

CHAPTER 6

TEACHING THE FIRST CYCLE

6.1 Introduction

Although the reconnaissance phase had taken almost a year to complete it was invaluable in allowing me to gain an overall prospective of the wide issues involved in the study as well as much of the detail that would be necessary and in place before I could continue. It allowed me to become familiar with and understand in some depth the natures, the strengths, the vulnerabilities and the weaknesses of street children. It provided an insight into their twilight world of disadvantage and deprivation, often of discouragement and despair but at other golden moments of remarkable optimism and bright hope. It inspired me to become involved in the establishment of a special needs school for them and to teach them Mathematics, Physical Science and about life for a year. It was not a theoretical exercise but a hands on, in the trenches, experience of an ugly and nasty side of society - a side which many choose conveniently not to consider or notice. It was heartbreaking, sad, enraging, exasperating and inspirational all at the same time. It forced me with a quiet and compelling urgency to reflect on myself and reminded me with the sharp prick of conscience of present and past privilege, of fortunate opportunity and continuing personal providence. It made me stop in my tracks and consider.

The spade work was complete, the context in place, the motivation sharp. Now it was time to plan and try to make a difference.

6.2 The planning of cycle one (P1)

6.2.1 The model of cycle one

Cycle one consisted of three phases. A planning phase (P1) where consideration was given to all the influences, both positive and negative, proximal and distant, which affected the problem and which had been collected during the reconnaissance phase. Some of these included the encouraging way I had been accepted and trusted by the children, their debilitating academic deprivation, the dichotomy between their psychological and emotional toughness and fragility, the unknown environment of the school and the uncertainty of how they and I would respond to our interaction in a formal setting. An initial approach was planned worked out and implemented (I1). This implementation was monitored and reflected on carefully throughout this stage and

evaluated (E1) systematically on completion. The general plan was then reconsidered. Figure 6.1 provides a pictorial representation of this model.

CYCLE 1

MONITORING AND REFLECTION THROUGHOUT

ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

PLANNING (P1)

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EVALUATION
(E1)

REVISED GENERAL
PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION (I1)

ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

Elements of methodology used:

- * Demonstration
- * Explanation
- * Cognitive questioning
- * Equipment
- * Worksheets

Figure 6.1 Model of cycle 1

6.2.2 The general plan

After the experience of the reconnaissance phase and the first few days at the school the elements of the general plan began to emerge. From the agreement I had made with the principal of the school I would teach for up to five hours a day. In deciding on a general plan I therefore realised that I would have to organise and systematise the huge amount of research information that would be arriving each day. I also accepted that I could not deal with it all on the same level of concentration and focus. In order to manage all this data I decided to use different strata of intensity. By this I meant that certain classes, lessons and learning areas would receive a broader, less detailed, dense and concentrated data gathering processes while strategic others would be put under the sharp lens of the microscope. This approach would also be related to time. I decided to break this cycle into two phases. Because of the uniqueness and newness of the school I chose to spend a few weeks familiarising myself with the general school situation, more specifically the classroom circumstances and to discover how the children coped with this new milieu. A broad spectrum approach would be used here. The purpose of this first phase would be to help me to decide on issues such as methodology, which psychological and relationship approaches to use and what classroom structures and rules to put into place. During the second phase I would introduce and add a more focussed strategy with regard to certain learning areas, content and classes while the broad spectrum approach would remain with the others.

6.2.2.1 The classes

Phase one: During this phase all four grades i.e. Grades 7, 8, 9 and 10 would be observed, studied and included in the data gathering exercise - the broad spectrum approach.

Phase two: From information gathered during phase one I would choose one grade to intensify the focus while still using the broad spectrum approach with the others - the broad and narrow spectrum approach. Selected lessons for the grade chosen would be taped on video and their observation and assessment would be triangulated with another competent observer.

6.2.2.2 The learning areas

Phase one: During this phase I would teach Mathematics and Physical Science to all four of the grades. I would include both subjects in the study - the broad spectrum approach.

Phase two: Again from information gathered during the first phase I would decide which of the learning areas, Physical Science or Mathematics for the grade selected I would choose to

intensify my focus. I would continue with the broad spectrum approach with the others - the combined approach. Selected lessons in this chosen learning area would be taped on video and their observation and assessment triangulated with a competent observer.

6.2.2.3 Syllabus content

Phase one: Because of my experience and the UNISA evidence regarding the academic deprivation of the children, I decided to spend some time exploring and investigating the actual situation with regard to the learners' Mathematical and Physical Science knowledge and abilities. After this had been done I would create a suitable syllabus for each class. However it soon became apparent that the learners themselves expected a level of content commensurate with the grade they were in, independent of their capacity to cope with it. They communicated this anticipation clearly to me. I realised that I would need a sensitive strategy to deal with this situation.

At this early point I decided that, apart from content intentionality related to each lesson, I also would include other intentionalities in the them as well. These were:

- A Personal intentionality - to develop the self-concept and confidence of the pupils and to attempt to deal with the many psychological and emotional issues evident in their behaviour.
- Behavioural intentionality - to help them to adapt to basic and acceptable social behaviour in a classroom and school.
- A Language intentionality - to improve the deficient English ability of the pupils.
- A Cognitive intentionality - to improve the cognitive skills of the pupils.

Phase two: This would develop out of and extend what was covered in phase one. The syllabus content to receive increased attention in the form of videod and triangulated observed lessons would be decided during phase one.

6.2.2.4 Methodology to be used

In deciding on how to approach this first cycle there were a number of factors to consider. Firstly, a student centred approach was needed that would enable me to continue to make personal contact with the pupils, win their trust and gain their cooperation (Rogers, 1983).

Secondly, a language compromise was needed. On the one hand, cognizance had to be taken of the pupils' limited conversational English and language of Mathematics and Science. On the other hand, these competencies also needed to be developed. Thirdly, because of their long legacy of basic "talk, read and chalk" lessons, I felt a gradual introduction of the more complex and demanding cognitive teaching style model would be appropriate (Harper, 1994). Fourthly, the pupils needed to be helped to construct a permanent record of the lessons for future reference.

With these considerations in mind I decided that during phase one I would make use of a process of do, talk, write and transfer during the lessons. The approach would be a combination of traditional methods of teaching, such as explanation and demonstration, that they were familiar with, and elements of the cognitive teaching style I proposed. After demonstrating the concepts and processes with the use of a variety of easily obtainable concrete learning aids and equipment, I would concentrate on an interactive cognitive questioning style to help the pupils construct their understanding. This would also help me to find a communication level and put the pupils in a comfortable position where they would need to talk. From lessons learnt with my Masters degree I decided to delay the introduction of cooperative learning and the use of formalised text until later cycles as I felt this would introduce too many new experiences at once (Harper, 1994). I therefore decided not to organise the class into groups but rather to seat them individually.

In order for the students to have a permanent record of the lessons and to guide them in developing methods of capturing lesson information, I planned to make use of specially designed worksheets for Physical Science and a method of recording in their workbooks in red ink the Mathematics processes we had covered. The Physical Science worksheets would contain activities and techniques such as the collection of data in tables, the drawing of sketches, summarising, recording of observations, making deductions, generalising and making predictions. Each aspect of the topic would be posed as a question i.e. What is a force? What effect do forces have on things? etc. The worksheets would be filled in individually and controlled by myself.

6.2.2.5 The timetable

On arrival at the school I was requested to revise the whole school timetable and learning areas

offered. This I did within the first few days. The school hours were from 8h00 to 13h45. There were two breaks of 30 minutes each. In designing my timetable I made each lesson one hour long. I planned to have two one hour lessons before the first break and then another two of an hour each after the break. If necessary, I agreed to fill in for the last 45 minute period where needed. Each of the four classes had one one hour period with me each day of the week giving them five periods a week in my class. The periods of each class were at different times each day. I decided to split the five hours a week into three hours for Mathematics and two hours for Physical Science.

6.2.2.6 The class environment, atmosphere and teacher/learner relationship

Garmezy (1983) noted that the ability of children to recover from psychological wounds is dependent on the provision of a nurturing environment. The challenge to those people working with them is to provide such an environment. Foley (1983) states that most street children voice the desire to have good relationships with adults. A relationship that is based on a patient willingness on the part of the adult to explain things and to support them with understanding in difficulty.

From my experience during the reconnaissance and first few days at the school I realised that these areas would be probably the most crucial in achieving success. Without a classroom where a sense of relaxed purpose prevailed, where there was mutually accepted discipline, order and where a bond of trust and respect for each other existed, very little learning I believed could take place. There would be such constant haggling, fighting, squabbling and noise that learning would fade into the chaotic background. Right from the beginning of phase one I realised that I would have to consciously, purposefully and step by step, using my student centred approach as advocated by Rogers (1983) and other necessary on the spot flexible adaptations, try to build this caring, supportive and trusting relationship, atmosphere and environment. It was absolutely crucial that in this area I was successful. They had to believe in me as a person first then as a teacher. They had to accept that what I had to offer them was what they required and wanted and then they had to acknowledge and agree to the conditions, mutually established, of the classroom. Without these in place the classroom would be very draining physically and psychologically and emotionally. If this was the case I knew I would fail.

In an attempt to achieve a suitable environment and atmosphere I planned to have an open discussion on the first day with all the classes and together arrive at a set of classroom rules, conditions, expectations and also consequences for not abiding by what had been mutually agreed to. These would be written on a large chart and displayed on the wall of the classroom.

6.2.3 Data collection sources during cycle one

6.2.3.1 Phase 1:

Field notes:

These would form the first line of data collected. At all times on my desk in my class I would have a book to capture, immediately if possible, any information, impressions, observations, ideas and reflections. This could happen before, during or after lessons and also during breaks. Before leaving for home at the end of the day I would read through these notes, reflect and add any other perceptions and comments which occurred to me. These would not be in great detail but they would form the basis of writing up my diary at home.

A diary:

Throughout the study I decided to keep a research diary almost on a daily basis. In it I would record my observations on all aspects of the study, some analysis of these experiences and use it to reflect on and interpret what I had done and seen. My field notes would form a basis for these writings. I would try to record everything that made an impression on me and would use a three tier system to capture my observations. Firstly, I would capture what I did. Then I would write down what I thought about what I had done and lastly capture what I felt about what I had done, thought and experienced. I would also use Hopkins' (1985) suggestion of recording general and incidental events. However, apart from these three broad categories, I would, after I had reviewed other relevant data sources, try to allow my mind to move freely over the events of the day. Then I would write down in the diary, without censure, what surfaced in my consciousness. The record I hoped would contain an intermingling of descriptions, commentary, opinions, criticisms, anecdotes, reflections and the beginnings of analyses of situations. The diary would allow me to step back from the daily occurrences, to take stock of what was happening, to search for meaning and to adjust what I was doing to what was happening.

Questionnaire one administered to the learners: First feedback questionnaire

I planned to give this questionnaire to the learners of all four classes within the first week of my arrival. In line with Hopkins' (1985) ideas the purpose would be to obtain some quick information with regard to their ideas on the type of school the boys wanted Masupatsela to be and how they wanted to be treated by both myself and other staff members. The questionnaire consisted of two open questions asking them how they wanted it to be like at the school and how they would like to be treated by the teachers and students at the school. I would be available when they completed the questionnaires to answer any queries or to explain in more detail if required. I believed that the information included in their replies would help me to decide on strategies to develop a constructive and suitable school and classroom environment and atmosphere and to find the best way of building my relationship with them in this new formal setting.

Other documents

During this phase I would also make use of other documents like an attendance registers to monitor attendance, learner worksheets and workbooks to assess progress, classroom rules mutually agreed to and any other documents that arose spontaneously or which, out of the circumstances, I believed would add to the richness of the data.

6.2.3.2 Phase two

Apart from the field notes, diary and other documents the following data collection method would be used.

Video tapes and written analysis of lessons

Because I realised it would be extremely difficult to observe and record my observations of the lessons at the same time as I was teaching them, I decided to video tape selected and strategic lessons. I decided to use the video camera to collect data in the three ways suggested by Hopkins (1985) in Chapter 4. This I believed would enable me to study them in depth at home in the evening and in so doing record the process, observations and initial impressions of the lessons. These I could later incorporate in my diary. To overcome the intimidatory potential of the equipment I intended to do two things. Firstly, I would video tape two non-dedicated random lessons and show them the results. Secondly for the selected lessons, I would choose different

pupils from the class to set up the equipment and handle it. In this way I believed they would rapidly become familiar with it and it would soon lose its novelty, blend away and be forgotten.

Classroom observation and lesson assessment by the researcher and triangulator

During this phase I would choose one of the selected lessons to be observed and assessed by a competent person. They would sit in on the lesson, observe it and then evaluate the lesson in terms of the cognitive teaching style using the instrument I had developed. After the lesson I would evaluate the lesson using the same instrument. This instrument can be found as Attachment 4A in the Appendix.

Written achievement test

At the end of each cycle I decided to set a written achievement test for the selected class, learning area and content. The purpose was four fold. Firstly, I wanted to test for conceptual understanding, secondly, for applicability of the concepts, thirdly, for selected cognitive skills and fourthly, to see if the pupils could recall the information. In testing for conceptual understanding and applicability, I decided to use the transfer principle. This involved the pupils having to apply the concepts to examples and situations not experienced before and some distance away from those used during the lessons. As an example of the above I refer to Attachment 6A in the Appendix.

To overcome the problem of the pupils not understanding the test format, the written language used in it, and the unfamiliarity of test writing, I decided to make the tests very pictorial and practical with a minimum of text. I also decided to talk the pupils through the tests and so eliminate any misunderstanding of the questions and the method of recording their answers.

Learner questionnaire two - feedback on first cycle of lessons

After completing both phase one and two of cycle one I planned to administer questionnaire two. The purpose would be obtain some immediate feedback from the learners on the teaching methodology I had used and on myself as a person and a teacher. I designed the questionnaire in two parts. The first part would cover eight areas. In each area the learners would choose an answer from three alternatives. The eight areas covered in the first part were:

Question 1: The learners' lesson enjoyment

Question 2: The learners' perception of the amount learnt.

Question 3: The learners' perception of how much was understood.

Question 4: The learners' perception of how much of my English they could understand.

Question 5: The degree to which the equipment I used helped their understanding.

Question 6: The learners' enjoyment at being asked questions.

Question 7: The learners' sense of freedom to answer questions.

Question 7: The learner's perception of the difficulty of the questions.

The two open questions which formed part two provided place for up to four responses. These two questions were designed in an attempt to establish, in a further way, what they thought of me as a teacher and of the lessons that I taught. The learners were given the choice of completing it anonymously. I include a copy of this questionnaire as Attachment 6B in the Appendix.

