definitions by Colton, and Schwartz and Pollishuke earlier on. The word “action” refers to “all activities by which we bring about a change in the world around us or by which we change our own situation in relation to the world.” It is a type of activity that brings about change in the knower - known relationship (Sinclair in Murphy & Moon (ed) 1998:55). It is crucial that the educator understands the relationship in terms of his learners’ participation in the lifeworld of the classroom. Notice how the ideas expressed above go beyond the narrow definition of AL presented by educators in par. 3.2.

The researcher will now look at an example in order to make sense of the knower – known relationship in the Foundation Phase. Within a problem-solving group a learner might try to, after thinking about the problem, convince her fellow members that her solution to the problem is the best one. She embarks upon various activities to put forth her personal version of knowledge – hypothesising, interacting, refuting, reflecting, representing. This construction may entail the use of the educator or a peer as resources to facilitate understanding. If she succeeds in presenting her personal version of the problem, then new knowledge is constructed from the changes she has induced in the knower – known relationship.

From the evidence at hand the inference seems to be that AL is not simply a case of getting the learner to participate in activity-based programmes and expecting her to

become an effective meaning maker. The foregoing scenario presents the learner as one who is deliberate in her effort to make meaning. It is this deliberation that defines ALP.

3.2.3 ACTIVE LEARNER PARTICIPATION (ALP)

ALP means that learners are challenged to think and present their meaning in different ways (Bentley & Watts 1994:46). In their effort to make meaning, they will be *experiencing, interacting, communicating* and *reflecting* (discussed in more detail in paragraph 4.4 with regard to the LLC learning area). These actions are the essence of ALP. They will broadly manifest themselves when learners are doing, thinking and collaborating with others to make sense of their lifeworld (see Chapter Four par.4.4). It may thus be concluded that ALP is a related concept to AL.

Since the constructivist view of the learner is still new to many educators in the Foundation Phase, it is important to look at some skills that are normally associated with the thinking and doing aspects of active learners. It can be used to “develop practices in which the child is the subject of the learning process and not its passive object” (Walker in Unterhalter, Walpe & Botha (ed) 1991:214). Once the educator sets the collaborative context, he can use these skills as guidelines to observe learners and evaluate his programme in terms of ALP.

Kitson and Merry's (in Merry 1998:45) table on inputs, processes and outputs can be adapted to help the educator to recognise the learner in the "thinking" (invisible – mental) and "doing" (visible – physical/practical) aspects of AL.

THINKING

Recognising
Remembering
Matching
Comparing
Finding/selecting
Sequencing
Categorising
Analysing
Synthesising
Transforming
Predicting/hypothesising
Applying
Inferencing/evaluating
Imaging

DOING

Moving/arranging
Completing
Highlighting
Connecting
Drawing
Constructing
Identifying
Answering/ asking questions
Telling
Acting
Writing

These skills have to be initially supported by a collaborative context where learners use educators and peers to construct meaning. The interpersonal skills of sharing, praising, caring, appreciating, respecting, encouraging, accepting and participating characterises the collaborative context (Abrami, Chambers, Poulsen, De Simone, D' Appollonia & Howden 1995:90). This can assist in localising the concept of *Tirisano* within the context of the classroom (see Chapter One par. 1.2.4).

The doing, the thinking and the collaborative aspects need to be clarified within the Literacy Learning Programme in order for educators to contextualise ALP in the

Foundation Phase of Curriculum 2005. Chapter Four is designed to accommodate this component of the study.

In order to foster a greater understanding of what learners are capable of in terms of AL, it is crucial for the educator to look at the developmental milestones normally associated with Foundation Phase learners. This will assist in planning programmes that are consistent with learners' growth and development. When this occurs learners feel competent to participate more effectively.

3.3 UNDERSTANDING THE LEARNER AS AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT

Foundation Phase learners are generally viewed as learners who use themselves and their own sub-cultures as points of reference in trying to understand their world. Bearing this in mind they, therefore, need to be gradually assisted to relate to wider learning contexts, to trust their own judgment and to depend less on the adults around them and more on their own capabilities. The developmental milestones and their implications for the educator are discussed in the section that follows in order to understand learners as active participants.

3.3.1 DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES OF LEARNERS IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

The Foundation Phase deals with learners between the ages six to nine. At this stage learners are extremely active in a physical sense. They enjoy activities that require manipulation of objects and movement. They have good control over their bodies and are highly confident about their skills (Biehler & Snowman 1993:108). Nagel (1996:4) contends that a programme sensitive to learners' physical needs can urge them to become natural inquirers. This means that any effort to design a learning programme must allow for stimulation of the mind through appropriate physical activities.

Learners at this stage are very eager to learn. They display a great deal of enthusiasm to find out the how, why and the where of events. (Biehler & Snowman 1993:112). Hamachek (1990:94) calls them "active explorers". They are bursting with energy to find out more about their environment. Sharma (1995:51-52) states that during the early elementary childhood, five to eight years, one learns best through active participation in concrete situations. The learner's curiosity motivates her to ask a series of questions. It is through questioning that she recognises things around her and feels the need to make sense of her surroundings. As the learner is given opportunities to explore her environment, she discovers that things and events exist independently of her. Through active mental participation the learner comes to terms with the fact that there are certain rules that she must abide by. She also learns that

her behaviour has consequences for which she must accept responsibility (Sharma 1995:52).

If educators are not sensitive to the above factors, they run the risk of imposing content that is difficult for learners to connect with. This prevents learners from adequately participating and ultimately affects their performance in the different learning programmes. The entire meaning-making process is placed in jeopardy. The promotion of AL requires the combination of physical and mental actions of the learners in order to help her to take ownership of the learning process. Educators must ensure that there is an adequate balance between the combinations. They must allow the learner adequate opportunities to *experience, communicate, interact* and *reflect*.

The collaborative aspect of AL is best understood by examining the social development of the Foundation Phase learner. As the learner leaves the Reception Year class, she becomes less egocentric and more group oriented. This assists her in assimilating a new way of life through sharing experiences and exchanging ideas (Duff 1993:13). Social interactions with the peers are the cornerstone of the collaborative aspect of AL. Learners must be given the chance to regulate and control their behaviour, respect differing views, conform to group goals and express emotions in a socially acceptable way (Prinsloo, Vorster & Sibaya 1996:120-121). Educators must take cognisance of the above and programmes must be designed to

facilitate group work that fosters cooperation. This is the basis of the co-operative learning teaching strategy explained in par.3.5.2.

From what has been discussed thus far the inference seems to be, that the Foundation Phase learner is developmentally an active person - physically, mentally and socially. Understanding the learner as an active participant also requires examination of specific characteristics that are associated with them.

3.3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF ACTIVE LEARNERS

The study of the characteristics of active learners is imperative, as this would assist the educator in building a profile of an active learner through the medium of his learning programmes. These characteristics can also be converted into a checklist that will enable educators to check if their programmes allow for ALP. This section discusses the characteristics and their implications for the educator.

The researcher has identified certain characteristics that are typical of active learners. These characteristics will be discussed under the following headings

- Ownership of learning
- Participation
- Problem solving and decision-making
- Organisation
- Assessment

- Active processing of information
- Motivation

- **Ownership**

Active learners start their own activities and take responsibility for their own learning (Bentley & Watts 1994:15). Brandes and Ginnis (1996:26) contend that this whole question of ownership is at the heart of a learner-centred approach. They provide a definition of ownership, which is pertinent to this research. Ownership is not viewed as just a moral or legal right to possession. They argue that it refers to the "motivation for care, maintenance and development of that which is owned." They provide us with a simple equation that can assist us in understanding the issue of ownership as one of the cornerstones of AL.

Possession + responsibility = ownership

The concepts of "possession" and "responsibility" need closer examination in order to understand application in the Foundation Phase. When a learner is confronted with new experiences in the Literacy Learning Programme, she needs time, with the assistance of the educator and/or peers, to meet these ideas in a variety of contexts. This provides plenty of opportunities to link the current experience to prior knowledge on the subject. Once this occurs the learner now recognises and accepts the purpose for learning. This type of "possession" motivates her to develop a unique

pathway, based on personal decision-making. The pathway takes the learner down the road of responsibility of discovering her own learning resources, mapping the direction towards new knowledge and facing the consequences of her choices (Rogers 1969:162).

In reading and writing this pathway to discovery begins when the learner becomes aware of the differences between what she reads and one of the messages of the text. The dissonance indicates that learners are monitoring their own reading and writing behaviour. Ownership by means of monitoring allows the learner to become an experimenter who is trying to fit the pieces of the literacy puzzle (Askew & Fountas 1998:129).

The challenge for Foundation Phase educators is to find ways to structure the learning experiences so that ownership is the final outcome. There has to be mechanisms in place to allow learners the opportunity to interact with a variety of texts to make meaning. Educators must design learning programmes that allow for gradual transition of ownership from adults and peers to the individual learner. Chapter Five is an attempt in this direction.

The combination of various strategies can help educators to develop ownership in their learners. Barclay and Breheny (1994:33-39) suggest the combining of the co-operative learning strategy, parental involvement and upper-grade buddies to assist learners to make valid choices about what they need and want to learn. Educators can

use the above combination or combinations of their own to allow learners to assume responsibility for constructing appropriate activities to enhance their own construction of knowledge.

- **Participation**

Active learners demand participation. Jones (1988:16) defines participation as ‘the power to shape events...’ Participation includes active involvement. Heck and Williams (1984:75) state that when learners are engaged in this way, it increases the learner’s opportunity to discover concepts and generalisations that they would have otherwise accepted from their educators.

Bird (1991:111) used the active thinking approach to mathematics with four and five year olds. Within this context she refers to participation as “children’s initiative”. She states that this initiative is displayed when the learners set the challenges for themselves. Once they do this they are able to help each other to meet these challenges by sharing their knowledge.

This indicates that the learning programmes designed for AL should allow learners the latitude to shape events. In other words, educators need to revise their preconceived ideas of what the learner is capable of. Once the educator accepts the learner’s participation as a means to make sense of her experience, he is able to

appreciate responses from the learner and help her to link what she knows to new concepts presented.

- **Problem solving and decision-making**

Problem solving is one of the COs that educators have to cater for. It also relates directly to the thinking aspect of AL. Bentley and Watts (1994:15) state that active learners take responsible decisions and seek to solve problems as they surface. McDermott and Rakgokong (1998:20), using a holistic approach to Mathematical Literacy in the Foundation Phase, state that the problem-solving process normally begins with heuristics. This is defined as the process of asking questions. With active learners these questions are normally self-generated. When learners use these types of questions they use mental images, diagrams, pictures and graphs to seek solutions. Educators must encourage the use of the above in order to help learners to verbalise their solutions.

McDermott and McDermott (1998:7) speaking from a technological perspective in the Foundation Phase, state that active learners are driven to find a solution. They are eager to shape the problem and solution to make it their own. In the process they take numerous decisions that hold them accountable to the learning outcome. This does not occur in isolation. The collaborative aspect of AL comes into play in order to assist in this direction. It caters for the development of viewing the problem from different perspectives. This means that learners must choose from a host of

alternatives. The solution chosen requires responsible behaviour. The educator can expose the learner to all of the above if he consistently uses group work as a platform for collaboration.

Learners are then given the responsibility for developing, presenting and assessing their ideas in a group context. The learners examine their existing perceptions and assess it to accommodate new knowledge. Educators need to teach learners some basic skills in order to guide them in their effort to find solutions. Some learners may use these guidelines, others create their own and some combine the basic guidelines with their own to form a third strategy. This is evident in the voting procedure used for a name of an advertisement in Chapter Five (par. 5.6.3.3). The idea is to promote the use of a strategy to facilitate understanding of the problem.

- **Organisation**

Given a task, active learners can organise themselves and fellow members in a group. Hence, they can produce results both individually and socially. They can analyse a task in order to determine areas that require individual participation and those that require group effort. They are able to make effective contributions to a group that was chosen by the educator (Bentley & Watts 1994:15).

Even a very young learner is capable of some organisational skill. This is best explained by looking at two examples as evidence of the above. A two-year

experiment carried out by Turner (in Schmuck & Schmuck 1979:119) in the late nineteen fifties showed that children, between the ages of four to six and a half years, are capable of taking the lead in organising classroom life. They were gradually able to display leadership in formulating their own rules and regulations. This indicates that young children are capable of systematic thought if they are given the opportunity. Tann (in Tann (ed) 1988:41) also discovered this when she carried out an experiment on topic work in a junior class. Learners themselves identified problems that emerged during separate group investigations. This resulted in organising themselves into a whole class unit to brainstorm ideas to circumvent the problems they experienced.

CO 3 relates to the skill of organising oneself. Evidence above informs us that Foundation Phase learners are capable of working systematically. In both the examples the educators trusted their learners as effective organisers. Educators need to look at learners as extremely capable beings that can create order if they are given the chance. In order to encourage the learner's organisational skills the educator can begin by using duty charts, instructional manuals and practical demonstrations. This will help learners to prioritise their actions. Positive feedback must be provided, as this will enhance the quality of their performance and the motivation to try again.

- **Assessment**

Active learners engage in both self and peer-assessment. When the learner is part of a group, the social interactions she engages in, challenges her existing knowledge. This discourse provides a platform for revising her original stance and assists in expansion of existing knowledge. Negative comments sometimes result in assessment of the task at hand (Rowe1994:184).

Assessment is a powerful means of getting learners to *reflect* on their actions. Educators can design self-assessment and peer-assessment schedules to allow learners to confront their experiences on their own and as members in a group. This will help learners in developing an awareness of themselves as members in a group and as individuals. This is discussed in detail when the role of the educator is examined as an assessor in par. 3.4.7.

- **Active processing of information**

Hayes (in Tann (ed) 1988:121-122) states that educators can recognise the active learner by focusing on what she does when she embarks upon a task. When learners are actively processing information they are able to do the following:

- recognise and relate information to work done in the class even though the presentation is different from the model presented by the educator. There is an increased reading of work-related books.

- take an interest in new ideas used in books and relate it to current classroom experiences.
- devise their own investigations and display an inquiring spirit. Hence, there is a transfer of skills from one context to another.
- ask a number of questions and use the group to discuss and develop ideas.
- relate and recall past ideas to current experiences. They are enthusiastic about using this knowledge to discover new relationships.

Educators need to study the above very carefully and ask themselves how they can accommodate these aspects in their programmes. Upon examining the above points, it becomes abundantly clear that the educator has to begin with the learner as a starting point. Once this occurs the learner values the learning experience and feels motivated to pursue the learning task.

- **Motivation**

Active learners generally feel good about themselves. This confidence motivates them to pursue tasks even if they experience failure (Bentley & Watts 1994:16). Merry (1998:77) refers to the above as “mastery orientation”. When learners display this type of disposition, they develop “a certain set of positive attitudes” which allows them to perceive failure as a stepping stone to achieving success. They stay on a task by giving themselves “subvocal” instructions.

They engage in this type of self-guidance, as they believe that they will eventually solve the problem at hand. Motivation increases participation. In the OBE context this means creating learning environments that spell success. The key principle is “success breeds success” (Van der Horst 1997:22). The educator has to focus on what the learner can do instead of what he cannot do. Working from this premise would allow the learner to experience success. This becomes a powerful motivator to try and try again.

The foregoing section and sub-sections have looked at AL and active learners comprehensively in order to help Foundation Phase educators to understand the context they are working in. Now that this has been established, it is necessary to look at the various roles the educator has to play in order to cater for ALP

3.4 THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR

3.4.1 INTRODUCTION

Educators cannot learn for the learners, cannot confer their understandings and values on them and cannot transfer their wisdom to them. But educators can create learning conditions that enable learners to process what they are encountering and with the help of caring mentors, derive personal meaning and knowledge (Withall in Majoribanks (ed) 1991:94).

Von Glasersfeld (in Murphy & Moon (ed) 1998:14) concurs with this view. He maintains that children are not “empty vessels” to be filled with knowledge. Rather, they are active meaning-makers. This is evident from the examination of the characteristics of active learners in par. 3.3.2.

The educator is now faced with the task of understanding the child’s conception of the world. Once he establishes this, he can create pathways to guide learners’ conceptualisations. These pathways require the educator to adopt different roles in order to facilitate understanding. The type of learners he is dealing with guides the role the educator plays.

3.4.2 APPROACH WITH THE FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNER

Learners in the Foundation Phase need to be treated differently from learners in the Intermediate Phase – grades four, five and six. They have less information on which to build new understandings and their strategies for organising and holding information are less developed (Edwards & Knight 1997:21). Both these aspects are crucial to the type of support the educator renders.

Be aware that the educator plays a host of roles to offer support to the learner as she moves from the known to the unknown. When learners are active participants in the learning experience, the role the educator plays is governed by the relationship that exists between the learner and himself. It is, therefore, necessary to examine this before a full discussion on the specific roles the educator will play.

3.4.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EDUCATOR AND THE LEARNER IN AN ACTIVE LEARNING CONTEXT

In an AL context that is outcomes based, the relationship between the learner and the educator is best understood as an interactive process which can be represented as follows:

The diagram is typical of a learner-centred approach that caters for ALP. The learner's motivation directs the learning process. This motivation is encouraged by inviting the learner to relate current experiences to prior knowledge and real-life situations. The educator takes the various roles to support the learner in linking the existing knowledge to the new concepts. Both the educator and the learner are continuously interacting with each other on the basis of the learner's conceptual understandings. Brandes & Ginnis (1996:165) refers to this as "participatory power" and describes the situation in which it exists as a "win – win" situation. The educator does exercise control but the learners are still the owners of the learning process. This is a highly flexible process as learners can work with other learners or a team in the same manner.

