About the Journal

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Editorial

Dear authors, reviewers, and readers

It has been a month since I was given the privilege to serve as the Chief Editor of the International Journal for Innovation Education and Research (IJIER). It is a great pleasure for me to shoulder this duty and to welcome you to **THE VOL-1, ISSUE-2 of IJIER** which is scheduled to be published on **31st October 2013.**

International Journal for Innovation Education and Research (IJIER) is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed multidisciplinary journal which is published by the International Educative Research Foundation and Publisher (IERFP). IJIER aims to promote academic interchange and attempts to sustain a closer cooperation among academics, researchers, policy makers and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines, which contribute to state of the art in science, education, and humanities. It provides a forum for the exchange of information in the fields mentioned above by welcoming original research papers, survey papers, and work-in-progress reports on promising developments, case studies, and best practice papers. The journal will continue to publish high-quality papers and will also ensure that the published papers achieve broad international credibility.

The Chief Editor, appointed by the Associate Editors and the Editorial Board, is in charge for every task for publication and other editorial issues related to the Journal. All submitted manuscripts are first screened by the editorial board. Those papers judged by the editors to be of insufficient general interest or otherwise inappropriate are rejected promptly without external review. Those papers that seem most likely to meet our editorial criteria are sent to experts for formal review, typically to one reviewer, but sometimes more if special advice is needed. The chief editor and the editors then make a decision based on the reviewers' advice.

We wish to encourage more contributions from the scientific community to ensure a continued success of the journal. We also welcome comments and suggestions that could improve the quality of the journal.

I would like to express my gratitude to all members of the editorial board for their courageous attempt, to authors and readers who have supported the journal and to those who are going to be with us on our journey to the journal to the higher level.

Thanks,
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Students' Ability to Communicate a Critical Situation After Implementation of ISBARR in an Undergraduate Nursing Curriculum

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Abstract

Effective communication has been identified as a key factor in maintaining patient safety, promoting a professional attitude, and facilitating collaboration between health care professionals. This study evaluated whether the implementation of ISBARR (I=Identify Self, S=Situation, B=Background, R=Recommendations, R=Read Back Orders) into the curriculum improved nursing students' ability to give a critical situation report. A sample of senior level students watched a videotaped critical situation and then gave an audiotaped ISBARR report. There were no significant differences in students' ability to give an ISBARR report following implementation of ISBARR into the curriculum. There was a moderate correlation of ISBARR scores with grade point average (GPA). Students with higher GPAs did better in communicating a critical situation. As with any change, implementation of ISBARR into the curriculum will take time to be fully integrated. The true impact on student outcomes and performance may not be apparent for a number of years.

Purpose and Review of the Literature

Communication skills are essential in providing safe and effective patient care, and the development of these skills needs to begin in the nursing program (Runy, 2008). Incorporating inter-professional communication into a nursing curriculum will prepare graduates to communicate effectively with other health care professionals and ultimately lead to improved patient safety (AACN, 2008). One of the objectives of the National League for Nursing (NLN) is to "Promote the preparation of a nursing workforce that contributes to health care quality and safety" (2011, "Mission/Goals/Core Values," goal 1 objective). The emphasis on patient safety supports the need to reform curricula to include learning activities that focus on the development of interprofessional communication skills. A standardized method to communicate pertinent and critical information in end of shift reports, as well as during critical situations, is recom

mended to improve communication (Runy, 2008) and patient safety. Few studies have focused on nursing student communication related to handoffs and critical situations. Keston (2011) evaluated a the use of SBAR in students who received didactic instruction on SBAR versus didactic instruction plus role-play and found those students who received role-play instruction performed significantly better. Since standardized communication is linked to improved patient safety, structured communication training needs to be started early in the education of nursing students.

At the school of nursing where this study was performed, ISBARR was chosen as the communication format to be implemented throughout the curriculum from the sophomore through the senior year. The majority of hospitals in the area and elsewhere teach SBAR to their healthcare professionals as the standardized communication tool to be used for handoffs and critical situations. The acronym ISBARR stands for Identify Self, **S**ituation, **B**ackground, **A**ssessment, **R**ecommendation, and **R**ead Back Orders (Grbach, Vincent, & Struth, 2008). For this study ISBARR was used since students often forget to introduce themselves or read back orders. A plan was implemented to thread ISBARR throughout the curriculum (Enlow, Shanks, Guhde, & Perkins, 2010). Through experiential teaching methods, activities were designed to increase in complexity (from simple handoffs to critical situations) as students move from sophomore to senior level. Students' skills in using the ISBARR communication format was evaluated using an ISBARR evaluation tool (Guhde, in press). Although use of ISBARR is being recommended by many healthcare agencies, there is limited research

and literature on evaluating nursing students' communication skills, a gap that this research begins to address. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of including a standardized communication format in the nursing curriculum on nursing students' ability to communicate a critical situation.

Method

Setting and Sample

Data for this study were collected during the Senior Practicum and Nursing Leadership course at a baccalaureate school of nursing. A convenience sample of Senior Practicum and Nursing Leadership students were asked to participate, the requirements of the study were explained, and informed consent was obtained.

The sample consisted of a total of 88 students (57 basic and 31 accelerated) who participated in the study. The total sample was composed of two groups of students at two data collection points who participated in 2009, before ISBARR was added to the curriculum, and from three data collection points during 2010 and 2011 after the curriculum plan had been implemented. The sample characteristics were as follows: 7.9% male, 75% Caucasian, a mean age of 28.17, and a mean grade point average (GPA) of 3.43.

Research Design

This evaluation study was reviewed by the University Institutional Review Board and approved. Students willing to participate watched a videotaped case study of a simulated critical incident where a patient with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) develops a pneumothorax. Those who agreed to participate also completed a demographic questionnaire. Five different samples of senior level students participated in this study. After baseline data was obtained from a total of 41 basic and accelerated students the curriculum plan was implemented in the fall of 2009. In 2010, twenty nursing students (a group of basic and a group of accelerated students) participated in the study after receiving only part of the communication curriculum plan. In 2011, twenty-seven basic students who received ISBARR education throughout their entire program participated in the study.

Variables and their Measurement

The ability to communicate a critical situation was evaluated using a tool to measure an inter-professional critical incident verbal report (Guhde, in press). This tool assesses the use of ISBARR by the nursing student in a critical situation and was adapted to fit the specific critical situation being used in this study. A videotaped critical incident of a patient with COPD that developed a right pneumothorax was shown to the students. Students then role-played a report to a physician and received orders. Specific information that should be reported for this critical incident was listed as separate items under each ISBARR component. The student received one point for each item reported correctly. Also, one point was given if the patient problem was identified first and one point if the report followed an orderly sequence. If there was no extraneous information provided, the student received an additional point. Evaluation tool scores ranged from 0-19, with 19 indicating all information was included and no extraneous information was given. Content validity of the evaluation tool was assessed by registered nurses who were members of the faculty. Inter-rater reliability was tested after the first administration of the tool by having three faculty members score the reports after listening to the audio taped reports. The percent of agreement across all items was 96.1%. The Interclass Correlation Coefficient[a] for average measures was .977 with an interval of .887 - .995 with 95% confidence. To ensure continued inter-rater reliability, two of the investigators continued to score the taped recordings separately. If there was variation in their scores, a third investigator scored the recording and the average of the three scores was used.

Data Collection

The study was explained as a study of communication of a critical situation. Students were made aware that their course faculty members were looking at certain communication techniques that are being used, and that he or she would be audiotaped while giving a report following the viewing of the videotaped critical incident. Whether a student participated had no effect on the grade that the student received for the class.

Results

There were no differences between basic and accelerated students in their ability to communicate report of a critical situation at any point in time. Therefore, scores for both traditional and accelerated students were combined, and t-tests were run. No differences were found in students' ability to communicate report of a videotaped critical situation after having received formal education on ISBARR threaded throughout their junior and senior courses compared to those who did not receive this education (t= .87, p=.39).

An interesting finding indicated there was a moderate positive correlation between cumulative GPA and the score on the evaluation tool (r=.36, p=.001). Students with higher GPAs scored higher on the evaluation tool.

Discussion and Implications for Practice

Significant improvements in communicating a critical situation did not occur in basic students or the accelerated students. Sample size is a limitation of this study, as it was difficult to recruit students to participate. Since this was a learning experience for students as well as a study to evaluate a curriculum change, participation should have been mandatory as a classroom exercise for all students, with students then having the option of using their scores for the study. Our results may not reflect the class as a whole.

The curriculum plan (Enlow et al., 2010) was newly implemented at the time data was collected. Results were obtained while faculty members were still learning best ways to implement and develop ISBARR simulations. Part time faculty may not have been aware of the curriculum plan as full time faculty members were just developing ISBARR learning activities. Other limitations reflected difficulties getting faculty to participate and follow the new curriculum plan. Based on 2010 faculty survey data, students did not usually have an opportunity to give a critical incident report. Students did not always take their ISBARR resource tool to clinical. Also, faculty felt the format did not fit with every specialty area, and therefore some faculty did not implement the tool.

It is likely that once ISBARR becomes more integrated into the curriculum, scores on the evaluation tool will be higher. As with any change, implementation of this curriculum plan will take time to be fully integrated. The true impact on student outcomes and performance may not be apparent for a number of years. Also, since GPA was correlated with better performance in ISBARR, faculty need to assess students who struggle academically for deficits in their communication skills and give ample opportunities for practice. Frequently, we hear faculty say a student is weak academically but strong clinically. Future studies need to assess whether these students with lower GPAs present a good impression based on their personality rather than truly having strong clinical skills. Also, another study, conducted after the curriculum plan has been in effect for four to five academic years, would provide more accurate information on the effectiveness of this curriculum change.

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PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS' UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCES OF BULLYING

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore learners' understanding of the different types of bullying as well as the extent of their exposure to various forms of bullying. As a result, the research question is: What is the primary school learners' understanding and experiences of bullying? This study is based on the Olweus Method (1985), which offers a theoretical framework that could assist the researcher to explore the roles of the bully, victim and bystander. The study has an initial quantitative method in which concepts are tested by means of a questionnaire for learners, followed by a qualitative method involving interviews with a focus group on their experiences in relation to bullying. During the analysis phase, the questionnaire responses were counted and percentages calculated to determine general trends. Thereafter, qualitative data was analysed systematically and organised into patterns and themes with the intention to propose some recommendations that might assist teachers in their efforts to create safe classrooms.

Keywords: Bullies, bullying, victims, power, bystanders.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a serious problem that has seen an increase in recent years in our schools (Brindley, 2010:2). According to Sullivan (2000:39-43) bullying is not a new phenomenon, because it has recently been recognised as one of the main concerns in schools internationally including Australia, United States, England,

Norway and New Zealand. In South Africa, there has been an awareness of bullying in schools that have recognised more needs to be done to create a safe environment (Prinsloo, 2005:460). In a survey conducted by the Centre of Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) in 2009, cyber bullying is also on the rise since one in five young South Africans admitted that they have bullied someone via text messaging and a quarter of them actually experienced bullying via text messaging (Baily, 2012:1).

Bullying can be defined as "the action of one child to hurt, threaten, intimidate, or embarrass another child" (Neser, Ovens, Van der Merwe, Morodi & Ladikos, and 2003:1). Sullivan, Cleary & Sullivan (2004:5) states: "Bullying can be physical or non-physical and can include damage to property."

They further describe that (1) physical bullying occur through being bitten, hit, kicked, punched, scratched or any form of physical attack, (2) non-physical bullying can be verbal or non-verbal bullying and include abusive telephone calls, name-calling, racist remarks or teasing and spreading of untrue rumours or (3) damage to property can include ripping of clothing, damaging of school bags and books and destroying school property.

A challenge to helping victims of bullying is the concern of secrecy surrounding bullying in primary schools. Many victims are afraid to tell someone about the bullying incidences. Educators should aim to bring bullying into the open by raising awareness of bullying and by encouraging victims to seek for help by speaking up. It would be helpful to introduce rules to prevent bullying behaviour in schools and to continually communicate that it will not be accepted or tolerated (Prinsloo, 2005:457). School rules maintain order and build an environment of security and discipline within the school. It is therefore necessary to have school rules in place to make learners and parents aware of the school's educational aims.

The Department of Education (1998:6) makes provision for the protection of learners against physical and mental harm by stating that "every learner has the right to non-violence and the freedom and security of a person". Schools are legally recognized to make sure that these rights are fulfilled for every learner. The act of bullying directly impacts on these provisions in the SA School's Act. Learners' rights and freedom are threatened by bullies' aggressive behaviour that affects the victim's physical, social and emotional well-being.

Zeelie (2004:66-67) writes that schools are "accountable and need to be proactive in behaviour policy and implementation thereof". However, educators need training to develop and implement educational policies

and practices (Prinsloo, 2005:464). As soon as measures are put in place to put a stop to bullying, schools will be a much safer and pleasant environment for our learners. Educators should therefore be empowered to meet the challenges of bullying behaviour in such a way that it does not impact negatively or get in the way of the learning process.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

As a Grade 4 educator at a school on the Cape flats in the Western Cape, the researcher found that many of the Grade 4 learners were bullied by older learners. This prompted the researcher to investigate learners' understanding and experiences of bullying as the researcher is concerned that learners who physically attack others could inflict injury and cause psychological harm.