These then were the data gathering methods used during phase one and two of the first cycle. A summary of them is captured in Table 6.1

6.3 Implementation of cycle one

The implementation of cycle one covered a period of 56 school days. It began on 1 February 2002 and ended on 7 May 2002. Phase one began on 1 February 2002 and lasted 27 school days ending on 11 March 2002. The length of Phase two was 29 school days. It started on 12 March with the first of the video taped lessons and finished after the written test on 7 May 2002. The flow and content of the implementation occurred as follows.

6.3.1 Phase one implementation

6.3.1.1 1 February 2002

This was my first day at the school. I did not teach but spent it with the principal, walking around the school, orientating and familiarising myself with the situation and what was happening.

No	Data source	Phase	Grades	Remarks	Date
1	Field notes	1 & 2	7,8,9 & 10	Done before, during and after lessons	2002:02:01 to 2002:05:07

2	Researcher's diary	1 & 2	7,8,9 & 10	Written up daily	2002:02:01 to 2002:05:07
3	Learners' questionnaire 1	1	7,8,9 & 10	What kind of school do you want? How do want to be treated at school?	2002:03:05
	Learners questionnaire 2	2	7 & 8	Evaluation of methodology, and me as a person and teacher.	2002:05:06
4	Classroom observation	2	8	Triangulated by competent observer	2002:04:12
5	Video taped lessons	2	8	6 lessons on Forces	2002:03:12 to 2002:04:19
6	Analysis of taped lessons	2	8	6 lessons on Forces	2002:03:12 to 2002:04:19
7	Cycle one written test	2	7 & 8	Test on Forces	2002:05:07
8	Miscellaneous documents:				
	1. Classroom rules			Mutual agreement	2002:02:06
	2. Spontaneous tribute	1	7,8,9 & 10	Given to counsellor	2002:03:08
	3. Attendance registers	1	8	Ongoing	2002:02:01 to 2002:05:07
	4. Edwin's story	1 & 2	7,8,9 & 10		2002:03:18
9	Learners' worksheets	2	7 & 8	These formed their portfolios on Force.	2002:03:12 to 2002:05:07

Table 6.1 Data gathering methods during Cycle one.

6.3.1.2 The period 4 February to 8 February 2002

On 4 February 2002 I started teaching Mathematics and Physical Science to the following four grades and learners.

Grade 7 - 12 learners

Grade 8 - 16 learners

Grade 9 - 10 learners

Grade 10 - 13 learners

As planned my timetable consisted of four hours teaching a day. I had a one hour period with

each of the four classes each day. During three of the periods each week I did Mathematics and in two of them Physical Science.

I began my Mathematics lessons with the 7, 8, 9 and 10 grades. I used this initial time to establish where they were with basic Mathematical and Arithmetical concepts such as number concept, the four basic operations and tested simple aspects like multiplication tables and addition and subtraction bonds. In order to begin the process of establishing trust and getting to know them I also spent time talking to them about the school, themselves and their concerns and aspirations.

On 5 February 2002 I held a discussion with each of the classes with regard to the rules that should pertain to both them and me in the classroom in future. I collected these from the classes in a cumulative way on the board and wrote them down so that I could make a chart of them to be placed on the wall for a permanent reference when conflict and dissent arose. In each case the suggestions were discussed and only when consensus was achieved was the rule included. I was also permitted to make suggestions.

In the afternoon of 6 February 2002 the principal asked me to hold a meeting with the staff to discuss and reorganise the existing timetable that had been put in place before my arrival. Because all but one of the teachers were there on a voluntary basis and had not been chosen for specific learning area expertise, I decided to make the process a very democratic one. On request I then explained to the staff the structure of the OBE phases and the learning areas required in each. We decided to use the OBE learning areas in the junior phase (Grades 1 to 3), the intermediate phase (Grades 4 to 6) and as far as possible in the senior phase (Grades 7 to 9). In grade 10 the subjects offered would depend on the strengths of the teachers. I therefore asked the intermediate and senior phase teachers to choose their own subject strengths and then to work out their own timetables based on the weekly period planner that I provided. I also gave them some guidance in the allocation of time between the learning areas. I stressed that we needed to listen carefully to the concerns and complaints of the children such as:

- They wanted more “real” school subjects.
- They wanted less literacy.

On 7 February 2002, based on my observation of their competitiveness, I introduce a simple extrinsic reward system into all four classes. This involved a hand shake and a coloured star in their books if they made no mistakes or what they called “total”. I explained that ten stars would qualify them for a chocolate.

On this day the process for the selection of the representative counsel also started. On Johannes’s insistence all boys willing and keen to serve on the body were given the chance of speaking impromptly and in their own language to the rest of the school explaining why they should be a counsellor. About 20 responded. This proved a baptism of fire as some were cheered loudly and others booed with a vengeance.

6.3.1.3 The period 11 February to 22 March 20002

Because of the huge conceptual, skill and Mathematical language gaps in all of the learners I decided to divide the four grades into two main groups. I linked the grade 7's and 8's together in one group and the grade 9's and 10's in another. From what I had learnt in the first week I began with the number system and the four basic operations with both groups. In order to bring in some differentiation I moved at a much faster pace with the higher group and also included more advanced concepts with them such as integers, powers and roots and more advanced examples.

On 11 February 2000 my newly organised timetable for the school became official and operational. 27 February saw the embarrassing inauguration of the student representative council by the Rector of the Pretoria College. It was embarrassing because some of the counsellors were booed by their peers and the occasion ended with the students just walking out of the hall.

Because of the time needed to test and establish the level of Mathematical and arithmetical competence of the four classes I delayed the introduction of the teaching of Physical Science until late February. As a start I used as content for the upper group Matter and Measurement and with the lower group Water.

On 5 March 2002 I asked the learners in all four grades to complete questionnaire one before we started with the lesson. This questionnaire had two open ended questions dealing with what kind of school they wanted and how they wanted to be treated by the staff and peers. In

completing the questionnaire the learners found it difficult to read and understand the questions. This made them insecure, reluctant and hesitant to commit themselves to answering. However I spent time explaining carefully in as many ways as I could what each question meant. I asked some to explain to me what they understood by the questions and when I saw that they had comprehended the essence, I asked them to translate this understanding to the others in a suitable black language. On completion of these questionnaires and a perusal of them at home I decided to carry out a thematic analysis of them.

During this time Magdel and I conducted three more staff development workshops with the principal and staff. The themes of these workshops were concerned with the development of school structures, the theory of Outcomes Based Education and how it could be practised in the school.

Throughout this phase I used a methodology consisting of a combination of traditional and elements of the cognitive teaching style as described earlier in this chapter.

5 March 2002 brought to an end the first phase of the implementation of Cycle one.

6.3.2 The implementation of phase two of cycle one

The implementation of the second phase of cycle one started on 12 March 2002 with the first video taped lesson and came to an end after the completion of the cycle one written achievement test on 7 May 2002. In all it covered a period of 29 school days. Before I could begin with this phase though I had to make some practical decisions with regard to the class, subject and content to be used.

6.3.2.1 The class selected for special focus

According to the planning done beforehand and before implementing this second phase, I needed to select from the four grades I was teaching, a grade and subject on which to concentrate. I needed to increase my focus and to place these under the detailed lens of a microscope. Without any doubt the grade that had made the greatest demands, the children that had pushed my personal educational, emotional and psychological resources to the limit with their attitude and behaviour during the first phase but which, at the same time, had also stimulated my interest,

tickled my curiosity and challenged my ingenuity, was the grade 8 class of 16 learners. Perhaps what made them achieve this effect was just the synergy of the random combination of characters, the effect of a few influential and dominant individuals or simply the working of their bouncing teenage hormones - probably it was a combination of these and other factors. They were also at an age and grade suitable for the content I had selected to use for the special lessons I wanted to tape on video and triangulate.

On reflection I decided to dovetail the content with the grade 7 lessons as well. With the grade 7's I would teach the same lessons but would not video tape them. Having two different lessons for each topic would also provide more and richer data. I would follow different content with the other group consisting of grades 9 and 10.

6.3.2.2 The subject and content chosen for special focus

Because of the essential remedial nature of the work I had been and was still involved with in the Mathematics classes I decided to choose fresh content from Physical Science to teach, tape and triangulate.

In terms of content I decided to use a series of six lessons on Force. I chose this topic because in the past I had discovered that teachers found difficulty teaching this aspect of Science and learners experienced problems with understanding it. It was also especially suited to the predominantly cognitive questioning methodology I proposed using and lent itself to the use of practical everyday equipment. I decided to divide the topic into the following five areas and lessons:

The concept of a Force	- 1 Lesson
The effects of forces	- 2 Lessons
Types of forces including gravity	- 1 lesson
The concept of weight and measuring forces	- 2 lessons

After I had made the selection of the content I set about preparing the worksheets to be used to record what we had covered in the lessons. The purpose of these worksheets was to show and help the learners to record what they saw and did practically in a systematic, neat and logical way. I include as Attachment 6C in the Appendix examples of the worksheets I used for

lesson one and part of lesson four.

6.3.2.3 The methodology used in phase two

For this phase I decided to continue with the same teaching methodology used throughout the first phase. Part of the time I would therefore make use of the traditional methods of demonstration and explanation but the predominant method would be cognitive questioning. The purpose of this strategy would be an attempt to make the concepts more understandable, to engage the learners verbally and so improve their conversational and subject language and to develop their cognitive skills such as analysis, comparison, prediction, deduction and categorization. The lessons would be done practically with the extensive use of equipment and recorded in pre-designed worksheets. These two way interactive conversations would also provide me with more opportunities to mediate emotionally with the learners as well and provide me with more opportunities to affirm them.

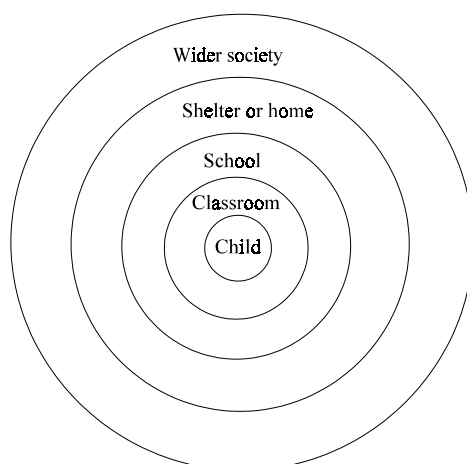
At this point I was ready to begin the implementation of the second phase of this cycle. The flow of this implementation occurred as follows.

6.3.2.4 The flow of the implementation of phase two of cycle one.

For these lessons I decided to seat the children in individual desks because I was not going to use co-operative learning. I arranged the desks in three curves of increasing sizes as this I found was the best configuration for getting the most number of learners into the video picture. The lessons were done with the grade 7 and 8 learners but only the grade 8 lessons were taped on video. After each completed lesson the worksheets were taken in and corrected. The flow of this part of the implementation of Cycle one can be found as Attachment 6D in the Appendix.

6.4 Evaluation of cycle one

It must be mentioned that there were two overarching and central questions in analysing both phases of cycle one. These were directly connected to the issues being researched in this thesis. The first was psychological and had to do with the nature of the interaction needed with the learners and the relationship required between the teacher and street child learner that was best suited to a formal school setting. The second was educational. It dealt with the methods that would be best suited to teaching street children learners in a special school established for them.



In analysing and evaluating all the information, the data sources mentioned in section 6.2.3 and the methods of analysis described in Chapter 4 were used.

In trying to establish some sense of order in the factors affecting the research questions and learners I soon realised that there were two broad circles of influence on them. These two influential circles were never discrete but intermingled intimately, moved closer then apart, and dominated and alternated with each other like a fascinating dance. The first was the wider context in which the teaching and learning interaction took place. I labelled these contextual issues or themes. Themes in this category were the outside influences like the boys' histories, the society surrounding them, the shelter or place where they lived and the school structures and organization. The second was the closer and more immediate, intimate and up front environment of the everyday classroom. Emerging themes in this circle had to do with language, methodology, teacher/learner relationships, learner behaviour, deprivation in all its forms and the effects of the children on me and the other members of staff at the school. Figure 6.2 illustrates this initial broad categorization.

6.4.1 The contextual issues which impacted on the learners

In dealing with children living on the street, street children who have been placed in shelters, who are living with relatives or friends or children who are staying at home in a situation of poverty, it must be remembered that often it is the lack of very basic needs that creates the many problems when they are in school. Life outside the school for them is often characterised by chaotic unrestrained freedom in the first, by institutional rigidity in the second or grinding

Figure 6.2 Circles of influence on learners

restrictive poverty in the last two. Life is in most cases a continual struggle of uncertainty, disappointment and unpredictable change. In all of these extremely difficult environments it never ceased to amaze me how positive and optimistic most the children remained. The following are some of the contextual issues which I found to play a significant role in the classroom.

6.4.1.1 The children's histories

Without a doubt the past trauma, pain, dreadful experiences, their hurt and psychological damage was just beneath the thin veneer of classroom conformity. Their stories when they shared them with me were truly horrendous and created within them an ongoing mistrust of adults. In most cases the majority of their experiences with adults had been very negative. They had been abused and mistreated by their parents at home and on the street their experiences of the police and the general public had been disparaging to say the least (Bao, Whitbeck, & Hoyt, 2000, Schurink, 1995, Le Roux & Smith, 1998a). To illustrate this point I relate two short histories:

“C was nine when he left his home because of poverty and abuse. He must have heard about the Intumaleng shelter because he caught a train to Pretoria. While on the train he met an adult truck driver who said he would give him money and clothes and look after him. The truck driver took him to Tzaneen but after three days just left him at a taxi rank near a Spaza shop. After spending the night at the shop he went to the police station and asked them to contact his mother. This they did. She said that she would come and fetch him but after two days and nights she still had not arrived. He was brought back to his home by the police where he was promptly beaten. He immediately ran away again to the

streets of Pretoria where he remained for about two and a half years. Finally he was removed from the streets to the Doxa Junior shelter” (Interview by Magdel Harper 11: 02:2002).

“Because of poverty fourteen year old N was taken to the streets of Pretoria by his mother. She understood that he needed an education but because both her and her husband were unemployed and had six other children she realised that they would not be able to afford to send him to school. She had heard that often street children were taken off the street by churches or other organizations, placed in shelters and sent to school. This was her reasoning for taking him to and leaving him on the streets. After a few days he was taken in by the C shelter. However here he was bullied and abused by the older boys. Because he could not take this treatment any longer he left the shelter on his own accord and started walking to his home in Soshanguve. Many kilometres from the shelter a taxi driver took pity on him, picked him up and took him home. At this point his mother approached the school with a few rand to try and bribe the bullies to leave him alone. It was after the school counsellor had managed to obtain a sponsor for him that he returned home permanently and attended school for the rest of the year from there. His father continues to verbally abuse him and his family” (Diary, 11:02:2002).