It is important for educators to know about the relationship that they should encourage for ALP. This will assist them in shaping the learning experiences according to the needs of learners. The interaction described above requires the educator to take on various roles in order to help learners to take ownership of their learning. In the Foundation Phase learners are at the entry stage of their schooling career. They need more support to facilitate active participation. The roles that are best suited to the latter, focus on the educator as a *facilitator*, *expert*, *model* and *assessor*. These roles will be examined in detail.

3.4.4 THE EDUCATOR AS A FACILITATOR

This chapter has already described the educator as a facilitator without elaborating much on the concept itself. At support meetings convened for Foundation Phase educators, it was evident that the use of facilitation to promote ALP was a new concept to most educators. This has motivated the researcher to look at the latter comprehensively. This section is introduced by presenting a description of a facilitator. It is followed by a discussion on facilitation as it relates to a learning outcome. This role is rounded off by looking at the creation of a supportive environment for ALP.

3.4.4.1 WHO IS A FACILITATOR?

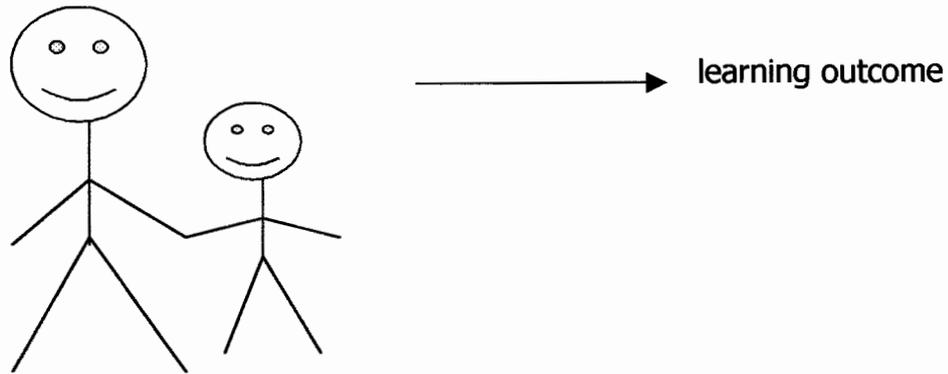
McNamara (1994:20) describes a facilitator as one who creates and supports conditions in which children may discover themselves. A facilitator will deliberately guide, assist and support the learner in her learning. Rooth (1997: 102-106) explains the above by focusing on the concept of facilitation. She states that facilitation means “to give a hand, to help or to make easy, by using a hands-off approach.” In an AL context this means assisting learners not only by telling, lecturing and dictating, but also by creating the opportunities for learners to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes. A facilitator is, therefore, one who increases the learner’s opportunity to learn by providing the structure and stimuli that will motivate ALP. This type of

support, as it manifests itself in an OBE context, is best described in the diagram below.

3.4.4.2 FACILITATION IN RELATION TO LEARNING OUTCOMES

FIGURE. 3:2 - THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EDUCATOR AND THE LEARNER IN TERMS OF THE LEARNING OUTCOME

Educator and learner



The diagram acknowledges the child as an active learner in the learning process with the adult supporting and guiding the learner's development. Both the educator and learner together recognise the responsibility for assessing learning in terms of its relevance to the outcome. The educator, in collaboration with learners, set tasks that are within the learner's scope of experience. Such collaboration prevents an authoritarian hierarchy of roles and avoids a mismatch between what the educator does and what the learners need to do. Educators as facilitators are, therefore, concerned with fostering understanding of knowledge to reach an outcome. They

invite learners to discover how much of knowledge they have, to generate their own further learning, to explore their potential and to consider options to reach the outcome. The emphasis is always to help the learner to help herself by finding the relevant information she needs. The learners, on the other hand, benefit from the facilitation by walking down the road of discovery with reassurance that their participation will be valued. Active participation of learners begin to manifest itself as learners begin to analyse, criticise, challenge and change existing perceptions of the world in relation to an outcome (Brandes & Ginnis 1996).

The creation of a supportive climate is a means of facilitation and needs to be clarified if the teacher is going to be effective as a facilitator of AL.

3.4.4.3 CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR ACTIVE LEARNING

Rogers (1969:165) states that the facilitator first works at building an accepted classroom climate. This means creating an atmosphere of co-operation and mutual support and using interesting and stimulating starting points (Southwood & Spanneberg 1996:45). These aspects should guide the facilitator when he plans and structures activities for ALP. Preparing learners for their own empowerment means that he as a facilitator has to be flexible, non-threatening, minimally-directive, creative, accepting and trustworthy (Rooth 1997:12-106).

Morrow (1996:7) states that a facilitator can meet success if he creates a supportive environment oriented to real-life situations. This context becomes a powerful means for learners to focus on familiar aspect in relation to the outcomes and explore aspects that go beyond the familiar. Learners must be encouraged to participate by expressing their ideas, experimenting, discovering and making mistakes. This provides a platform for freedom of expression. Brandes and Ginnis (1996:48) state that if facilitators let learners make mistakes, they are not “damning the child to a life of wrongness”. Instead by facilitating in this manner they are inviting a culture of exploration and risk-taking that is more productive than the search for adult standards.

The facilitator’s task is more guiding learners on how to think rather than what to think (Heck & Williams 1984:78). In reading and writing this means that the facilitator interferes as little as possible between the text and the reader. This allows the learner the opportunity to *interact* with various interpretations of a text and she can thus play an active role to create an individual response. For the facilitator this could mean designing questions that will lead learners to find the answers rather than giving answers before learners have considered the questions.

The creation of a supportive climate for facilitation is further enhanced by how the educator makes his expertise available as a resource for learners to become actively involved in the learning experience.

3.4.5 THE EDUCATOR AS AN EXPERT

In order to examine the role of the educator as an expert, it is important to first look at its definition traditional and then examine the role in its new context in terms of ALP. Previously most educators assumed the role of experts in an authoritarian sense. In the junior classes this meant, that educators imparted knowledge and discipline. They made all the choices for their learners and controlled what and how they learnt. As a result learners became highly dependent on the educator for information and for ways of thinking and doing. Learners were also more concerned with behaving in a way that pleased the educator rather than learning through their own activated zones of meaning-making (Goodman & Goodman in Moll (ed) 1990:245).

Whilst this was the set up in most South African classrooms, there were educators who used their expertise to guide learners to think critically and solve problems in a manner typical of OBE. Learners were motivated to actively interpret information imparted (Van der Horst & MacDonald 1997:27). Educators used their expertise to bring out the best in learners. It is this type of expertise that needs to be examined more closely. Educators are experts in relation to their learners. They are extremely knowledgeable on a host of topics and are experts in understanding and managing children (Merry 1998:28). Discussions at the beginning of this chapter (par. 3.2) with regard to AL and ALP was aimed at building the knowledge base of Foundation Phase educators so that they could develop their expertise in creating AL contexts.

Bird (1991:152-153) states that expertise in an AL context is based on an indirect means of control. When this occurs the educator does not *tell* the learner what to do but rather *invites* them to participate in the learning process. This caters for ALP by allowing learners the freedom of choice and creating room for suggestions. Yelon and Weinstein (1977:346-347) contend that this indirect influence of the educator as an expert is a good way of soliciting opinions and ideas of learners, expanding ideas and praising or encouraging participation.

The educator's expertise can be effectively used to demonstrate an activity. Within the Literacy Learning Programme the educator may, for example, want to teach children how to read words that are within inverted commas. He must ensure that the activity does not merely degenerate into a mere imitation. If the activity is to promote ALP, then his expert performance must relate to thinking and mental actions. In other words, the educator must be able to make his expertise explicit to his learners without being prescriptive (Merry 1998:29). The latter is clearly demonstrated in the apprenticeship approach to reading.

When educators use the apprenticeship approach to reading they take on the role of an experienced, knowledgeable partner and help learners to assimilate knowledge and techniques associated with reading in a more efficient manner. The use of "expert protocols" is also favoured in this approach (David & Palincsar in Merry 1998:29). When educators make use of the latter, they verbalise their mental and physical

actions in order to assist learners to approach their learning in a strategic manner. This relates closely to the role of the educator as a model.

3.4.6 THE EDUCATOR AS A MODEL

Foundation Phase learners are immature thinkers (Edwards & Knights 1997:21). There are some things that they cannot discover for themselves and even if they could, they would participate in an inefficient mode of learning. In addition to this not all learners are self-motivated to engage themselves as active participants in the learning process (McNamara 1994:4). The educator, therefore, has to take on the role of a model in order to guide learners in the learning process.

Modelling is a term used in social cognitive theory. This has been discussed in detail in Chapter Two (par. 2.5.2) upon examining the views of Albert Bandura. It refers to the psychological changes that can take place when a learner observes a model. It is more than mere imitation of behaviour, which is regarded as only one of the many changes that is the result of modelling (McCown et al 1996:254).

The use of modelling amongst educators in preschool and junior schools has received widespread support. (Gage & Berliner 1992, Angeletti 1993, Barclay & Breheny 1994). It promotes “vicarious learning.” This means that learning takes place by observing others perform without the learner overtly performing herself.

When the learner observes the model – which can be the educator or a peer - it motivates her to perform the skill demonstrated (McCown et al 1996:248). Rosenhine (in Gage & Berliner 1992:522-523) states that modelling helps the learner to progress from a spectator to a novice. Once the learner becomes confident he becomes an initiator and finally an independent worker.

The educator must use his role as a model to enhance AL. He must strive to stimulate the process of “engagement”. Wray and Medwell (1993: 83) use the term to describe a situation where learners want to join in the behaviour they see around them and try to imitate the demonstration they receive. The model has to provide guidance that the learner can identify with. For this to occur the educator as a model must provide beacons that would whet the appetite for finding out.

He begins by talking aloud whilst performing a demonstration or working on a problem. In this way, he makes his strategies explicit with regard to the task at hand. In this study the researcher uses “think aloud” commentaries to model the creation of a class contract in Chapter 5 (par. 5.6.2.1). Once this occurs, learners are also exposed to the fact that they will experience “dead ends” but there are ways of coping with them.

The educator’s commentary must not be limited to mere procedural steps. He must be aware of his own thinking processes in order to guide learners on how to respond emotionally and intellectually to a task. Learners must see how he formulates a

proactive plan to execute his actions, how he actualises prior knowledge to link relevant points and how he copes with distractions and time constraints. In order to make these mental actions part of the learner's repertoire, they will have to be subjected to modelling in the manner described above, as often as possible (Nisbet in Coles & Robinson (ed) 1991:29).

Whilst the educator facilitates learning by making his expertise available through modelling, he is continually assessing the effect of his actions in terms of ALP.

3.4.7 THE EDUCATOR AS AN ASSESSOR

The assessment policy in the general education and training band - grades R to nine (Department of Education 1998(b):8-9) defines assessment as "a process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about learners' achievement, as measured against nationally agreed outcomes for a particular phase of learning." This implies that the educator as an assessor is one who deliberately intervenes in the learning experience in order to gain information of how the learner is progressing towards the outcome. In the new literacy context, he is a participant-observer or a "kidwatcher". Goodman (in Hall 1987:71) uses this term to describe insightful and reflective observation that is required when working with elementary level learners.

As a "kidwatcher" the educator will be constructing a profile of the learner as an active participant and gaining clarity of focus in terms of the outcome. The characteristics of active learners discussed in par. 3.3.2 can assist in designing a

profile. The focus is enhanced by carefully designing activities in order to access a range of specific information required on the learner in terms of the outcome. While learners are busy with the given tasks the educator can gain information on what the learners can do by observation, questions and projects (Gauteng Department of Education 1998:72-74).

From an AL perspective the data gathering is enhanced if the educator formulates a host of questions as a guide to his observations. This lends structure to how the learners are participating in the given task. The following questions serve as examples to assist in assessing active learners.

- How is the learner approaching, organising, and working through the task?
- Are they working purposefully, knowing what they are doing and why?
- Are they developing their own strategies to stay on task?
- What do they do when they get stuck?
- How do they record their work?
- What outcomes have they reached?
- What processes and skills have they used?
- Are they being challenged and extended?
- Where do they plan to go next?

(Adapted from Southwood & Spanneberg 1996:101)

Whilst observing the learners in terms of the above questions, the educator can further relate them to the learner by thinking about the questions he can ask them

whilst they are on task. This makes assessment an active two-way process, which is beneficial to both the teacher and the learner. The following serve as examples.

- What have you done so far?
- How did you do it?
- Why did you do it in that way?
- Can you do it in another way?
- What do you think will happen if...?
- What did you learn?

The educator assesses his performance by the response he receives from the learners. This may result in the revision or expansion of an outcome. From the above it is also evident that the educator as an assessor acknowledges the learner as a resource in providing information on her progress.

Involving learners in self-assessment and peer-assessment allows them the opportunity to report on a task from their perspective. Self-assessment allows the learner to *reflect* on how she performed as an individual or a member of a group. Peer-assessment involves learners giving opinions about how they participated, contributed, helped or performed in a task (Gauteng Department of Education 1998:74). Both these types of assessment are true manifestations of ALP. In order to drive the AL process forward, the educator has to not only take on various roles but

also use different teaching strategies to support the learner in her learning experiences.

3.5 TEACHING STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE ACTIVE LEARNER PARTICIPATION

The educator as an advocate of ALP is faced with the challenge of promoting the interaction between the mind and the hand of learners in order to enhance the meaning-making process. He has to deliberate on the “why and how learners choose to do things” instead of “what it was they chose to do”. Hence, the focus is on the thinking and decision-making aspects and how it relates to end products rather than assessing of products in isolation (Assessment performance unit in Banks (ed) 1994:61-62). This means that the educator now has the task of stimulating, imaging and modelling inside the learner’s mind. This requires the use of teaching strategies as a vehicle to travel the mind of the learner and bring out conceptions of the world in terms of the planned outcomes.

A teaching strategy is “a broad plan of action for teaching activities with the view to achieve an aim” (Fraser, Loubser & Van Rooy 1993:143). This strategy has also been described as a “plan of attack” to achieve learning outcomes (Van der Horst & McDonald 1997:124). The educator has to choose teaching strategies that assists in “the bringing out” process.

The analysis that follows will look at the teaching strategies of discussion, cooperative learning and games, role play and simulations. Each of the strategies will provide a definition and analysis in terms of what they mean for ALP.

3.5.1 DISCUSSION

Killen (1996:24) describes discussion as “an orderly process of face-to-face group interaction in which people exchange ideas about an issue for the purpose of solving a problem, answering a question, enhancing their knowledge or understanding, or making a decision.” Hence, a discussion is a purposeful conversation that is goal-directed. It can take place in a small group or in a large group involving the entire class. The focus for this section will be on the large group discussion.

When this strategy is used in an AL context, it exposes the learner to a host of background experiences and knowledge. She can use this as a springboard to practice her own thinking by testing out her ideas in a host of alternatives. Learners will be able to become aware of different attitudes and what lies behind those differences. This acts as a precursor to arguing against contrary views (Whalley in Coles & Robinson (ed) 1991:70). The learner is provided with an opportunity to argue her opinions, justify them in the wake of criticism from peers and locate words that are commonly understood by her peers (Dunne & Bennett 1994:8). Riley and Coe (1992:16) contend that the “*listen, think, pair, share*” strategy is a good way to structure learners’ participation in the whole class discussion. As learners perform

the various actions, they *communicate* their ideas and views initially with a partner and then with the class. The “*pair*” stage affords learners to actively engage in their perceptions of the event. All the actions in this strategy encourage *interacting* between and among learners and adults (see Chapter Five par. 5.6.3.2).

ALP helps in promoting the development of objective, informed and reflective thinkers. The whole class discussion provides adequate opportunities for the above. The objective thinkers see the discussion as strategy that can bring many dimensions to a particular topic. This encourages them to listen to divergent views and add their own inputs. The informed thinkers are provided with a wider base to examine their existing knowledge. Reflective thinkers can reflect on their own thought processes as it relates to the outcomes of the discussion (Killen 1996:25).

3.5.2 CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING

In order for the learner to demonstrate her abilities as an active learner, the whole class discussion is not an adequate platform. This is especially true if we take into account the fact that most public schools in South Africa have more than forty learners per class. Educators have to make use of some sort of group work in order to promote AL. Co-operative learning is one of the strategies that encourage learners to be active participants in the learning process.

Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1994:4-5) state that “co-operative learning is the instructional use of small groups through which students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning.” In its simplest form, it is used as groupwork where two or more learners work towards the goal of mastering specific content. Well established co-operative base groups are comprised of learners that are heterogeneous in character. This means that they have learners of mixed abilities, culture, race and gender. There is a stable membership that helps, supports, encourages and assists its members to succeed in its endeavours.

Co-operative learning can only be effective as teaching strategy for ALP if it encompasses the five basic elements listed below by Sutton (in Killen 1996:78).

- Positive interdependence – learners must be truly dependent on one another.
- Face-to-face interaction – learners must be within close proximity to each other. This will be evident if there is positive interdependence.
- Individual accountability – all learners are responsible as individuals as they all have a part to play in order to reach group goals.
- Interpersonal skills – these skills which include sharing of ideas, accepting differing views, active listening and taking one’s turn to relay ideas, must be taught.
- Assessment – learners must analyse the performance of their group.

Once these elements are established and the grouping is heterogeneous, it allows for ALP by accommodating a “cultural kaleidoscope” of learners. The learners are

exposed to other learners that come from different ethnic backgrounds (Le Roux 1997:1) They are afforded the opportunity of looking at concepts from a host of different angles and finally choosing an option to respond to the concept. Besides promoting these academic outcomes it also deepens the social outcomes of AL.