In a survey conducted at the researcher's primary school by a non-government organisation in South Africa, 89% of the learners indicated that they were physically assaulted by other learners, 56% indicated they bully others while only 11% of the learners reported bullying incidents to an educator (Anon, 2005:5). The fact that 11% reported the incidences is an indication that many learners in the school are suffering in silence while exposed to the trauma of bullying. As an educator the researcher is concerned that bullying is having a significant effect on more than half of the learners within the school.

In a study done in Gauteng among 207 scholars, Neser, et al, (2003:5) found that 60.9% of the learners reported to being bullied at school in 2002. According to the Centre for School Quality and Improvement, 90% of the learners at a Johannesburg school had been bullied the previous year (De Wet, 2005:83).

Further research confirms that only a small number of incidences of bullying are reported (Cullingford & Brown,1995:3) and many victims keep their suffering a secret (Simanton, Hoover & Burthwick, 2000:4).

Bullying flourishes on an element of secrecy as bullies threaten their victims with more bullying if they report the bullying incidents. According to The Antelope Vally Times, there is an atmosphere of "don't talk about the bullying or don't bring it up kind of thing" (Daly, 2012:1).

With this study the researcher looked forward to understanding the role of the bully, victim and bystander.

The researcher wanted to have a greater understanding of the extent of the learners' exposure to various forms of bullying, be able to recognize and respond effectively to bullying behaviour, gained knowledge of new and effective strategies to reduce bullying behaviour when it occurs, learned how to empower learners to report incidences to prevent and stop bullying. Very little research on the topic has been done in South Africa and research on this topic has not been conducted in the Retreat area within the Western Cape. It is against this background that this study explores learners' understanding and experiences of bullying.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY & RESEARCH QUESTION

This study aims to find out learners' experiences of the different types of bullying, explore the extent of their exposure to different forms of bullying and to examine what can be done to reduce bullying.

The research question for this study is: What is the primary school learners' understanding and experiences of bullying? This main question is subsequently further subdivided to include learners' understanding of various forms of bullying and understanding of the roles they have been exposed to.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Olweus Theory

A theoretical framework that underpins this study is the theory of the internationally recognized Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. The Olweus Bullying Prevention theory is a method for working towards reducing bullying behaviour in schools. By looking more closely at the roles of the bully, victim and bystander in the Olweus Method, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of these roles.
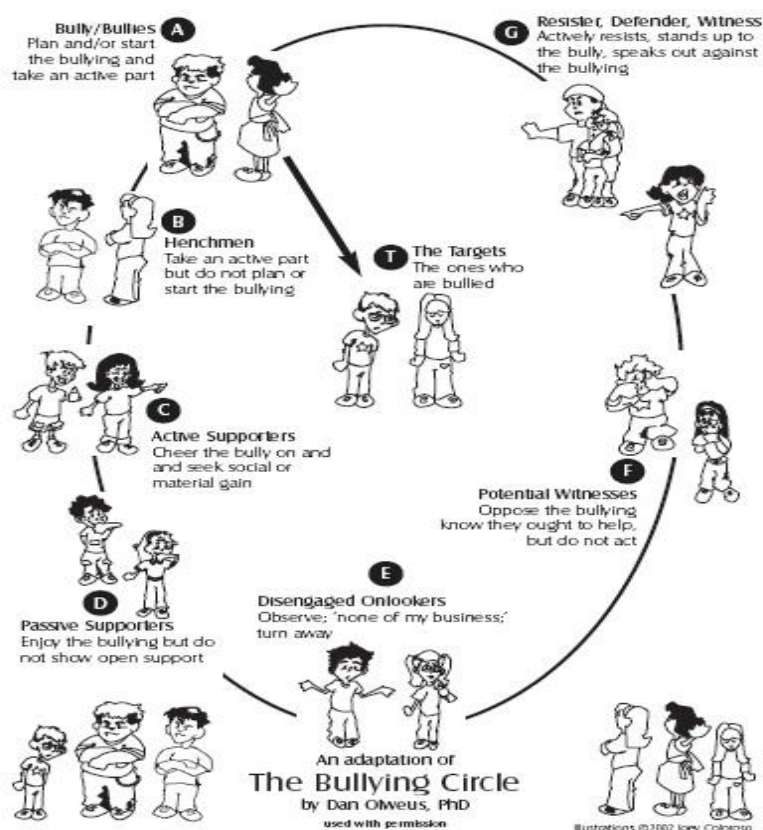
Figure 1. The Bullying Circle (Olweus, 2002)

Figure 1 outlines the "Bullying Circle" developed by Olweus in 2002 and it represents the different ways in which learners in a school are involved in or affected by bullying. It also describes how learners may be engaged in a bullying situation, as a victim, bully or bystander. The following role players are presented in the Olweus bullying circle.

A   in the Olweus' bullying circle, refers to the bully as the one who starts the bullying as the perpetrator by taking an active leadership role. Olweus (2001:3-15) points out that bullies are often popular and like to be seen in a core group. They hardly ever bully on their own.

If they are part of a group, they prefer other bullies to be present to boost their confidence. Bullies in the bullying circle who take an active part in the bullying incident often blame others and show very little remorse for their behaviour.

B   in the bullying circle shows that lead bullies often have followers or "henchmen" who usually do not start the bullying, but are helpful toward the bullying and participate in it. The 'henchmen' are therefore actively involved in the bullying incident. However, these henchmen as they are referred to in the bullying circle are not the ones who plan the bullying.

C   points out the active supporters who would applaud the bullying and simultaneously look for social or material gain. This way, as active supporters they expand their group of friends.

D   shows that there are also passive supporters in the bullying circle who support the bullying by enjoying and cheering the bullying on but do not join in. In this fashion, they watch the incident that occurs but do not openly support the bullies.

E   refers to disengaged onlookers in the bullying circle. These onlookers are not together with the bullies because they play the role of the spectators in the bullying incident. They are the ones who will turn away because they feel that the argument or fight has nothing to do with them.

F   shows that the bullying circle also includes potential witnesses who are against the bullying and who know they are suppose to help. However, these potential witnesses do not act.

G   points out the resister who actively refuses to go along with the fighting or argument as well as the defender who stands up to the bully. Then there is the witness who does not hesitate to speak out against the bullying.

Bullying by the role players in the bullying circle may involve physical behaviour such as hitting, kicking, or stealing from the victim plus verbal abuse for example, name calling, insults, racist remarks or threats. It is against this background that the study deems it necessary to understand why learners bully and to identify the victims and the bystanders.

TYPES OF BULLYING

Through examining the bullying circle in the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and looking more closely at the roles of the bully, victim and bystander, the researcher found a much better understanding as to how the bully, victim and bystander operate in a bullying situation. It is therefore important for this study to include the various types of bullying because understanding the types can help in preventing bullying and stopping it before it takes place.

Direct Bullying

According to Boulton, Truman & Flemington (2002:354) and Lee (2004:10), direct bullying can be defined as "a relatively open attack on a victim that is carried out face to face and may include pushing, kicking and fighting". Similarly, Woods & Wolke (2004:136) explain: "direct bullying includes direct aggressive acts such as hitting, kicking, pinching, taking belongings or money, pushing or shoving, or direct verbal abuse." These are all ways that learners engage in as direct physical bullying. Another common type of direct bullying is verbal or spoken bullying. Verbal bullying involves teasing, mocking, name calling, threatening, and taunting by other learners (Beane 2000:56). Sharp, Thompson & Arora (2000:37-46) believes that this type of bullying is also seen as "more hurtful in terms of the consequences including feelings of depression, low self-worth, loneliness, anxiety and severe difficulties with social relationships in adulthood".

Indirect Bullying

Boulton et al., (2002:354) state that indirect bullying can be defined as "being more subtle and less direct and includes behaviour such as social isolation and exclusion from a group". Emotional bullying occurs mostly as indirect bullying and it includes spreading rumours, gossiping about a learner and social exclusion (Shangkuan Koo, 2011:1). According to Butler, Kift & Campbell (2010: 85) cyber bullying is a type of bullying that occurs when the perpetrator intends to cause emotional or physical harm to the victim. He also suggests that the bully chooses "to hide his or her identity to place the victim in a powerless position where he or she is unable to fight back, unable to protect themselves as they feel hurt, vulnerable and embarrassed". Cyber bullying is one the foremost social media ways in which learners engage these days. However, cyber bullying did not form part of this study as the learners at the school surveyed in this study, did not allude to such activities. Therefore, cyber bullying was not included in this study in 2010. Learners in the school at the time of data collection in

March 2010 had little access to electronic media except at school where it is used under supervision. A shift has since emerged and cyber bullying has become more aggressive.

THE EXTENT OF BULLYING

It was mentioned in the introduction that there is an increase and a decrease of bullying behaviour in schools. In the 1990s two nationwide studies on the prevalence of bullying were conducted in Australian schools. One study was done by (Peterson & Rigby, 1999:483) with about 38 000 learners between the ages of 8 and 17 and another study was conducted by Cross et al (2009:181) with 7 418 school children between the ages of 9 and 14 years. The findings by Peterson & Rigby revealed that 23.5% of the learners reported being bullied at least once a week compared to Cross et al's findings of 16% who reported being bullied at least once a week. This shows a drop in the occurrence of bullying in the schools in Australia.

In a United States survey of over 5.7 million schoolchildren in Grades 6 to 10, almost 30% were bullies, a victim of bullying, or both. In a United States national survey, 13% reported they bully others, 11% reported being victims of bullies, and another 6% said that they both bullied others and were bullied themselves (Nansel et al. 2001:22). An additional study of American junior high and high school children, by Adair et al (2000), found that 81% of students witnessed bullying at their schools. Only 21% reported it to an adult. Other research reveals that around 30% of bullying victims do not tell (Rivers & Smith, 1994).

In a recent English study on bullying conducted by Osborn (2007) with 1 140 learners between the years 2002 and 2007, it was found that there is a decrease in bullying at the school. However, findings reported by Molcho, Craig, Due, Pickett, Harel-Fisch, Overpeck & the HBSC Bullying Writing Group (2009:1-10), showed an increase in bullying behaviour amongst peers between the ages of 11 and 15.

In a study conducted in Norway, of the 568 000 learners, regular targets of bullying (once a week), were 9% of the study's respondents and about 7% were bullying others regularly (Olweus, 1994:13). According to Olweus (1994:19) boys are expected to be more involved in bullying behaviour than girls and to be victims of bullies. On the other hand, Roland (2011) found in a survey of 1 200 to 5 000 Norwegian learners, that there is an increase of 6.2% in peer victimization (being bullied or bullying others) from Grades 5 to 9 between the

years 2004 and 2008. However, Roland et al (2010:41-45) also confirms a decrease in peer victimization between the years 2001 and 2004.

In a recent study on bullying conducted by the University of South Africa's youth research unit, among 3 371 learners, it was found that 34% of the participants surveyed in Gauteng and of 901 learners surveyed in the Western Cape 30% were victims of bullying between the years of 2010 and 2012 (Louw, 2012:3).

In addition to this, Adam (2013:1) refers to cyber bullying as a kind of cruel behaviour of social media that has become the new playing field for the bullies. She writes that teenagers say that cyber bullying takes place on Twitter (23.8%), Face book (92.6%), My Space (17.7%) and on Instant messenger (15.2%). She further suggests that 65.8% of the learners respond online to the bullies while 35% confront the bullies in person. However, some learners prefer to avoid coming to school (15.4%) while 4.5% fight back with the bully. Statistics also reveal that 25% of the learners are victims of cyber bullying, two thirds witness cyber bullying online and only 10% of the parents are aware of the cyber bullying taking place at school.

The above studies show that bullying is fairly common across different countries in the world. From the literature, it is obvious that learners bully others directly or indirectly. This could include physical aggression, sexual harassment, social isolation, spreading rumours, etc. It is also important to take note that learners are not just victims to incidences of bullying, but also listeners and spectators of physical and verbal bullying.

Having the knowledge of the extent of bullying behaviour is one thing but understanding the factors that cause this problem is as important. Understanding the factors caused by the child's personality or by the environment can help in preventing bullying and stopping it when it does happen. Family factors may consist of violent behaviour toward the child by the parent. Individual factors may include certain personality styles and interpersonal behaviours. School factors refer to the social setting at school which have shown by this study's findings to play a key part in the occurrence of behaviour problems. Community conditions and attitudes where violence is widespread and children are exposed to aggressive behaviour can also encourage bullying.

THE EFFECTS OF BULLYING

According to Sullivan et al. (2004:6), victims of bullying may feel "angry, scared, depressed, disempowered, hateful, hurt, hopeless or vengeful". Bullying is a problem that can affect the ability of the victims to progress

academically, socially and emotionally (Sullivan et al., 2004:18). Victims of bullying may feel insecure and think there must be something wrong with them. They may become anxious, cautious, withdrawn, and isolated from their peers. They may even lose self-confidence and not want to go to school anymore. The effects bullying behaviour have on victims can be separated into two categories, namely the effects on the victim's physical health and the psychological effects on the victim. Effects of bullying on physical health will be discussed first. These include some physical effects such as frequent illnesses, headaches and migraines, sleeping disorder, problems with digestive system and study problems.