It took the slightest hint of tension, spark of conflict, disagreement or perceived negative encroachment on personal space to free their thinly bridled pathology and for them to forget and disregard accepted classroom behaviour. These curbed, hidden and in many cases smothered feelings would often affect their mood making them quiet, morose and depressed. At other times barely suppressed rage would erupt through the surface like lava from a volcano and immediately they would lose control over their personal and social behaviour. The change in conduct would manifest itself in bouts of unrestrained shouting, fighting, leaving the classroom and school spontaneously and without permission, withdrawing into a comatose state of sleep and losing any perspective of acceptable classroom behaviour. All restraint would be lost. This aggressive classroom behaviour is also mentioned by Foley (1983), Trussel (1999) and Williams (1996). When this happened it required all my experience, knowledge and skills to first contain the anger, prevent the behaviour from getting out of control and then attempt to regain classroom

normality. I found this process exhausting. In a later theme, when I discuss learner behaviour in the classroom, I will expand and elaborate on this aspect of their underlying psychological and emotional issues, how I dealt with them and how they affected me.

6.4.1.2 The influence of the places where they lived

As mentioned these varied from dilapidated, seedy and run-down buildings in central Pretoria, to shelters of different qualities and homes of parents, relatives and friends.

The living conditions of those children who came to school from the street and then returned to the street after school were not at all conducive to improving their lives or education. Most lived and slept in a derelict block of flats in Sunnyside along with upwards of 750 other homeless people of all types - criminals, prostitutes, drug dealers, alcoholics and down and outs. Their lives consisted of a never ending terrible and exhausting struggle to balance the need for the basics of survival such as food, shelter and clothing and the drive for a better life through their belief in education. These boys would use the afternoons gathering, through “working” on the streets, the “zula” money needed to pay the daily R5 rent and to buy the food and necessities they needed. Often the money they collected would be insufficient and they would arrive at school hungry. If they were hungry the hunger dominated their thinking, made them tired, listless, distracted them and made learning unimportant. This lifestyle is also described by Swart (1990 a), Ennew, (1994), Szanton (1994) and Schurink (1995).

In most cases the fiercely established pecking order and hierarchy of the building where they stayed resulted in the street children being at the bottom of the system. This had the effect of them having the least access to facilities and privileges. Their small personal place would constantly be changing (Swart, 1990 a). Storage place for clothing and their meagre possessions such as their school books was more often than not non-existent and washing opportunities for their clothes and themselves very erratic. These conditions led to a frustratingly ongoing loss of stationery and school books (stolen by fellow street children or taken by flat dwellers to make cigarettes or “zolls”) and on warm days a terrible stench of body odour in class.

Apart from the lack of comfortable bedding arrangements, the nightly activities of the buildings also made sleep extremely difficult if not impossible for them. The strong temptation and peer

pressure to join in these adult activities and festivities and to participate in substance abuse was ever present and often resulted in continued use or relapses into addiction (Swart, 1990 a; Ennew, 1994).

With all these terrible obstacles, barriers, difficulties, temptations and adversities I never ceased to be amazed when these children arrived at school off the streets. I agree completely with De Oliveira, Baizerman and Pellet (1992, p. 172) when they say: "For those of us aware of the incompatibility of lifestyles between street and school we cannot help marvelling at the special efforts made by these children."

The chilling winds and cold early mornings of the early May winter also brought its problems for the children. My diary of 7 May captures the effect.

"Today is the first day of winter. It is cold with a chilling and cutting breeze. I notice that some of the children only have their T-shirts on. The result on early attendance is marked with most of the school coming late and after break spending more time basking in the sun than necessary."

Illness also played a significant roll in both attendance and the ability to participate meaningfully in classroom lessons. With those on the street who had very little access to care and medication this was a matter of life and death. The plight of the ill street child is well illustrated by a quote from my diary of 5 February 2002.

"On Monday the clinic sister brought one of the children who lives on the streets to the school because he was too weak to come on his own accord. He had a terrible cough, probably advanced TB, was shaking and looked as if he was dying - a diagnosis that was confirmed by the sister. She explained that he had been in for a TB cure for three months but as soon as he had been released from hospital he returned to the streets, stopped taking his medicine and relapsed. We had to call the ambulance to take him back to hospital. When they arrived all they had to help him was oxygen. It is here that the real problems of the street child who is still on the street begin. The ambulance men wanted an address of the child for their records. They laughed, were incredulous and confused

when we gave them the streets of Pretoria as his address. The upshot of it all was that he was taken to hospital and after three days released back onto the streets. Two days later he arrived back at school in the same condition as he had left. He spent the whole of Wednesday sleeping in the school counsellor's office while she tried to find a place for him. She was unsuccessful. He will probably die on the streets."

All these factors made the attendance at school, participation in classroom activities and the effectiveness of the learning for these children erratic and exhausting and at times exasperating and very irritating for me - a situation echoed by Le Roux and Smith (1998 a). Their books and stationery would constantly have to be replaced to the point where I decided to keep their workbooks and files at school. They would also often arrive in class exhausted, sick, hung over or spaced out. Any form of homework for them became impossible. They tested my ability to accept them as individuals unconditionally to the limit. They forced me to try to understand and accept their different reality and to develop a new way of interacting in class with them that took this shockingly deprived situation into consideration. It made me reassess the way I reacted to their eccentric and unpredictable behaviour and as a teacher compelled me to make unfamiliar allowances and concessions on the one hand and set strict parameters on the other. They needed a unique kind of care (Le Roux & Smith, 1998b). As examples of this I include the following. At certain times I just had to accept that it was impossible for them to remain at full attention for the whole lesson. At other times when the body odour became excessive I had to be direct and explicit and send them for a shower. However I also insisted that they understood the times of my periods and that they be on time for them.

It also resulted in a growing respect developing in me for those who persevered, who continued to attend and be positive about their future despite their terrible struggle. Their tenacity, determination, resolve and pluck irresistibly gained my respect. However in the end the ongoing debilitating amounts of energy and motivation needed to sustain this way of life took its insidious toll and gradually they dropped out of school and ended up back on the streets. This led me to the conclusion that formal schooling for children still on the streets has virtually no chance of success.

Children from the shelters at times also presented difficulties. Food was often used in the shelters

as a control mechanism. This would result in the children arriving at school hungry with the resulting devastation on learning. Often problems experienced in the shelters would spill over and be carried on during school time. Another shelter issue which reared its head was that of inter-shelter rivalry. Not all shelters were equally financially fortunate or well run. The cauldron of the school lead to jealousies especially when comparative stories of material handouts and benefits, pocket money, trips away, menus or treatment surfaced amongst their conversations. For example Children from Doxa Juniors were perceived by the other shelter children to experience a better quality of life and be more privileged in terms of material benefits and opportunities. These perceptions often led to strong arguments and fights.

The behaviour and attitude of the children at school and in the classroom was influenced also to different degrees by the role model influence, training, spiritual and moral guidance and educational help received at the shelter. This also varied in quality from shelter to shelter. Teachers often mentioned during staff talk that the behaviour, attitudes and commitment of the Doxa boys was superior to the other shelters. Subtly this perception must have translated into differing treatment of learners in the classroom by the teachers because it soon surfaced in the form of an accusation by the other shelter boys that Doxa Juniors were arrogant and received preferential handling by the teachers. This shelter identity syndrome made its presence felt in other situations as well such as the selection of the student representative council.

With children staying in the homes of family or friends the ebb and flow of available finance for transport and the inconsistent nature of trains and buses often made their attendance erratic. In some cases the only way for the children to continue to attend school was to find sponsors to cover their transport costs. Many of the children had to walk alone or in small groups for some of the way to school through the streets of central Pretoria. Along the way there were many seductive attractions like the cafe near the central station that showed video's and where all sorts of licentious adult activities took place. Often the temptation would be too great and they would dally and spend time here missing school or arriving in class frustratingly late.

It became obvious as this cycle progressed just how much the deprivation of basic needs impacted on the ability of the children to benefit from the school and the learning it offered. As soon as they were tired, cold, hungry, sick or under the influence of substances their behaviour

changed and very little learning took place. These factors had a devastating effect on their abilities to concentrate, stay awake in class, participate in the activities or do any written work. They affected their moods considerably and often made them on the one hand morose, depressed and withdrawn and on the other aggressive, disruptive and antagonistic - all conditions which make teaching and learning extremely difficult, the situation psychologically challenging and the classroom emotionally draining. Le Roux and Smith (1998 b) explain how difficult it is for street children to adjust to mainstream values and situations. This is how I experienced these factors as well. Any teacher wanting to teach children in this situation will be hard pressed just to deal with these practical outside issues let alone the other educational considerations found in the school and classroom.

On the positive side of the equation the majority of the children in the school were off the streets and away from the street's debasing brutality, captivating temptations and vicious exploitation. They were in the protection of a shelter. Here they were provided, with their basic requirements of shelter, clothing, food, to differing degrees guidance and care, an opportunity to attend school and just a hint and glimpse of a better life.

6.4.1.3 The school, its structures and organization

On 5 March 2002 I conducted a survey with the grade 7,8,9 and 10 learners. The first question dealt with what kind of school they wanted. At this stage the school had been operational for about a month. Table 6.2 Here is a thematic summary of their responses. 37 boys responded.

From this survey it can be seen that what the children wanted was a school with normal attributes like sport, trips and excursions, normal spread of subjects, text books, a nice uniform, ample teachers, respect shown and a choir. What was also significant was that they wanted a school that had the atmosphere and feel of a family. However what they wanted most was a co-educational school with girls. This was understandable in terms of their developmental stage of life. This was also the one issue that the school refused to compromise on as it saw the dynamics, drawbacks and problems of having teenage girls at the school as being far more daunting than the advantages gained.

Theme	Number of respondents		Theme	Number of respondents
Staff: More teachers White teachers Total:	4 1 5		Calender: Fun days Saturday school Total:	1 2 3
Curriculum: More subjects More of computer African languages Technical subjects Total:	6 1 1 2 10		Behaviour: No bullying by prefects No corruption Show respect Be like a family Total:	2 1 4 6 13
Extra -mural activities Sport Artistic activities After school study Trips and excursions Choir Total:	8 2 2 5 3 20		School organization: Good rules Have girls More students Nice uniform No uniform Have student card Be like other schools Total:	3 11 2 5 1 3 1 26
Resources: Text books Food Total:	4 4 8		Facilities: Library Play ground Smoking place Total:	2 1 1 4

Table 6.2 Thematic summary of responses to questionnaire one

From the outset the children's ongoing requests matched these findings. They were adamant that they wanted what they called a "proper" school. By this they meant a school that was accepted as a normal school by the outside world. They wanted the school to have an identity, credibility and the approval of the wider society. They insisted on a uniform, requested that they receive a Masupatsela identity card showing that they were students at the school, they asked for the same range of subjects they were used to at the other schools they had attended, they demanded a suitable time table, they wanted the relevant text books for the grades, they wanted a curriculum which matched the grades they were in and not necessarily their abilities and they wanted teachers who were competent and respected them as individuals. Unfortunately because of the haste, rush and lack of planning in establishing the school, for the first few weeks very little of these were in place. Before my arrival for instance the classes I was to teach experienced the school as having very few of these requests and demands and they were not reticent in making their observations verbal through difficult questions. Their perception was to a large extent true. They were spending their days alternating between two learning areas namely

literacy and numeracy, their time table was very repetitive, there were no text books and a limited number of exercise books. The teachers were floundering around in a sea of uncertainty, lack of direction and absence of structure. This caused them to lose credibility, a sense of authority and authenticity amongst the boys. Not respecting adults for their age or teachers for their position the boys were ruthlessly and brutally honest in vocalising and personalising their complaints, ideas and opinions. The school in the eyes of the children during this stage, I believe, lost substantially of its magic, its credibility and momentum. Something, I realised, that would take much time and effort to regain.

On my arrival I was inundated with complaints about the limited subjects they were being taught, the competency of the teachers and the lack of books. These came mainly from the Doka children because they knew and trusted me from the time I had spent with them the previous year. I suggested to the principal and staff that we listen to these complaints and see how we could meet as many of them as we could within the restraints of an extremely small budget and limited staff capabilities. This negative perception of the school and teachers began to turn around when the organizational and practical basics began to arrive. The boys received a range of exercise books and stationery, a set of text books arrived for each subject and class, a new curriculum with many more of the recognizable subjects was introduced, teachers began to teach in areas where they felt comfortable and so slowly the dissent waned to a quiet murmuring of uneasiness beneath the surface.

This whole early episode provided an insight into the fact that the children had very clear, specific and definite ideas about what they wanted in and from the school, what they required from the teachers and that they were not happy with what they saw because it was not meeting these expectations. This was proof of Ennew's (1996) insight when she states that researchers and adults that work with street children should listen to them, their views and their perceptions and not fall into the trap of asking teachers, staff and institutions what the children need. They were also not shy to voice these observations and persist in their unhappiness until they were listened to and something was done to meet their complaints. Although they wanted and demanded in general terms for the school order, structure, competence, rules, authority and limits as soon as these encroached on them personally and on their freedom they reacted with rebellion and unpleasantness. This is further illustrated in the following paragraph written from

information in my diary on 29 April 2002.

“Another contentious issue which highlighted how strongly they were prepared to challenge issues and make their opinions known concerned the election of the representatives for the student council. It showed how careful and sensitive one needs to be when dealing with issues where power is given to certain individuals. It is also another indication how unaware and insensitive they can be to the feelings of others. The election of the counsellors happened as follows. All the grade 8, 9 and 10 boys were asked to stand on the stage. The rest of the school were then given ballot papers and were asked to vote for ten of the boys on the stage. Then those on the stage voted for ten members amongst themselves. The whole business was quite chaotic, loud, messy but much fun and enjoyed by the boys. The votes were counted and the staff were then given the opportunity of adding their votes. Finally 10 boys were chosen in this way. Up to this point all had gone well, the boys had accepted the process and anticipated the announcement of the counsellors with excitement. However on announcement of the elected boys by the rector of the Pretoria College in the hall with all present all hell broke loose. The announcement of each name was met with one of two responses - loud and vociferous applause and cheering or terrible booing and derogatory whistling. After the announcement of the last name one of the grade 8 boys stood up and with eloquence and apparent logic but without any sensitivity for the occasion, dignitary present or boys selected as counsellors, slated the whole process, stating that the selection had been rigged, the wrong boys had been chosen and that preferential treatment had been given to certain individuals from specific classes and shelters. This instantly incited the school and swept them up into an angry and ugly state, especially the grade 8's, with the result that the children spontaneously as a mob and with stinging raucous debate, left the hall leaving the Rector, Principal and the staff behind in an embarrassing state of confusion.”