Co-operative learning identifies most with the collaborative aspect of ALP. It does this by focusing on the “let’s work it out together approach” (Fisher 1990:98). It is here that the concept of sharing is introduced. Learners take on different roles e.g. facilitators, scribes, material managers and Captain Quiets to become familiar with interpersonal skills mentioned in par. 3.2.3. This is crucial to South Africa’s new democracy. Educators need to remember that the essence of diversity and democracy is not learning a few dances and songs from each other’s culture. It entails mobilising the mechanics of *Tiriso* (see Chapter One par. 1.2.4). This means providing opportunities for working through conflicts, reaching consensus, agreeing to disagree and perspective taking via the use of the co-operative learning strategies.

When the learner is an active participant in the learning experience, the experimentation with ideas must be allowed to flourish. Co-operative learning affords the learner the opportunity to engage herself in this manner. As learners become more confident in their groups, they feel safe to take risks and do not mind being wrong in front of a few peers. They use their imagination to brainstorm ideas, make connections and seek patterns to solve problems (Fisher 1990:36). All of this helps the learner in building a profile of herself as a participant in learning.

3.5.3 GAMES, SIMULATIONS AND ROLE PLAY

Petty (1993:182-190) refers to games, simulations and role play as active learning methods. Killen (1996:46) calls them “performance activities”. He states that these types of activities encourage learners to act a part. They range from formal scripted plays to free flowing activities such as role play. The mixture of structure and freedom results in activities such as games and simulations.

In order for an activity to be considered a game, the people must think and behave as players trying to win in conformity to a set of rules. Games can also be non-competitive and emphasise co-operation. Simulations are events in which participants have different roles to perform specific functions and enough basic information to enable them to carry out a role with professional intent. Unlike simulations, role play is usually ” brief and episodic”. The participants are given the opportunity to invent the facts (Jones 1988:17). All these activities have two important features. Learners may take a role and behave in a way that is not natural to them. The activity will usually involve just a few active participants while the others observe.

This teaching strategy provides Foundation Phase learners with both the physical and mental stimulation they need to be active learners. It teaches learners the value of participation. Once the child plays a role, she is faced with the task of dealing with problems in a concrete way. A host of mental actions are forced to come into play.

As the learner explores alternatives, she gains a better understanding of her own values and attitudes. She also begins to understand the feelings and attitudes of other participants. The first hand experience she gains is a better educator than the mere reading about situations from a textbook (Killen 1996:148).

Games, simulations and role play can be used to test out ideas, methods and plans that learners use to relate to a particular situation. It is extremely beneficial to enhance creative writing as it brings affective experiences alive. They can also serve as introductions to new topics. This can be taken further to involve the learner in some form of assessment of her experiences. *Reflection* and introspection are enhanced in this context. (Petty 1993:250).

3.6 CONCLUSION

AL and ALP in the Literacy Learning Programme are new concepts to most Foundation Phase educators. A comprehensive discussion was undertaken to assist educators in understanding of the concepts and developing expertise in related issues. Upon examining various definitions of AL it was found that three key aspects govern the concept, viz., the doing, thinking and collaborative aspects. These aspects are foundations to making sense of the world. They are associated with certain actions. These actions are the essence of ALP and relate to *experiencing, communicating, interacting and reflecting*.

The examination of the developmental milestones and characteristics of active learners revealed many implications for educators with regard to planning and implementation of Literacy Learning Programmes. The relationship between educator and the learner also reveals further implications in this regard. More important though, it reveals the various roles the educator has to play in order to afford learners the opportunity to interact in an AL context. The roles identified as compatible to Foundation Phase learners relate to the educator as a *facilitator*, an *expert*, a *model* and an *assessor*. It was also found that teaching strategies like discussion, co-operative learning and games, simulations and role play can be used effectively to promote ALP.

The next chapter will focus on the Literacy Learning Programme in the Foundation Phase. The chapter will be focusing specifically at the LLC Learning Area as a model for AL. The concepts of AL and ALP will be related to the skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and dramatisation.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXAMINATION OF THE LITERACY LEARNING PROGRAMME WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND COMMUNICATION LEARNING AREA AS A MODEL OF ACTIVE LEARNING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the Literacy Learning Programme is new to Foundation Phase educators there is a need to look at a learning area as a model to ALP in an AL context. This chapter begins by looking at the use of multidimensional literacies as a base for the Literacy Learning Programme. This will be followed by an examination of one of the eight learning areas, viz., the Language, Literacy and Communication (LLC) learning area.

This learning area is used as a model for examining the aspects of AL and the actions associated with ALP as they relate to the relevant terminology. This is followed by an examination of how the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening relate to AL in the OBE literacy context. The whole language approach forms the backdrop for the analysis.

The chapter ends by considering the use of learning centres as part of the process of encouraging AL in the Literacy Learning Programme.

4.2 THE NEW LITERACY CONTEXT

Chapter One (par.1.5.2) examined the Literacy Programme in the traditional junior primary classroom. It was evident that literacy was limited to the ability to read and write. The overemphasis of the basal reader programme led to the teaching of individual cognitive skills that was divorced from the social and cultural context of the learners. By neglecting the role and the influence of situation, activities and participants, literacy was reduced to discrete skills necessary for reading and writing. This limited practice, which Street (in Richardson 1998:116) refers to as an “autonomous” model of literacy, has cost South Africa dearly in terms of literate behaviour.

The twenty-first century learner will need more than the mere application of “assembly line” technology (promoted by traditional literacy instruction) in order to survive in the new millennium. In order to stimulate learners to actively engage in literacy events, there has to be contextual learning, which takes into account technology, multimedia, authentic purposes for the use of all forms of language, a variety of symbol systems including graphics and encounters with situations where cultural diversity is celebrated (Antonacci & Colasacco in Ellsworth et al (ed) 1994:222). Literacy for the twenty-first century is multidimensional.

4.2.1 MULTIDIMENSIONAL LITERACIES

In order to understand this term it is necessary to acknowledge the fluidity of the Literacy Learning Programme in a country. Literacy changes and these changes are intimately coupled with knowledge, ideology and context (Richardson 1998:117). South Africa's transformation to a democracy has resulted in changed views on social, cultural and ideological ends. Hence, reference is made to literacies as opposed to literacy, which will operate and function within the current democratic context.

These literacies are derived from daily lives of people, which are multidimensional. They include cultural, ethnic and religious identity, economic status, community mores, gender identity, and political persuasions, national economic development, citizenship, language and culture (Richardson 1998:117). OBE uses multidimensional literacies as a blueprint for a new literacy context.

4.2.2 OBE AS A MANIFESTATION OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL LITERACIES

OBE stresses the multidimensional nature of the Literacy Learning Programme by focusing on the following:

- Language literacy – emphasis on the improvement of the learner's listening, speaking, reading and writing ability.

- Cultural literacy – cultural, social and ideological values that shape our text.
- Critical Literacy – the ability to respond critically to the intentions, content and possible effects of messages.
- Visual literacy – the interpretation of images, signs, pictures and non-verbal language.
- Media literacy – the reading of, for example, television and film as cultural messages.
- Numerical literacy – the ability to use and interpret numbers.
- Computer literacy – acquiring and using the infrastructure from computers.
- Language across the curriculum – the use of language to establish relationships, engage in reciprocal exchange with people around you, integration of new knowledge with existing knowledge and obtaining and conveying of ideas and information.

(Department of Education 1997 (c):21)

By focusing on an inclusive and integrated perspective, OBE aims to promote a platform for “active literacy” (see Chapter One par. 1.4). This is an empowerment approach that allows people to participate actively, critically and effectively in society (Weeks & Leaker 1991:10). At school it encourages what Brown (in Antonacci & Colasacco in Ellsworth et al (ed) 1994:222) refers to as a “literacy for thoughtfulness” by allowing the learner opportunities to actively construct meaning. This meaning-making endeavour supports the use of the social structure of peer collaboration.

From the discussion thus far, it is clear that literacy in the OBE context cannot be defined as a school subject – hence the use of the words learning programme. There is an implicit acceptance that literacy is now a wide range of specific cultural practices which learners have a right to access in accordance with their personal needs and goals. The Literacy Learning Programme accommodates this by using the multidimensional literacies within the framework of eight learning areas.

These learning areas form the ‘fields of learning’ within which the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes has to be acquired. They are Human and Social Sciences, Technology, Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences, Life Orientation, Economic Management, Art and Culture, Natural Sciences and the Literacy, Language and Communication (LLC) learning area (see Chapter One par. 1.4) (Malan 1997:19). The area of focus in this chapter will be the LLC learning area.

4.3 THE LLC LEARNING AREA OF THE FOUNDATION PHASE

4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

This learning area focuses on the way learners interact with the world and with each other. The emphasis is on *communication* of meaning and understanding using any means at the learner’s disposal including the use of sign language. This is crucial to meet the aim of nation building in South Africa. Improved *communication* is vital to

promoting a new South Africa free of intolerance, misunderstandings and prejudice. The language policy also supports this idea of creating a shared understanding of South African culture (Department of Education 1997 (a): 14-22).

In terms of the new Constitution of South Africa, the government has to promote multi-lingualism, the development of the official languages and the respect for all languages used in the country. The LLC learning area aims to do this by using the advancement of multi-lingualism as a major resource to give learners the opportunity to develop and value not only their home languages, cultures and literacies but also other languages, cultures and literacies of our country and other international contexts (Department of Education 1997 (c): LLC2). The LLC learning area thus stresses both the diverse and common aspects necessary for the holistic and lifelong development of the learner.

The LLC learning area accommodates all of the above aspects in the following specific outcomes.

4.3.2 THE SPECIFIC OUTCOMES AND RELATED ASPECTS OF THE LLC LEARNING AREA

The specific outcomes (SOs) describe the contextually demonstrated knowledge, skills and attitudes, which has to be assessed whenever the learner's competence in the LLC learning area is to be demonstrated. This learning area has seven SOs. The

assessment of these SOs is guided by assessment criteria (AC) which provides statements of the sort of evidence educators need to look for in order to ascertain the achievement of a SO. These criteria, however, are too broad. The detailed content and processes that learners should master, as well as the details of the learning contexts in which learners will be engaged in, are provided by the performance indicators (PI). The scope and level of complexity of the LLC learning area, is explained in the range statements (RSs). When planning activities for AL all of the above must be considered within a phase organiser which form the broad learning context. They reflect the COs and summarise what is currently important for the transformation and development of a South African society. There are six phase organisers in the Foundation Phase, viz., communication, society, personal development, environment, entrepreneurship and health and safety. The programme organiser is the theme or topic which helps to mobilise the SOs in a learning programme (Malan 1997 20-21).

In order to examine the LLC learning area as a model of AL it is imperative to list both the SOs and assessment criteria AC from the LLC learning area in the Foundation Phase.

SO1 Learners make and negotiate meaning.

- AC1. Original meaning is created through personal texts.
- AC2. A key message is identified and clarified.
- AC3. Meaning is constructed through interaction with other language users and text.
- AC4. Ways in which construction of meaning varies according to cultural, social and personal differences identified.

- AC5. Ways in which context affects meaning and understanding are identified and responded to.
- AC6. Writer's/speaker's/signer's point of view is reflected on and responded to.
- AC7. Interpretation and meaning are discussed.
- AC8. Discourse is sustained.

SO2 Learners show critical awareness of language usage.

- AC1. Purpose, audience and source of texts are identified. Visual and other non-verbal features of text are identified.
- AC2. Ways in which language is used to transmit and shape socio-cultural ideas and values are explained.
- AC3. Awareness of how language changes over time and place are demonstrated.
- AC4. The manipulative uses of language and text are identified, analysed and responded to.
- AC5. Visual and non-verbal/non manual features of texts are identified and analysed.
- AC6. Language reflecting bias is identified and responded to effectively.
- AC7. Biased attitudes towards languages and language varieties are explored responded to and challenged.

SO3 Learners respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in texts.

- AC1. Responses to the artistic effects of texts are demonstrated.
- AC2. Literary effects of texts are recognised.
- AC3. Response to text is linked to family life.
- AC4. Opinions on texts are given.
- AC5. Opinions are reviewed in relation to the opinions of others.
- AC6. Responses to text are linked to personal life and the lives of others.

SO4 Learners access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations.

- AC1. The information need is defined.
- AC2. The aim of the information search is defined.
- AC3. Information is located, accessed and selected.
- AC4. The accuracy and relevance of the information is evaluated.
- AC5. The reliability of the information source is ascertained.
- AC6. Organisational skills are applied.
- AC7. The difference between fact, fiction and bias is identified.
- AC8. Reasoned arguments are developed in the course of applying information.

- AC9. The results of the information search and processing are presented.
- AC10. The relevance of the information search is evaluated by the learner.
- AC11. Awareness of the value of informed decision-making is demonstrated.
- AC12. The ability to integrate new information into existing knowledge is shown.
- AC13. The ability to apply the newly acquired knowledge to real-life situations is demonstrated.

SO5 Learners understand, know and apply language structures and conventions in context.

- AC1. Knowledge of grammatical structures and conventions is applied to structure text.
- AC2. Incorrect and/or inappropriate language usage by self and others is edited.
- AC3. Common patterns of different languages are identified, explained and applied.

SO6 Learners use language for learning

- AC1. Different styles and terminology suited to the demands of a particular area is used.
- AC2. Learning strategies are evaluated and adapted according to the demands of the task.
- AC3. Language is used in order to refine ideas and solve problems.
- AC4. Language to talk about learning is used.
- AC5. The ability to transfer terminology and concepts from one language to is demonstrated.

SO7 Learners use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations.

- AC1. Appropriate medium of communication is chosen.
- AC2. Register, tone and body language are adapted for audience and situation.
- AC3. Purpose of the interaction is identified and achieved.
- AC4. Evidence of planning, drafting and checking is produced.
- AC5. Evidence of the following is shown
- structural organisation
 - clarity of expression
 - originality of ideas
 - appropriate use of language
 - care and attention to the quality of the presentation.

(MML Foundation Phase Development Project 1998:8-9)

The seven SOs are achieved through the integrated use of the basic skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking, observing and signing. These skills are crucial to encouraging ALP and will be considered after examining the LLC learning area as a model of AL.

4.4 ACTIVE LEARNING IN THE LLC LEARNING AREA.

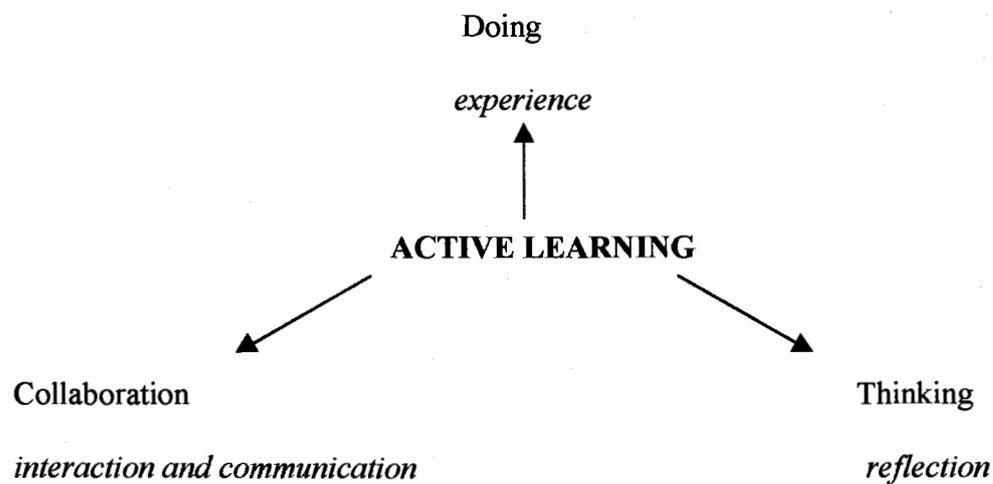
Chapter Three (par. 3.2.1) looked at various definitions of AL – some of which related to both the physical and mental actions that learners engage in order to come to know the world. These actions have also been referred to as the doing and thinking aspects. Meaning and understanding are the ultimate goal. This goal is achieved in a collaborative context by encouraging ALP. This means that learners will *be experiencing, interacting, communicating and reflecting* to make sense of their world.

In order to provide a comprehensive discussion of the LLC learning area as a model of AL, it is important to consider how the aspects mentioned above and actions associated with ALP manifest themselves in the SOs. The researcher has developed a structure to facilitate the discussion. It must be noted that the division is arbitrary and developed for the sake of clarity. In reality all the aspects of AL and actions of ALP are interwoven.

The examination of the doing aspect will focus on the *experiences* the learner engages in as an active participant. The thinking aspect will emphasise the opportunities

provided for *reflection* of experiences. The collaborative context will focus on the building of a shared perspective by *interaction* and *communication*. The diagram below has been developed to clarify this visually.

FIGURE. 4:1 THE ASPECTS OF ACTIVE LEARNING AS IT RELATES TO THE ACTIONS OF ACTIVE LEARNER PARTICIPATION



All of the above will be examined by analysing the SOs and the AC of the LLC learning area.

4.4.1 THE DOING ASPECT

Cairney (1995:71) states that the new multidimensional literacy context encourages learners to participate in a host of classroom practices that acknowledge their needs and personal goals. They are given numerous activities to share their insights,

discover and make sense of the world. This aspect filters through all the SOs. The learner is afforded many opportunities to exercise her personal and social-linguistic competence. This is possible because of the revision of the definition of the word “text”.