Physical effects on the victim

Physical effects of bullying on the victim refer to aggressive behaviour that can affect the learners physically. Physical aggression may lead to physical harm such as scratches, bruising or torn clothing. Frequent illnesses may include viral infections, especially flu and fever, colds, cough or chest infections. Victims may complain about headaches and migraines or have sleeping disorders by "having nightmares, waking up early and more tired." Another physical effect of bullying on the victim according to Garrett (2003:68) is that victims experience problems with their digestive system by having irritable bowel syndrome and stomach aches. As a result of poor concentration victims also experience study problems. Based on this, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus, 1993: 2001b) as a method for reducing bullying behaviour in schools may be a way to stop physical bullying from taking place.

Psychological effects on the victim

Psychological bullying can be defined as something that happened to the victim emotionally on purpose or with malicious intent. Victims may experience intellectual constraints as a result of continual emotional stress and therefore victims may show a decline in grades. Another psychological effect on the victim is that of fear for e.g. fear of the bus ride to and from school or fear of going to the bathroom or less supervised areas at the school. Garrett (2003:69) claims that victims have spoken about bullying as leaving a person "bruised" inside. According to Garrett, victims who are emotionally affected in this way may cause "hesitation in victims in taking social, intellectual, emotional or vocational risks as learners or adults". Psychological effects can last for years if it is not addressed. According to Garrett "the loss in self-esteem lasts all the way into their adult lives". Psychological effects may include having problems with development of self-esteem. This may cause

failing to develop self-esteem and may affect the learning process of the victims. In view of this, it is important for this study to focus on the school's code of conduct to promote appropriate behaviour within our schools.

SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT

A school's code of conduct outlines procedures for maintaining supportive and safe environments that cater for all learners. The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996), Section 8(1) requires the School Governing Bodies to draw up a code of conduct for learners after discussions with learners, parents and educators. In terms of Section 8(5), a code of conduct has to make provision to take care of the interests of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary procedures. To maintain a quality school environment that is safe and bully-free, Zeelie (2004:29) proposes a code of conduct as an important instrument.

It is important that schools provide all learners with the school's code of conduct to make sure that learners follow the rules that they have seen, discussed and agreed to. A school's code of conduct encourages good behaviour and therefore describes what an offence is and what the consequences for offences are (Bray, 2005:134). Everyone will then know what actions will be taken against them for certain offences. This study deems it important to highlight the use of a school code of conduct as it enables schools to include an antibullying policy in which schools can state clearly that bullying is taken seriously and that consequence will be applied should it happen.

METHODOLOGY

Mixed method approach

The researcher has decided to combine two paradigms and use a mixed method research approach. By combining both paradigms, the researcher is able to make sense of the learner's experiences of the different kinds of bullying as he or she describes it, and compare learners' accounts of bullying with figures gained from quantitative research. More detailed experiences of the different types of bullying was generated in the interview session to gauge learners' understanding of the terminology and obtain insight into their personal experiences. Using both methods in this study was to provide better understanding and answers than using only one research method.

Piloting

A pilot test was administered at two different sessions. The researcher first piloted the questionnaire with an Intermediate Phase group at a school which did not form part of the sample. The idea of the pilot was to determine how long respondents took to complete questions, whether all questions and instructions were clear and whether to take away any items which did not generate usable data. The pilot was successful as nothing needed to be changed on the questionnaire.

Sampling

To answer the research question, the researcher identified all the Intermediate Phase learners at a Primary School in the Western Cape. The total sample comprises 296 learners, which includes 78 Grade 4 learners, 119 Grade 5 learners and 99 Grade 6 learners. These learners are most likely familiar and informed and therefore information rich on the issue of bullying. The criterion for inclusion in this study was therefore that the participants could relate to experience of bullying, either as a victim, bully, or witness. McMillan & Schumacher (2006:326) state that "criterion samples are chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena the researcher is investigating."

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Questionnaires

The first instrument used was a questionnaire to explore learners' experiences of bullying and to what extent they have been exposed to various forms of bullying. To conduct the questionnaires, arrangements were made with the identified school, learners, educators and principal. The questionnaires were administered to the learners by their teachers in Grades 4 to 6 during a regular classroom period. It took place in their natural school setting: in their classrooms where the questions were carefully compiled in the language of instruction, English or Afrikaans. The process was arranged for the 7th of September 2009 and was written in the Reading period so that the Intermediate Phase learners could fill out the questionnaires. Learners used pencils that were provided for them to complete the questions. Teachers read the instructions on the questionnaires to the

learners. It was agreed that completed questionnaires be sent to the principal's office for collection by the researcher.

The researcher decided to make use of a closed response Likert scale format where the following item response selections were provided: (1) "Everyday/always; (2) once/twice a week; (3) once/twice a month; (4) once/twice a year and (5) never". Learners could choose between these predetermined responses on the questionnaire. This study found the Likert scale useful as it allows the study get an overall extent of the learners' experiences of bullying. Learners were asked to write their names on the questionnaires to enable the researcher to select a focus group for the interview. However, learners' names are not revealed in this report, to maintain confidentiality.

Focus Group Interview

The second instrument used in this study was a semi-structured group interview. The interview was conducted in a classroom at the research site on the 25th of March 2010 with a focus group of six learners who were selected depending on the frequency of their responses in the questionnaire. An even mix of bully, victim and bystander were selected in relation to the category "how others treat you" on the questionnaire. In this category, these learners mainly pointed out that they were 'constantly' bullied either by being, hit, kicked, pushed, teased, called names or rumours were spread about them. Thus, these learners will be able to share experiences of bullying they were involved in.

The focus group consisted of two boys and four girls: two girls in Grade 4, one boy and one girl in Grade 5, and one boy and one girl in Grade six. Respondents 1 and 2 are Grade 4 learners; respondents 3 and 4 are Grade 5 learners and respondents 5 and 6 are Grade 6 learners. Interestingly, a mix of gender (girls and boys) indicated in the questionnaire that they are being bullied mostly at school. Their responses were transcribed verbatim.

The interview process was explained beforehand to the principal and the staff and with the permission of the principal a recording device was used. The researcher initially experienced difficulty completing the interviews with the focus group due to a taxi strike and the H1N1 Flu (swine flu) scare during the third term

of 2009. On the day of the interview, the process was also explained to the learners on how they were identified to be part of the interview process. A recording device was deemed necessary to check that data from the interview is accurately represented. The researcher managed the process to ensure confidentiality.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As this study deals with a potentially sensitive emotional topic, the researcher endeavoured to be as ethical and considerate of respondents as possible. To comply with ethical standards, the researcher sought approval from WCED and from the selected school to conduct the research before collecting any data. All learners and their parents were of all the aspects of the research and consent was detained to conduct the study with the learners at the school. The researcher has taken care to conduct the research and present the findings in an ethically considerate manner.

Before starting with the study, approval to conduct the research at the school was sought from the school principal, the parents and from the WCED before collecting the data. The researcher met with the principal and the staff in the staffroom to inform them of the aims of the study and how the school could benefit from it. Both the principal and the staff were very enthusiastic about the idea of the bullying research since it was a problem at the school.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher made sure that the information collected is true and represents an accurate picture that is transparent and clear so that the researcher can undertake the same method and produce similar results. The researcher tested the issue of reliability by using a pre-test method in this study. The pilot test (questionnaire) was conducted with all Intermediate Phase learners from another school who did not form part of the study. The researcher evaluated the scores of both Intermediate Phase groups to test for consistency and repeatability of answers.

The issue of validity is tested by using a semi-structured interview method with a focus group to answer the sub-research questions. These questions pertain to learners' experiences of different types of bullying and the extent to which learners have been exposed to various forms of bullying. Using this measure by delving into

the learners' experiences of bullying, the researcher was able to reach valid findings and conclusions. As a result, the researcher determines whether the test appears to measure what it is intended to measure. If it works, the test is valid at this point and may be inspected further to find out whether the test is valid and may be used in other contexts.

DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data in this study is analysed by using descriptive statistics which provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. The responses were counted and percentages were calculated to determine general trends. All analysis were analysed using the SPSS 17 computer software package, a statistical data analysis tool.

In this study, accepted levels of significance reported are as follows: The five per cent level of significance includes all chi-square values where p = 0.05. A chi-square contingency test was done in this study to see if there is any statistical significant difference in the responses by the three grades (Grades 4, 5 and 6). A p-value corresponding to the chi-square value less than 0.05 shows that there is a statistically significant association between two variables e.g. boys being bystanders or girls being perpetrators of name calling. In contrast, probability value greater than 0.05 shows no significant difference or association.

With the assistance of a statistical analyst, the researcher systematically organised the data into themes and patterns using frequency tables. Some notes were taken to record perceptions of the learners and recollections of how they behaved and spoke during the interviews. The researcher listened to audio-recordings to analyse the focus group data and stored it in a computer file. The transcriptions were then given to an independent colleague who checked for any inaccuracies. The results are presented objectively summarizing the findings, so that respondents will be able to understand the material in order to increase the probability of acceptance of the conclusions.

DISCUSSION

Summary On Demographics Of Learners

Table 1. Grade in school (Basis Information)

Grade		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4A	39	13.2	13.2
	4B	39	13.2	26.4
	5A	40	13.5	39.9
	5B	40	13.5	53.4
	5C	39	13.2	66.6
	6A	13	4.4	70.9
	6A (Afr)	15	5.1	76.0
	6B	35	11.8	87.8
	6C	36	12.2	100.0
Total		296	100.0	

Of the learners who participated in the study, 26.4% (78) were in Grade 4 and completed the questionnaire at the time of this study. Of the rest of the learners, 40.2% (119) were in Grade 5 and 33.5% (99) in Grade 6. Some of the learners in Grade 6A answered the questions in Afrikaans and the rest of the learners in all Grades completed it in English. At the time of this study the ages of respondents ranged from 9 to 14 years. The gender distribution of the learners was almost even, representing (50.8%) females and (49.2%) males.

Summary On Being Bullied

A basic statistical analysis was undertaken to gather information from learners who reported how often they have been bullied at school. Forms of bullying included direct and indirect bullying such as being hit, kicked, pushed, teased, spreading of rumours or name calling or teasing, while being deprived of their money, snacks or lunch was also investigated. Response options for the first few questions ranged from 1 (every day) to 5

(never) in the category 'how others treat you'. There were some questions which not all learners completed. Responses I and 2 have been combined in certain tables to get a significant indication of the frequency of bullying experiences in the school. The results have been computed as percentages only of those who responded.

In particular, the researcher wanted to ascertain if the younger children (Grade 4s) are bullied more than the older learners (Grade 6s), as it appeared as such from experience in the school.

Table 2. Being hit

Q6. How often do other learners bully you by hitting y in school?			Grade Recoded			
			4	5	6	Total
Every day Or Always	Count		14	17	12	43
	% within Recoded	Grade	18.4%	15.0%	12.4%	15.0%
Once or twice a week	Count		7	25	21	53
	% within Recoded	Grade	9.2%	22.1%	21.6%	18.5%
Once or twice per month	Count		6	5	14	25
	% within Recoded	Grade	7.9%	4.4%	14.4%	8.7%
Once or twice per year	Count		4	16	15	35
	% within Recoded	Grade	5.3%	14.2%	15.5%	12.2%

Never	Count		45	50	35	130
	% within Grade Recoded		59.2%	44.2%	36.1%	45.5%
Total	Count		76	113	97	286
	% within Grade Recoded		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

As a group, 34% of Grade 6s are hit daily and/or more than once a week while only 27.6% of Grade 4s are hit every day and at least once or twice a week.

Table 3. Being kicked

Q7. How often do other learners bully you by kicking you school?	Grade Recoded			
	4	5	6	Total
Every day Or Always Count	13	11	9	33
% within Grade Recoded	16.9%	9.7%	9.6%	11.6%
Once or twice a week Count	9	24	21	54
% within Grade Recoded	11.7%	21.2%	22.3%	19.0%
Once or twice per month Count	4	9	15	28
% within Grade Recoded	5.2%	8.0%	16.0%	9.9%
Once or twice per year Count	6	18	16	40
% within Grade Recoded	7.8%	15.9%	17.0%	14.1%
Never Count	45	51	33	129
% within Grade Recoded	58.4%	45.1%	35.1%	45.4%
Total Count	77	113	94	284
% within Grade Recoded	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

28.6% of Grade 4 learners versus 30.9% of Grade 5 and 31.9% Grade 6 learners are collectively bullied daily and/or more than once a week by being kicked at school. However, the incidence of never being kicked changes among grades, evening out to:

- 58.4% in Grade 4;
- 45.1% in Grade 5; and
  - ☐ 35.1% in Grade 6.