Afterwards we had to intervene in a few classes and douse angry emotional flames. Somehow they did not believe and trust in the democratic process either because they had no experience of it or because the results did not meet their own expectations and ideas of what they wanted. These included only those boys from their own shelter and friendship clique. This event taught us valuable lessons. It highlighted the power of their own egocentricity, their lack of respect and

sensitivity for place, person, position or age, and their willingness to express their opinions no matter what the consequences. It was a lesson I noted closely and which I realised had great consequence for the classroom. This incident and behaviour is supported by Barker (1980) who says that if boys react like this in a threatening situation it is an indication of their low effectiveness in interpersonal relationships and low competence in social skills.

6.4.1.4 Staffing

On 5 March 2002 in a survey conducted with 37 boys in grades 7,8,9 and 10 the following open ended question was put to them: How would you like to be treated by the teachers and students at this school? Table 6.3 contains a summary of their replies. I have gathered the responses under three headings: How teachers should teach us, treat us and behave when with us.

How they should teach us.	No	How they should treat us and others.	No	How they should behave with us.	No
Put in more effort	1	Love us	9	Listen to us more	4
Give us more tests	1	Respect us	10	Don't smoke	1
Mark our books	1	Be patient with us	8	Don't pick us out about our uniform	1
Take it slow	1	Treat us well, like a family and help us.	6	Don't use corporal punishment	2
		Like us for who we are	2	Take more responsibility for us	1
		Respect each other	3	Don't swear at us	1
		Try to understand us	5	Notice me	1
		Treat us like human beings	1	Don't shout	1
		Believe in us	1	Be like parents	3
		Mickey us (Treat us like Mickey)	4	Have no favourites	3
		Be fair	2	Not wear small skirts	1
		Support and like us	1		
		Be friendly and kind	1		
Total:	4	Total:	53	Total:	19

Table 6.3 Summary of responses to question two of questionnaire one.

It can be seen from this summary that the learners' main concern with teachers was with being

treated with love, respect, patience, understanding and with the qualities experienced in a family. They were less concerned with teaching aspects and teacher behaviour. This finding is supported by Foley (1983). It was also interesting to see at this early stage of the year that they were already comparing my style of teaching and me as a person with other teachers (Mickey, us). These were some of the aspects we should have considered when appointing new teachers.

As can be imagined the teacher issue was a contentious, delicate and sensitive one. The dilemma the school found itself in was that it had no funds to pay teachers and so had to accept those who were willing to teach as volunteers regardless of experience, qualifications or the ability to deal with very difficult and demanding children with special needs. The problem that developed lay not in the teachers' initial keenness or motivation but in a number of other unfortunate factors. Firstly some, out of necessity, were asked to teach subjects outside their areas of competence. This led to content knowledge deficits which in itself showed up in hesitancy and insecurity in the classroom. This insecurity was further amplified by their lack of experience, insight, skills, strategies, knowledge and ability to deal with extremely difficult, outspoken, direct, confrontational and disrespectful children (Foley, 1983). The teachers' situation was further exacerbated by the fact that they were in a constant personal and exhausting survival struggle themselves. They were not earning any money for their efforts, were forever anxious about their futures, their finances and their own tenuous situations. The uncertainty, insecurity and lack of content knowledge was picked up by the children and treated in devastating fashion. They were ruthless, callous and cruel in telling the teachers to their face what they thought about them and their teaching abilities. Williams (1993) says that street children see school as a waste of time if the teachers are perceived as being of poor quality and uncaring and Foley (1983) states that street children hate oppressive and authoritarian teaching styles and need teachers and adults who are caring, willing to support them with patience in the teaching environment. All these factors led to classroom behaviours which made teaching extremely hostile, uncomfortable and unpleasant. For these reasons Szanton (1994) states strongly that the best professionals are needed to work with street children.

A further factor which made teaching at the school more difficult for the female teachers was the attitude of the boys towards them. In many cases the women were seen, because of the age and worldly experiences of the boys on the street, not as teachers and respected adults but as "sex

objects ” available to be spoken to and treated as such. Advances and comments with sexual overtones, innuendos or blatantly outright suggestions were directed at them in class, during breaks and after school. The women teachers, especially the younger ones, found this intimidating and very difficult to deal with.

The outcome to all these factors were extremely difficult, aggressive and high stress classroom atmospheres and environments for the teachers and students who were dissatisfied, disgruntled and who took out this frustration and anger in very disruptive behaviours. It was after experiencing periods like these that they would walk into my classroom, emotionally charged, for Mathematics or Physical Science. In many cases it took a substantial part of the period to calm and settle them before I could begin with teaching.

This high stress, pernicious, rebellious and threatening teaching environment soon had its effect on the teachers. According to Swart (1987 in Le Roux and Smith, 1998 b), the burnout experienced by child care workers is high. McLachlan (1986) agrees that the stressful conditions faced by child care professionals who have to deal with socially and psychologically scared children on a daily basis is extremely high. Absenteeism arrived, resignations began to occur, emotional exhaustion was evident and teachers began to hit children and throw things at them out of anger and frustration. My diary of 25 and 29 April records the following:

“On Tuesday we have terrible staff ructions - T resigns, M hits a child. There is a disaster as three teachers do not arrive at school. M I feel has fled because of the incident when she hit and pinched a child. L suddenly informs the principal that she has personal business for the day and disappears. The school is coming apart and the children are becoming restless with the confusion caused by the lack of teachers. It reaches a crisis on Tuesday when there is nobody to take the Grade 7 and 8 computer class. The learners rightly are angry and militant and nobody knows what to do. After a long struggle I get them into my class and try to deal with the situation. I calm them down and we agree that they have the right to be angry, that something should be done and that four of them will form a delegation to the principal the following day.”

I will deal with this situation further and in more detail later in the chapter.

These were the conflicts arose around me. They were impossible not to notice or ignore and I began to ask myself the question why I was not experiencing the same trauma in my own classroom. Yes, it was exhausting holding a learning environment together while teaching and yes I had experienced tense and difficult moments but generally my lessons occurred in a atmosphere of relevant quiet, concentration and peace. This contrast of what was happening in my classroom and others was not only my own observation but was relayed to me on a number of occasions by the principal, the Pretoria College staff who worked alongside us and the janitor. I will not reflect on and analyse this situation here but rather cover it when I deal with my classroom relationship with the learners.

These then were some of the contextual issues I believe impacted on my classroom and the questions of the study. It is vital that attempts to improve learning for street children in the narrower context of the classroom are backed up by efficient school structures and organization, experienced, competent and empathetic teachers and embraced by a supportive culture and ethos (Ennew 1994; Foley, 1983). During this the first cycle this was not often the case. What began in the beginning with enthusiasm, hope and anticipation slowly under the weight of unfolding reality ended in May as a general underground swell of dissatisfaction, of increasing disappointment, of agitation and a touch of sadness amongst the learners.

6.4.2 The classroom issues which impacted on the study

In examining and analysing the different data sources collected from the first cycle according to the procedure set out in chapter 5, five classroom categories or themes emerged. Although I will be discussing these five themes separately and will deal with them discreetly their analysis soon displayed their interrelatedness and complimentary nature. I will therefore endeavour to show the interconnectedness where possible as it made sense to me.

6.4.2.1 The relationship between the teacher and the learners

From my first interactions with street children and from the first day in a formal setting at the school I realised that, without a doubt, this aspect lay at the heart of any educational success I hoped to achieve with the children. For a cognitive style of teaching to be effective, accepted and successful it is critical that the pupils are prepared, willing and eager to take part and interact with the teacher and the materials. Meaningful participation and a keenness to venture personal

opinions and ideas is often reliant on an inner confidence and positive self-concept. A relationship between the learner and the teacher which is warm, caring and supportive is most likely to create the classroom atmosphere conducive to participation and risk-taking (Rogers, 1983). An over-authoritarian and fear-driven environment will probably have the opposite effect. In other words, intellectual interaction needs to be supported simultaneously by an encouraging, reassuring and sympathetic emotional interaction (Garrett, Roche & Tucker 1997; Rogers 1983). Without mutual trust and respect, understanding, patience and belief in each other, I knew the lessons were doomed to failure.

In one aspect I was at an advantage. Because a core of the learners in each of the classes came from the Doxa Juniors shelter my reputation had preceded me and come through them to the school. Through my work the previous year I already had a genuine relationship with these boys. They had obviously spoken to the others in the school and so I did not have to start from scratch to build the relationships. This factor helped me to establish an atmosphere and environment suitable and conducive for my lessons right from the beginning.

Right from the onset I worked extremely hard at establishing and maintaining a sound relationship with all the boys. I tried to create an environment where I could nurture what Richter (1996) calls “protective” factors. Factors such as creating a nurturing relationship with an adult and building experiences and support that would help them to contain and handle their distress or reconstruct it in positive terms. I consciously kept the three student centred principles of congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathetic understanding uppermost in my mind (Rogers 1983). An entry on 4 March 2002 in my diary captures the success of this approach even at an early stage of the cycle.

“The atmosphere is calm and our relationship is filled with mutual respect. Perhaps I have internalised the student centred approach of empathy, congruence and positive regard to the point where they are responding to it. In any event they listen carefully, react quickly, work diligently, respond to praise and extrinsic motivation like the stars and chocolates I give them. I must be doing something right.”

This general attentive, co-operative and wanting to please atmosphere is also reflected in

observations in the analysis of my video lessons.

“Learners very attentive. Learners enjoy writing down note. Do so quietly and conscientiously” (Lesson 1, Tape 1, 12:03:2002).

“Learners actively participate. Hands go up quickly ” (Lesson 4, Tape 4, 16:04:2002).

“Learners enjoy handling the apparatus. All participate and concentrate” (Lesson 6, Tape 6, 19:04:2002).

However, because of their testing, unpredictable and challenging behaviour at times, the application of the student centred principles often proved to be exhausting, taxing and difficult to maintain. This was especially true when speaking to individuals when they had done something wrong, when they had to be disciplined or when they had been fighting or arguing with others in class. Early on I learnt a very hard lesson in this respect. Because of their independence and disrespect for most adults in general, if they do not like what you do, say or how you say it they will come back at you with whatever they are thinking, unabridged by social filters, and more often than not, containing strong and disrespectful language. This disrespect and distrust for adults is also mentioned by Le Roux and Smith (1998 b) and Foley (1983). Situations like these have the potential to become inflamed and out of control very quickly especially if you as the teacher respond impulsively. Another strategy they use in conflict circumstances is to pick up their books and walk out of the class and school taking no notice of anybody. Because of the aggressive way they address you, their blatant defiance and apparent lack of fear or concern for any consequences of their actions, it takes all of one’s experience and restraint to remain calm and controlled. If you do not retain your composure you as the teacher are the loser in terms of your relationship with the offender and the rest of the class every time, no matter how you try to recover (Diary, 12:04:2003).

At other times one had to hold the mask of inscrutability up to innocent and naive comments which arrived like bolts of lightning out of the blue and which needed just to be let go. As evidence of this I quote the following from my diary of 18:04:2002.

“Magdel and I stop the car at the school and we are met as usual at the car window by the ever smiling and cheerful Sofie. Sofie is in grade 1 and about eight years old. She has made a special friend of Magdel because at the beginning of the year Magdel gave her

a new dress and shoes to wear to school. Now she insists on carrying Magdel's briefcase to her office each morning. As we get out of the car we see she is barefoot. This is unusual because she is normally very proud of the little white platform shoes Magdel gave her. She then puts her foot on the mudguard of the car, requests Magdel and me to look at her foot and with the most innocent and beautiful smile says: "See mam Magdel my shoes are all fucked up!" Then she picks up Magdel's case and skips off to her office" (Diary, 18:04:2002).

Notwithstanding the initial strangeness of the situation, the majority of the learners unfamiliarity with a new white male teacher, having a video camera trained on them, experiencing other strange adults in the class (like the triangulator) and the novel questioning and language demands to contend with, the boys were full and brimming with confidence in the classroom - keen to risk answers to questions and participate in anything asked of them. This was in stark contrast to the black semi-rural school children of the same grades I had taught in my previous study who took a much longer time to reach this stage of confidence and participation (Harper, 1994). Survival on the streets had provided these street children with no circumspection of adults or fear of new and strange situations (Foley, 1983).

Apart from the student centred principles which informed my interactions with the boys I also made use of other approaches and techniques to achieve the relationship I wanted with them.

- *Humour:*
Shared laughter proved to be very powerful in reducing tension, establishing mutual rapport and exposing the human side of us all. The general mirth and laughter which resulted when I compared the attractive and repulsive abilities of forces to similar affects on them of pretty and not so pretty girls in lesson one broke the ice in the first formal video lesson. They forgot the video camera and our normal relationship was reestablished (Lesson 1, Tape 1, 12:03:2002).
- *Praise and attributional feedback*
Brophy (1981) reported that praise could play an important reinforcement method for teachers in building self-esteem, provide encouragement and build a close relationship between student and teacher. Burnett (2002) states that teachers who attribute students success in a task or a performance to a specific reason use attributional feedback.

Appropriate and genuine public or private praise and feedback whether in the form of verbal appreciation or complimentary remarks made in relation to their effort or ability in their workbooks or on their worksheets helped a great deal to build confidence in the learners and to cement our growing trust and closeness. Evidence of this can be found in the brilliant smile and facial expression of B when he provides me with the excellent answer: “It goes this way and then it goes that way when it bounces. A force is there. ” to my question: “What will happen to this ball when I drop it and why?” (Lesson 3, Tape 3, 12:04:2002).

- *Physical contact:*

With my experience at the shelter the year before I realised that, if used judiciously, this form of intimacy could be a powerful way to establish a bond of friendship and respect. When receiving particularly impressive answers, full marks for a test or piece of classwork or just some behaviour or deed which I appreciated, I would walk up to them and shake their hand or pat them on the back. This was a new and welcome experience for many of them.