In the traditional literacy context, the learner’s *experience* of a text meant the completion of worksheets and interacting with textbooks in the basal reader programme. Halliday and Hasan (in Goodman & Goodman 1990:225) state that a text is the basic semantic unit of linguistic interaction that is cohesively bound. It is characterised by a unity of meaning that takes into account the total situation in which it operates. This is compatible to the definition of the word text in the new literacy context. The word “text” refers to a unit of spoken, written or visual communication, which is inclusive of sign language (Department of Education 1997 (c):LLC5).

The spoken texts include conversations, speeches, large and small group discussions and songs. The written texts include poetry, drama, novels, letters, magazines, scripts and newspaper articles. The visual texts includes posters, cartoons, advertisements, environmental print (labels, signs, icons) maps, charts and diagrams. This broad definition of the word text means that the learner is given a wide variety of literacy experiences. These ventures are always interpreted within a context.

The context may be linguistic. This requires the learner to consider how the words or sentences that surround any written or spoken text contribute to the overall meaning.

The doing aspect also means to be physically with other language users and taking into consideration the whole situation in which an utterance is made. SO1 AC 4-8 makes this explicit. The learner has to consider the backgrounds of speakers, writers, listeners and readers when she is expressing, clarifying and rehearsing her thoughts in an activity. Hence, the learner is encouraged to perform in an extralinguistic context (Department of Education 1997 (c):LLC5).

Also of importance here is the relation of experiences to the learner's prior knowledge of a text. Cairney (1995:69) contends that one of the keys to teaching reading and writing, is to engage reader and writer with texts. This can only be achieved when readers are able to relate the text to existing knowledge, prior textual experiences and their personal interests. SO 4 AC 12 and 13 as well as SO 3 AC 3 and 6 encourage this practice in order to allow learners to explore their feelings, ideas and opinions in an activity.

4.4.2 THE THINKING ASPECT

This aspect is vital to AL. Some academics acknowledge this aspect as being the foundation of AL. It is also basal to the constructivist philosophy. Learners are actively making sense of their experiences by forming, testing, and modifying hypotheses (Wray & Medwell 1993:86). *Reflection* is also an integral part of the process. Cambourne (1995:188) sees *reflection* as a "discussion with oneself". Such

discussions encourage the exchange and interchange of interpretations, constructed meanings and understandings.

The LLC learning area recognises the above interpretation and uses meaning, understanding and *reflection* as a base for ALP. SO I AC 1–8 aim at the development of the learner’s ability to understand, create and negotiate meaning in various contexts. Learners are guided to create a wide variety of text using their own experiences and the input from interaction with peers. In an effort to create meaning, learners are given the opportunity to experiment with ideas, spelling, reading and writing. This experimentation allows for *reflection* and risk-taking. Learners have the opportunities for clarification, extension and refocusing by “talking themselves to meaning” in a social and individual context (Cambourne 1995:188).

SO 6 also helps to clarify the thinking aspect of AL. It aims to do this by focusing on the inherent value of language as a tool for problem solving, decision-making and creative, critical and evaluative thinking. This SO is basal to all learning areas in the curriculum. Learners are encouraged to use various learning strategies, for example, questioning, selecting and memorisation, to make meaning of the text.

These strategies are extended in SO 4 AC 1-13. The aim of this SO is to develop the learner’s capacity to retrieve information. The learner is presented with numerous opportunities to access information. These include factual articles, manuals, the media, reference material, reports, magazines, cartoons, the internet and graphic

material. The interaction with these sources provides the learner with a platform for selection, assimilation and reflection after comparison of information (Department of Education 1997 (c):LLC23).

Also of importance is the use of the thinking skills model TASC in language learning. The acronym TASC stands for Thinking Actively in a Social Context. This model is compatible to language learning, as learners are encouraged to use language to think. They are taught several steps to follow in order to solve problems and reach high levels of thinking. The context is always linked to the everyday lives of learners. They are encouraged to work socially in groups and co-operatively in order to make meaning (Wallace, Pandaram & Maltby 1998:16). The titles “Language in my World – Grade Two” and “Reading in my world” from Juta Publishers serve as good examples of where this model was implemented.

4.4.3 COLLABORATION

Antonacci and Colasacco (1994:219) view collaboration as an essential component of the new literacy context. They state that it involves interacting with various kinds of texts and actively constructing meaning together. This is crucial to the concept of *Tirisano* (see Chapter One par. 1.2.4). Halpern (1991: 56-57) views collaboration as something that happens when two or more learners work together towards a common goal. The combined effort of the group creates an end product. Vygotsky as mentioned in Chapter Two (par.2.6.4) has also stressed learning through social

interaction. The LLC learning area uses collaboration as a platform to promote critical literacy, social value in texts and appropriate communication strategies.

According to Aronowitz and Giroux (1985:132) critical literacy implies helping learners to learn to read their world and their lives critically and relatedly. It requires the development of a deeper understanding of how knowledge is created, legitimised and more importantly it refers to social action, which involve communicative and interactive events. SO 2 AC 1-7 clearly demonstrates a critical literacy perspective.

The aim of this SO is to develop the learner's understanding of the way in which language is used as "a powerful instrument to reflect, shape and manipulate people's beliefs, actions and relationships" (Department of Education 1997(c):LLC16).

A multilingual context, which is characteristic of the South African society, forms the framework for the development of interpretation and reflection on how language is used. This means that the linguistic and culturally diverse learner population is acknowledged. This is demonstrated by the inclusion of codeswitching – SO 6 AC 1-5. Both the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998:208) view the use of codeswitching as extremely valuable in second language learning.

They describe codeswitching as the ability to go back and forth between two languages to deepen conceptual understanding. They view this skill as an important part of the constructive thinking processes that is enhanced by a collaborative context.

Focusing on the social value in a text means that learners will be given the opportunity to analyse the social and cultural aspects of a text. SO3 aims to develop the learner's appreciation, use and creation of text as "an artistic expression of thoughts, feelings, attitudes and values through exposure to a wide variety of genres" (Department of Education 1997 (c):LLC20). Learners are encouraged to use group work in order to explore, compare, evaluate and understand a variety of texts. This type of collaboration is of utmost importance. When two or more persons collaborate in addressing or trying to solve a problem, they are forced to interact with each other as well as the text. This helps to transform thoughts, attitudes and feelings (Cambourne 1995:188).

In a South African context this type of collaboration also includes the spiritual ideal of *ubuntu* or *botho* which is the art of being human.

Mbongwe (in Heese & Badenhorst (ed) 1992:15) states that it refers specifically to

"the human qualities that are acquired by an individual through personal ennoblement and moulding by voluntarily and intentionally accepting and internalising human norms and values in terms of the culture and the philosophical convictions of his people."

It refers to the universal values of compassion, tolerance, justice, respect for others and enthusiasm for life. The learner encounters these traits as she reads texts that are relevant to her society. The mixed cultural group setting in the classroom further

assist in providing a multicultural perspective on the opinions related to a text. It also helps to build *ubuntu* amongst members in the group.

Communication is basal to all the aspects of AL and the actions of *experiencing*, *interacting* and *reflecting* are all means to *communicate* meaning and promote understanding. All the SOs in the LLC learning area is grounded in *communicative* events. SO7, however, refers specifically to the development of learners' ability to apply *communication* skills for a particular purpose and in a relevant situation. This requires learners to communicate orally and in a written form to a host of social situations and adjust the nature of their response to suit the audience, purpose and situation.

From the examination of the aspects of AL and the related actions of ALP within the LLC learning area, it is evident this learning area is extremely compatible with the basic tenets of AL.

This provides a good foundation for the discussion of how the basic skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing, are viewed within the SOs of the LLC learning area.

4.5 THE BASIC SKILLS

A ministerial committee appointed by the Department of Education to investigate the 1998 matric results, found that the poor performance of learners was largely due to the lack of adequate reading and writing skills. The committee found that there was a serious deficit in critical, analytical and interpretative reading skills. Writing skills, which go hand-in-hand with reading competence, was seriously lacking (Sunday Times – Read Right 7 March 1999:1). The OBE context aims at providing a more critical, holistic, learner-friendly and context-specific process approach to the skills of reading and writing in order to counter results quoted above.

The basic skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing which underpin all the SOs of the LLC learning area are integrated. Observation and signing have also been included as important skills to allow learners to actively engage with a wide variety of texts and contexts (Department of Education 1997(c):LLC7).

Mazibuko, Borowski and Richards (1998:6) writing from a South African OBE English perspective in the Foundation Phase, state that the basic skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing must be part of every school day. These skills must be presented in a manner that allows the learner the opportunity to become actively involved in the learning process by doing, communicating and constructing a world that is relevant to them. This approach to the basic skills is highly compatible to the whole language approach.

4.5.1 WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH

Weaver (1990:6) states that the word “whole” in the whole language approach refers to the fact that language is kept whole and not fragmented into isolated skills. The learner must be involved in the whole experience for it to be purposeful. This approach acknowledges the fact that learners often use reading to help them to write, or writing to help them talk, or talking to help them read – the one ability helps to develop the other (Flanagan 1995:119). The Literacy Learning Programme and specifically the LLC learning area recognises the fact that basic language skills interact in a holistic and integrated manner.

Watson (in Raines 1995:2) states that the whole language approach promotes reading as an active meaning-making process, writing as a process to develop ideas and skills, speaking and listening as a meaningful way to motivate learners to *communicate* what they are learning. It must be remembered that each of the skills acts as a filter through which the learner learns a language. If any one is lacking, language learning will not be optimal. In order to provide a deeper understanding of the basic skills in the LLC learning area, it will be necessary to examine them closely in relation to the SOs and the three aspects of AL. The skills will be separately discussed for the sake of a comprehensive discussion but it must be remembered that the four skills are not mutually exclusive but rather interdependent and complementary to one another.

4.5.2 READING

Reading in the whole language approach is a process of active making of meaning from the interaction with print. This information is related to the prior experience of the learner. As the learner goes through the text, she samples ideas and contexts predict events and confirm thoughts. She then integrates the new knowledge with previous knowledge (Raines 1995:4-6). The learner is presented with a variety of reading material and books – some of which she creates herself. Whilst reading the learner is encouraged to guess words from the meaning they are making of a sentence or story and from the cues they derive from the pictures. The learners are given opportunities to work individually, in pairs or co-operatively to complete reading activities (Flanagan 1995:16-17).

This view of reading is foundational to all the SOs of the LLC learning area. It encourages AL by allowing the learner to read texts that are relevant to their lives. The new readers for Foundation Phase learners are sensitive to the daily experiences of our learners. SO 1 and SO 5 are broad enough to allow learners to use the mental actions of predicting meaning, predicting word order, learning the distinctive features of letters, words and symbols. The doing aspect involves guiding learners through reading activities based on their personal texts or on books or topics that are thematically related. The focus on the extralingual context (mentioned earlier on in par. 4.4.1) means that collaboration between learners is highly favoured.

Also of importance in the new literacy context, is the introduction of reading and writing from the start. Instead of spending valuable time on the teaching of discrete skills of phonic and flashcards to prepare for reading, the learner is given the opportunity to be active from the start. They read labels, learn in two languages, use invented spelling, compile picture books and add meaningful stories to them (Norton, Pule, Smith & Vergnani 1997:xiv).

4.5.3 WRITING

Current research on children's early writing emphasises the fact that young children can write creatively before they can read. Kenneth and Yetta Goodman (in Hennings 1986:228) also found that "children use in writing what they observe in reading." They state that this is important because it is only when children try to create written language, that the observations focuses on how form serves function. This has led to a changed view of the writing process. Donald Graves (in Raines 1995:29-30) is one of the pioneers of the writing process approach. This approach emphasises the fact that children learn about writing in much the same way as they learn other things in their surrounding environment. They pay attention to print, inquire about what it means, find similarities and begin to relate the print they see to what they already know. Graves suggests that the educator places the pen in the child's hand and lets the child construct the print. This results in writing imaginatively using invented spelling to make meaning.

The process approach to teaching writing is called “Writing Workshop”. Graves states that this approach is effective if it allows learners the opportunity to go through the stages of prewriting, drafting, editing and sharing the writing.

The traditional view of writing, however, does not give credit to authorship and meaning but rather to structure. This was elaborated upon in Chapter One (1.5.2). The emphasis is on patterns, sequence and the skills of formation, size and spacing (Hall 1987:41).

The LLC learning area takes into account both the process and the traditional approach to writing. This is evident in the levels of complexity set for the LLC learning area. These levels indicate activities for a basic level of language learning in all contexts (Department of Education 1997(c):LLC12). The activities for SO 6 include the use of process writing as a class activity. This can assist in creating collaboration for the development of writers as a community. The activities for SO 1 AC 1 encourage the use of emergent writing, experimenting with phonic spelling and writing for different purposes and audiences. The learner is encouraged to respond to a range of inputs from stories, plays, poetry and music by writing them down. This provides a stimulus for the learner to communicate her feelings and thoughts in a written form. Decision-making and sharing of opinions are part of the process.

The traditional approach to writing highlights the doing aspect. This is explicit in the activities related to SO 1 AC 1. Educators must provide opportunities for learners to

refine their writing/production skills by paying attention to size, shape, formation, legibility and speed (Department of Education 1997(c):LLC13). This assists the learner to develop a personal style.

4.5.4 SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Throughout the day learners use oral language – speaking and listening. The ability to use oral language in an effective manner often affects the success a person experiences in interpersonal relationships and business transactions. These skills are so important but in the traditional education system they have been reduced to sound drills, recitation, listening comprehension and routines. Educators need to move away from the “cricket-net approach” where particular forms and features of language are practiced repeatedly in contexts divorced from the learner’s experiences (Howe 1992:4-6).

The whole language approach, however, as an alternative, values the use of talk as a basal component of oral language. Talk is the integration of listening and speaking. It allows learners to gain knowledge to explore, clarify and rehearse their ideas (Schwartz & Pollishuke 1990:4). The focus is also on active listening. This type of listening goes beyond reception or even retention of ideas heard. It requires the learner to generate thoughts in response to a situation and express them either verbally or non-verbally (Hennings 1986:97).

Within the LLC learning area and the Literacy Learning Programme as a whole, the idea is to promote the healthy development of oral language. More especially since educators in the Foundation Phase are dealing with learners that have better oral inclinations than written. Active oral experiences in the OBE literacy context means conversing, discussing and *interacting* with adults and peers.

This type of collaboration enhances the *communicative* potential of talk. It does this by providing opportunities for learners to explain their thoughts to others and consolidate their understanding from the public statements they receive about their learning.

Talking and active listening also enhances *reflection*. The feedback that the learner receives assists her in adjusting her thoughts by becoming more self-aware. Review and interpretation forms an integral part of the process. Learners are forced to think about not only what they have done but also how the response of others affects them (Howe 1992:11). This results from a keen sense of observation.

4.5.5 OBSERVATION AND SIGNING

Both these skills have been included in the LLC learning area in order to create a greater awareness of the diverse society people live in. Observation is a skill needed throughout the curriculum. It refers to noticing or paying selective attention to something (De Boo 1999:7). In a whole language context it is referred to as viewing

and observing with a focus. In order to sharpen learners' powers of observations, educators need to model the qualities associated with the skill. This assists learners in sharing their ideas and responses. They read and write their observations. As they do this they become more critical and perceptive of the world around them (Schwartz and Pollishuke 1990:5). Signing has been specifically included as it is one of the official languages in South Africa and as such it has to be reflected in the new multilingual context. It can be used effectively to allow learners to make meaning through non-verbal communication.

4.6 THE USE OF LEARNING CENTRES

All of the above skills can be adequately accommodated in the various activities at learning centres that help realise both the COs and the SOs of the LLC learning area. A learning centre or activity centre is one way of organising instruction so that learners can take ownership of their learning. It is usually a specific area in the classroom or school where the learner can work in a small group or independently. It is highly compatible to AL as it allows the learner to use his basic skills to explore, estimate, experiment, and question and hypothesise. This can be highly challenging for the learner working independently (Dhand 1995:1).

In the Foundation Phase, educators can set up a reading, writing, publishing, listening, maths and a language centre. The reading and listening centres may be permanent, while the others may be temporary or used for a specific purpose for a

short period of time (Schwartz & Pollishuke 1990:59). It is suggested that educators arrange these learning centres according to their programme organisers. The activities designed for the learning centres can help revise and consolidate the basic skills that the learner has already acquired.

4.7 CONCLUSION

Upon examining the new literacy context, it was found that OBE uses multidimensional literacies as a blueprint for the Literacy Learning Programme. The focus is also on “active literacy” as a means to empower learners with a critical disposition to make meaning. Seven SOs, AC, performance indicators and range statements guide the LLC learning area - one of eight. These are designed to assist educators in planning learning experiences in the Literacy Learning Programme.

Each aspect of AL was related to actions associated with ALP in order to find evidence of these concepts within the LLC learning area. It was found that both the key aspects and the actions of AL are extremely compatible to the SOs and AC of the LLC learning area.

An examination of the LLC learning area also revealed that the basic skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking is approached in a holistic and integrated way that is typical of the whole language approach. This approach favours AL. The inclusion of observation and signing as basic skills, is also evidence of sensitivity to

the aspects of AL in the Literacy Learning Programme. Learning centres can also be introduced in the Literacy Learning Programme in order to afford learners the opportunity to *experience, reflect, interact* and *communicate* ideas related to a programme organiser. They can also serve to revise and consolidate the basic skills in the Literacy Learning Programme.

The next chapter will focus on AL at the research site of grade two classrooms. The action research cycle as proposed by Zuber-Skerritt will be used in order to examine the research problem.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

AND RESULTS OF THE STUDY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research problem by means of an action research project in grade two of the Foundation Phase. The research team consists of five educators who are active in developing the solution to the research problem. The research problem can be identified as: What should a model of active learning within the LLC learning area of the Literacy Learning Programme look like? The four-moment action research model as proposed by Zuber-Skerritt (1992:13) will be used to solve the problem.