Table 4. Giving up lunch, snacks or money

13 . How often have you been bullied into giving up your lunch, snacks or money?		Grade Recoded			Total
		4	5	6	
Every day Or Always	Count	6	13	11	30
	% within Grade Recoded	7.9%	11.8%	11.8%	10.8%
Once or twice a week	Count	5	8	11	24
	% within Grade Recoded	6.6%	7.3%	11.8%	8.6%
Once or twice per month	Count	1	2	1	4
	% within Grade Recoded	1.3%	1.8%	1.1%	1.4%
Once or twice per year	Count	2	7	8	17
	% within Grade Recoded	2.6%	6.4%	8.6%	6.1%
Never	Count	62	80	62	204
	% within Grade Recoded	81.6%	72.7%	66.7%	73.1%
Total	Count	76	110	93	279
	% within Grade Recoded	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Significantly more Grade 6s (23.6%) are forced into giving possessions to bullies daily and/or more than once a week than Grade 4s (14.5%). This shows that bullying is not just a problem of older children targeting younger ones, but for a number of types of bullying measured in this study, it is actually worse in Grade 6.

SUMMARY ON BEING A BULLY

Chi-square analyses indicated no significant difference in the way that learners in different Grades bully others by hitting them, kicking them, pushing them. Also no significant difference in the way that learners bully

others into giving up their lunch, snacks or money and places and times they bullied others at school, as the probability value (P value) is greater than 0.05.

Table 5. Hitting them

15. How often do you bully others by hitting them in school?		Grade Recoded			
		4	5	6	Total
Every day Or Always	Count	6	11	9	26
	% within Grade Recoded	8.0%	10.5%	9.8%	9.6%
Once or twice a week	Count	14	16	13	43
	% within Grade Recoded	18.7%	15.2%	14.1%	15.8%
Once or twice per month	Count	4	4	6	14
	% within Grade Recoded	5.3%	3.8%	6.5%	5.1%
Once or twice per year	Count	3	16	7	26
	% within Grade Recoded	4.0%	15.2%	7.6%	9.6%
Never	Count	48	58	57	163
	% within Grade Recoded	64.0%	55.2%	62.0%	59.9%
Total	Count	75	105	92	272
	% within Grade Recoded	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The probability value (P value) is greater than 0.05 so there is no significant difference in the way that learners bully others by hitting them at school. However, the probability value of the times and places where others were bullied, is less than 0.05 which means there is a statistical difference.

Table 6. Places and times bulling others

Q21 The places and times where you have bullied oth learners?		Grade Recoded			
		4	5	6	Total
	Count	9	10	4	23

on the way to school	% within Grade Recoded	18.8%	11.6%	5.5%	11.1%
in the toilets	Count	2	4	5	11
	% within Grade Recoded	4.2%	4.7%	6.8%	5.3%
in the corridors	Count	4	5	10	19
	% within Grade Recoded	8.3%	5.8%	13.7%	9.2%
during lessons	Count	1	12	15	28
	% within Grade Recoded	2.1%	14.0%	20.5%	13.5%
on the way home	Count	24	32	32	88
	% within Grade Recoded	50.0%	37.2%	43.8%	42.5%
on the bus	Count	8	23	7	38
	% within Grade Recoded	16.7%	26.7%	9.6%	18.4%
Total	Count	48	86	73	207
	% within Grade Recoded	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

One can conclude that the highest incidences of bullying occur off the school premises e.g. on the way to school, on the way home and on the bus. 50% of Grade 4 learners reported they have bullied other learners on their way home while 37.2% in Grade 5 and 43.8% in Grade 6 indicated that they have bullied others on their way home.

During lessons there is also a bigger percentage in Grade 6 (20.5%) than in Grade 4 (2.1%) of bullying taking place during lessons.

SUMMARY ON BEING A BYSTANDER

Seen others being hit

Table 7. See others been hit

23			Grade Recoded			Total
. How often have you seen another learner bully others by hitting them?			4	5	6	
Every day Or Always	Count		42	47	52	141
	% within Grade Recoded		55.3%	43.9%	56.5%	51.3%
Once or twice a week	Count		8	26	17	51
	% within Grade Recoded		10.5%	24.3%	18.5%	18.5%
Once or twice per month	Count		3	6	5	14
	% within Grade Recoded		3.9%	5.6%	5.4%	5.1%
Once or twice per year	Count		7	10	5	22
	% within Grade Recoded		9.2%	9.3%	5.4%	8.0%
Never	Count		16	18	13	47
	% within Grade Recoded		21.1%	16.8%	14.1%	17.1%
Total	Count		76	107	92	275
	% within Grade Recoded		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In the category "what you have seen or heard", the responses to the first question "How often have you seen others being hit?" reveal that there is a statistically significant difference by Grade as to how often learners have seen another learner bully others by hitting them daily and/or more than once a week:

- 75% in Grade 6;
- 68.2% in Grade 5; and
- 65.8% in Grade 4.

Looking at the results, one can conclude that Grade 6s has seen others being hit more often than the other two Grades.

Another difference occurs where learners indicated they have never seen others being hit. The incidences reported represent:

- 21.1% in Grade 4;
- 16.8% in Grade 5; and
- 14.1% in Grade 6

Compared to the other two Grades, the results show that mostly Grade 4s have never seen others being hit.

Heard about others being teased

Table 8. Hear others been teased

Q24. How often have you heard another learner bully other by teasing them?		Grade Recoded			Total
		4	5	6	
Every day Or Always	Count	44	42	52	138
	% within Grade Recoded	58.7%	38.9%	56.5%	50.2%
Once or twice a week	Count	3	23	17	43
	% within Grade Recoded	4.0%	21.3%	18.5%	15.6%
Once or twice per month	Count	4	9	3	16
	% within Grade Recoded	5.3%	8.3%	3.3%	5.8%
Once or twice per year	Count	5	8	6	19

	% within Grade Recoded	6.7%	7.4%	6.5%	6.9%
Never	Count	19	26	14	59
	% within Grade Recoded	25.3%	24.1%	15.2%	21.5%
Total	Count	75	108	92	275
	% within Grade Recoded	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The responses to the second question "How often have you heard about others being teased?" reveal that there is a statistically significant difference by Grade as to how often learners have heard about another learner being teased daily and/or more than once a week:

- 75% in Grade 6;
- 62.7% in Grade 4; and
- 60.2% in Grade 5

The older learners (Grade 6s) are the ones who mostly heard about others being teased.

What you have done

When looking at the results for this section, it was found that most learners indicated that they have reported incidences to teachers:

- 48.5% in Grade 5;
- 44.3% in Grade 4; and
- 39.8% in Grade 6

Table 9. What have you done?

Q25 What have you done when you have heard or seen another learner being teased or called names in the school?		Grade Recoded			
		4	5	6	Total
report the incident to a teacher	Count		48		114

	% within Grade Recoded	31	48.5%	35	44.4%
		44.3%		39.8%	
walk away and ignored it	Count	10	9	18	37
	% within Grade Recoded	14.3%	9.1%	20.5%	14.4%
I helped the bully	Count	2	1	3	6
	% within Grade Recoded	2.9%	1.0%	3.4%	2.3%
helped the person being bullied	Count	20	25	15	60
	% within Grade Recoded	28.6%	25.3%	17.0%	23.3%
I laughed	Count	1	5	5	11
	% within Grade Recoded	1.4%	5.1%	5.7%	4.3%
I watched	Count	6	11	12	29
	% within Grade Recoded	8.6%	11.1%	13.6%	11.3%
Total	Count	70	99	88	257
	% within Grade Recoded	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Grade 5s mostly reports an incident to a teacher compared to Grade 4s and Grade 6s. Of significance, is a few who indicated that they actually laughed and watched the incident happening instead of reporting or helping the victim. Others walked away and ignored the bullying:

- 20.5% in Grade 6;
- 14.3% Grade 4; and
- 9.1% in Grade 5

The Grade 6s show a higher percentage of walking away and ignoring the bullying.

SUMMARY ON THE INTERVIEW

A focus group interview was conducted with six Intermediate Phase learners, who were selected depending on the frequency of their responses, to delve into their understanding of bullying experiences. An even mix of

bully, victim and bystander were selected in relation to the category "how learners treat you" on the questionnaire. Respondents are as follows:

- Respondent 1 and 2 (two girls in Grade 4)
- Respondents 3 and 4 (one girl and one boy in Grade 5)
- Respondents 5 and 6 (one girl and one boy in Grade 6)

The interview with the focus group included aspects to research different types of bullying and learners' understanding of being a victim, bully or witness. Before the research was conducted, it was assumed that the older children bully the younger children more than they are bullied themselves. Respondents confirmed this perception in the interview, reporting that the older children bully the younger ones with much greater frequency. The Grade 6s (36.1%) are hit less frequently while the Grade 4s (59.2%) are hit more often. Of significance is the fact that the main kind of bulling that occurred was that of physical assault by mostly boys and name calling by mostly girls. Pushing occurred mostly of all the physical bullying. There is also an indication that many victims are suffering in silence because only some of the learners (44.3%) reported the name calling, the threats and the teasing to an educator or a parent.

While teachers are in a position to assist, it appears during the interview that learners only reported serious incidences where learners are physically injured and less serious cases are kept silent. Learners felt more comfortable telling their parents hoping they would resolve the problem of bullying at school. Parents on the other hand, contacted the school principal to sort out the bullying behaviour at the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations in this study includes suggestions to an anti-bullying policy, strategic planning on bullying, suggestions to manage a classroom, suggestions for working with a victim and bully, peer responsibility, token economy and a whole school approach.

Anti-bullying policy suggestions

To guarantee the protection of all learners within the school it is expected (South African School's Act 84 of 1996) that every school develop a safety policy which includes bullying as a subsection. This study wishes to suggest that schools insert an anti-bullying clause as part of the schools code of conduct which schools could use when they draw up a safety policy. Engaging in an anti-bullying policy formulation at the school where the study was conducted is an important method of reducing bullying behaviour within the school. The purpose of an anti-bullying policy is to help establish a safe and happy environment by providing clear rules and procedures for dealing with bullying remarks on a regular, consistent and ongoing basis (Squelch et al., 2000). Learners have the right to learn in a safe, secure environment that is free of bullying.

The teachers, learners, and parents need to plan to create a community in which everybody feels valued and protected. They also need to aim to protect children against bullying and racist remarks and provide support for the victims, bullies, bystanders and parents. Schools and classrooms need to establish and stick to rules as outlined in the anti-bullying policy above. The key for educators is to realize that we are all members of a particular ethnic, race, various class, gender, as well as sexual identity. These factors make us diverse and unique as in the case of this school where the study was conducted. Educators therefore need assistance in dealing with, not just bullying and racist remarks, but with diversity because they must overcome the challenge of educating learners. Developing and implementing a no-bullying policy sends a loud and clear message that bullying comments will not be put up with and that the school is a bully-free zone. This will ensure a safe environment for learners. The carrying out of an anti-bullying policy, developed together with the school community, can assist the school to monitor and prevent this kind of behaviour.

Strategic planning on bullying

The South African Child Gauge (2009/2010:25) clearly states that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 Section 12(1) (c) proposes "everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person, including the right to be free from all forms of violence" (Smith & Pendlebury, 2010). To achieve this ideal, educators, learners and parents should all be involved and be prepared to work towards developing and implementing strategies to prevent misbehaviour. This can be done through strategic planning. Suggestions for effective implementation of strategies to reduce bullying behaviour at this school with the necessary monitoring of activities and evaluation strategies are reflected in

Table 10.

Table 10. Bullying Strategy

Activity	Responsible Person	Outcome
☐ Arrange sessions for Grade 6 learners to be trained as monitors and prefects to assist with reducing of bullying.	• Grade 6 Educators • Grade 7 Educators	• Inform parents • Assist Grade 6 learners in implementation of Sessions.
• Establish a committee to plan awareness and prevention of bullying. • Parent meeting to discuss School's Code of Conduct. Monitor learner behaviour.	☐ Principal and all Staff members	• Involve staff, parents, and learners. • Inform School Governing Body and parents. • Form Home-school relations.
☐ Group counselling sessions for self-esteem.	• Educator Support Team Co-ordinator • Social Worker	• Inform all educators and parents • Monitoring of sessions.
• Workshop on developing a whole school positive behaviour approach. • Implementation of approach	• WCED officials • Bullying Behaviour Committee	• Provide educators, parents and caregivers with skills to assist with bullying behaviour. • Monitoring implementation of whole school approach.
☐ Evaluation strategies	• Principal • All educators	☐ Evaluating strategies

Suggestions to manage a classroom

Another concern was found in this study that teachers often leave their classrooms unsupervised. Suggestions teachers could use on how to manage their classrooms effectively is to plan the classroom procedure and atmosphere ahead of time to reduce or prevent bullying or discipline problems before they occur. Teachers who are not in their classes and not on playground duty give learners the opportunity for bullying behaviour.

During the interview, respondents revealed that they are intimidated by bullies while the teacher is out of the classroom. The bullies say they will bully the others after school if their name is written on the board, implying

that they spoke in the classroom while the teacher was out. For this reason, it would be a good idea to train monitors and prefects (refer to bullying strategy timeline) to assist with bullying behaviour not just in class but in the toilets, the passages or on the playground during break.