- *Encouragement and repeated explanations:*

Often at times when the concepts I was dealing with were difficult for them to understand I would refrain from showing any frustration, stop, start again and again using a different tack and explain the concept from a different angle. I would encourage them not to lose courage and belief in themselves and tell them that it was my responsibility to make the knowledge available to them. These are characteristics which street children appreciate because they are seen as showing a personal interest and caring in them (Foley, 1983). At a certain point however, if the problem was with one or two specific children, I would carry on with the lesson and deal with the problem with those involved after the class at my desk.

- *Recognition and sensitivity to individual needs*

I found this a very affirming and powerful way of connecting, establishing a close bond and developing trust with the children (Rogers, 1983). The body and facial language of the boys was always a clear indication of their frame of mind and mood. They would not make any attempt to conceal these. I would pick up on individuals who I saw to be showing signs of depression or elation and speak to them individually later. In many cases they were quite taken aback when I asked them what was troubling them or making

them so happy.

As a very real example of the value of this sensitivity to and recognition of their individual moods and feelings I relate the following story. I had heard from Magdel that E was contemplating suicide. He had communicated this desire in a letter written in class and given to her. She showed me the letter and I deduced from its style that he enjoyed story writing. On entering my class I saw that he looked terrible, he had been crying, he was dejected, disconsolate and brooding. I left him alone for the duration of the lesson but afterwards I took him aside and explained that I loved story telling and writing as much as he did. I then read him one of the short stories I had written and asked him if he would write stories for me. I can still see the beginnings of a smile crease around his mouth and the frown lines above his eyes disappear. I presented him with a hardcovered book and asked him to write them for me in it. The next day he returned with his first story. I include the story here as he wrote it.

Story for us about animals

Once upon a time there was an four animals - Wild Dog, Jacky and two crocodiles. In the morning an animals went to look for food. Crocodiles swimming in deep river.

Crocodiles do not want to see Wild Dog and Jacky. One crocodile call Wild Dog to be his friend and crocodile lie and tell Wild Dog about nice place. No animals in or on that place. After that Jacky never saw Wild Dog again.

Jacky think about two crocodiles. Can kill his friend and went to the river. Ask crocodile about Wild Dog. Jacky start to build a big house. Call it Wild Dog Cafe to remember his best friend. Tell two crocodiles to went to open Cafe. Two crocodiles drinking wine. After smiling and talking about Wild Dog they eat him and slept.

Jacky start to fire the house. Inside there was two crocodiles. They die Jacky start to live nice life.

The message: If someone treats you bad you must leave him (Edwin's story, 18:03:2002).

He seemed very pleased and much happier as I read through it with him. I took it home typed it up on my computer, gave it back to him and he pasted it in his book. This was the first of a number of stories he wrote for me. The entry into my diary of 18:04:2002 captures my feelings about this incident.

“Perhaps through this connection and mutual interest E might just turn around and be positive about life and people. Time will tell. All these children have been so badly abused and let down by adults that our responsibility here at school towards them is doubly important. If we let them down as well it will probably finish them.”

E was later one of the success stories of the school.

This approach of listening to their stories both personal and made up was confirmed as being important by Mishler (1999) and Freedman and Combs (1996).

At other times on request I brought books for them to read, clothes to wear and recorded the rap songs they had composed on a tape recorder for them. I believe that it was these sensitive and kind acts in response to individual needs like these that helped me to establish the relationship I hoped for.

As time passed I wondered why there was such a contrast between my relationship and what went on in my class as opposed to the others around me where I observed chaotic, noisy, militant and out of control situations. I witnessed on a daily basis classrooms full of conflict, tension, disobedience, shouting matches, sullen disobedience and strained relationships between teachers and children. Although there were many issues that made teaching the children difficult, exhausting, taxing and frustrating the relationship between myself and the children was never one of them. I believed that I had, over this time, developed an excellent relationship with all the learners I was teaching. I was doing something right in terms of this. In support of this perception I include in Table 6.4 a summary count of responses to question 9 in the learner questionnaire number two. This was completed at the end of the cycle 1 on 6 May 2002 by the eleven grade 7 learners and thirteen Grade 8 learners. The question asked was: What kind of teacher am I? It must be remembered that these were children who held little respect for anyone just because they

were adult or because they held the position of a teacher. They had shown on numerous occasions throughout this time that they were quite prepared to be ruthlessly and brutally honest with teachers about their teaching and as people. The responses therefore I believe were a genuine reflection of their opinions.

Positive responses	Gd 7	Gd 8	Total		Positive responses	Gd 7	Gd 8	Total
He is a very good teacher	7	9	16		He never comes to school cross		1	1
I like/love Mickey	7	5	12		He does not like us to steal		1	1
He helps us to understand	5	4	9		He is always at school		1	1
He respects us		5	5		He does not like fighting		1	1
He communicates with us	1	3	4		He is honest		1	1
He understands me	2	1	3		He is funny and makes jokes		1	1
He is clever and wise	2	1	3		He is generous		1	1
He is fair and just	1	1	2		I respect him		1	1
He provides hope for us	1		1		We learn things easy with him		1	1
I am happy in his class	1		1		He is a man		1	1
He likes children very much	1		1		He has a good personality		1	1
He is always happy	1		1		He is soft and fatherly		1	1
He is a good person	1		1		He feels if I am OK or cross		1	1
He is a gift to me	1		1					
Negative responses	Gd 7	Gd 8	Total		Negative responses	Gd 7	Gd 8	Total
Fights with me if I don't know answers.		1	1		Sometimes gets cross		1	1

Table 6.4 Summary of Question 9 responses to learner questionnaire two

The high number of responses to the first three general comments in this summary, namely, that they liked me as a person, saw me as a good teacher and helped them to understand, were very encouraging. This meant that my way of interacting with them and treating them was appropriate and working well, that they liked the methodology I was using and that it was making the content understandable. It was also heartening to see that they enjoyed the respect that I showed

them - the respect for which they had strongly requested in questionnaire one. Other issues which they had asked for in questionnaire one and which were present in their replies were that I understood them, I was fair, I was like a parent to them and that I liked them for who they were. The list of personal qualities such as honesty, intelligence, generosity, wisdom sensitivity, sense of humour, love of children and gentleness which they enjoyed in me were also interesting and insightful and provided guidelines for future classroom interactions. Perhaps by being myself and interacting in this way I had, as Foley (1983) says, created a new image of an adult for them. There were only two negative responses.

As further evidence of the positive relationships I had established with the boys I include a spontaneous tribute one of the boys gave to Magdel without my knowledge.

(Replace this page with Special Page: Page 175)

All these positive comments and affirming feedback from the children provided the necessary balance and encouragement to counter how much effort, energy and personal giving it took to hold the relationships, classroom atmosphere and learning environment together. My diary records this tentative situation in the classroom.

“I have the feeling that the only thing that is keeping my class together with a sense of order and purpose is my own strength of personality and the way I am treating the children” (Diary, 25:04:2002).

To summarise: I realised that the following aspects probably played the most significant part in establishing my successful relationship with the learners:

- The boys responded exceptionally well to the student centred approach of using the concepts of congruence, empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1983).
- I was perceived as being confident and competent in content knowledge.
- My genuine interest in them as individuals and their future was transparent.
- I respected them and showed it.
- Through my experience and strength of personality I had the interpersonal skills to deal with the difficult situations that developed.
- I was enthusiastic.
- My lessons were well prepared, involved participation and were not boring.
- They could see through my preparation, teaching aids, video camera and worksheets that I was as serious about their education as they were.
- I had personal qualities with which they identified positively.
- I established mutually accepted and respected boundaries in terms of behaviour and discipline.
- I had a personality presence in the classroom which in a non-specific and non-verbal way created an atmosphere and environment which was seen by the learners as a being a serious, comfortable and fun place of learning.
- I motivated them both intrinsically and extrinsically (Diary, 12:04:2002).

Probably the most significant and influential factors affecting my relationship with the learners was their classroom and general behaviour.

6.4.2.2 Learner behaviour

On 5 February 2002 I gathered in a list on the chalkboard from the grade 7,8,9 and 10 learners the rules that they wanted to operate in the classroom for them and myself. I also negotiated with

them to add my own to the list. This list was then written out on a large card and displayed in the classroom and referred to for the rest of the year. It was quite unsettling for me when the first rule suggested by a grade 8 boy was that no dagga should be smoked *in* class! Here is the completed list as negotiated.

Rules for students	Rules for teacher
1. No fighting	1. Be patient
2. Be on time for lessons.	2. Have no favourites
3. Respect each other	3. Respect students
4. No stealing	4. Be well prepared with interesting lessons
5. Be honest and don't tell lies	5. Be an example
6. No walking around the classroom	6. Know my subjects.
7. No eating	
8. No swearing	
9. No smoking in class	
10. No sleeping in class	
11. Keep class neat	

These rules then became the guidelines for classroom behaviour. Whenever there were deviations from or the flaunting of these rules I would use the list on the wall to remind them that they had agreed to them and therefore their behaviour was unacceptable. This admittance of wrong doing and self-censuring using their own rules was often enough to stop the errant behaviour.

Generally speaking during my everyday lessons with grades 7, 9 and 10 and especially during my selected video recorded lessons the behaviour of most the boys was acceptable and at times exemplary. However it was the grade 8 class with its combination of characters, personalities and histories that made the dealing with their behaviour exhausting and exasperating. It was the individual and combined behaviours of members of this class that chiefly made life for most of the teachers in the top four grades, especially the women, hell. This was the chaos, noise, shouting and confusion I saw, heard and experienced in the classrooms around me.

It soon became obvious that certain boys in this grade with their strength of character and hidden

agendas became ringleaders and intimidators. In most cases a power game developed between the boys and the teachers for control of the classroom. It was these boys who would determine disruptive strategies, select teacher targets and intimidate others in the class to implement what they had decided. Their behaviour was extremely disrespectful to the women. These strategies took many forms. General defiance with regard to listening, writing and obeying any instructions, arriving late for class and walking out at any time, going to sleep in class, verbally attacking and abusing the teacher, walking about and talking across the classroom at will, discussing the teacher and other teachers personally and openly, rejecting teachers and picking random fake and real fights amongst themselves to disrupt the lesson. This behaviour demoralised and frightened many of the women teachers. This powerful and very uncomfortable learner behaviour is echoed in the writings of Williams (1992,1993,1996); Foley (1983); Le Roux and Smith (1998 a) and has its roots in their beliefs, street life and experiences and deep seated anger (Foley 1983 & Williams, 1996). It is also an example of negative “power over” conduct experienced from their families, institutions, public and justice system (Gross, 1985; Ennew 1996 & Foley, 1983). Richter (1996) refers to this behaviour as an under-socialized conduct disorder and is reiterated by Richter, (1988b; Foley, (1983) and Williams, (1992) when they say that street children often show an inability to adapt, function and cooperate in a “formal” and normal social setting. Because of the seriousness of the situation we called a staff meeting and discussed the causes and possible solutions. The causes we identified were:

1. It was the biggest class with 16 learners.
2. It had grouped together some of the most difficult children in the school.
3. In the class there were an even number of children from the different shelters and off the street. This led to a pack mentality and group allegiances forming. In the other classes one shelter normally dominated.
4. Because the boys had known the freedom of being an adult on the street they saw themselves as being equal to adults. They did not respect teachers because of their position or because they were adults. This is especially true for women teachers who are seen as adult women but rather as equals, girls and available sexually. These women teachers as well as the young secretary had to deal with not only allusions, hints and innuendoes but also direct personal advances and other ploys such as written notes.
5. Their suppressed anger and hurt from previous physical and psychological trauma needed an out. Through this disruptive conduct they were acting out these emotions (Foley,

1983). Swart (1988) is of the opinion that trauma suffered in the home, school and street environments should be addressed together with the boy's educational deficiencies if he is to make any headway in an educational setting.

6. Perhaps much of the problem lay with the teachers themselves. Possibly the teachers were weak and insecure. Maybe their subject knowledge was seen to be limited and the lessons boring and perceived to be irrelevant and a waste of time by the students because they had their own definite ideas as to what they wanted.

At the end of this meeting it was decided that Magdel, the school counsellor, would work with first the ringleaders and then the whole class. The programme that she followed with them can be found in her thesis (Magdel Harper, 2003).

Although for most of the time they behaved themselves in my class there were sporadic outbursts of minor forms of these behaviours. I believe it was the sound relationship that I had developed with them and the purposeful and interesting lessons they experienced in my classroom that resulted in me experiencing much less of this kind of disruptive behaviour. The foundations for this relationship can be found in the summary earlier on in this chapter.

In the following few pages I will highlight some of the behaviour patterns displayed by the boys that emerged from my thematic analysis of our interactions in the classroom.

Behaviour volatility

Probably the key characteristic of street children's behaviour in the formal setting of a classroom is its volatility and unpredictability. Agrawal, (1999) states that emotions of anger and aggression occur when children are neglected, punished and deprived of their needs. This may cause anti-social behaviour or attitudes of rebellion against authority. The peace and quite of a gentle lesson can be smashed instantly by a remark made by one of the learners, an accusation, a threat, a taunt, a sneer or a unfavourable comparison. The tolerance level is very low and delicate and often the slightest incident will act as a tinder spark and ignite a serious conflict. Raw passion, wrath and naked aggression floods in and takes over regardless of any consequences. A teacher's position in this situation can be dangerous and the way it is dealt with crucial to the further atmosphere and relationships in the classroom. As an example of the speed, unexpectedness and

violent nature of this phenomenon I quote the following piece from my diary of 25:04:2002. The incident erupted during the quiet part of a Mathematics lesson for the problematic grade 8 class when they were busy doing some examples in class of work I had discussed with them.

“On Wednesday I experience the first fist fight in my class. J and H come to blows after J has said something that H does not like. I do not know what was said because it is in Sotho. H reacts with “blind rage”- a level of rage I have never seen before. I now understand what this term really means. Other boys try to intervene and I have to take action before it gets out of control. I move quickly and stand between the two of them looking at H. He looks straight through me with eyes I have never experienced before. They are wild and red with temper, fury, and a crazed lack of reason. In this condition I realise he is capable of anything. He sees nothing but J. I try to speak to him but he hears nothing. The only way I can get his attention is to take his head in my hands and force him to look into my eyes. As his eyes meet mine the film of hatred and rage in them seems to clear and he comes out of his trance like state and becomes aware of me. Slowly his shoulders sag, he quietens down and moves away from the crowd. I find the level of anger, the speed with which it arrives and the way it consumes all rationality quite terrifying. At that moment H, who normally is passive and quiet, almost lost control and, I am sure, was capable of terrible violence.”