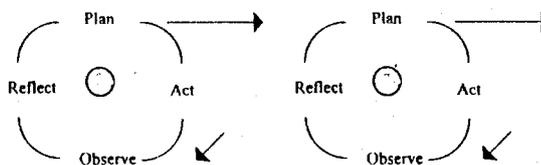
Each cycle of this four-moment action research model consists of the four major moments, viz., *plan*, *act*, *observe* and *reflect*. Although more than one cycle is usually completed in this type of research, this study was undertaken in only one cycle where the four moments assist in analysis of the research problem. The reason for completing a single cycle is the time involved in completing a cycle in this research (four months) as well as the constraints of the costs involved (see par. 5.7.2).

The phase organiser *Communication* and the programme organiser *Advertisements* form the learning context. Four stages, viz., classbuilding and teambuilding, whole class discussion, group work and individual work are applied sequentially in order to encourage AL and ownership of the learning experience. Towards the end of the chapter the research team is able to make deductions about the solution to the research problem after testing the four stages out a few times.

5.2 THE FOUR-MOMENT ACTION RESEARCH MODEL

5.2.1 CLARIFICATION OF THE FOUR MOMENTS

FIGURE 5:1 - ZUBER-SKERRITT'S FOUR-MOMENT ACTION RESEARCH MODEL



(Source: Zuber-Skerritt 1992:13)

Zuber-Skerritt (1992:11) explains the four major moments by focusing on activities normally associated with them. The model begins with a *plan*. At this stage the researcher analyses a problem and works out a strategic plan outlining the outcomes.

The next step requires the researcher to *act* in terms of the plan. It is implementation by some sort of intervention. This followed by evaluation of the intervention by appropriate methods and techniques. Here the researcher *observes* intently with the aim of monitoring effects, noting problems and identifying key issues. The final moment involves interpretation in terms of the outcomes stated in the planning stages. This means that the researcher reflects on the results of the evaluation and the whole action in the research process. This leads to informed planning, which triggers off a new cycle leading to improved *planning, acting, observing* and *reflecting* on the same problem. These actions continue until the problem is resolved.

5.2.2 THE FOUR MOMENTS AS THEY FEATURE IN THE RESEARCH

Although each moment is based on the model proposed by Zuber-Skerritt, it has been tailored to suit the research problem. During the *planning* stage statements are made about the critical and specific outcomes of the LLC learning area, teaching strategies to be used, mechanisms built in to encourage ALP and resources. The research team also explains how the actions, in terms of the outcomes, can be implemented. The plan is then implemented and this is followed by *observation*. Dialogues and direct quotations sometimes feature in order to present the observations as vividly as possible. The symbol **E** will be used to represent the word educator and the symbol **L** will be used to represent the word learner. The observations are *reflected* upon in terms of the identified problem. The moments of *planning, action* and *observation*

are revisited in order to assess their implications for a model of AL. This leads to the formulation of a model for AL.

5.3 THE EXAMINATION OF ACTIVE LEARNING AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Throughout this chapter we will be referring to AL in the manner presented in Chapter Four (par. 4.4). Each aspect of AL is associated with an action or actions of ALP – the doing aspect (*experiencing*), the thinking aspect (*reflecting*) and the collaborative aspect (*interacting* and *communicating*).

The Literacy Learning Programme also includes the eight learning areas (see Chapter One par. 1.4). It is not possible to examine the research problem in all eight learning areas. This study is confined to the LLC learning area of the Literacy Learning Programme.

5.4 THE RESEARCH TEAM – THE PARTICIPANTS

The researcher took the role of a facilitator to guide and support the five participants in the research team. As an educator in the Foundation Phase, the researcher was also a participant. As a facilitator, the researcher had to explain the theoretical framework behind the research problem and how it translated in practical terms. This meant the application of co-operative learning strategies and heterogeneous grouping of

learners. Initially some participants were reluctant to use any alternatives to ability groupings. They felt that any grouping contrary to the latter was unproductive and resulted in high noise levels. Participants also expressed a lack of understanding of the terminology that was used in the chosen SOs in the LLC learning area. All of the above was clarified at the initial meetings of the planning stage and during the implementation stage of the research.

Generally, as a facilitator the researcher provided a sounding-board to try out ideas and reflect on actions. As a participant the researcher became a co-partner. Both the roles were necessary to provide information to participants at meetings.

In order to ensure that the participants were favourably disposed towards the research, the researcher held weekly meetings. The initial meetings were designed to clarify the COs and SOs. The participants were given time to reflect on the above design before the final plan for the research was adopted. Since the topic the research team was dealing with was new to most participants, the early stages of implementation required a lot of direction from the researcher. Towards the latter part of the research the meetings became more collaborative and analytical. Here the researcher responded as a participant. The data collected was reflected upon. These meetings looked at the key aspects of AL as they evolved. Problems and effects of actions were also discussed.

5.5 DATA COLLECTION

- Diaries

Alrichter, Posch and Somekh (1993:11) view the diary as a means to document one's perceptions and observations across the different stages of the research process. In this research, the participants kept a diary on a continuous basis in order to record reactions, interpretations and explanations. Some participants structured the diary to reflect the date, area of focus and reactions. This assisted in quick location of information. The diary served as an important tool for discussion at meetings. Reactions recorded also helped to compare the effect of actions in the different grade two classrooms.

FIGURE 5:2 – AN EXCERPT FROM A DIARY

| Date | Area of focus | Reactions |
|-------|------------------|---|
| 11/08 | Role performance | - Although learners were given descriptions of roles they had to play some battled to execute them effectively. - Facilitators tended to dominate. |

- Tape Recordings

Participants used the tape recorder to record segments of the interaction in the various stages. These recordings included interactions between educators and learners and amongst learners themselves. They assisted in providing information on the mental actions of learners. Initially when learners were taped, they were extremely conscious of their reactions. The tape recorder was also a novelty to some. After a brief explanation of its use and frequent recordings, the learners began to react more naturally.

- Video

The research team wanted to get a holistic picture of the discussion lesson. Some participants suggested the use of a video camera. One of the participants managed to secure the services of a colleague who offered to video tape the lesson. Whilst the recording assisted in analysing behaviour patterns of learners, it proved to be too distracting as a means of gathering data. The person handling the camera was also an amateur and had difficulty in zooming in on the interaction between learners. This method of data collection was abandoned after the whole class discussion.

- Photographs

Photographs were taken in order to provide information on the nonverbal aspects. They assisted in identifying gestures and served as a good motivator to allow learners to explain their actions.

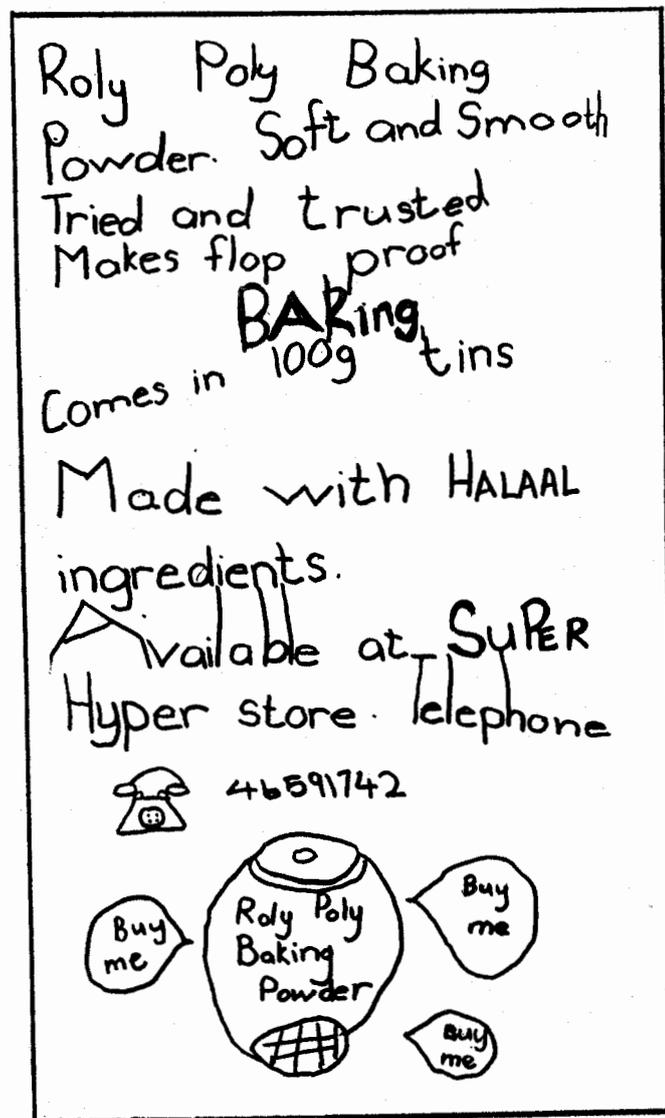
ILLUSTRATION 1 – EXAMPLE OF A PHOTOGRAPH DISPLAYING GESTURES



- Document analysis

Elliot (1991:78) states that documents can provide information, which is relevant to the issues and problem at hand. In this research samples of learners' work in the form of posters and supporting illustrations, became the objects of scrutiny.

FIGURE 5:3 – EXAMPLE OF A LEARNER'S POSTER



5.6 THE FOUR MOMENTS IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

5.6.1 PLANNING

The research team acknowledged the fact that although learners were together for the past six months, they did not share a close partnership. This was due to the fact that their individual performance always took precedence over group efforts. Even when co-operative group work was undertaken, learners lacked the interpersonal skills to make it a productive learning experience. This research was highly dependent on collaborative behaviour – a key aspect of AL. The research team, therefore, had to build interpersonal skills as part of a programme for AL. Participants studied the COs keeping in mind the concept of *Tirisano* (see Chapter Three par. 3.2.3). They identified one CO that was extremely pertinent to collaborative behaviour. This CO underpins the whole programme that follows – see Chapter One (par. 1.2.3). CO 4 relates to collaboration of learners.

CO 4 – Learners work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community.

Whilst this CO tended to be focal to the research, the team also acknowledged that the COs relating to communication, problem solving, organisation, design and learning strategies were also pertinent.

The research team decided to begin with classbuilding, followed by teambuilding activities to help develop CO 4. In order to build community, it was decided to allow learners to choose a class name and draw up a class contract. For the teambuilding activities the learners would work in heterogeneous groups of four chosen by the educator according to ability, race and sex (see Chapter Three par. 3.5.2).

Although the learners were together as a class for the past six months, it was acknowledged that they would not be used to working in the combinations that would be chosen by the educator. The research team decided to use icebreakers. Abrami et al (1995:51) defines icebreakers as fun activities used to put people at ease when they first meet. They were to choose a group name and perform different roles – facilitator, scribe, materials manager and Captain Quiet (see Chapter Three par. 3.5.2).

Once the foundational planning for group skills was in place, the research team had to look at a phase organiser in order to find a broad context for the learning experience. The phase organiser *Communication* was chosen. We discussed the application of the latter for grade two learners. This was followed by the choice of a programme organiser. After much deliberation the programme organiser *Advertisements* was chosen. The research team felt that this topic formed part of the visual print that learners encountered in their daily lives and would allow for creative use of language and adequate opportunities for AL. This led to the choice of SOs that best related to

the programme organiser. The research team studied the SOs and the AC of the LLC learning area. The following SOs and AC were chosen

SO 1 Learners make and negotiate meaning

AC 2 Meaning is constructed through interaction with other language users.

SO 2 Show critical awareness of language usage

AC 1 Purpose, audience and source of texts.

The next step in the plan was to look specifically at how to develop the programme organiser *Advertisements* in relation to the above SOs and AC. The research team wanted to encourage AL in a manner that allowed learners to become shareholders and owners of the learning experience (see Chapter One – par. 1.2.4). Participants, therefore, built in mechanisms to encourage ALP. These mechanisms appear in italics in bold print.

As an introduction to the programme organiser the whole class discussion was chosen as a teaching strategy. The research team viewed discussion as a bridge between direct instruction and learner-centred instruction. Both these types of interventions were invaluable in the introductory stage. It was agreed that the focus would be on the actualisation of learners' prior knowledge of advertisements by using the *listen, think, pair, share strategy* (see Chapter Three par. 3.5.1) within the context of Mother's Day. The creation of a class advertisement would begin by using a *mind map* to illustrate learners' responses. A checklist would then be drawn with the help

of learners in order to guide the creation of a class advertisement. The research team also decided to use “*think aloud*” commentaries while creating the class advertisement – see Chapter Three (par. 3.4.6).

The research team then looked at how learners were to create their advertisements. Within the AL context of the SOs and the AC of the LLC learning area participants wanted learners to exercise the roles they would have been subjected to in the teambuilding stage, share ideas and be creative. It was agreed that learners working in groups selected during teambuilding would best accommodate this. They would create a group advert. A *tracking sheet* similar to the class checklist would be given to each facilitator in a group after the materials manager chose an object to advertise. This would assist in guiding learners on the details to include in their advertisements and tracking of their progress. Once the groups completed their advertisements, they would report their creations.

Although the research team could have stopped the planning at this point and assessed AL as a process, they felt that group work had the tendency to dissolve the individual’s performance and true ownership would not manifest itself. This led to planning of an additional set of activities to allow for the demonstration of individual competence. The research team knew that they were dealing with learners that got bored very easily. Participants had to, therefore, think of a manner in which they could observe the learner’s competence as an individual without merely asking them to create advertisements individually. It was decided to arrange the classroom into a

flea market with four clusters of tables. Each cluster would have a name and provide different options for learners to choose from. The following *options* were agreed upon.

The *wanted more details* table. There would be a few advertisements with sketchy details. Learners had to find ways to make it alive.

Look for powerful words to sell me. Items without labels would be placed here to assist learners. Newspapers and magazines would also be provided.

Let us guess your advertisement. Here learners could include as many details as they wanted in order to give us a clue to their advertisements.

Make a model to advertise. Resources like cardboard, glue, scissors, newspapers, magazines and crayons will be available to the learners for construction purposes.

The final plan for the research was as follows.

FIGURE. 5:4

SUMMARY OF THE PLAN FOR THE RESEARCH

1. Critical Outcome Four

Learners work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation and community. *Classbuilding and teambuilding activities.*

2. Phase Organiser: *Communication*

3. Programme Organiser: *Advertisements*

4. SOs and AC in the LLC learning area

SO 1 Learners make and negotiate meaning.

AC 2 Meaning is constructing through interaction with other language users.

SO 2 Show critical awareness of language usage.

AC 1 Purpose, audience and source of texts.

5. *The whole class discussion*

Actualisation of prior knowledge

Creation of a class advertisement

6. *Group Work*

Creation of a group advertisement and reporting the creations

7. *Individual Work*

Choosing options

From the summary it is evident that the research team was dealing with four stages, viz., classbuilding and teambuilding, the whole class discussion, group work and individual work. The stages were implemented in the sequence mentioned above. The moments of action and observation will be discussed under these four stages.

5.6.2 ACTION

5.6.2.1 CLASSBUILDING AND TEAMBUILDING

The learners were arranged as a large group and asked to think of names that they would like to be called besides grade twos. The educator wrote learners' suggestions on the board. Learners suggested names like Children of the South, Suminye, Whizz Kids, Fantasy Children, Power Rangers and Rainbow Kidz – spelling of the word “kidz” invented by learners. Learners then voted by a show of hands for the best name for their grade. Learners drew their own picture to illustrate the name. All efforts were stuck on a chart around the class name. Each learner then chose a space and wrote her name on the chart. This was followed by the drawing up of a class contract – based on ideas from Abrami et al (1995:56). Each learner had to complete a table that follows:

FIGURE. 5:5 - BUILDING A CLASS CONTRACT

| Three things that others do to make it difficult to learn | Three things that make it easier to Learn |
|---|---|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |

Learners discussed and compared the items on their list with a partner. The pairs then joined another pair to form groups of four. The groups discussed helpful behaviour in the classroom. A reporter was chosen to report back on the ideas of the group. The educator wrote down the ideas as they were suggested. The common ones were processed into a contract that each learner signed. It began with the words “I will...” It was duplicated on a large chart entitled “Rules for group work”. The chart began with “We will...” The following is an example of a learner’s contract.

FIGURE. 5:6 - EXAMPLE OF A LEARNER’S CONTRACT

RAINBOW KIDZ

RULES FOR GROUP WORK

I hereby promise that I will

use a quiet voice.

take my turn.

listen to my friends when they are talking.

listen to my facilitator.

ask my facilitator and/or a friend for help before I call my teacher.

share my material.

SIGNED BY _____

ON THIS DAY _____

This was followed by several group activities in order to accommodate teambuilding. The latter began with the use of an icebreaker. The learners had to begin by saying “I am ...” followed by “I like...” The learners ended off with “So who are you...” Learners were allowed to use pictures to communicate personal information. After this each group chose a name and made badges to illustrate their name and identify

themselves. Learners were then given discussion topics, questions and pictures to allow them to communicate freely, take turns, share ideas and assist each other.

Every learner in the group was then allocated a role. Learners were given a brief description of each role.

Facilitator – checks that everyone understands the task given.

Scribe – writes down the group's ideas.

Captain Quiet – checks on behaviour.

Materials manager – gets the materials needed to complete the task.

The learners were required to demonstrate their competence in a particular role when group activities were in progress.