Before the lessons begin, teachers could avoid any difficulties by ensuring learners are promptly engaged in useful activities. If the teacher is occupied with putting up displays, distributing materials and searching for equipment there is ample time for social bullying to occur such as chatting and making fun of someone. This builds up disorder and leads to the delay of beginning the lesson. It is therefore important for the teacher to be in the classroom before the lessons begin.

Suggestions for working with a victim and a bully

It is important for this study to highlight a few suggestions for working with a victim and a bully because learners pointed out the problems of bullying they are faced with issue on and off the school premises. Instead of the staff ignoring the learners' complaints or 'passing the buck' to the SGB, HOD and the principal, victims could be encouraged to take a stand and speak openly about the bullying incident by describing the incident in detail and to always remember to report it. Victims could also be encouraged to think of ways to protect themselves, to always shout for help or refuse to fight and to keep away from dangerous situations.

Respondent 1 revealed that some learners are so traumatised and suffer in isolation to the point where they feel like killing themselves, but that other learners (bystanders), feel sorry for the victims of bullying and try to support them. Victims could be taught to remain calm, focused and bystanders should be taught to help or support the victims by reporting the incident. Teachers and parents could encourage victims to seek assistance and speak up and could try to ensure them that they will be protected from further harm. A major challenge for teachers to helping victims of bullying is to unveil the aspect of secrecy surrounding bullying. Fear, embarrassment, and shame make many victims hesitant to tell their teachers or parents about bullying incidences as revealed in the interview results.

When working with a bully, teachers could encourage bullies to treat others with respect. When bullying occurs, the educator could remove the bully immediately to a time- out corner in the classroom from the bullying situation and investigate the incident. The teacher then reminds the bully of the consequences set out in the school's code of conduct. The incident is then to be recorded in an incident book. Thereafter, the educator could try to change the behaviour of the bully with positive reinforcement strategies. All the bullies,

followers, defenders and bystanders are to be involved in the intervention plan. The educator could then suggest counselling if necessary or use developmental programmes to help the bullies. Contact with the parents could be made to inform them of the incidences to ensure the school is a bully-free zone.

Token economy programme

Another intervention strategy that educators can implement with younger learners is the *token economy programme* (Burke, 1992:100). A learner earns tokens for displaying a wide variety of appropriate classroom behaviours including task completion, responding to instructions and showing respect to others. Tokens can be used at a later time to buy books, pens, pencils, etc. In addition the learner can lose tokens for displaying disruptive behaviours. Each learner can earn, spend or lose tokens in an individualised manner and therefore a token economy programme can be a valuable method for promoting positive behaviour and decrease negative behaviour. Considerable planning is necessary that such a programme is successful and maintained.

The Whole School Approach

A Whole School Approach in the form of training workshops can be run by the WCED to prevent bullying behaviour. This approach brings together behavioural and emotional development strategies from a range of approaches to provide educators, parents and caregivers with skills that can assist when working with children who present bullying behaviour. Topics discussed in workshops include: The Conflict Cycle, Self-esteem and behaviour, Code of Conduct and Developing a whole school positive behaviour approach. These workshops are aimed at guiding educators and parents in preventing bullying or challenging behaviour in schools and in the home environment and can therefore also be incorporated into the School Improvement Plan at our school.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A whole community approach is needed to address bullying behaviour. Teachers, learners, and parents could all be involved in developing and implementing a plan they agreed on. Research could therefore look into teachers' understanding and implementation of useful strategies in preventing bullying behaviour in primary schools.

It would also be useful to research whether all primary and high schools do in fact have an anti- bullying policy in place at their schools.

I would also suggest that researchers explore the prevalence of the secrecy element of bullying in the Western Cape primary schools and reasons why victims are afraid to tell. As mentioned already, the earlier that bullying problems are recognised and addressed in constructive ways, the greater the chances of helping learners get out of victim, bystander and bullying roles.

CONCLUSION

Having looked at the phenomenon of bullying, the researcher identified the following issues that warrant attention in the study: (1) educators often seem unaware of bullying; there seems to be (2) a lack of interest among parents and school staff to address bullying and it seems (3) learners don't know they have a responsibility to report or stop bullying. This means that all stakeholders at schools must participate in drawing up an effective intervention plan that will focus on aggressive learner behaviour within schools.

Reflecting on the responses of the questionnaire with Intermediate Phase learners, it is clear that bullying is a matter of concern and cannot be ignored. Based on the evidence, learners indicated that others were directly or indirectly bullying them as well as learners who admitted to being bullies. Of significance is the fact that the main kinds of bullying that occurs among learners are physical assault (53.2%) and name calling (36.1%). There is also an indication that many victims in the school are suffering in silence because only some of the learners reported the bullying incidences to an educator or a parent.

The victims were exposed to the trauma of being bullied while others also mentioned that they themselves have bullied someone at school. Some of these bullies were previously or unwittingly victims. These incidences might play a role in them becoming a bully. Influences from social networks, gangs or groups in the community may also contribute to learners becoming bullies. Violence at home and in the community and in the media also has a negative impact on the learner's behaviour because they model what they see and hear most of the time.

On the other hand, a victim may see bullying as an unpleasant experience while the bully may say that he or she is "only teasing". Teasing, pushing or kicking is only regarded as playing when friends act in a way where they have fun together without hurting each other physically. Bullying, occurs when children are not friends

and they act in a way where there is a desire to hurt each other. When the victim does not take pleasure in the playful act, it becomes bullying to the victim.

"Defenders" as they are referred to in the Bullying Circle, do not like bullying and therefore try to help their peers by reporting it. While educators are in a position to assist learners, it appears that learners only reported serious incidences where learners are physically attacked or threatened while emotional and verbal abuse are regarded as less serious and kept silent.

An intervention plan or program that involves all the learners, parents, and school staff could assist to ensure that all learners can learn in an environment that is safe and secure. The following possible solutions are recommended to prevent or reduce bullying at school:

- Teachers can work with learners in class to develop rules against bullying.
- A questionnaire can be distributed to the learners to help them become aware of the bullying problem.
- Establish an anti-bullying committee consisting of staff, parents and learners to plan awareness and prevention activities.
- Different forms of bullying must be identified and described.
- Involve parents who will assist educators to monitor and supervise during interval. ☐   Appoint learners as monitors to watch for bullying during intervals ☐   Train the monitors in what to look out for and to whom to report.
- Educators should establish a positive, friendly, and trusting relationship with the class and each individual child to ensure that victims will report incidences of bullying.
- Ensure that bullying is mentioned in the school's code of conduct.
- Have group counselling sessions to address issues such as self-esteem.

As a researcher I strongly feel that educators need to protect the learners as well as themselves. To ensure this they need to have the necessary policies in place. Each school should compile a written safety policy, which must be made available to every educator and publicly displayed to create and maintain a safe, risk-free environment for learners and staff. Schools could arrange parent workshops, supply resources, and make genuine attempts to engage parents in important decisions related to diversity education. Educators therefore need to be provided with the tools they need to develop and implement educational and officially valid policies and practices. Once this process is well underway, we stand a better chance in keeping learners safe and secure.

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Parental Involvement In English Literacy Homework With Primary School Learners

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to explore parental involvement within an English Literacy intervention programme focusing on a group of Grade 4 primary school learners. The study postulate that active involvement of parents in their children's education can enhance learning, and argues that in order for learners and parents to actively engage with the learning processes they should become more emancipated in the process. Therefore the main focus is that parents can be assisted by educators, to scaffold the learning processes of their children.

The study is framed by a qualitative approach, to which the parents of identified learners were invited. The programme was implemented to investigate the benefits of parental involvement in after school homework activities. A small multilingual focus group was formed to determine the success (es) of this programme. A research paradigm was used to lean towards a critical theory paradigm framed by an action research model.

Key words: Emancipation, partnership, parental involvement, homework, intervention programme

Introduction

1.1 Background And Context Of Research

Teachers contend that parental involvement in assisting children with homework has always been lacking.

Wolfendale (1992:6) supports this view and argues: "in textbooks on the history of education, parents are conspicuously absent: they appear to exist only in relation to their primary legal duty to send children to school." What has also become more noticeable is that parents find it increasingly challenging to assist their children with homework, often due to variables such as learner characteristics, lack of knowledge and education and integrative orientations (Brown, 2007: 170).

In recent years, educators have opted for various alternatives as a way to involve parents in the schoolwork of learners, but with no or little success. As a result, parents often disclosed various factors, which include their inability to assist their children either due to their level of schooling, or their unfamiliarity with the varying materials and methodological approaches to scaffold the lessons presented in the classroom. This is in contrast with the expectations relayed by the Department of Education (DoE) that requires a greater degree of parental involvement in children's educational development (Mestry & Grobler, 2007:176).

Outcomes Based Education (OBE) demands educators to afford learners homework that would engage parents more with their child's educational endeavours, and to serve as a platform for parents to collaborate with educators in the educational undertakings of their children. Van Der Horst and McDonald (1997:6) review the mission of a change to OBE where the focus is on the learner and his/her needs. Acknowledgement of human diversity (learners' differences must be accommodated). A move to participatory, democratic decision making in education (teachers, parents and learners have a say in how

they experience education). Emphasis on accountability (responsibility). Allowing all learners to achieve their full potential (different levels according to individual ability).

In view of this, Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:17) state that "parents (should) also benefit greatly from being involved with the school. For both parents and teachers, teamwork reduces the characteristic isolation of their

respective roles." Collaboration consequently means where the parents and the teachers or the school work together, and in this case for the improvement of children's development.

In 2007 the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) distributed a circular which encouraged parents to support their school-going children with homework activities. This document states that stakeholders such as the School Management Teams (SMT's) and School Governing Bodies (SGB's) should use this opportunity to debate with parents the significance of assisting their children with their homework (DCD/0065:2007).

Members of the SMT as well as the SGB are expected to continuously post urgent appeal to the parents at Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) meetings to become more actively involved and to support these pupils. In further view, Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:83) share these sentiments with the approach used by the WCED that children can be assisted by their parents on a (various) range of activities to scaffold their learning.

According to Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:83) these vital activities are referred to as the "curriculum of the home." Herein, Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:83) further suggest that these activities at home can include tutoring, parental supervision and the checking of homework, as well as conversations between the parent and the child regarding everyday events. Parents can also encourage their children to read for enjoyment. The reason why reading is seen as vital to complement stimulating strategic action beyond the classroom, is documented in the National Reading Strategy:

> *To read is to empower*
> *To empower is to write*
> *To write is to influence*
> *To influence is to change*
> *To change is to live.*   *(National Reading Strategy, 2008: 4)*

The National Reading Strategy suggests that the parents should show a greater level of interest in how their children perform academically, and should afford closer attention to their children's personal growth.

Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009: 83) support the idea that parents should reward their children when they perform well at school. These methods of reward that parents can afford learners could consist of appraisals, incentives, encouragements, praise and compliments. These may serve as further motivation to the child to perform well at school and stimulate both their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to achieve more academically and socially.

The Purpose Of The Study

This study aims to conduct research into an intervention programme, involving parents of a selected group of Grade 4 learners through a series of English literacy homework sessions; to ascertain whether such a form of intervention would then enable parents to assist learners with the then-afforded homework activities. The homework programme, which was implemented, comprises of listening and language homework activities. An action research approach was used to frame observations during the various stages and sessions of this programme. For this study, the level of parental involvement was crucial as parents needed to become much more supportive, helpful and more compassionate to complement the learning processes of the child. A strong bond or partnership between the school and the home were essential for the learner's holistic development. It was evident that parents needed to display a more hands-on approach and to work collaboratively with the teacher to meet the expectations from learners and to yield more meaningful ways on how parents could effectively assist their children with their homework activities.

The purpose of the language homework programme was to provide an academic and strategic link between the school and the home, as well as to create a collaborative space for further engagement between parents and learners. Furthermore, the aim was to develop a more transparent level of communication between home and school, as a way to support parents with the necessary knowledge and skills to assist learners with homework, especially as parents are seen as the child's foremost educators. In this study, the language programme was used as an instrument to enable parents to be more supportive towards their children's schooling as well as for parents to reflect on their involvement and their contributions within the learner's learning processes. The intention behind the language programme was

to illustrate to parents that effective parental involvement can be beneficial to all stakeholders i.e. learners, parents, educators etc. especially when it comes to defining the roles of the different stakeholders such as DoE, community and Non Governmental officials (NGO's) in order to improve and assist with parental involvement, and by assisting parents to become emancipated.

Background To The Homework Programme

The framework provided by Van Niekerk (2007) serves as research instrument for the study. This programme, devised by Van Niekerk (2007) is specifically designed as an instrument to foster greater collaboration

between the school, parents and learners. The homework programme is divided into various themes. In her programme, Van Niekerk (2007:3) integrates various themes to complement activities and skills within the classroom and at home. The outline below charts these topics as covered during the six sessions with the participants.