Evidence of this volatility can also be found in my analysis of the last video taped lesson of this cycle. “ A fight breaks out when N is accused of not being honest. He responds with naked aggression. This shows just how the volatility is just beneath the surface. It also shows their fierce competitiveness and egocentricity ” (Lesson 6, Tape 6, 19:04:2002).

Another example of the volatility of behaviour, depth and venom of anger and level of inter shelter rivalry was displayed against one of the shelters one morning on the walls of the newly painted toilet. It came in the form of huge, black, capital letters. This graffiti took the form of dreadful and poisonous filth directed at all those who belonged to that particular shelter. The message was an expression of the perceived privileges received and arrogance shown by those in that shelter. The voice of powerless and suppressed rage screamed from the walls (Diary, 13:03;2002).

This volatility of behaviour has the implication that any teacher that takes on the job of teaching street children in a formal setting of a school which is fraught with a multitude of possible explosive situations, must be extremely experienced and well trained in dealing with instantaneous conflict and potentially violent behaviour.

Extrinsic rewards

One of the innovations I introduced and which had an immediate positive effect on their behaviour was an extrinsic reward system when they produced work which was completely correct. Firstly, if as they said they achieved “total” for a piece of work, I would show through my facial expressions and body language how pleased I was, I would praise them verbally, shake their hands and paste a coloured star next to the correct work. After obtaining ten of these stars I would bring them a chocolate. The effect of this system was immediate and dramatic in the way they smiled with pride in front of the others when achieving success, how outwardly disappointed they were when they did not attain zero mistakes and by the respect and compliments they obtained from their peers. This system was just another example how the boys craved positive feedback and praise. This was an indication of how little they must have had of it in the past.

Withdrawal into sleep or private behaviour:

On many occasions boys would just fall asleep sitting up at their desks or put their heads down on the desks and go to asleep no matter what I said or did. They would go into such a deep sleep that it was almost impossible to wake them. I soon realised that the majority of these cases were those boys who stayed in the derelict flats in Sunnyside and still spent much of their time working the streets. When I asked them about this behaviour they said that sleeping in the flats, with all the nighttime partying and activities, was almost impossible. The culture of substance abuse in the form of alcohol, dagga and glue sniffing also played a part in this behaviour, not only with the boys from the street, but those from the shelters as well. Many were tempted and took the windows of opportunity that frequently presented themselves. My diary describes one of these days well.

“ However I soon noticed that there were always three or four boys who fall asleep at their desks. Most of these learners come from the flats in Sunnyside. When I ask them

why they are tired they say they went to bed very late because they were working or there was too much noise. E in grade 10 was in a terrible state. His eyes looked gone and he seemed to be in a complete trance. His excuse was that Keiser Chiefs had won their match and he had celebrated at the flats until four in the morning. His body odour was nauseating and the concoctions mixed and taken to increase the high of the team having won, as explained to me by him, were horrendous” (Diary, 28:04:2002).

This behaviour is also apparent in the video taped lessons.

“General discomfort now, yawning, lying back in chairs, one with head down ” (Lesson 2, Tape 2, 15:03:2002).

“W fades and puts his head down ” (Lesson 4, Tape 4, 16:04:16).

Resorting to sleep in class was also used to withdraw from moods of depression, anger, sadness, fear or when distressing sleepless nights of nightmares occurred.

It was also noticeably that certain children would suddenly just drift off into their own worlds and do their own thing such as start drawing a picture, rock backwards and forwards, play with a toy or gadget they had brought to school or read something. This they would do blatantly without any sense of embarrassment, attempt to hide it or understanding that it was inappropriate behaviour.

Identity seeking

In much of their behaviour their craving for an accepted and respected identity can be seen. As mentioned they repeatedly requested an official student card that identified them with the school and which they could show to outsiders as proof that they attended a “proper” school. They also wanted a proper uniform - long grey trousers and a white shirt - and not the black T- shirt they were wearing. They said that they did not want to look different to children at other schools. This search for identity also erupted viciously into strong ethnic association when we tried to establish which language we should teach as the second language in the school (Diary, 19:02:2002).

Boys would often use jewellery in the form of gold chains or rings, a new gadget like a small computer game, flashy dark glasses or a cell phone, a cap or bandana or an outrageous coloured hairstyle to make an individual identity statement and gain status.

The search for identity could also be seen in group and shelter solidarity. Whenever one member of a group, clique or member of a shelter got into trouble with teachers or other learners, the other members of the group or shelter would immediately rally round him. This often led to the incidents escalating into inter-group or shelter gang conflicts which were difficult to control and resolve.

Difficulty in adapting to routine and rules

Of all the things that the boys regarded as being important their sense of freedom was probably closest to their hearts. This is supported by Ennew (1994), Swart- Kruger (1996) and Agrawal (1999). Aptekar (1988) also says that their ability to refrain from immediate pleasure or set aside immediate gratification is reduced. After experiencing the complete freedom of the street and being able to do and not do whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted, adapting to the formal structures, routine and rules of a formal school was very difficult for them. They found the need to conform to the rigidity of the timetable, regular period bells, definite starting and ending times of school, fixed times for breaks and even school on Friday after eleven o'clock extremely uncomfortable, confining, irritating and unnecessary. The majority displayed a diminished sense of time urgency. This would result in them being sidetracked on the way to school by girls or movies, bunking school on a whim or peer pressure, arriving late and leaving early, drifting in unconcerned and late for periods, basking in the sun long after the end of breaks and not coming to classes because they felt like doing something else. When confronted with the inappropriateness of this behaviour and by the frustration and irritation of the teacher, their reaction was one of nonchalance, surprise and little concern. For any teacher this blasé attitude and lack of a sense of routine, organization and compliance to standard times, rules and procedures proved to be very frustrating and difficult to understand and deal with. Swart (1988) sums up what is needed from a teacher in this regard when she says that an enormous investment in human contact, energy and hard work is required before a street boy can even contemplate working in an organised fashion.

The school possessions of most of the children such as workbooks, pens, rulers and files were in a constant state of confusion and disrepair - broken, torn, lost, left behind, stolen, forgotten, misplaced and tattered. This state of affairs was exacerbated by their use of shopping packets for

school bags and the fact that those living in the derelict flats had no place to store or keep their possessions safe.

Vigorous individual competitiveness and rivalry

The roots to this behaviour lay most probably in the terrible competition for survival during the times of hardship and life on the street. This open and often aggressive behaviour manifested itself with regard to the reward system and especially when tests were returned or they received their examination marks. As a teacher this conduct often created tricky situations as my entry of 2 May 2002 describes.

“ Today I am faced with a tricky situation. I hand out the test results for the grade 9's. G has done extremely well and J not so well. They are friends. J's body language is such that it is obvious that he is unhappy and very disappointed. G on the other hand is extremely proud of his achievement. I mention to the boys that they can take their scripts overnight to show whoever they wish - perhaps the house fathers, friends, parents or others. G says something to J in Sotho which instantly makes J very angry. Their tempers flare immediately as often happens in these situations. When I ask for an explanation for the fight J says angrily that G wants to show his test to one of their mutual friends. J is very unhappy about this because he says the friend will then ask him how he did and he will have to explain that he did not do very well.”

In dealing with this potentially explosive situation I decided to use the democratic approach and put the problem to the class and ask them for their interpretation of what should be done. This approach of listening to their ideas is suggested by Ennew (1994). In the end we decided together that it was everyone's prerogative to show their test results to who they wished or keep them secret if that was their decision. Both G and J accepted this mutual peer decision. This technique of placing problems and behaviour issues in the arena of classroom discussion and resolution was one I used successfully throughout the year.

The majority of the behavioural patterns were supported by Schurink (1995). In his work respondents who were involved with street children stated that the behavioural problems

observed and most prevalent in street children when they were alone and with others which were: attention-seeking, sensitivity to crisis, social withdrawal, aggression, stealing and lack of or short span of attention.

6.4.2.3 Deprivation

This aspect made its debilitating presence felt in many areas of the boys lives. Deprivation came with many nasty and crippling faces in the formal school situation- academic, necessary background experiences, financial, material, emotional, psychological, social and a lack of love from caring and significant others (Richter, 1996) . It's constant and obvious presence angered, frustrated, and disheartened the boys and at times created within them a resigned fatalistic sadness. However in spite of the little they had they more often than not bounced back with an optimism, courage and determination to create for themselves a better life, which never ceased to amaze me.

Academic deprivation

Richter (1996, 1988 b) states clearly that street children suffer from a educational backlog. Ennew, (1994) and Szanton, (1994) agree that street children suffer from lost academic opportunities, are ill prepared for academic studies and are behind in their schoolwork. Shurink (1995 p. 110) captures some of the reasons for this deprivation but also the results of increasing time exposure on the streets when he says:

“The longer the period the children spend on the streets, the poorer their prognosis for educational rehabilitation become. Not only do the children progressively lose the basic educational skills which they might have picked up in a few years of schooling, but they begin to acquire handicaps. The longer the boys spend on the street, the more likely it is that they will show indications of cognitive and perceptual dysfunction. The reasons for this are multiple and include the long term effects of glue sniffing, injuries and accidents associated with glue intoxication; and injuries and accidents associated with violence and exploitation intrinsic to street life.”

Academic deprivation was in terms of schooling the most disabling, handicapping and educationally maiming. They were forced to drag this paralysing ball and chain of forfeiture and

loss through each lesson over and over again. The deprivation in numeracy and literacy found in the tests done by UNISA were obvious from the beginning especially in the Mathematics classes but later in the Physical Science lessons as well. As an example of their numeracy deprivation I quote from my diary.

“Today I discover just how deprived in terms of basic Mathematical ability the learners are. I test the grade 7,8,9, and 10 grades with regard to addition, subtraction, multiplication and I find:

- Some have no concept of place value
- They do not understand the concepts of multiplication and division.
- For most knowledge of their multiplication tables and addition and subtraction bonds is very weak.
- They are very shaky when it comes to doing addition and subtraction operations which include carrying and borrowing.
- Only a very few have any idea about doing multiplication and division operations.
- Their knowledge of fractions is extremely poor ” (Diary, 12 to 18:04:2002).

This deprivation was glaringly obvious to me and I expressed my observations to them. All the grades refused to accept this feedback and displayed an overinflated and arrogant opinion of their own Mathematical ability. With all the classes it took a practical demonstration to make them understand that we needed to start with the basics before we could move onto the content of their own grades. I took a grade six textbook, showed it to them, selected four basic operation examples out of it and gave them to all the classes to do. Only a very few managed to get any right. It was only through this demonstration that they accepted what I had told them about their Mathematical deprivation and were willing to go back, revisit the basics and catch up.

Their misconceptions and gaps in Science knowledge was also noticeable. I include three examples which illustrate this point. When asked to categorise a list of items into living and non-living things two of the boys in grade 10 classified rocks as being living, basing their response, when asked, on the belief that mountain rocks grow bigger (Diary, 15:042002). When asked what makes a ball fall downward when dropped L in grade eight answered: “Air force - the air inside the ball and around it forces it down ” (Lesson 4, Tape 4, 16:04:16 and Diary,

16:04:2002). Plants such as grass and trees were seen as not being alive (Diary, 15:02:2002).

In the beginning their lack of exposure to the writing of pen and paper tests and examinations was also glaringly evident. I soon learnt that in order for them to understand and have a fair chance of completing the test or examination with what they knew, I would have to explain the questions verbally and show them practically how to record their answers.

Physical deprivation

Their physical deprivation often came through, especially with those who stayed in the flats, in their overwhelming body odour, shortage of clothing, hunger and lack of personal belongings. This sense of privation and need together with what was learnt on the street for survival, I believe, was behind the stealing that took place between themselves and from the staff and school. When they were hungry, cold, tired or upset, as can be imagined, very little learning could take place.

Theft was endemic. They stole from their friends, their enemies, cell phones from Magdel and other staff members, collection money from the church, stationery from me and whenever opportunities presented themselves. Gadgets were irresistible and were often the source of arguments and fights. For most stealing was wrong for others but acceptable behaviour for themselves if they needed what they coveted. They understood the morality but the craving for possession overruled it.

Emotional deprivation

Agrawal (1999) states that lack of affection may lead to severe emotional problems and fear in developing and forming relationships while street children grow. A lack of a nurturing relationship can retard their emotional development as well as lead to a maladjustment of their socio-psychological life. Schurink (1995) emphasises the street child's emotional problems and mentions his continuous search for people who will empathize with him, a fear that nobody will ever love them, his distrust of his fellow man and a fear of being alone.

For me personally this emotional deprivation was probably the most difficult to deal with and

the most draining. It was a function of the abuse and trauma buried in their terrible pasts and carried in their difficult presents. It came through with their longing for physical affection, their positive response to praise and affirmation and their attachment as soon as mutual trust had been established. Because of their ongoing great emotional hurts, disappointments and let downs of the present and past, when they found a genuine and stable source of acceptance, affirmation, stability, friendship, boundaries, concern and love, their emotional pleas were very demanding and substantial. Ennew (1994) speaks of their strong emotional dependency. My student centred approach created just such conditions and enabled me to establish a close emotional bond with them on the one hand but on the other the approach often drained and depleted my own psychological resources and emotional energy. Above all they gained my deep respect for their resilience, durability, stamina, strength of spirit and ability to bounce back from adversity and disappointment over and over with optimism. They were emotionally tough. The classroom, however with its many other demands, did not provide enough time or space for me to deal with the overwhelming need for individual trauma and other psychological counselling. Swart (1988) stresses the need for this type of counselling when she says that trauma suffered on the street or at home needs to be addressed together with the child's educational deficiencies if he is to make any headway in the educational setting. With this in mind Magdel began her psychological counselling programme with the boys to supplement and support what was being done in class (Magdel Harper, 2003).

6.4.2.4 Methodology

Although I used a variety of traditional methods such as explanation and demonstration cognitive questioning formed the basis of the methodological style used in cycle one. It was the vehicle through which the learners were guided to construct their own understanding of the concepts being taught. Table 6.5 contains a summary of the triangulated lesson observation. A competent and experienced cognitive teaching style teacher watched my Physical Science lesson with the grade 8 class taught on 12 April 2002. She rated it using the observation schedule afterwards. I scored it independently using the schedule as well.

It can be seen from the table that the triangulator scored the lesson at 69% and myself at 56%. The average of these two being 62,3%. This can be interpreted that the lesson achieved this percentage of the complete cognitive teaching style model. These scores reflected nil scores for

part 3 of section A because this part dealt with cooperative learning and a deliberate choice was made to exclude this method from the lessons. In part four of section A and section B the questions concerned with small group dynamics also were not applicable and so reduced these scores. This factor brought the average for section A which was concerned with the teaching of thinking aspect down to 60% and section B to 62,5%. Part one and two of section A which dealt with the cognitive questioning aspect of the teaching model received high averages of 95% and 87%. This is an indication that the predominant aspect of the teaching model chosen for this cycle was used extensively and successfully.