5.6.2.2 THE WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION

All learners were seated on the carpet in front of the classroom. In order to accommodate learners (ranging from forty-six to fifty) the desks had to be stacked against the wall.

The actualisation of prior knowledge began with a problem. Learners were asked to imagine that an advertising company employed them. Their duty was to think of all the gifts that they could advertise for Mother's Day. The *listen, think, pair, share* strategy was introduced. It was represented as follows:

FIGURE. 5:7 - LISTEN, THINK, PAIR, SHARE

| | |
|--------|-------|
| LISTEN | THINK |
| PAIR | SHARE |

ILLUSTRATION 2 – LISTEN, THINK, PAIR, SHARE STRATEGY IN ACTION



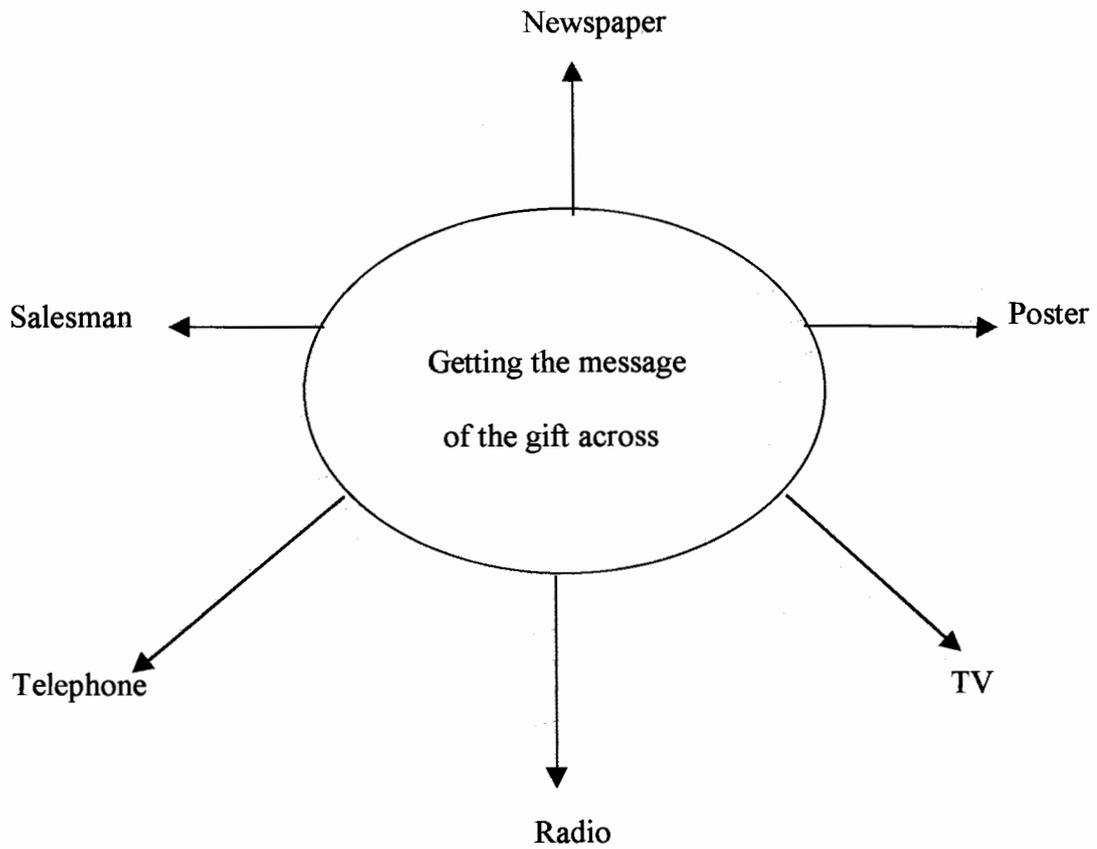
A ball of prestik was placed on each word in order to guide learners on the actions they should be performing. A large chart was placed on the board and a few learners were asked to draw their gift ideas. Chocolates, perfumes, kitchen appliances, shoes, cellphones and sewing machines were drawn.

The next step was to set the scene for the creation of the class advertisement. Learners were then required to think about how they were going to get the message of the gift across to family members. A mind map was drawn to illustrate learners' ideas.

ILLUSTRATION 3 – WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION ON THE MIND MAP



FIGURE. 5:8 - MIND MAP OF LEARNERS' IDEAS



The learners were then shown an advertisement supplement with typical Mother's Day gift ideas. Learners commented on the common details the gifts had. This helped to draw up the class checklist similar to the example provided.

FIGURE 5:9 - DETAILS ON THE CLASS CHECKLIST

| |
|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OUR CLASS CHECKLIST</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>DETAILS WE MUST INCLUDE</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Name2. Headlines3. Benefits4. Guarantee5. Price6. Telephone number7. Address8. Pictures |
|---|

When creating the class advertisement the participants in the research team chose a gift that the learner drew at the beginning of the discussion lesson. They used the class checklist in order to create an advertisement. Learners gave all the suggestions for the advertisements. The participants also used “think aloud” commentaries to guide and organise the creation of the advertisement.

5.6.2.3 GROUP WORK

Prior to the actual creation of the group advertisement, the participants used the tracking sheet, which was similar to the class checklist to revise the details to be included. Learners were then advised on how to use it – ticking a detail as they finished. Rules for group work were also revised to guide interaction. Learners were then briefed on the *Lucky Dip* – explained below. At this point learners were told about reporting on their advertisements. Facilitators were reminded that every member in the group should be able to read and explain the advertisement as anyone could be chosen as a reporter at the point of the report back.

The group work began with the *Lucky Dip*. Learners were asked to bring objects that they would like to advertise. Learners brought toys, kitchen utensils, stationery items and shoes. The participants increased variety by putting some additional objects like items of clothing, hair accessories, and cans with labels and jewellery. The objects were put into a large plastic bag. All material managers were called out. They had to close their eyes and choose an object. The selected object became the item that the group advertised.

ILLUSTRATION 4 – THE LUCKY DIP AND GROUP WORK IN ACTION



5.6.2.4 INDIVIDUAL WORK

The research team wanted learners to shop around for an activity that suited them. Participants knew that whilst some learners would manage the choice without any intervention, there were others that would benefit from it. The ideal would have been for the participants to take all learners at once for the “shopping around”. However, due to the large numbers the class was split in two.

The participants took the learners to each of the four tables. One learner was asked to read the instructions on the table. Once this was completed learners were free to choose an activity that suited them.

ILLUSTRATION 5 – THE FLEA MARKET



5.6.3 OBSERVATION

5.6.3.1 CLASSBUILDING AND TEAMBUILDING

The research team generally viewed this stage as extremely challenging for learners. There had to be constant intervention regarding the importance of sharing and being amenable to different points of view in a group. Learners did, however, enjoy the prospect of having their ideas acknowledged in a class contract, the choice of a class name and a group name.

It was noticed that although learners were excited at the prospect of offering ideas for a class name, some were still baffled by the fact that their name was not chosen. The participants took on the role of facilitators in order to create an understanding of choice in a large group. The following excerpt is an indication of the dilemma experienced after the class name was chosen.

E: We will now be called the “Rainbow Kidz”. Are you happy with our new name?

Learners in chorus: Yes/No

The educator then allows two learners who said “no” to respond.

L1: I wish you could have chosen the name I gave you.

L2: It’s not fair. The name I gave you was very pretty.

Educator then directs the next question to the whole class.

E: Why couldn’t I have chosen the name given to me by both these learners?

L3: We voted. Their names did not get the most votes.

E: If I had taken one of the names they had given, would that have been fair?

L4: No – then you will be a cheater.

From the above it is evident that the learners had to be questioned to lend credibility to the procedure that was followed. The words “fair” and “unfair” were defined in the context of a voting procedure. The latter gave learners an indication of how to deal with decisions in a large group. The use of the word “cheater” is also an indication that the learner is *experiencing* the ethical dimension of communal practice. All of the above serve to indicate the collaborative aspect of AL in early progress.

The learners responded favourably to the exercise where they had to list three things that others do to make it difficult to learn. Speaking out of turn, being selfish and not following instructions were some common responses. The word “others” was a good choice as it allowed learners to shift the blame of bad behaviour to learners other than themselves. This reveals information about both the doing and thinking aspects. The learner first divorced herself from the bad behaviour, *experienced* and *reflected* on what it means. The written *communication* demonstrated the learner’s perception of the situation.

The commencement of teambuilding with the icebreaker helped learners to relax. Some were reluctant to share personal information. This was evident amongst

learners of English as second language. While they were quite comfortable with the “I am ...” part, they had difficulty in talking about the “I like ...” part. In groups where this occurred, those with stronger verbal skills in English were asked to assist by finding the English words for the pictures these learners chose to get their message across. Some learners were reluctant to assist. Participants drew their attention to the fact that all of them shared a common name and should strengthen the bond by helping each other. Members that rendered assistance were praised for their efforts.

The role performance proved to be problematic initially. Learners were not used to working in this manner. Despite being given role descriptions the learners still battled to execute them effectively to achieve collaboration. Some participants of the research team turned the role descriptions into questions that the learners used as a guide e.g. the facilitator had to now ask the question “Did everyone in my group understand the task given?” At the end of the activity they were asked to use the questions as a self-assessment tool. This worked fairly well with most learners. Participants generally viewed their role as facilitators during the classbuilding and teambuilding stage. Every effort was made to help and guide learners by eliciting their conception of the learning experience as a member of a group.

5.6.3.2 WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION

This stage was characterised by sharing ideas and experiences in a large group. Participants noted that ownership of the learning experience had very broad

application at this stage. Generally the educator tended to be in the forefront. Learners did, however, begin the initial step of *experiencing* the programme organiser *advertisements* from their perspective and develop skills for the creation of advertisements.

The learner's first test for collaboration after the classbuilding and teambuilding stage began with the *listen, think, pair, and share* strategy. Some learners merely paired up and *interacted* with the person next to them whilst others looked for members of their group. Generally learners got on quite well during this stage. The action of "think" revealed important information on the thinking aspect. Some learners continued tapping their temples. Upon questioning the learner, she indicated that she was telling her mind to "roll out ideas". By inventing the gesture, the learner was able to give herself a cue for *reflection* on the problem posed.

Learners exchanged ideas quite comfortably with their partners as the theme of Mother's Day was within their scope of *experience* - the doing aspect was something they could identify with. Some learners did not live with their mums and a few did not have mums. The participants used their role as facilitators to help learners to relate to people that fulfilled this role in their lives. Learners related grandmothers and guardians with the maternal role and this assisted them in thinking about ideas to advertise. The type of gifts drawn (par. 5.6.2.2) were typical gifts associated with Mother's Day and served to indicate a realistic interpretation of the event.

Learners responded well to the mind map. Initially when the skeleton of the mind map was drawn, learners began making meaning and *reflecting* on the diagram as it related to their environment. Some stated that it looked like the sun, a wheel with spikes, a spider, a cactus. The thinking aspect was also revealed when learners were questioned on the use of the mind map. The following are some of the reactions noted.

“To empty our brains of ideas on how we can sell something”

“To pencil what we know so that others can see it”

Some learners of English as second language experienced difficulty in associating with words related to advertisements. Participants used learners who were proficient in the mother tongue - Zulu and English to codeswitch in order to help them (see Chapter Four par. 4.4.3). The participants expressed their concerns regarding their limited Zulu skills. This did affect the quality of interaction between those with limited English verbal skills and the educator.

The creation of the class advertisement stimulated learners' creativity. By allowing the learners the opportunity to make text-related decisions, they began exercising their role as an audience. They *reflected* and offered advice on where to start writing, choice of colour, and length of text. The participants used their roles as assessors to accept or reject the suggestions made by learners. The following statement serves to

indicate the above ideas. It also serves to illustrate the awareness of audience and purpose.

E: “You suggested I use yellow and my paper is white. Will everyone be able to see the words on my advertisement if I write in yellow?”

The use of “think aloud” commentaries helped learners reinforce the actions necessary for the creation of the advertisement. The participants adopted the role of an expert to this end. They showed learners how experts think in the advertising context by verbalising their thoughts to guide the creation. The following statements serve as examples:

“I must make sure my advertisement has a name”

“It must have three to four powerful words”

“Is my picture related to the name?”

This allowed learners to go back and forth from checklist to advertisement in order to correlate the different aspects. It also served to stimulate learners’ opinions regarding the final choices that were made e.g. some learners felt that a detail like guarantee of a product was best left out because one would have to keep replacing and repairing the product if it was defective. This would mean more work and less money.

5.6.3.3 GROUP WORK

In this stage the participants noted that learners worked very hard to achieve ownership as a group. The key aspects of AL became more visible. It was found that whilst some learners used the mechanisms and skills provided in the whole class discussion, others innovated ideas to convey their advertisements. The interpersonal skills among members in the group improved as learners began to collaborate on the details in their advertisements.

As an introductory activity, the *Lucky Dip* proved to be quite stimulating for learners. They enjoyed the element of surprise. Some material managers stated the objects they would like to scoop out of the bag and made a conscious “feel for” the objects. This indicates that the skill of prediction normally associated with the thinking aspect in progress (see Chapter Three par. 3.2.3). Upon retrieving an object for the group advertisement, some learners waved their choices to other group members for approval. This type of collaboration indicates that the group already began serving as a point of reference to reaction.

Once the task of creating a group advertisement was underway, it was noticed that there was better co-operation amongst members as compared to the teambuilding stage. Learners’ prior experience in the group and the revision of the rules for group work assisted in this direction.

Learners used different starting points to begin their advertisements. Some groups started with a discussion on several aspects of the tracking sheet. Others concentrated on detail one, which was the name - completed this and then went on to the next detail. The choice of a name for the advertisement revealed ownership in terms of the procedure that was followed. The following are some of the procedures used by learners:

- voting on a name and choosing the name with the highest number of votes;
- writing the name on pieces of paper, crumpling it and asking the facilitator to choose one;
- the adoption of a suggestion given by a member;
- drawing a mind map of ideas and making a random pick.

From the above it is evident that whilst some of the learners adopted ideas that they were exposed to in the whole class discussion, others created their own procedures. The skills of application, finding, connecting and transforming which is normally associated with the doing and thinking aspects of AL is evident here.

The collaborative aspect was evident in the role performance of learners. It was interesting to note that although learners were given specific roles, they did not confine themselves to these roles. Building a shared understanding of the group advertisement meant that the task of understanding the creation went to members that were not the appointed facilitators. This was evident when learners collaborated on the meaning of the details on the tracking sheet. All members through the exchange

of meaning in conversation negotiated the interpretation of information on the tracking sheet. The *interaction* amongst learners, who were creating an advertisement on a chalkboard duster, serves as an indicator in this direction.

L1: We have to look at a headline for our advertisement.

L2: What shall we write here?

L3: (Clenches a fist). Some powerful words.

L1: I like the words "best in the world".

L3: "Cleans in a flash".

L2: This means that it cleans very fast.

L3: A duster cleans the board. "Cleans in a flash" is better.

The group finally decides on the words "cleans in a flash".

This excerpt also reveals the learners' critical awareness of language. The headline that was finally chosen is typically associated with the functions of a duster. It is also indicative of a collaborative effort to make a product appealing to an absent audience.

This collaborative effort was also evident in groups where the role of the scribe was split. In these groups it was agreed to give each member a portion of the script in the advertisement. This led to part ownership of the total script. In some groups this also improved the visual effect of the final product. The difference in the fonts and use of colour enhanced the creativity of the final product.

The creativity, which participants felt to be a common attribute of all three aspects of AL, manifested itself in a variety of ways. Learners took renowned names like “Glyco Lemon” and changed the first letter of the word. The name then read “*Parfo Lemon*”. “Organics” became “*Tallganics*”. Clicks Stores became “*Blicks Stores*”. This indicates that learners were able to use a known name as a source and create an original. By doing this they were using their knowledge of the alphabet and experimenting with letters to come up with names not very far off from the shared meanings of the audiences they were targeting. Learners also ventured into invented spelling e.g. *sooper*, *fantazztic*. Reversal of letters also featured in some advertisements. Upon questioning learners it was found that they were aware of this, but used it to make people look at their advertisements and read what they had to say. Both use of reversals and invented spelling reveal *experiencing* thought processes from an authors and audience point of view. It is also indicative of the learner’s willingness to take risks in order to make sense of her experiences.

The doing and thinking aspects were evident in the report back of the group advertisement. Learners found different ways to *communicate* their creations. Groups created models of their products, sang the words in the advertisement and acted out the advertisement. Those that created models first used the real objects from the *Lucky Dip* to create a picture in the advertisement. They combined the attributes of the real-life objects and their pictures to create a model. The realistic creation of pictures and models deepened their role as active learners. Their problem-solving abilities were noted in the use of design, colour and texture. The report back

in terms of songs and dramatisation served to illustrate learners' initiative to *communicate* a written form in a dramatic way. All of the above demonstrates learners' resourcefulness to get a message across. They chose their own medium to respond to a task. This deepened their participation and the ownership of the learning experience.

Participants stated that choosing the reporter at the point of the report back generally helped to foster individual accountability for the group creation. When reporters were questioned on their advertisements, some were able to answer quite confidently. Some reporters identified gaps in their knowledge when exposed to an audience. Other members of the group generally assisted them to clarify meaning.

In most instances the participants used the role of the facilitator to guide learners with different aspects in their group creations. In some groups the participants had to intervene as some learners began to dominate. The facilitators in the group wanted to track all the actions without entertaining the participation of other members. Some participants responded by physically placing the tracking sheet in the centre of the group. They encouraged the group facilitators to use words like "I think ..." followed by "What are your ideas on...". Intervention was also necessary to make the role of the Captain Quiet more effective. Participants introduced tokens for talking to maintain discipline. Objects like sticks, spoons and unifix cubes were used as tokens. One token was placed in each group. The Captain Quiets allowed members in a

group to share ideas if they had a talking token. This helped to keep the noise level down.