Table 1. An abbreviated version of the Van Niekerk (2007) model was used for the purposes of this research study. The themes selected were covered over a 5 themes period

Theme 1	The School	Topics	The Classroom
			Late for School
Theme 2	The City	Topics	The Shopping Mall
			Occupations
Theme 3	Transport	Topics	The Bicycle
			The Service Station
			Road Safety
			The Railway Station
Theme 4	Animals	Topics	The Zoo
			Farm Animals
Theme 5	The Supermarket	Topics	Odd one out
			Let's bake

The programme of Van Niekerk covers a 28 week timeframe. For the purpose of this study only 18 weeks were covered; consisting of the six contact sessions of one hour each with the parents as indicated in table 2.

Table 2. The 28 week framework of the listening and language 2 home programme (Van Niekerk, 2007)

Week 1	The School	Week 2	The Classroom
Week 3	Late for school	Week 4	The City
Week 5	The Shopping Mall	Week 6	The Shopping Mall (continued)
Week 7	Occupations	Week 8	Transport
Week 9	The Supermarket	Week 10	Odd one out
Week 11	Listening games (Supermarket) Let us bake!	Week 12	The bicycle Revision Game (1)
Week 13	The motor-car Road safety	Week 14	The Service Station
Week 15	The Zoo	Week 16	The farm

Week 17	Animals - games	Week 18	The Railway Station
Week 19	The Weather Seasons Days of the week	Week 20	Revision games (2) Good manners
Week 21	The Park	Week 22	Safety in and around the house Emergency services
Week 23	The Library	Week 24	The Post Office
Week 25	The Dentist	Week 26	The Doctor
Week 27	The Airport	Week 28	Revision Game (3)

Each topic consisted of a comprehension activity, a family game, vocabulary activities, auditory reception activities and memory skills. The topics covered also consisted of a large range of sound and phonic activities as well as reasoning skills. As the purpose of the programme was to improve the language skills of the learners further emphasis was also placed on writing activities which formed part of the home programme.

Research Question

In order to strengthen the relationship between home and school and simultaneously improve the English literacy skills of the Grade 4 learners the study focused on addressing the following questions:

1. How can parents be supported to assist their Grade 4 children with English literacy homework?
2. What strategies can be implemented to involve parents of Grade 4 learners with English literacy homework?

The parents were supported in assisting their children with homework by putting the intervention programme into practice and to improve the relationships between the home and the school. This was done through regular contact sessions with parents and/or other family members of the learners. The researcher had regular communication with parents or representatives of the learners through telephonic communication to remind parents of meeting dates and/or written communication via letters and circulars. Home and school liaison books to discuss the progress of learners afforded parents with feedback on the learner's performance. Report cards were also used to inform parents how their child/ren performed during the term. The researcher forwarded SMS's to the parents if learners failed to complete homework or if parents did not sign the homework sheet.

The following approaches were applied to involve the parents with English literacy homework intervention. The aims were to eliminate barriers between the school and home, such as the language barriers due to the multilingual range of languages spoken among the research participants. English was used as a tool to level the equity caused by the language diversity. Another approach was to strengthen relationships shared between the teacher and the parents especially among foreign nationals who were regarded as 'aliens' in the immediate social setting. These existing power relationships were turned around by initiating the building of trust between parents and teachers and parents of different cultural backgrounds as well.

Time management skills were integrated as parents set aside certain slots to assist their children with their homework. Such homework timeslots were instrumental in building family relationships as well and provided a platform for parents to interact on a neglected terrain that is the education of their children. Time management facilitated a specific form of discipline and routine in family life that further added value to the importance of linking home as informal learning environment and school as formal learning environment.

Transport was provided as parents were brought to the school environment where the learners spent most of their time. Learning opportunities were created via the homework programme where parents were informed on how to help their children with homework and finally an empowering atmosphere was established by means of the homework programme to strengthen relationships amongst parents and children thus familiarized parents with insights into what their children experienced daily.

The approach that was most beneficial for the group was the language barriers that were broken down between the home and the school, as all the parents who participated in the intervention programme understood the

English used in the intervention. There was also a better level of understanding between the parents and the educator as the parents began to understand how they could assist their children with their schoolwork.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: Critical theory

The research approach used in this study leans towards the critical theory paradigm, as the entire study is underpinned by the action research model. According to Duffy and Scott (1998:184) critical theory has been dominated by Jurgen Habermas since 1971. They further view that the central aim of Habermas's critical theory model was to obtain a concept of civilization with a realistic aim that could lead to the liberation of people from supremacy. In other words, individuals are able to view life critically and objectively as a way to create opportunities which would allow them to be free from domination and oppression, so that they would be able to think more critically and become independent. For this reason the intervention programme was implemented as a way for parents (or the representatives) and learners to become emancipated from the difficulties experienced with homework assigned at school.

In his framework, Habermas (as cited in Duffy and Scott, 1998: 184) has specific viewpoints to outline how one can understand what social reality, technical, practical and emancipation mean. In the study conducted by Horkheimer (1982), the study largely centered on the parents' inability to assist their children with homework. Horkheimer is also of the opinion that critical theory must be realistic in its meaning as it is imperative that it identifies the actors of change. These actors of change allude to the intervention programme that was offered so that the parents or the representatives could be empowered, and to be of assistance to the children. In addition, Critical Theory should also afford clear direction and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation (Horkheimer, 1982). In essence, derived from Horkheimer's view, Critical Theory can therefore be seen as a theory which can be radical and emancipatory (Kemmis, 2001:92), as it brings along change through research. The transformation that is referred to by Kemmis came to fruition in this study as parents became self-sufficient in assisting their children with homework.

In the research of Lilly and Green (2004:4), they relate to the notion of critical theory, through a different focal point. They propose that critical theory is defined through the societal and ethnic milieu that accompanies children when they start attending school.

The central purpose of this study is to introduce and evaluate the effects of a homework programme to emancipate the parents in assisting learners with homework.

Action Research

In order to gauge the effect of such a programme, Riding, Fowell, and Levy (1995:1) cautions that "a methodical, iterative approach embracing problem identification, action planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection" should be considered and that the insights gained from the initial cycle, should then feed into the planning of the second cycle, for which an action plan should be modified and the research process repeated again.

Planning

Planning is the first stage within the Riding, Fowell and Levy (1995) cycle and involves an analysis of the problem before a strategic plan of action is compiled (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, 1988:11). During the planning stage of this study, the researcher evaluated the current situation and noticed that parents struggled to assist learners with their homework. The researcher therefore planned ways on how to have a constructive influence that would be beneficial to both the parent and learner.

Acting

This stage involves the implementation of the strategic plan (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, 1988:12). The homework programme was implemented which consisted of six sessions of one hour each. During these sessions, parents were equipped with ways on how to assist their children with homework. Parents were encouraged to interact with both teacher and learner during the implementation phases of the programme.

Observing

During this phase, the observer (educator) should be consistent with the monitoring-aspect, and take notes on what was implemented and to do pro-active planning (Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 1988:13). The educator

observed how the parents interacted with the programme through monitoring. Observations of how the learners responded to the programme were done in class context and learners' performances were monitored accordingly.

Reflecting

This stage reflects on the outcomes (results) of the evaluation (Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 1988:13). The researcher planned the next sessions in advance and made the necessary adjustments (based on observations) accordingly, to allow parents a better opportunity to interact with the content and scaffold the learning processes of the learner.
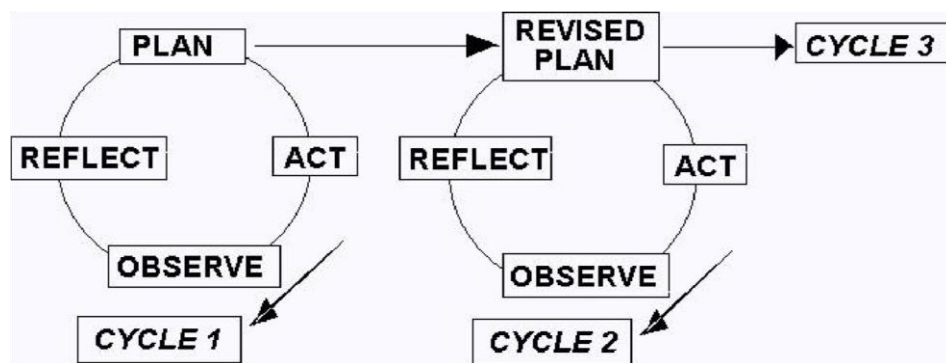
Figure 1. The action research cycle (Riding, Fowell, & Levy, 1995)

Methods

This chapter focuses on a qualitative research design framework as a means to ascertain how the parents of Grade 4 learners could be supported to assist their children with English literacy homework assignments. This was done by offering an intervention programme for parents using English literacy as a vehicle to establish common ground. This chapter includes a further discussion on the research design and methodological framework used by the researcher to which the process of obtaining the relevant data will be explained. Furthermore, this chapter will highlight key points of action research as it relates to the critical theory paradigm used in this study.

The Research Site

The research site is a primary school which was started in 1910 in the Cape Peninsula. There were originally four schools in the area. The research site is the only one that remained. The other three schools were closed down. The school comprises of Grades R to Grade 7 learners with only one class per grade. The family composition of the learners range from single parenting, nucleus families and extended families. Parental involvement at the research site was practically non-existent prior to the intervention programme. The reasons (as shared by parents) were mainly due to different parenting patterns, low self-esteem with regard to subject knowledge, low education levels (of parents), and that most of them were not acquainted with the OBE framework and expectations. The parents also mentioned their work related issues such as long hours during harvesting time on the wine farms. Other parents who resides outside the area stated that they must use different modes of transport and that the lack of finances in many instances played a negative roll which influenced their participation and involvement in their children's school work.

The data was collected at the primary school through means of questionnaires, a focus group of parents and from data obtained from learners' homework books. The data was collected to establish if the parents were able to assist their children with their homework. The respondents were the Grade 4 parents which modelled the multilingual focus group. There are 38 learners in the Grade 4 class of whom 18 are girls and 20 are boys. The learners come from different cultural groups, have diverse backgrounds and speak different home languages. The table below will give you an idea of the diversity of the learners in this class.

Characteristics of research sample group

Table 3. A statistical breakdown of the sample group

Medium of instructions	Afrikaans
Second Language of instruction	English
Learners' mother tongue:	Number of learners: 38
Afrikaans	26
English	2

isiXhosa	8
Shona	2
Number of parents that reside with both parents	19
Number of learners who reside with a single parent	8
Number of learners who reside with single parent within extended family	6
Number of learners who reside with guardian	2
Number of learners who reside with grandparents	3
Number of immigrants	2
Number of learners that receive a social grant	16
Number of learners that benefit from the school's nutrition programme	34

The abovementioned information was obtained from the school's CEMIS. The information is an indication of how diverse the sample population at the research site is, especially with reference to the different home languages, the different family types as well as the level of poverty.

Research design

The research design in this study was devised in such a way as to obtain information on the degree of involvement of parents in the edification of their children.

Fouché and De Vos (2005:1320) define a research design as the plan that the researcher intends to use when conducting the research. A case study based on an action research model of the Grade 4 class of 38 learners

was conducted. The researcher networked on a regular basis via SMSs, telephonically and informal conversations with the parents. The design employs a qualitative approach, and relevant data was derived from research instruments such as self-administered questionnaires and focus group interviews. In focus group interviews respondents were interviewed on their opinions and concerns to ascertain how they could best be supported to assist with their children's homework.

In a scholastic study conducted by McMillan and Schumacher (1993:37), McMillan *et al*. (1993) viewed the benefits of traditional qualitative research also is when one is able to use which a single 'case' to which that case is studied in depth." For this purpose the researcher used her own class as a case study. Qualitative data comprises of texts in the configuration of effective oral descriptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 1999:37).

The qualitative research design framework afforded the researcher insight into the intensity of parental commitment to their children's schooling. The qualitative approach used, focused on a single purpose, namely to "portray and comprehend the proceedings within the tangible, natural context in which the engagement with learners and parents transpires (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:272)."

Research Instruments

The instruments that were used consisted of self-administered questionnaires, homework sessions, field notes, focus group interviews, observations and CASS marks of learners.

A Qualitative Research Approach

This study focused on a qualitative research approach which enabled the researcher to learn directly about the communal world of the respondents by investigating the involvement and participation of the parents.

Fer (2004:562) declares that "researchers are more interested in the qualitative studies, involving an interpretive approach to its subject matter to provide an in-depth description of a particular situation or setting in a particular classroom, school, or practice." He contends that "intricacy, appropriateness, investigation, and common sense" are the key words in qualitative research. Fer (2004:562) furthermore states that there are a variety of research types that can be utilised in teaching such as case studies, grounded theory and participative inquiry. The reason a case study approach was decided upon is because the study could be confined to one

class as a "subject" which allowed the researcher to gather information that could delve deeper than the surface to get to the heart of learners' dilemmas and parents' involvement in the children's learning at home.

Validity And Reliability In Qualitative Research

Feldman (2007:30) states: "To demonstrate validity in qualitative studies, such as narrative forms of action research, there need to be expectations for the types of things that action researchers ought to pay attention to in how they inquire into their practice, and ways to assess how well that has been done." At the research site the data that was collected via the questionnaires, focus group interviews, homework programme, field notes and learners' The CASS marks reflected were true and meticulously awarded. Respondents were asked to be honest, sincere and open with their responses as authenticity of data refers to the correctness in which the data is presented. The parents had to respond without revealing their identity. The focus group interviews were conducted using a recording device in order to ensure that scrupulous data being recorded.