SECTION A							Section B	Section C	Total
Observer	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Total	Total	Total	Total
Max	27	15	24	15	15	96	12	9	117
Triangulator	26 96%	14 93%	0 0%	8 53%	15 100%	63 66%	9 75%	9 100%	81 69%
Researcher	24 89%	12 80%	0 0%	9 60%	8 53%	53 55%	6 50%	6 67%	65 56%
Average	25 95%	13 87%	0 0%	8,5 57%	11,5 77%	58 60%	7,5 62,5%	7,5 83%	73 62,3%

Section A: Teaching practice - Teaching for thinking

Part 1: Cognitive questioning

Part 2: Teacher feedback to responses

Part 3: Cooperative learning

Part 4: The role of language in learning

Part 5: The use of learning aids

Section B: Learner behaviour

Section C: Teacher\learner relationship

Table 6.5 Summary of triangulated lesson using observation schedule - Cycle 1 - 12:04:2002

The low average of 57% for part 4 of section A represents the difficulty which both the learners and I experienced with regard to the language used in the lessons. My lower score in section B with regard to learner behaviour was probably influenced by the much longer time I had spent with the learners and not by just the one lesson the triangulator had watched. The high average score of 80% in section C showed how positively the relationship between myself and the learners had developed by this early stage. This then was the assessment of the selected lessons

of myself and the triangulator but what were the views of the learners?

Tables 6.6 and 6.7 show a summary of some of the questions of questionnaire two completed by the eleven grade seven learners and the thirteen grade eight learners on 6:05:2002. The questions included in the table 6.6 summary were the multiple choice questions numbers one to eight and in table 6.7 the open ended question ten.

Grade	Q 1: How much of my lessons did you like?			Q 2: How much do you think you learnt?			Q 3: How much did you understand?			Q 4: How much of my English could you understand?		
8 n=13	All 11	Some 2	None 0	A lot 10	A little 2	Nothing 1	Most 5	Some 7	Nothing 1	A lot 8	A little 5	None 0
7 n=11	9	2	0	6	4	1	7	4	0	8	3	0
Total :	20	4	0	16	6	2	12	11	1	16	8	0
	Q 5: How much did all the equipment help you to understand the lessons?			Q 6: Did you like being asked questions in the lessons?			Q 7: How free did you feel to answer the questions?			Q 8: How did you find the questions I asked you?		
8 n=13	A lot 10	A little 2	Not at all 1	A lot 7	A little 6	Not at all 0	V free 8	Little free 4	Not 1	V easy 5	Easy 4	Difficult 4
7 n=11	11	0	0	10	1	0	9	2	0	4	6	1
Total:	21	2	1	17	7	0	17	6	1	9	10	5

Table 6.6 Summary of responses to questions 1 to 8 of learner questionnaire two of cycle one.

In analysing the responses to these questions of the learner questionnaire given to the pupils after the completion of all the lessons of cycle one, the following can be seen. The overall response to how much they liked the lessons and rated them was very positive. Their opinion of how much they learnt and understood was also encouraging. There was a discrepancy between their perception of the language of the lessons with their view being more positive than that of the researcher and triangulator. According to them the use of the equipment played a significant part in their understanding of the lessons. They enjoyed being asked the cognitive questions and felt free to answer them although they found some of them on the difficult side. My explanations were also understood.

Positive themes N = 24	Total responses
The lessons were good	19
I could understand	6
He explained well	5
I enjoyed answering questions	2
The lessons were interesting	2
He knew the Maths and Science and was clever	2
I was not frightened	1
I enjoyed the equipment	1
There was no fighting in class	1
Negative themes N = 24	Total responses
Some parts I did not understand	3
I did not hear very well	1
I don't like it when he gets angry	1

Table 6.7 Thematic summary of question 10 of learner questionnaire two of cycle one.

The use of cognitive questioning

Shifting substantially from the telling, reading and passive acceptance approach that many had stated had been their experience in the classroom in the past to the active, participatory , questioning style was enjoyed by the almost all the learners. They enjoyed the challenge and the demands of the questions even the ones that tested them outside the confines of memory and into the risky territory of opinion, reason, experience and logic. Another refreshing thing about the majority of the boys was their confidence to risk answers and opinions and to participate in any demonstrations. This was in stark contrast to my past experiences with black learners of the same grade (Harper, 1994). The two limiting factors in their ability to answer the questions were their own active, available English and their limited general experience outside the street and shelter.

This willingness to venture answers to open questions i.e. those with multiple answers or those which required personal opinion, was refreshing and heartening. Many of these question required the learners to risk creative responses by generating examples for phenomena from their own

experience. This ability of pupils to transfer concepts into their own experience is important to a cognitive style of teaching for two reasons. Firstly, by correctly applying what has been learned to other contexts within their experience, pupils provide confirmation to the teacher that they have understood the concepts. Secondly, it provides the teacher with a window into the thinking of the pupil.

The ability and willingness to increase the distance and complexity of transfer was also a function of time and experience. This I also experienced with mainstream black primary farm school children as well (Harper, 1994). Having the ability to transfer to further contexts requires experience of those contexts. From the start the learners were enthusiastic, keen and confident to answer these questions but it took time for them to understand what was wanted and so answer them with increasing creativity. In lesson one for instance when I asked the learners to provide transfer examples of their own for attractive and repulsive forces they struggled. However, by lesson two, when I asked them for examples of forces changing the shape of things, they replied imaginatively with:

“The American plane crash into the Twin Towers - the buildings fell down and changed shape. When a car is travelling and it crashes its shape changes. People break bones ” (Lesson 2, Tape 2, 15:03:2002).

When requested for examples of muscular forces at work they offered:

“When you slice bread. When I play soccer. When I punch him on the nose. Cutting the grass with a panga. When we wash our clothes ” (Lesson 4, Tape 4, 16:04;2002).

And a learner’s answer to the question: Where can you see a force make something that is still move?

“A rocket - the fire comes out one way and the rocket goes the other way ” (Lesson 2, Tape 2, 15:02:2002).

More difficult questions that dealt with cognitive skills and general understanding were also tackled with enthusiasm. Included in the general questioning were cognitive questions which

required them to:

- **Predict:** eg. What will happen to the ball when I drop it? Response from learner: “It will go down and up ” (Lesson 4, Tape 4, 16:04:2002). What will happen to the forcemeter if I hang 204g from it. Response: “It will show two ” (Lesson 6, Tape 6, 19:04:19).
- **Deduce and generalise from a number of cases:** What happens to all of these when I apply a force? Response: “It changed their shape ” (Lesson 2, Tape 2, 15:02:2002). What has a force done in each of these cases? Response: A force has made something change direction ” (Lesson 3, Tape 3, 12:04:12).
- **Categorise:** Why did I group all these together? Response: “All have a push in them.”
- **Estimate:** Estimate the gravitational force with which this torch is being attracted by the earth? (Lesson 6, Tape 6, 19:04:2002).
- **Compare:** Which is heavier this 500 g mass piece or this torch? (Lesson 6, Tape 6, 19:04:2002).
- **Hypothesise:** What do you think will happen and why? Response: “It will go down - because the force - the force of gravity is pulling ” (Lesson 6: Tape 6, 19:04:2002).

The ability and to answer these cognitively based questions compared very favourably to similar learners in a mainstream school in my study done in 1994 (Harper, 1994). Their confidence to do so was superior. This tends to support Aptekar (1988) who argues that street life, rather than detract from it, might promote cognitive growth. This occurs because of the many self-managed, non-supervised activities, the high amount of social awareness of people, and a knowledge of their natural environment experienced by children who are on or who have experienced time on the street.

The one frustrating and restricting factor in the questioning process was often the lack of active spoken language available to the learners. This was very obvious in two of the replies to my question: How do the brakes of a bicycle work? My comments in the video lesson analysis capture this problem. J is keen to try. He gets frustrated - uses his hands to gesticulate and then gives up. P has great difficulty putting into words and sentences what he knows. He resorts to showing how brakes work with his hands. Here are his own words while he shows us all with his hands: “There are other things on the brake - nê - that thing - when you pull that thing that other thing - it goes like this - and they move and squeeze the wheel ” (Lesson 4, Tape 4, 16:04:2002).

The concrete equipment and practical demonstrations were very successful in supplying the basis for formulating the questions. Apart from the interest generated by the novelty of this aspect it provided a real, tangible experience for their responses. This was confirmed by the answers of the learners to this question in learner questionnaire two. In fact the responses to this question were the most positive of all asked. This confirmed my view that merely relying on previous experiences, general background and carried knowledge would be a tentative foundation on which to base the questioning. The concrete stage was critical.

From the outset the prepared worksheets proved very strange, useful, fascinating and enjoyable for the learners. They were also a practical way of recording their understanding. They were useful because they provided a visual way of demonstrating systematic and different ways of writing down what we had studied together. They were strange because they were new and unfamiliar to the learners. I had to spend much time showing them how to use and complete them. The structure and function of a simple instrument like a table, for example, with its columns, rows and cells had to be explained in detail. Because of the lack of pride that many showed in their possessions and the difficulty of safe storage, I decided to keep the worksheets at school. This lack of pride and concern of many carried over into their written work as well and so the worksheets were often scruffy, lost and misplaced.

Another important factor in the use of a questioning approach with the learners concerned pace and sensitivity to what the learners know and are capable of answering. It is not possible for them to provide answers to questions about which they have no information. To persist with questions when responses are not forthcoming results in the lesson dragging and a level of apprehension and tension building in the class. The approach must not descend into a “guess what the teacher’s thinking” game. The decision about when to stop asking and to start telling is a finely balanced one. The following example illustrates this point. On asking the learners what caused the ball to fall downwards and where this force came from, they became very frustrated and uncomfortable after a while when they could not answer the question (Lesson 1, Tape 1, 12:03:2002). This is the time therefore just to tell.

I became acutely aware while using cognitive questioning to help the learners construct knowledge, of just how complex and demanding an approach it is. The number of procedural and

content balls that one has to continually keep in the air is formidable. The many decisions and adjustments one must continually make is extremely demanding. This was similar to what I found in my 1994 study with mainstream farm school students (Harper, 1994). Below is a list of all the things I had to take cognizance of while interacting with the pupils:

- The overall concepts I want the pupils to learn.
- The order in which the concepts need to be introduced.
- The equipment I need and the practical demonstrations I need to do to show the concepts.
- The questions I need to ask to guide the construction of knowledge.
- The need to assess, react and adjust to pupils' responses appropriately.
- The monitoring of my language so as to make sure the questions and demonstrations are understood.
- The monitoring of participation and learner behaviour.
- The building of self-esteem through positive affirmation.

All this is exacerbated by the language problem.

In analysing the process of teaching using cognitive questioning, I realised that it was these types of questions which placed the learners, more often than not, in their zones of proximal development and provided the learning opportunities (Vygotsky, 1978). I also realised that one must not underestimate the subtlety and complexity of this type of teaching. It needs a firm basis of content knowledge, an inner confidence, a strong language ability, an ability to think quickly and clearly on one's feet, a sound knowledge of different question types, the ability to deal with deviant behaviour sensitively, spontaneously and competently, have a natural affinity with learners and a strange innate gift to think out, phrase and rephrase the right questions. Some of these attributes, I believe, can be acquired, others perhaps are tied up in the personality, motivation, sensitivity and natural talents of the teacher. The reward of teaching this way is the joy of observing the fledgling attempts of independent thinking and the delight of seeing natural learning and cognitive development taking place and more importantly being enjoyed.

6.4.2.5 Language

From the last fifteen years of involvement in school education of all types in South Africa the issue of language in the classroom is probably the most critical. It is also one that seems to be neglected, suppressed, obfuscated and blind-eyed because of its sensitivity and complexity. This

ticklish, delicate and emotionally loaded problem was highlighted in all its complexity at Masupatsela during this cycle. Everybody in the school had agreed that the medium of instruction from grade four upwards would be English. The explosive problem of language arose when the choice of a second language for adoption was discussed with the boys. As recorded earlier in this chapter the range of languages in the different grades stretched across all eleven of the official languages of the land and one language from Namibia. In grade nine for instance there were nine different first languages. For most of the boys this mother tongue was one of the last sources of personal identity and for maintaining a sense of belonging. They were all fiercely defensive of their own culture and language (Diary, 19:02:2002). When it was suggested that the majority language in each class should be used as the second language the others were so incensed and such a violent and anger charged atmosphere resulted that the idea had to be shelved. As mentioned before the problem was then given to them to solve. Their solution was as interesting as it was practical. They decided to make Afrikaans the second language because it had a neutral status amongst them and provided more job opportunities in the Pretoria area than any of their own.

One of most salient issues to emerge right from the reconnaissance phase, was the role that language would play in both establishing a necessary warm and relaxed teacher/learner relationship of trust and the effectiveness of the cognitive teaching style. The proximal effect of language was felt significantly both in the area of communication and the construction of knowledge through cognitive questioning. It also was a significant factor in building the self-esteem of the learners.

The assessment reports from UNISA concerning their English ability were not encouraging, nor was my own initial evaluation through my reconnaissance and phase one of this cycle experience with them.

The general English and specific subject English ability of the teacher

I realised that without a sound conceptual knowledge of the content and the ability to communicate it in appropriate language, it would be very difficult for me to translate downwards into more understandable English. It was a constant struggle to come up with a variety of simpler synonyms which would be in the range of conceptual acceptability. For instance, it was not

possible to use the words “a force is *exerted*” or even a force “*acts on*”. Both these attempts brought blank stares. Instead I used the words “push and pull” for repel and attract (Diary, 16:03;2002). Another example was when I experienced difficulty using “*rotate*”. This occurred when I attempted to summarise what happened when a force acted on a water sprinkler, pin wheel, watch hands and a windmill. I had to reduce this word to “spins, turns or goes round and round” (Lesson 3, Tape 3, 12:04:2002).

This vocabulary restriction was also significant when evaluating the responses of pupils to questions. In reply to a question concerning what kind of force stretches the elastic band when I attach a mass piece to it K’s answer is “The “*power*” of the earth. My dilemma lay with accepting “The *power* of the earth” as being conceptually close enough to be permissible as a substitute for the force of gravity (Diary, 19:04:2002).