Throughout this stage participants used comments, questions and familiar starting points and integration of ideas to secure active responses from learners. The following are some pertinent examples.

- “I like your idea. Can you tell me how you arrived at it?”
- “Why did your group write the price in dark print?”
- “Look at the product your materials manager pulled out of the bag. Can you find details that you can use in your advertisement?”
- You said wiggly crayons. She said waggly crayons. Why not combine both – Wiggly Waggly Crayons.

By responding in this manner, the participants attempted to facilitate the role of an audience for learners’ efforts. The examples listed above are also an indication of the participants’ genuine effort for information and not a mere testing of knowledge of learners. The research team noted that this had a positive effect on the key aspects of AL. Learners were freed from the need to focus on educators’ answers regarding their creations.

5.6.3.4 INDIVIDUAL WORK

This stage saw ownership and AL at its best. Learners demonstrated the key aspects of AL according to their assimilation of the activities that were chosen. They were generally excited about the range of options available to them. The support base of the educator, peers and the strategies in the previous stages helped the learners to perform individually.

Once the learners chose their activities three working modes were noticed:

- learners formed their own cliques and completed their activity based on the advice of other group members
- learners working side-by-side but remaining focused on their activity. Interaction with others was only limited to requests for resources.
- learners that spent time talking and listening to others before finding their own space to complete their activity.

The key aspects of AL was evident in the strategies the learners used in order to complete their tasks. Some recruited others that they perceived to be experts. The request below is an example of an effort in this direction.

L: I have finished the powerful words for my advertisement but I cannot draw the picture. Please help me.

This is indicative of actions of an informed thinker. The learner knows her strengths and weaknesses. She completes the mental work of the task and subcontracts another learner to do the illustration. It is also interesting to note that both these learners were in the same group previously. The learner had developed recognition of a peer's talent and co-opted it.

Another strategy that became evident amongst those learners who completed their activities without minimal consultation, was the use of mental checklists. This is similar to "think aloud" commentaries used in the whole class discussion. These learners used the mental checklists to remain focused and organise the steps for their activities. They refused to be drawn into the conversations around them.

Learners' decision-making skills became apparent amongst those that worked in a clique. They generally chose the same activity but retained individual ownership. The interaction at the *wanted more details* table elucidates this. The responses below are directed at learner three.

L1: I think you should put in the price.

L2: The price is important. We put it in our group advertisement.

Learner three completes the advertisement without writing the price. It is evident that the group served as an advisory body (a source for a text) but the learner made the

final decision to reject the advice given. Meaning was made according to the learner's perception of important details.

Learners also used individual work to reveal the topic of *advertisements* from a cultural perspective. The dialogue below took place at the *create an ad* table (see par. 5.5 figure 5.3).

E: Can you read what you have written in your advertisement?

L: Made with halaal ingredients

E: What does that mean?

L: It means that it has no gelatin and I am a Muslim and I can eat it.

E: What is gelatin?

L: It is fat from the P I G (spells the word but does not directly say it).

This reveals the critical use of language. The learner is aware of the audience that is going to purchase her product. She uses her cultural background to decide on the details that should go on her advertisement. The association of gelatin with pig (an animal rejected by the Islamic faith) reveals the use of prior knowledge to *communicate* an advertisement that would be acceptable in terms of norms of ingredients in her culture. This is also an example of *reflective* thinking.

In this stage learners also demonstrated their ability to be critical of each other's work. This was especially evident when learners got a negative response e.g. "Your

model is ugly - yak". This resulted in learners *reflecting* on their creations and amending it to get approval from peers. The peers became valuable resources to perform.

The participants viewed their roles as co-partners and audiences to assist the meaning-making enterprise of learners. It was noticed that once learners began their individual creations, they required very little monitoring from the participants. There were fewer requests for help. Generally participants entered the interactions between learners by making requests for information, questioning and commenting on the creativity of ideas. Praise and encouragement were used to motivate learners to complete the given tasks.

5.7 REFLECTION ON THE MODEL

In this section the model is reviewed in terms of the four stages of the model of AL. This is followed by recommendations for an improved model.

5.7.1 THE FOUR STAGES

Upon reflecting on the four stages of classbuilding and teambuilding, whole class discussion, group work and individual work it was found that each stage helped to develop the aspects of AL and increase the ownership of learning by affording the

learners opportunities to *experience, reflect, interact* and *communicate*. A summary of our observation in terms of these actions is provided to elucidate this.

- *Classbuilding and teambuilding*

Classbuilding and teambuilding set the climate for inclusion by allowing learners to choose a class name and a group name. Empowerment and achievement in a collaborative context began to manifest as learners began *experiencing* different perspectives – as illustrated by the choice of the class name (see par.5.6.3.1). The role performance and sharing of personal information also assisted in *interacting* and *communicating* ideas to build a shared perspective.

- *Whole class discussion*

The whole class discussion served as a community of inquiry for the programme organiser *Advertisements*. Ownership of the learning experience was too broad to be of significance. This stage generally helped to build skills for the exploration in the next two stages. The actualisation of prior knowledge helped learners to *experience* the topic of Mother's Day by forging a link with their past experiences. The learners also broadened their frame of reference by looking at the possibility of grandmothers and maternal guardians as people receiving gifts on Mother's Day (see par. 5.6.3.2). The *listen, think, pair, share* strategy also gave learners the opportunity of *reflecting* on a problem from their perspective. Allowing learners to interact with a written text,

viz., the Mother's Day advertising supplement (see par.5.6.2.2) further enhanced this meaning-making enterprise. Harnessing the participation of learners developed skills for creation of advertisements.

- *Group work*

Group work allowed learners to experience the creation of an advertisement from a shared perspective with peers who had mixed abilities. Learners generally worked hard to achieve ownership. Peers became a valuable resource in this respect for example the duster advertisement (see par. 5.6.3.3). The sharing of the roles of facilitator and scribe helped in the meaning-making endeavour. The report back in terms of models, songs and role play is indicative of learners' efforts to be shareholders in their learning.

- *Individual work*

Individual work saw ownership at its best. Learners began *experiencing, interacting, reflecting* and *communicating* with peers and ideas in terms of how they assimilated the learning experience. The support received by the learner in the whole class discussion and group work helped her to perform on her own. The influence of the cultural background of learners also featured in this stage.

Finally the research team viewed the four stages in the learning sequence as an attempt to provide learners with expanded opportunities for AL (one of the four principles of OBE - Van der Horst & MacDonald 1997:22).

- *The role of the educator in the four stages*

Once classbuilding and teambuilding was in place it was noticed that as the learners participation and ownership increased, the role of the educator changed in terms of the support he offered. In the whole class discussion he led with a large number of learners. This required his expertise of modelling, assessing and facilitation. In group work he guided and supported small groups of learners by offering suggestions, asking questions and making information statements.

During individual work he engaged in low monitoring as the learners began constructing their own ideas. He entered discussions as an equal partner. His suggestions presented only one view among a host of others.

5.7.2 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED

During this study the research team experienced a few problems that created a delay in the implementation of the four stages. Some participants did not attend meetings. This was due to personal commitments. A few principals were also reluctant to release participants despite initially signing notices outlining the nature and purpose

of the research. They felt that the research project was an optional extra if time permitted. This posed problems with regard to the knowledge and management of the research project. This problem was partially solved by telephonic communication. The absent participants, however, missed out on the healthy discussion that took place at the meetings.

The participants also expressed their frustration at the decoding of complex terminology as reflected in the SOs and AC of the LLC learning area. Numerous information sessions had to be provided to create a common understanding of the research programme. The cost involved in participation in the programme also had a negative impact on the commitment of the participants.

The cycle implemented lasted for four months. A few participants of the research team showed a lack of interest towards the latter part of the research. This was due to the perception that curriculum renewal was the task of the Foundation Phase advisor in the Department of Education.

The research team had to also contend with the practical constraints that delayed the completion of the stages in the research. Participants had to cope with learner absenteeism, nurses' visits, photographs, talks by outside speakers and excursions.

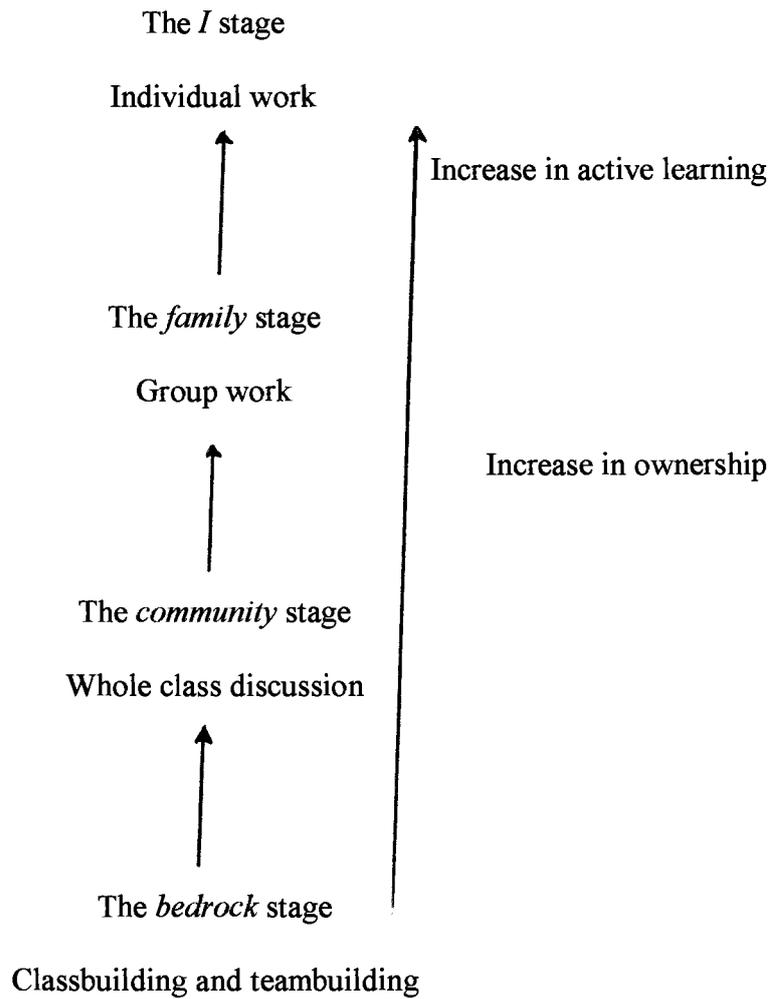
5.8 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The results of the action research project indicate that AL is enhanced by the application of the four stages of classbuilding and teambuilding, whole class discussion, group work and individual work in a learning sequence. Evidence indicates that this is the solution to a model of AL that can guide ALP in the Literacy Learning Programme.

Learners are afforded adequate opportunities to become shareholders in the learning experience by *reflecting, experiencing, communicating* and *interacting* with peers, adults and ideas. The partnership and camaraderie that developed as the stages in the sequence progressed has motivated the research team to call the model “The *Tirisano* Model of Active Learning”.

The four stages have been renamed to highlight the support they offer. Classbuilding and teambuilding are viewed as prerequisites for AL. They form the “*bedrock* stage”. Whole class discussion is characterised by exploration of new skills in a community. It is thus called “the *community* stage”. Group work helps learners to gel together and produce a shared product using the skills from the previous stage. It is referred to as “the *family* stage”. The individual efforts of the learner are recognised in the “*I* stage”.

FIGURE. 5:10 - THE TIRISANO MODEL OF ACTIVE LEARNING



Prerequisites to drive the sequence forward

5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN IMPROVED MODEL

After reflecting on the results of the action research project, the research team is able to make the following recommendations for an improved model of AL in the Literacy Learning Programme.

- Bearing in mind that AL and the SOs in the Literacy Learning Programme is still new to most Foundation Phase educators, the research team recommends that all four stages, viz., class and team building, whole class discussion, group work and individual work be introduced at the beginning of the year.
- The research team is also aware of the fact that there will be some learners that will not feel confident by the final stage in the learning sequence. In this case, the team recommends that the educator offer intensive support and design new tasks based on the same outcomes to scaffold learners' understanding. Lessons should be specially tailored to address the problematic areas so that the learner can ultimately demonstrate the desired competence. This could mean the return to a new version to the stages in the learning sequence.
- All the stages in the sequence will not necessarily be used for every learning experience. It can be modified to suit the nature of outcomes. The research team believes that if a choice has to be made it should always be between group work and individual work. The whole class discussion should always be included as it

helps in the initial “coming together” and exploration of a new learning experience.

5.10 DATA VERIFICATION

This step involves ensuring the internal validity of the research. An important issue in data analysis is verification of the results. Poggenpoel (in De Vos (ed) 1998: 348-351) suggests using Guba’s model with *truth value*, *applicability*, *consistency* and *neutrality* as criteria applicable to assess trustworthiness of qualitative data.

This research will be measured using the aspects as proposed by Guba. A brief explanation of the aspect is given. This is followed by application of the description to the data in this study.

- *Truth value*

The truth value of qualitative research is obtained from the discovery of human experiences, as the participants in the research team perceive them. The researcher has to develop credibility of the study by representing the realities experienced by the participants as accurately as possible so that people who share that experience would instantly recognise the description (Poggenpoel in De Vos (ed) 1998:349).

This study fulfilled the criteria of truth value by ensuring that the research team worked from common crucial factors. The five participants in the research team were all experienced Foundation Phase educators teaching grade twos. All these grades were multiracial and the learner population per grade ranged from forty-six to fifty. This is typical of a South African classroom.

In addition to this the researcher was able to present the multiple realities experienced by the educators as common reactions to the stages in the model. This was done by holding weekly meetings to verify findings and develop a common understanding regarding key issues. These findings were substantiated by diary entries, tape recordings, photographs and document analysis (see par.5.5).

- *Applicability*

In a quantitative sense applicability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts. In qualitative research, however, the purpose is not to generalise findings but rather to describe a particular phenomenon. Guba (Poggenpoel in DeVos (ed) 1998:349) states that applicability embraces the concepts of fittingness or transferability. The latter is accommodated as long as the original researcher presents sufficient descriptive data to allow for comparison.

In this research the use of the four-moment action research model by Zuber-Skerritt, helped to provide descriptive data in a structure that can allow for comparison. The

four-moments of *plan, act, observe* and *reflect* assisted in developing the model of active learning. The moment of *planning* provides steps that can be used to develop a plan of action for a model of active learning (see par 5.6). The moment of *action* shows the procedure in implementing the stages in the model. The moment of *observation* helps one to document the reactions of learners and the roles played by the educator to promote active learning. The final moment of *reflection* helps to cement a model of active learning by revisiting the stages applied sequentially and analysing them in terms of the key aspects of AL.

Educators wanting to apply “The *Tirisano* Model of Active Learning” to their specific grades can use the four moments as a framework to compare and adjust programmes according to the level of complexity required.

- *Consistency*

In qualitative research the key concept is reliability. It is concerned with the extent to which a measure applied once, but by different people, yields equivalent results. The replication of testing procedures must not alter the findings (Poggenpoel in De Vos (ed) 1998:350).

“The *Tirisano* Model of Active Learning” was formulated after the application of one cycle of action research. The researcher is mindful of the fact that action research normally requires more than one cycle. However, due to time constraints and the cost

involved the researcher was unable to continue with further cycles. This, however, should not be viewed as a study lacking in reliability. After the one cycle of action the results of the study revealed that “The *Tirisano* Model of Active Learning” enhances ALP and ownership of learning in the Literacy Learning Programme. Bearing in mind the nature of the COs, SOs and the learner’s competence to handle them, the researcher also makes recommendations for an improved model (see par.5.9).

Educators wanting to apply the model should, therefore, study not only the model but also the recommendations for an improved model. This may result in choices being made after “the family stage” (whole class discussion) (see par. 5.9).

- *Neutrality*

Neutrality is normally referred to as the freedom from biased behaviour. Qualitative research, however, makes its findings more authentic by giving impetus to the subject’s perceptions and experiences relating to the study at hand. Guba’s model as it relates to neutrality has shifted the emphasis from the researcher to the data. Once truth value and applicability are established, the criterion of neutrality is satisfied (Poggenpoel in De Vos (ed) 1998:350).

In the previous paragraphs the researcher has confirmed the truth value and applicability of this study. It is, however, necessary to look at aspects that the

researcher has built in the various stages in order to present confirmation of data to attain neutrality.

The researcher used various mechanisms to provide examples of learners' responses and the actions of the participants in the research team. This was achieved by the use of dialogues (see par. 5.6.3.1, 5.6.3.3, 5.6.3.4), information statements (par. 5.6.3.2), comments (5.6.3.3) mechanisms for ALP (par. 5.6).

In view of the analysis presented above it may be concluded that the credibility of this research has been proven according to Guba's model.

5.11 SUMMARY

This chapter used action research to find a model of AL in the Literacy Learning Programme in order to guide teaching for ALP. Classbuilding and teambuilding, the whole class discussion, group work and individual work were identified as the stages for implementation within the context of CO 4 and other pertinent COs, SOs 1 and 2 in the LLC learning area of the Literacy Learning Programme. The phase organiser *Communication* and the programme organiser *Advertisements* formed the learning context for the stages after classbuilding and teambuilding.