The Intervention Programme

The homework programme was introduced to the parents of the Grade 4 class in 2009. Table 4 indicates the sessions that took place at the research site on the following days.

Table 4. Sessions that took place at the research site in 2009

Day	Date	Times
Saturday	25 April 2009	10H00 - 12H00
Saturday	16 May 2009	10H00 - 12H00

Saturday	23 May 2009	10H00 - 12H00
Saturday	06 June 2009	10H00 – 10H45 10H45 – 11H30 11H30 – 12H15
Saturday	25 July 2009	10H00 – 10H45 10H45 – 11H30 11H30 – 12H15
Saturday	22 August 2009	10H00 – 10H45 10H45 – 11H30 11H30 – 12H15

During the first three sessions all the parents met at the research site at the same time. Parents, grandparents, a guardian, a social worker from a Children's Home and a cousin attended the sessions.

After the third session the parents informed the researcher that the time slot did not suit all of them and that the times therefore had to be reconsidered. Parents then met at the research site at different times. The researcher made the necessary changes to accommodate the parents' needs.

The intervention in 2009 was a period of trial and error that could serve as a "pilot" to the actual study to commence in 2010.

The programme commenced with the Grade 4 parents in 2010 and took place over a period of six sessions which ranged from February 2010 to June 2010. Parents who found it extremely difficult to come to the research site because of travelling problems were accommodated in a community hall in Westlake. The researcher made the necessary booking arrangements at the hall well in advance. The sessions were therefore held at the research site as well as the community hall in Westlake, which was much more central and convenient for the majority of parents. The parents could choose the venue and the time most suitable for them.

Table 5. Times at the school and community hall

10H00 TO 11HOO	Research site (School)
11H30 TO 12H00	Westlake community hall

The researcher interacted with parents, grannies, older brothers and sisters as well as aunts at the two venues during the different time slots. Table 3.6 indicates the date and time slots.

Table 6. Indicates the date and time slots in 2010 of the homework sessions

Saturday	27 February 2010
Saturday	13 March 2010
Saturday	24 April 2010
Saturday	08 May 2010
Saturday	29 May 2010
Saturday	12 June 2010

Background To The Intervention Programme

An English literacy homework programme was implemented to assist parents in order for them to help their children with homework. After an initial analysis conducted by means of a questionnaire focusing on the parents' ability to assist their children with homework, the researcher decided to follow an English language and listening homework programme. The programme opted for was devised by Liesel van Niekerk who is a speech and hearing teacher. This programme which is commonly referred to as "Listening and Language Home Programme" consists of different components of literacy such as reading, comprehension, vocabulary, listening, speaking, language study, spelling, sentence memory and auditory reception. This coincides with the six main Learning Outcomes according to the Revised National Curriculum (2002:6).

The intervention programme facilitated the above mentioned outcomes as the parents were asked to endorse the outcomes while implementing at home what they were trained during the intervention sessions.

Action Research

An action research approach was used as a suitable method for the emancipation of the Grade 4 parents at the sample site. Somekh & Zeichner (2009:6) mentions that "action research was developed in Europe and the

USA in the first half of the twentieth century and its take up in many countries can be seen as a product of the 'World of Flows'; a modern day approach to educational reform." Henry and Kemmis (1985:3) are of the opinion that action research is a learning process that is systematic, while Somekh and Zeichner (2009:6) maintain that action research "brings along an independent obligation to oppose domination and cultivate and maintain justice." In this study the researcher focused on the relevance of action research and critical theory in order to emancipate the participants and to explore to what extent it can be seen as " radical and emancipatory."

In addition to this, Somekh and Zeichner (2009:5) portray action research, "as a proposition, that has discursive power because it embodies a collision of terms. In generating research knowledge *and* improving social action *at the same time*, action research challenges the normative values of two distinct ways of being –that of the scholar and the activist."

Supplementary to all the above, action research is also described as "proceeding in a spiral of steps, which is composed of planning, action and the evaluation of the result of action (Kemmis & McTaggert, 1990:8)."

Carson (1990:168) supports this view and states that "the process of critical action research is collaborative and follows a cycle consisting of moments of reflection, planning, acting, observing, reflecting, replanning, etc. which takes place in a spiral fashion." Kemmis believes that "this form of action research aims not only at improving outcomes, and improving the self-understandings of practitioners, but also at assisting practitioners to arrive at a critique of their social or educational work and work settings (Kemmis, 2001:92)."

According to all of these aforementioned definitions of action research, it is clear that action research has a lot of benefits including that it treats the process as a collective, as well as collaborative and consultative. In other words while the research is carried out, all the role players such as the principal, educator, parents and school community interact with each other and work collaboratively. This empowers all involved. Abrams (as cited in McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:445) maintains that action research is a benefit to educators as it empowers and assist them in an evidence-based systematic inquiry. Another advantage is that it also involves individuals such as the educator, learners and parents.

 Ferrance (2000:8) implied that action research is a plan that educators will embark on a cycle of asking questions, gather information, reflecting and choosing a schedule of activities. The six steps cycle, sketched by Ferrance (2000:8) is explained in the following figure:
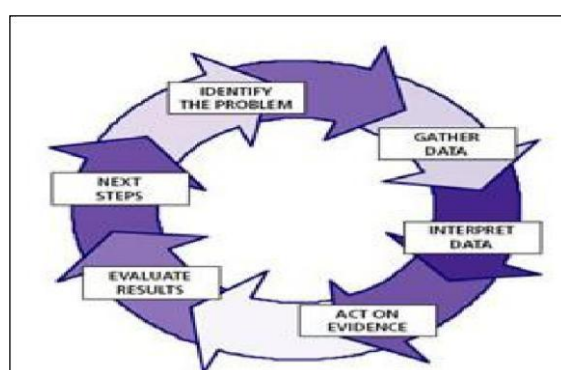

Figure 2. Ferrance's Action Research model (2000:09)

Table 7. Times per session at the research site and the community hall.

10H00 TO 11HOO	Research site
11H30 TO 12H00	Westlake community hall

Parents, who could not attend due to various reasons, were asked to send a representative, in their place. It is for this reason that grandparents, sisters and other family members attended the homework sessions as substitutes for parents unable to attend. Those who have attended engaged actively during these sessions. The researcher explained the content of the programme step- by- step. Parents were allowed to respond by asking questions and to give their input and also to interact with the researcher constantly during the duration of the sessions. The homework programme consisted of different themes, which included:

Table 8. The different themes of the homework programme Van Niekerk (2007)

The School	
The Classroom	Late for School

The City	
The Shopping Mall	Occupations

Road Safety	
The bicycle	The service station

Animals	
The zoo	The Farm animals

Each theme was followed by exercises in the form of comprehension, vocabulary, memory activities as well as sentence constructions. The researcher dealt with each section by reading the content to the parents. In information sessions conducted, it was also explained to them how to go about completing these exercises with their children. The researcher encouraged the parents to establish a routine to interact with the learners' homework programme on a daily basis.

The parents had to tick next to each exercise as they completed it in order for them to mark where to followon the next time. They had to indicate all the activities that their children struggled with or were unable to complete. The purpose for this was so that the parents could consolidate the work before continuing with the next theme or exercise. Parents were encouraged to praise their children for all the work completed and/or attempted. Parents were reminded to sign and date all completed work.

In addition to the aforementioned, parents were encouraged to interact with the researcher while the sessions were in progress, to eliminate any uncertainty regarding the homework programme.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires (See Appendix F, p 128) were used to gather qualitative data and in doing so the researcher was able to give a well described description of the involvement of parents of the Grade 4 class. The questionnaires were given to all the parents before the intervention programme started. parents before the intervention programme started. This was done to see whether the parents were capable of helping their children with homework.

Planning Of The Focus Group

For this research study, the researcher had to have a clear idea of the specific information that was needed and why the information was important, before the focus group was conducted. It is for this reason that a group

of nine multilingual individuals were chosen. The participants were "pre-screened" via the telephone by letter and orally. This was done to ensure that they would be representative of the various diverse cultural groups.

The table below indicates the various language groups of the participants of the focus group.

Table 8. A breakdown of respondents based on first language groupings

Different Home Languages	Number of respondents
Afrikaans	4
English	1
IsiXhosa	2
Tsonga	1
Tshwane	1
	9

In response to this, Anderson (1987:203) suggests that "the participants must have some common characteristics related to what is being focussed upon." In this case, the aim of the focus group interview was to determine whether or not the homework intervention programme was beneficial to the participants.

The focus group interview was conducted using open-ended questions. This was done in order to stimulate an environment in which participants could feel free to discuss their concerns and issues regarding their children's progress and their own involvement in assisting the children with their home work. For this, the researcher occupied the role as the group moderator/ mediator. Anderson (1987:204) affords the following suggestions for the group moderator. According to Anderson, the moderator must be comfortable with the group processes and that s/he must encourage the respondents to participate in the discussion. The moderator must balance the

contributions of those who form part of the focus group. Anderson (1987) cautions and advises the moderator to listen both actively and attentively to all the verbal contributions of the respondents to paraphrase and to summarise of what was said.

The moderator must be innocent, empathetic and sensitive and must function as a facilitator and not a performer. The moderation must be aware of past, present and future perspectives during the session. It is vital that the moderator must keep the discussion moving, focused and must know when to wrap up. It is recommended that the moderator must use silences, pauses and probes effectively. The mediator should exercise mild control, but avoid leading participants. Furthermore, s/he must remain flexible and adaptive and must stay in the background because it is the views of the participants that are important. The mediator must suspend his or her personal prejudice and acknowledge individual contributions and should control those individuals that are dominating the interview.

In terms of time management, the moderator must always be conscious of time and respect the participants and believe their contributions are important regardless of their background, experience or education. The moderator must have adequate background of the topic and have effective communication skills and must understand how to use humour and naïve questions.

In essence, the role of the moderator is very significant. Good levels of group leadership and interpersonal skill are required to conduct a group successfully.

With permission of the respondents these interviews were recorded on an electronic recording device. The responses were recorded to ensure that the information collected was true and accurate.

The focus group constituted of grandparents, sisters and other family members. Each representative was asked to sign an attendance register every time that they attended one of the homework sessions.

The table below indicates when the sessions took place and how many participants attended at the two different venues.

Table 9. A breakdown of dates and attendance

When were these session s held?	Where was it held?		How many people attended the sessions?
	Research site School	Westlake Community hall	Total
Saturday 27 February 2010	5	Not Applicable (N/A)	5
Saturday 13 March 2010	4	Not Applicable (N/A)	4
Saturday 24 April 2010	1	3	4
Saturday 8 May 2010	8	6	14
Saturday 29 May 2010	6	0	6
Saturday 12 June 2010	3	0	3

The focus group interview was conducted at the research site. The researcher informed the respondents timeously of the date, time and place where the interview would be conducted. Rabiee (2004:656) supports this view by saying that: "In order to maximise participation it is important to obtain an agreed date from the informants well in advance of the interviews and to remind them a few days before they start." The interview took place one Thursday evening at the research site. This was done in order to accommodate the nine respondents. The researcher had to prepare the venue for the interview and arrived a half an hour prior to the interview scheduled. The researcher welcomed the respondents as they arrived and thus created a relaxing atmosphere.

The researcher and the respondents were involved in a systematised conversation (See Appendix G, p 131) where parents shared their experiences and gave feedback on the intervention programme. Anderson (1987:200) describes a focus group as a "group is a carefully planned and moderated (framed on) informal discussion where one person's idea bounces off another's creating a chain reaction of informative dialogue." The function of the focus group is to focus on a precise theme, to do it in depth, in a relaxing atmosphere. It furthermore aims to illicit a wide range of opinions, attitudes, feelings or perceptions from a group of individuals who share common experience that relates to the topic under study (Anderson, 1987:200). The result of a focus group is an exceptional form of qualitative information which conveys awareness about how people respond to an incident or product.

Parents were engaged by means of interviews to collect data on their perceptions on duties related to their involvement in learners' homework activities. The interview was recorded on a voice recorder. Participants reflected on how the sessions enabled them to assist their children with homework and this concurred with the researcher's aim to assist parents in helping their children with homework. The researcher also inquired about their capabilities to assist their children with the homework.

I am in agreement with Dos Reis (2007:36) who views the focus group interview as a research tool that is highly consistent with current trends in educational research, and which aims at understanding more about what respondents think and feel."

Conducting The Focus Group

The researcher acted as the moderator and made use of the tips mentioned in Anderson (1987:204). At the start of the interview the participants were welcomed and thanked by the researcher in order to make them feel at

ease with the group process. These interviews were conducted after the intervention programme was implemented. The interviews were audio taped and were transcribed to ensure that the information was accurate. The participants were informed before the time that their responses would be recorded and they were asked to give their permission in order for the researcher to use the recording device.