Like most children learning in a second, third or foreign language these boys were also faced with the double learning problem. They had to contend with learning both new concepts and the language to describe, express and label them. Having constantly to learn new, difficult, foreign and technical words such as friction, gravity, equation, exponent, repulsive and integer and explain them in a strange language is difficult enough in itself and often diverts the attention away from concentrating on the actual concepts themselves (Diary, 16:04:2002).

Having the ability and vocabulary to rephrase questions in alternate ways and to explain and describe concepts and activities spontaneously, accurately and well with different words while maintaining conceptual integrity, proved a vital and challenging skill when using cognitive questioning, especially with disadvantaged learners being taught in a second and third language.

The ability of the teacher to code-switch from English to African languages

In many cases even rephrasing questions, explanations or translating downwards proved inadequate for conceptual understanding. In these instances not being able to switch to any African language proved most frustrating for me. I found it very helpful, during those lessons when I felt it necessary to code switch to ask one of the learners to translate and clear up the lack of understanding. If used circumspectly, this ability to code-switch to the language of the learners is a powerful tool in the hands of the teacher.

Based on my observations during this cycle there are, however, other issues to consider when deciding to switch codes. The first question to bear in mind is whether one should do it at all. Reality has brought me to the opinion that all means possible need to be explored and attempted in order to establish conceptual comprehension (Harper, 1994). When one is faced with a lack of understanding all avenues, both conventional and unconventional should be attempted to achieve understanding. Using the primary or thinking language of the pupil when a second or foreign language fails, seemed to me to be an appropriate and legitimate option.

Secondly, the decision has to be made as to which code to use. In the grades used in this study, there was a variety of languages in each grade. Somehow when I asked the learners to translate they would always chose an appropriate language for the purpose. Very few teachers would be able to cope competently with this difficult language demand.

Thirdly, at what point in the perceived lack of understanding does the teacher resort to code-switching? Is it used at the first hint of confusion or as a last resort? Perhaps one needs to read each situation on its own merits. Possibly one should find a middle road between rushing in immediately and in so doing preventing the possibility of English language development, and delaying switching languages to the point when conceptual confusion or misconception occurs or frustration sets in. Code-switching too early may also build a future expectation of it and a dependency on it. Code-switching also becomes relevant when conceptual terms do not exist or can be misleading in the language of the learner.

During this cycle I became acutely aware of how critical my language ability, and lack of it with regard to black African languages, played in the implementation of the methodology I had chosen.

The ability of the learners, when listening, to understand the English of the teacher

The problem of a restricted English ability amongst the pupils was particularly acute when I used a cognitive questioning style and when the concept being discussed and constructed became increasingly more abstract. In questioning and discussion around the ideas of Weight and Gravity the pupils struggled to deal with my attempts to guide their formation of ideas through the use of questions. This was also evident in their facial expressions, body language and when they tried

to understand my efforts to explain my demonstrations of these concepts. This lack of understanding retarded the success of a cognitive questioning approach (Lesson 5, 19:04:2002).

The ability of learners to use English to formulate answers to questions and to express their understanding verbally and in writing

It soon became obvious that the pupils could understand more English than they could use. At the outset their available English was very limited. The assessment done by UNISA in this respect was correct. This often created the dilemma of not knowing if it was the answer to the question they did not know or if it was just a lack of language to express it.

As having learners to talk through concepts for their own understanding was an integral part of the methodology, this limited English proficiency on their part created a problem. Sometimes for instance the way they expressed an answer created a conceptual dilemma. For instance N answer of “Gravity is the mass of everything going down. There is no weight to go up” (Lesson 4, Tape 4, 16:04:2002). One way to overcome this problem was to ask the boys to elaborate further if they could. If not another way was to use the interpreter concept. As soon as I suspected that the difficulty in answering lay in language, I would encourage the learner to respond in their primary language. Then I would get another learner to translate for me. I believed that it was important for the learners to try to express the concepts in their own words before providing them with the correct scientific labels. I was also delighted and pleased with the innovative ways they created English names for new concepts, such as the types of forces, after seeing examples of them. e.g. Machine Force for Mechanical Force, Engine Force for Mechanical Force, Earth Force for Gravity and Body Force for Muscular Force (Diary, 16:04:2002 and Lesson 4, Tape 4, 16:04:2002).

Although the Physical Science and Mathematics was dense in new subject, specific language it was surprising how quickly the learners picked up new conceptual terms such as muscular, mechanical, elastic, and frictional forces, gravity, repulsive, numerator, integer, exponent and lowest common multiple when they had to. Their general English ability also improved when they absorbed and used later general words like crumple, dent, crumble, squash and rotate. It was also remarkable how quickly they began to transfer them into contextually correct situations showing that they understood them. This had also happened in my 1994 study when I taught

primary school students in a black farm school (Harper, 1994).

The real problem of language arrived when they had to write English. This showed up glaringly when they had to add their own transfer examples, write down a process or explain something in their worksheets. This lack of ability also showed up sharply when they had to complete their questionnaires. I quote some examples of the grade 8 boys replies to the questions: How would you like to be treated by the teachers at this school? and What did you think of my lessons? “They most listen us befor they shaute us plees.” “Education teacher us.” “I like you lessons be you a best theaca.” “What I’va learn something that I like in Science ” (Learner questionnaires 1 and 2).

With all these language difficulties and obstacles street children have one great advantage over many other learners in a class where the language of instruction is not the mother tongue of the learners. Their experience of personal hardship and the harsh school of the street has given them a certain bravado and confidence. They are willing to try, risk and have a go. This confirms what Richter (1988 b) has written about their willingness to risk. They will guddle along determinedly without embarrassment in broken English in response to a question. They will venture an opinion or tell a story spontaneously with exotic vocabulary and in eccentric grammar. They will persevere doggedly, with difficulty and enthusiasm with a telling where many other children will remain quiet for fear of peer or teacher ridicule. What better way to learn a new language?

The effect of having to teach in a second language

Apart from the fact that learning is made extremely difficult by the second language problem, it must also have had an effect on the motivation of the other teachers in the school. Having to teach for most of the day in a second language must be exhausting and heavy going. The lack of spontaneous responses in the end, also must take its toll. One’s sense of humour is affected and the whole pace of the lesson is slowed to a pedestrian crawl.

Finally, with regard to the language issue, I was struck by a thought as I watched K in grade 8 struggle to understand and be understood. This is a situation which must play itself out daily in thousands of classes across South Africa where a second or foreign language is used as medium

of instruction. I observe that K is wrestling with the understanding of basic concepts. I see that he does not have the language to express either what he does understand or what he would like to know because he does not understand. I see how desperately he is trying to comprehend through the misty veil of a strange tongue. He is Zulu speaking. The class is full of different languages and I am teaching in English. I reflect on what it must be like to have, deep down, a driving need to improve oneself and your situation and yet have to drift along in a world of limited understanding and frustrating hardships to achieve it. I wonder how many thousands just opt out and drop-out probably just mentally and physically too exhausted to continue.

6.4.2.6 The effect of the school and teaching on me and the staff

In all my thirty six years of teaching I have never experienced a more stressful and difficult three months than those from February to May 2002. The situation was caused by two main factors. The first had to do with the school as a whole. The lack of finance and support, the initial disorganization, lack of resources and the shortage of competent and experienced teachers to deal with the special needs of the children, contributed to the condition. The second was the disruptive and difficult behaviour of the children in class and around the school. For me personally this was exacerbated by the pressure put indirectly on me to come up with solutions to the school's problems. To capture my feelings and mood from the beginning I quote from my diary of 4 February 2002.

“My feelings and mood vary and swing from panic, depression, hope, despair and resignation. Both the principal and staff are looking at me to solve the problems and lead them to some light. I find this a huge responsibility. We are in for a long and hard slog with little other than the naive enthusiasm and positiveness of the children to inspire us.”

Most of the teachers had never experienced a situation like they were faced with in the classroom. They had no specialised training or experience, they had to teach unfamiliar subjects at times, familiar discipline methods were ineffective and did not work, the learners were aggressive and disrespectful, they were fighting for their own personal survival and they were not being paid for all their effort.

When teaching street children one is continually faced with choices forced on by ambiguities and

dilemmas. How does one interact with a child who has become an adult long before his time? How does one associate compassion and empathy with blatant, terrible and unacceptable behaviour like the stealing of your cell phone? How does one deal with arrogant and unrealistic aspirations when the reality and base is deprivation and inadequacy? How does one teach the required and expected syllabus when one knows the real needs lie elsewhere? How does one accept the responsibility yet protect yourself with a level of detachment? These were just some of the challenging paradoxes we as teachers at Masupatsela were faced with.

The effect of this day to day stress soon manifested itself in the following ways amongst the staff.

- Absenteeism
- Health problems
- Exhaustion
- Tired eyed resignation to the situation
- Inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour i.e. hitting children, corporal punishment, throwing blackboard dusters at children
- Requests for help and stress management counselling from Magdel, the school counsellor, by teachers.
- Desertion and resignation from the school

The physical effects of the stress on me and others is found in entries in my diary.

“My neck and the bottom of my skull are alive and painful again. I phone the doctor. Typical effects of stress she says ” (Diary 11:02:2002).

“I was in agony with my neck on Tuesday. This worried me until I discovered that others on the staff have the same symptoms of stress ” (Diary, 12:02:2002).

The mental and emotional stress lay in the dispirited and often dead, resigned eyes of the teachers.

However apart from the physical, psychological and emotional exhaustion at the end of each day all was not negative. I did go home with an inner sense of achievement and accomplishment. I knew that the boys I taught enjoyed and respected me, they appreciated and benefited from my

lessons and I felt that just perhaps I was making a small difference to their lives. I loved teaching the lessons, the light of understanding in the eyes and smiles of the boys, the spontaneous affection they showed me, the example of their fortitude, striving and optimism, their belief in how I could help them and the way they made me reassess my own privilege.

6.5 Conclusion

6.5.1 Students' written test results

The results of this written test were very pleasing with an average of 65,9% in grade 7 and 77,2% in grade 8 being achieved. The range extended from a low of 31,8% to a high of 95%. It was therefore evident that the methodology had been successful and effective in developing an understanding of the concepts. What surprised me more though was the keenness with which they prepared for the test and the enjoyment in writing it. Table 6.8 contains the result of the written science achievement tests for the grades 7 and 8.

It was difficult to establish precise statistics for school attendance because of the ongoing "floating" bottom third of the class. These were children who arrived at school, attended for a few days and then disappeared. However some general trends were established during this time. Firstly, the attendance of the boys who were still on the street and stayed in the Sunnyside flats was erratic. If one takes the circumstances under which they lived this was understandable. The children from the shelters attended most regularly and consistently. Boys who stayed privately with family, relations or friends varied and often depended on private finance and the regularity and dependability of public transport (Attendance registers, 1:02:2002 to 7:05:2002).

So what were the conclusions I needed to draw from this time at Masupatsela and this cycle of lessons which represented about 62% of the cognitive style teaching model? What were the messages buried in the above evidence? What could be learnt from this reflection to improve the applicability of this model in cycle two?

In general terms despite the very difficult contextual issues, the restrictions of the language constraints and the newness of the approach, myself as a person and teacher and the aspects of the cognitive teaching style used, were successful, well received and enjoyed by the learners. This was evidenced in their growing confidence to participate in the lessons and in the

competence with which they answered the questions in the test.

Learner	Grade 7 - 13 learners			Grade 8 - 15 learners	
	Mark - maximum 22	%		Mark - maximum - 22	%
1	9	40,9		18	81,8
2	19	86,3		21	95,4
3	16	72,7		17	77,2
4	absent	absent		7	31,8
5	18	81,8		15	68,1
6	17	77,2		18	81,8
7	16	72,7		10	45,4
8	17	77,2		11	50
9	12	54,5		21	95,4
10	13	59,1		15	68,1
11	11	50		19	86,3
12	15	68,7		15	68,1
13	15	68,1		absent	absent
14	10	45,4		20	90,9
15				16	72,7
16				absent	absent
17				17	77,2
Mean:	14,5	65,9		16	72,7
Range:	9 to 19	40,9 to 86,3		7 to 21	31,8 to 95,

Table 6.8 Summary of learners' Physical Science written achievement test - Cycle one

My student centred approach in developing an appropriate and trusting relationship with the boys had been exhausting, trying, difficult to maintain under arduous and challenging learner behaviour but very successful and rewarding. As time had passed and trust had grown they had opened up and shared not only many of their troubles, worries and fears but also their aspirations, hopes, dreams and joys. We had also formed a close, complimentary bond and understanding in the classroom. This mutual appreciation delimited the parameters and created a very suitable atmosphere and environment for learning to take place. One of the few in the school. However,

there were still areas in my classroom which needed strengthening and many adjustments made in the school to improve things.

I felt that the research methodology had been appropriate and successful. The data gathering methods had been extensive and had provided me with an overwhelming quantity of information.

In reflecting on this cycle and in terms of my analysis of above themes I made the following deductions. They would need to be considered for adapting the general approach when planning cycle two.

- For the situation in the classrooms to improve much would have to be done to rectify and develop the school organization, structures, curriculum, availability of resources and the quality of the general teaching and teachers.
- The relationship of trust and support I had developed with the boys needed to be further deepened.
- The pool of English available to individual pupils in order for them to respond to questions, understand explanations better and complete tasks on worksheets had to be increased.
- Although the cognitive questioning style of teaching was foreign to the pupils at first, they adapted quickly to it and found it stimulating and enjoyable.
- The worksheets were successful both in terms of recording the lessons and for test preparation. These should continue.
- More space and opportunities for individual and communal thought and discussion would need to be created so that practice in the more demanding cognitive and creative thought could be achieved.
- Because of the egocentrism and fierce competitiveness co-operation and support between and amongst the boys was seldom seen. A way of dealing with this needed to be found.
- In order for the full potential of the equipment and demonstrations to be realised they would have to be moved closer to the pupils.

I was a lot more experienced and wiser after three months back in a school and in the classroom. I had been as much a learner as a teacher. I had been immersed in the unfamiliar culture of a new school for street children which I had helped to create. I had been enriched by the fascinating

personalities I had encountered amongst the boys and learnt much from the mutual struggling, grappling and agonizing in the novel and new situations we both found ourselves.

Finally, Swart (1990 p. 126) captures succinctly my thoughts of the children when I sat quietly away from the school on my swing bench and contemplated my involvement with them.

“For me, street children are tremendously exciting people. They question everything, and by so doing, they force us to re-examine our notions about family and society, welfare institutions, education, and human rights. But most of all they force us to reflect on our notions of childhood.”

Cycle two with its interesting challenges awaited.