The four stages were implemented in a sequence. Classbuilding and teambuilding helped develop the early foundations for collaboration. The whole class discussion

assisted in the actualisation of prior knowledge relating to *Advertisements* and developing skills for the creation of a class advertisement. Group work allowed learners to demonstrate their interpretations of advertisements as a team. Individual work saw the learner exercising her options relating to advertisements and engagement in personal creations. The movement through the different stages saw the increase in learner participation and gradual ownership of the learning process.

The results of the action research project provide adequate evidence for the four stages to be used as a model of AL to guide the teaching for ALP in the Literacy Learning Programme. Due to the spirit of camaraderie and partnership that developed in the stages of the sequence, the research team is inclined to call it “The *Tirisano* Model of Active Learning”. Guba’s model was used to verify the findings of this study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

From the researcher's experience as a district facilitator for Curriculum 2005 since 1997, it was evident that educators in the Foundation Phase were unable to make a shift in orientation to the teaching of literacy in the new Literacy Learning Programme. It was, therefore, essential to find a model of active learning in order to provide guidance on teaching for active learner participation within the Literacy Learning Programme.

"The *Tirisano* Model of Active Learning" solves the main problem of mapping a model for the Literacy Learning Programme to enhance ALP. It embraces "the *bedrock* stage" (classbuilding and teambuilding), "the *community* stage" (whole class discussion), "the *family* stage" (group work) and "the *I* stage" (individual work). These stages when applied sequentially promotes AL and ownership of the learning experience..

The investigation of the subproblems also revealed interesting findings. Upon examining the learning theories that related to ALP, it was found that both the transmissive and the constructivist approaches relate well to ALP in the Literacy

Learning Programme. The definitions of AL revealed the key aspects of doing, thinking and collaboration. The actions of *experience, communication, interaction* and *reflection* were identified as the essence of ALP – a related concept of AL. The examination into the role of the educator in promoting AL provided clarity on the role of the educator as a *facilitator, expert, model* and *assessor*. The in depth look at the new Literacy Learning Programme clarified the SOs and AC as they related to the key aspects of AL and the basic skills.

6.2 THE PROGRAMME OF INVESTIGATION

In the first chapter an introductory orientation to the main problem of AL in the Literacy Learning Programme of Curriculum 2005 was provided. The focus fell on the traditional literacy programme and its inadequacy to act as an effective model of AL as guidance to ALP in the new Literacy Learning Programme (see Chapter One par.1.7). In Chapter Two learning theories that relate to ALP are examined. Both the transmissive and the constructivist approaches are discussed and examined in terms of their relation of ALP. This was undertaken in order to help educators to see the value of both these approaches for AL in the Literacy Learning Programme. Since Foundation Phase educators had a narrow view of AL (Chapter Three par. 3.2) various definitions of active learning were probed. It was found that three key aspects govern the concept, viz., doing, thinking and collaboration (Chapter Three par.3.2.1). The actions associated with AL are presented as the essence of ALP. These actions refer to *experience, communication, interaction* and *reflection*.

Since the new Literacy Learning Programme is learner-centred the role of the educator goes beyond that of a transmitter of knowledge. In Chapter Three (par. 3.4) a comprehensive discussion on the educator as a *facilitator, model, expert* and *assessor* is provided in order to help understand the diverse roles the educator will undertake in order to actualise AL. Chapter Four uses the LLC learning area of the Literacy Learning Programme as a model to examine AL. The aim is to provide clarity on the SOs and their relation to AL and ALP. Chapter Five uses the action research model as proposed by Zuber-Skerritt to investigate a model of AL to provide guidance on the teaching for ALP in the Literacy Learning Programme. The four stages of classbuilding and teambuilding, whole class discussion, group work and individual work is applied sequentially and adopted as a model of AL also known as “The *Tirisano* Model of Active Learning”.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher after conducting an intensive literature study and action research is able to draw conclusions and make the following recommendations.

6.3.1 LEARNING THEORIES THAT RELATE TO ACTIVE LEARNER PARTICIPATION

Conclusions

It was found that some transmissive approaches, viz., learning theories of B.F. Skinner, Albert Bandura and the Information Processing Model can still be modified in order to facilitate ALP in Curriculum 2005. Both cognitive and social constructivisms (Chapter Two par. 2.3.2 & 2.6) have provided valuable insight into the philosophy of constructivism, which is the foundation of ALP. Cognitive constructivism as explained by John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner assists in elucidating learners' organisation of information, thought processes and insights on an individual level. Social constructivism, viz., the work of Lev Vygotsky provides valuable information on the role of adults and peers in creating shared meanings. It also helps to highlight the importance of attitudes and emotions in the learning experience.

Recommendations

- It is suggested that colleges of teacher education restructure their pre-service and in-service course content in order to make it more applicable to the outcomes of Curriculum 2005. Learning theories in particular must be presented in a user – friendly manner that can be easily translated into AL practices in the classroom.

The structure used by the researcher throughout Chapter Two – the examination of the theories and relation to ALP can be used to guide teachers on otherwise abstract information. Icons and dialogues can be used to bring these theories alive.

- Instead of merely providing content on the various learning theories, manuals can be designed as interactive texts more especially if it is a distance learning course. The essence of various learning theories must be explained in a learner-centred way. Educators can then be given problems in the classrooms based on the actualisation of AL using the learning theories. They can be asked to study the problems in the context of learning theories and offer solutions and alternatives.

6.3.2 ACTIVE LEARNING AND ACTIVE LEARNER PARTICIPATION

Conclusions

This study revealed that AL goes beyond the narrow focus of activity-based programmes (Chapter Three par.3.2). It deals with the deliberate effort of learners to make sense of their experiences. The identification of the three key aspects of doing, thinking and collaboration assists in understanding the complexity of the process of AL. The actions of *experiencing*, *communicating*, *interacting* and *reflecting*, which denote ALP is the essence of AL. The examination of the basic processes associated with AL, the developmental milestones of learners and characteristics of active

learners, have provided us with some guidelines for planning and implementation of learning programmes. The researcher views the release of the above information as an attempt to develop expertise in avenues that are relatively new to literacy teaching in the Foundation Phase.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Provincial Steering Committees of the Foundation Phase acknowledge the above and train district facilitators to use the information to design learning programmes for ALP. This must be cascaded to Foundation Phase educators at circuit level.
- Since AL and ALP deal with aspects that have general application to all learning experiences, it is recommended that they should be foundations to planning of all learning programmes. It is suggested that educators list the type of experiences they would offer in terms of doing, thinking and collaborative aspects. In order to visualise various AL experiences; it is recommended that educators use the list of active words mentioned in Chapter Three par. 3.2.3. Converting the actions of *experiencing, communicating, interacting* and *reflecting* into a checklist to monitor learners' activities, can facilitate the assessment of learning experiences.
- The promotion of AL in the Literacy Learning Programme requires flexible timetabling. It is suggested that educators use large blocks of time that is

adaptable to the changing needs of learners. This would promote longer and more sustained attention to tasks and accommodate intensive active investigation. The timetable must further accommodate interspersed daily input sessions and regular sharing times. This can be used for large group discussions, instructions, explanations, negotiation of curriculum and celebration of accomplishments.

6.3.3 THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR

Conclusions

It was found that the roles most compatible to the Foundation Phase learner related to the educator as a *facilitator*, an *expert*, a *model* and an *assessor* (Chapter Three par. 3.4). They can be effectively used to create a supportive climate for AL. The teaching strategies of discussion, co-operative learning and games, simulations and role play can mobilise the educator to adopt roles that enhances learners' active performance.

Recommendations

- Bearing the above points in mind it is recommended that every Foundation Phase educator be developed as a reflective facilitator. This would encourage the educator to constantly question his aims and actions, monitor his practice in terms

of the roles he plays in helping learners achieve the outcomes of Curriculum 2005.

- The roles undertaken by educators can be made explicit by holding demonstration lessons in specific aspects of literacy learning e.g. reading and writing. These lessons can be demonstrated at circuit support committee meetings by district facilitators or educators that have a good grasp of the roles. The lessons could be video taped and distributed to schools as a source of reference.
- It is also suggested that schools develop vibrant staff development programmes. The skills relating to the various roles of the educator can be presented as a workshop to educators of both the intermediate (grades four – six) and senior phases (seven – nine). This would help them to understand the Foundation Phase learner and adapt some roles to suit AL in their phases. This type of collaboration also assists in creating a holistic view of the learner as an active participant in the Literacy Learning Programme.

6.3.4 THE LLC LEARNING AREA AS A MODEL OF ACTIVE LEARNING

Conclusions

The examination of the LLC learning area revealed that the OBE Literacy Learning Programme encourages AL and ALP by embracing multidimensional literacies. They aim at empowering learners by promoting “active literacy” as a means to assist

learners in their meaning-making endeavours. The SOs and AC of the LLC learning area are designed to assist educators in planning learning experiences in the Literacy Learning Programme. It was found that both the key aspects of AL and the actions associated with ALP are well grounded in the SOs and AC of the LLC learning area. The basic skills are approached in a holistic way and integrated manner which is typical of the whole language approach. These basic skills can be further developed in learning centres around the classroom.

Recommendations

- The Department of Education has merely provided educators with the Foundation Phase Policy Document, a week of retraining on the new Literacy Learning Programme and intermittent circuit workshops. This is clearly inadequate to embrace the complexity of multidimensional literacies. It is important that educators at school form Foundation Phase cell groups and work out a policy of implementation for themselves. They can begin by analysing and simplifying the SOs and AC in terms of what they mean for the basic skills in literacy. In the absence of national expected levels of performance they can draw a “syllabus” to guide the teaching-learning process in the various grades.
- It is also important for schools to set up curriculum development units. These units must be given a budget for resources and the subscription to newspapers and journals that provide the latest developments in literacy learning. This would

help educators to update themselves with the latest trends – the whole language approach, reading for meaning, the eclectic approach (skill + meaning). Disadvantaged schools can enlist the assistance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for the purchase of resource material.

- In order to encourage development of the basic skills in the Literacy Learning Programme, it is suggested that educators provide the following opportunities for ALP.

**Speaking* – oral language development for rehearsal of thoughts, expression and clarification of ideas by way of problem solving activities, puppet centres, large group and small group discussion (see Chapter Four par. 4.5.4).

**Listening* – the promotion of active listening by read aloud story sessions, role playing, dramatisation, echo clapping and question and answer sessions (see Chapter Four par. 4.5.4).

**Reading* – the creation of meaningful reading experiences by daily read aloud experience, group reading, paired reading and predictable pattern book reading. Silent reading programmes must form part of the daily reading sessions. Educators are also encouraged to provide open-ended activities for reading as they promote the skills of comprehending, prediction, hypothesising and drawing conclusions. Creating a reading centre in the

classroom enhances this. Books at the centre must be renewed according to the programme organisers (see Chapter Four par.4.6).

**Writing* – Whilst the structural approach to writing is an essential lifeskill, writing as a process must receive more attention (see Chapter Four par. 4.5.3). Educators need to model the authorship of writing as a communicative process. Writing centres can also be set up to provide learners the opportunity to author their own texts. Completed texts can be stored in an “author’s basket” for leisure reading.

6.3.5 THE MODEL OF ACTIVE LEARNING AS GUIDANCE TO TEACHING FOR ACTIVE LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN THE LLC LEARNING AREA

Conclusions

This study used the four-moment action research model as proposed by Zuber-Skerritt in order to find a model of AL to assist in the teaching of literacy. The focus was on the LLC learning area in grade two. The actions of *plan, act, observation* and *reflection* assisted in organising the research process in a cycle.

The stages of classbuilding and teambuilding, the whole class discussion, group work and individual work were implemented as a sequence within the phase organiser

Communication and the programme organiser *Advertisements*. It was found that the learners were afforded adequate opportunities for ALP. The sequence allowed for development of collaborative behaviour, opportunities to make meaning and take ownership of the learning experience. This evidence led to the stages being expressed as a model of AL. Due to the spirit of camaraderie and partnership that developed in each stage, the research team is inclined to call it “The *Tirisano* Model of Active Learning”.

Recommendations

- We recommend that “The *Tirisano* Model of Active Learning” as a model of AL in the LLC learning area be implemented with all four stages viz. the *bedrock* stage (class and teambuilding), the *community* stage (whole class discussion), the *family* stage (group work) and the *I* stage (individual work). Educators can introduce the four stages at the beginning of the year in the Literacy Learning Programme (Chapter Five par. 5.8). With regard to planning for AL it is suggested that this begin with the assessment of learners’ competence to handle collaborative behaviour. Once this is completed, educators can develop the *bedrock* stage. When group skills are well established the *community*, *family* and *I* stages can then form a sequence on their own (Chapter Five par.5.8).
- Action research can assist educators in investigating their own classroom practice. Since Curriculum 2005 will evolve by the inputs suggested by educators, it is

imperative for every school to make action research part of their curriculum development plan. Educators must be briefed on the four moments of *plan, act, observe* and *reflect* to tackle the problematic aspects of their teaching. The mentors used for this process may be heads of departments or educators who display exceptional expertise with regard to curriculum. These people can form a team that inform and advise curriculum renewal using action research.

- The research team maintains that the key to planning for AL is a balance among the whole class, small group and individual activities. This balance can be achieved by using all three in some sort of combination to allow for both educator-directed and learner-initiated experiences for active participation. The following are some sequences that can be used for the SOs in the Literacy Learning Area after the *bedrock* stage.

Whole class discussion + group work + individual work

Whole class + group work

Whole class + individual work

It is suggested that the whole class discussion must always be part of the sequence. It helps to provide a basis for exploration of new topics and initial confidence building. It is also suggested that the educator uses different mechanisms e.g. mind maps and tracking sheets to secure ALP (see Chapter Five par. 5.6.1).

- This study recommends the use of heterogeneous groups during group work in order to share expertise. In grade one it is suggested that educators use pairs. This would require less structure and will also assist in helping learners to make the transition from being egocentric to being social.
- Once learners have the necessary interpersonal skills it is recommended that educators allow learners to become active designers of the learning experience. The educator can begin a new topic by asking learners what they already know, what they need to know and how they think their needs can be met. Their responses should be stated as outcomes and be used to guide the learning stages in the model. Such an approach will help to build activities around the interests and life experiences of the learners. Educators should always be on the look out for “teachable moments” during the implementation stage in order to motivate learners and help them with problems experienced.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

During the course of this study the researcher encountered problems that need further investigation. Although they can enrich our understanding of AL in the Literacy Learning Programme, they cannot be comprehensively discussed, as they do not fall within the scope of this research. The following themes require further research:

- A comparative study of the difference between AL in the Literacy Learning Programme of the Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase (grades four to six) of Curriculum 2005.
- Making an active start with the basic skills in literacy in the Foundation Phase of Curriculum 2005.
- Action research as a model for curriculum renewal at the site level of the classroom with special reference to the Literacy Learning Programme in the Foundation Phase.
- The role of the Foundation Phase head of department as support for AL in the Literacy Learning Programme.
- AL in alternatives to outcomes-based education in the Foundation Phase of Curriculum 2005.

6.5 SHORTCOMINGS OF THIS RESEARCH

The following are viewed as some of the shortcomings of this research.

- The implementation of only one cycle of the action research model. The ideal is to continue with a number of cycles until there is satisfaction that the practice has been improved. Due to the duration of each cycle (four months) and the cost involved we were unable to continue beyond the first cycle.
- The limitation to the LLC learning area. Since OBE favours a “transdisciplinary” approach (see Chapter One par. 1.2.1) this research would have been more

appropriate if it investigated a model of active learning from an integrated perspective in the Literacy Learning Programme.

- Educators lack of understanding of the COs and SOs of the LLC learning area (see Chapter Five par. 5.7.2). The terminology is viewed as complex and difficult to decode in terms of classroom practice. This led to numerous meetings to create a common understanding of what was required for the research in terms of implementation.
- Educators' lack of commitment to the curriculum renewal process. A few participants viewed the task of finding of model of AL in the Literacy Learning Programme as the job of the Foundation Phase advisors in the Department of Education (see Chapter Five par.5.7.2).
- The lack of support from principals for projects that involve renewal of educational practice.

6.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

“The *Tirisano* Model of Active Learning” solves the main problem relating to the formulation of a model of AL to guide ALP in the Literacy Learning Programme. This was achieved by using the four-moment action research model as proposed by Zuber-Skerritt. The sequential implementation of the *bedrock* stage (classbuilding and teambuilding), the *community* stage (whole class discussion), the *family* stage (group work) and the *I* stage (individual work) saw an increase in ALP and ownership of the learning experience.

An intensive literature study assisted in clarifying the subproblems. An investigation of the learning theories relating to both the transmissive and constructivist approaches revealed application of both to ALP. The transmissive approaches can be remodelled to accommodate ALP. The constructivist approaches provide knowledge on the learner as an active participant and are invaluable to Foundation Phase educators. It was also found that both the concepts of AL and ALP require educators to acknowledge the learner as one who can shape her own learning in terms of her prior knowledge and actions. In order to do this the role of the educator moves beyond the traditional transmitter of knowledge. This study provides insight into the role of the educator as a *facilitator, model, expert* and *assessor*. The examination of the LLC learning area of Literacy Learning Programme is an attempt to contextualise AL within SOs and should be viewed as an effort to help Foundation Phase educators to develop as experts in their field.

Due to time constraints and cost of implementation this study was undertaken in a single cycle. It was also limited to the LLC learning area. This may be viewed as a shortcoming of “The *Tirisano* Model of Active Learning” to the Literacy Learning Programme. It nonetheless serves as a starting point for Foundation Phase educators making a paradigm shift from the traditional literacy programme to the new Literacy Learning Programme of Curriculum 2005. It should be viewed as an indigenous model and a “helping hand” to achieving critical and specific outcomes within the programme.

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