Everybody present was encouraged to participate in the discussion. They were asked to respond openly and honestly to the questions. The researcher listened attentively and was very sensitive to the way the participants responded to the questions and by doing this remained to stay flexible and adaptive. The input of each participant was recognised and respected as each contribution was regarded as important. There was no- one that dominated the interviews (group). This was done in order to exercise effective control while the interviews for the focus group were conducted.

The interviews were conducted in English as it was an English intervention programme with nine multilingual parents. The focus group interviews were conducted and completed at the research site to ensure that the participants felt at ease and comfortable on 16 September 2010.

Results And Discussions

In this chapter the data -presented from the questionnaires obtained from the parents of the 38 Grade 4 learners, the focus group interviews with 9 of these parents (family representatives) and the information gathered from the homework sessions that parents had to attend, will be presented.

Data that was also obtained from the informal communication with parents, observations of learners in class during contact time, field notes and homework activities reflected in their homework books and CASS marks were triangulated to reflect themes that emerged from the data process, to reflect the reason why the researcher equipped the parents by engaging them in the homework programme.

Analysis Of Questionnaires

Parents were engaged by means of questionnaires (see appendices) that they had to complete prior to the homework sessions to determine their level of involvement and their capability in their children's homework. Each of the questions consisted of options whereby the parents would select the option of their choice. There

was also a section in each question for parents or family representatives to clarify, give reasons or to provide additional information to the question.

Parents' responses were recorded on a spreadsheet and are represented in graphic form or in bar graphs. There are 38 learners in the Grade 4 class, but of the 38 issued, only 25 were returned.

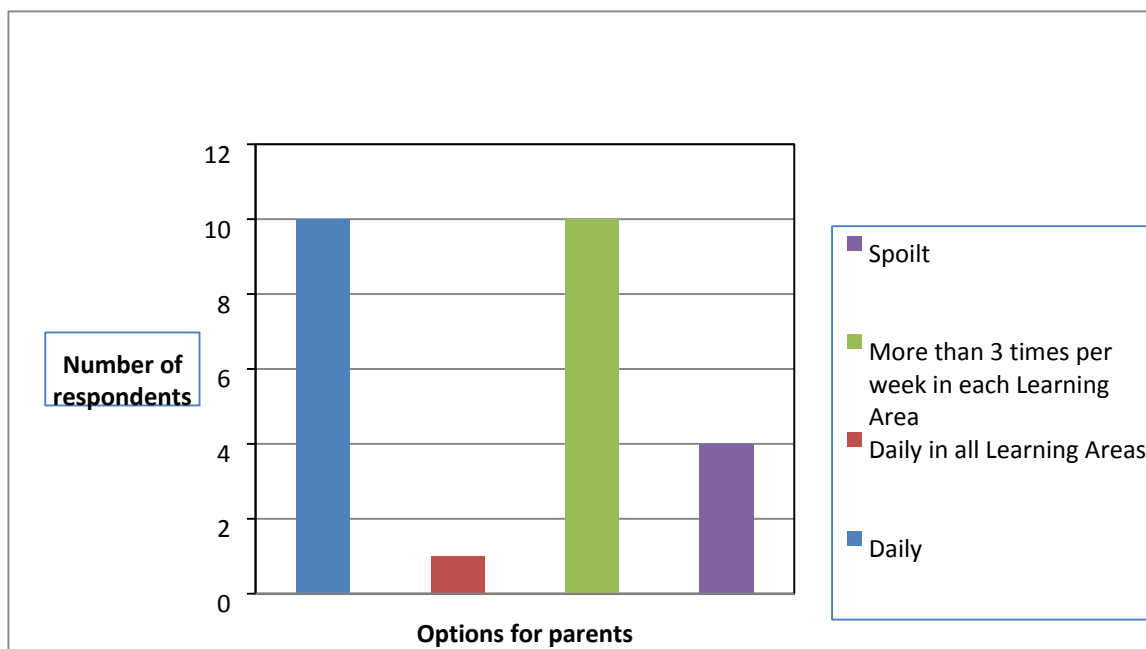Question One: Does your child get homework on a regular basis

Figure 3. A statistical breakdown of the regular submission of homework

Of the 38 questionnaires that were forwarded to parents, 25 were returned. Only 10 (40%) of the respondents indicated that their children get homework on a daily basis, whereas 1 (4%) indicated that her or his child gets homework daily covering all Learning Areas. An additional 10 (40%) indicated that their children received homework more than three times per week in each Learning Area. Of the questionnaires 4 (16%) were spoilt as respondents chose more than one option despite the instructions clearly stating how to complete the questionnaire. The aim of this question was to determine the level of parental involvement to ascertain whether parents are aware of the fact that their children do receive homework in an ongoing basis

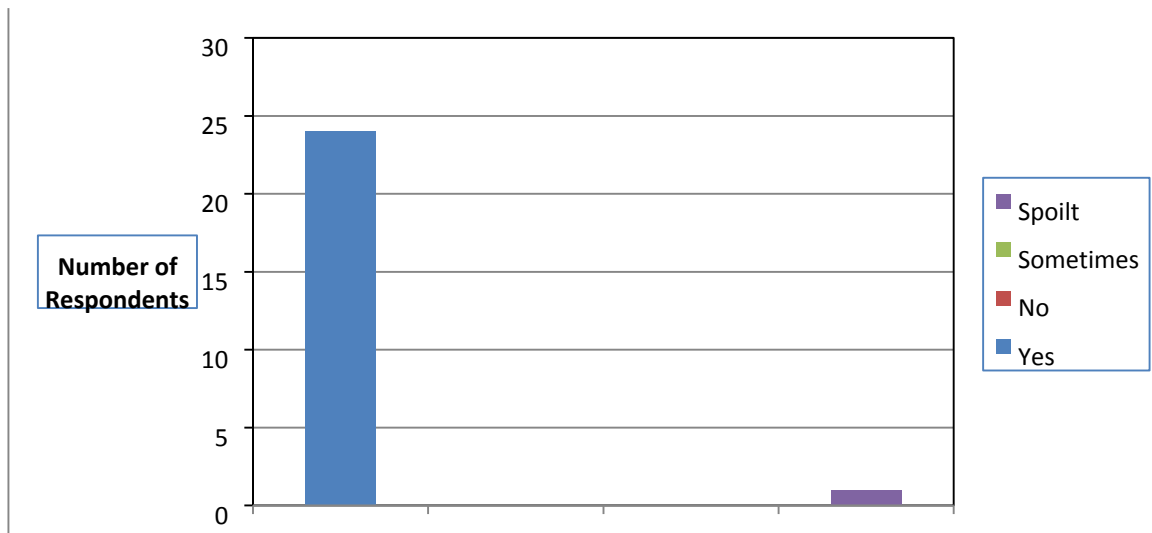Question Two: Do you assist your child your child with the homework?

Figure 4. Parents' assistance with homework

In this figure it shows that of the twenty five respondents 24 (96%) indicated that they assist their children with their homework, whereas 1 (4%) of the questionnaires were spoilt in the sense where the parents indicated that they do and do not assist their children with homework.

Question Three: Do you understand the homework?
Parents who indicated that they understand the homework, comprises of 18 (72%). Respondents, who indicated no to the aforementioned question, consisted of 1 (4%) and the parents who indicated that they only sometimes understand the homework were, 5 (20%) while 1 (4%) questionnaire was spoilt.

Question Four: What is the nature of the homework that your child gets at school?
In the above figure, the majority of parents 14 (56%) indicated that their children receive homework in the form of activity sheets. 1 (4%) specified that his or her child gets homework in the form of projects, 9 (36%) referred to the homework as written assignments and 1 (4%) indicated that their children get homework in more than one of the options.

Question Five: Do you sign the homework?
Of the total number of respondents, 13 (52%) said yes to the question, compared to the 3 (12%) who indicated 'no', compared to the 9 (36%) of them who replied sometimes.

Question Six: Do you have a specific time when you sit with your child to assist him or her with the homework? Of the 25 respondents, 18 (72%) replied yes to the question, 5 (20%) indicated no, 1   (4%) indicated sometimes; to which and 1 (4%) of the questionnaires were spoilt. 20 parents motivated whether or not they have a specific time that they spent with their child's homework

Question Seven: Do you liaise with the educator if you are uncertain about certain aspects of the homework? On the question to whether they liaison on a regular basis if they are uncertain about certain aspects of the homework, a mere 7 (28%) respondents replied to the question affirmatively that they do communicate if they are uncertain about how to assist their children, compared to the 10 (40%) who indicated that they do not interact, to which 8 (32%) indicated that they sometimes do liaise with the educator.

Intervention Programme

Based on the responses gained from the listening and language intervention homework programme in English literacy, sessions were held to assist the parents with content matters that their children have to master at this grade level. This programme, designed by Van Niekerk (2007), was aimed at parents who wanted to take an active role in contributing to a homework series for their children. Written permission was obtained from van Niekerk to use her programme for the purpose of the research.

The first cycle of the action plan was put into practice while the first session was planned and implemented. The first session started out as a two hour session, commenced from 10h00 to 12h00 on a particular Saturday at the research site.
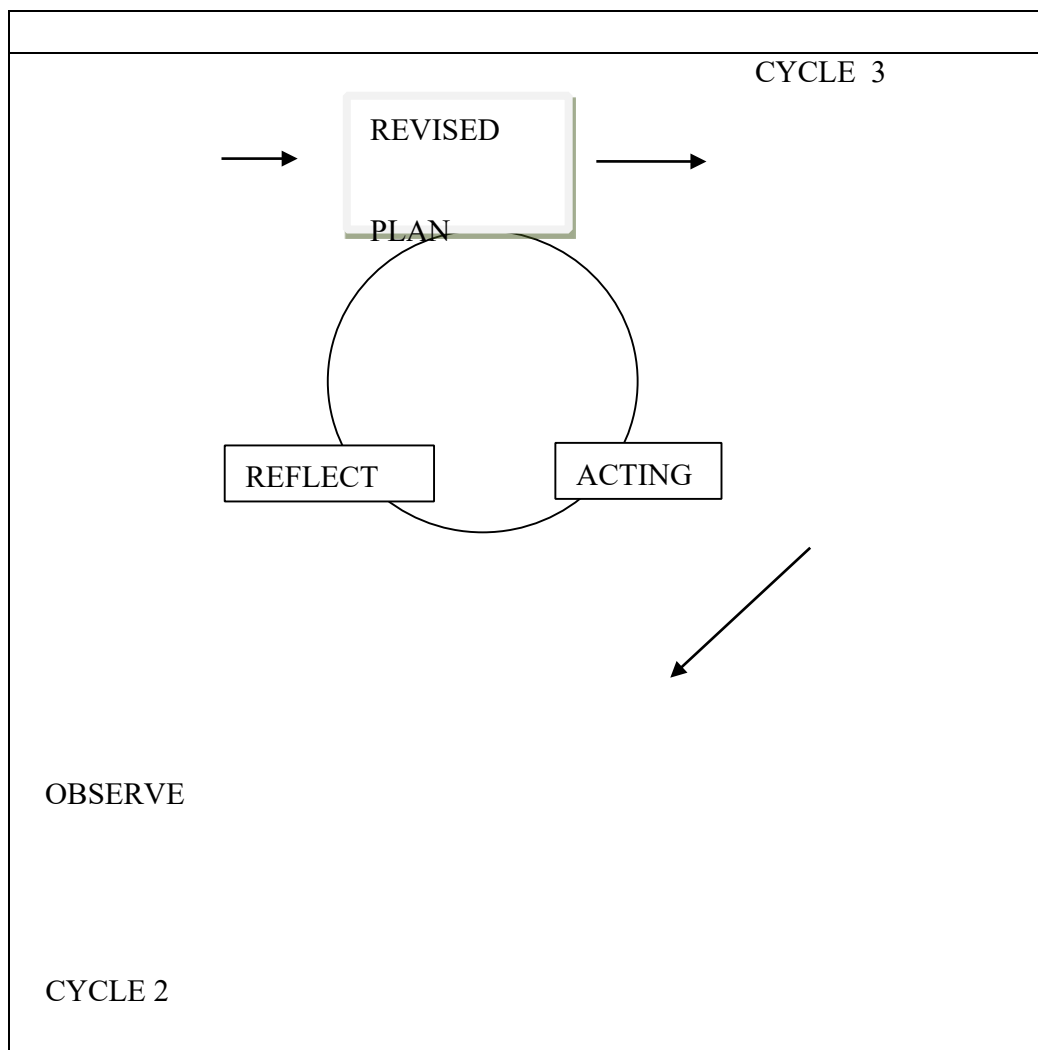

Figure 5. The Revised Plan. Adapted from Riding, Fowell & Levy (1995)

The following figure depicts the parents' attendance during the implementation of the intervention programme. The first two sessions in 2010 were initially held at the research site (school). After the researcher reviewed and reflected on the research process the researcher planned to move to an additional venue in Westlake for the remaining 4 sessions to accommodate those parents who stayed in the Westlake vicinity.

The attendance during the 4th session which was held on Saturday, 8 May 2010, showed an escalation in the number of attendance at both venues due to a parent – teacher meeting that were held prior to the homework programme. The researcher emphasized the importance of parental involvement and reminded the parents of the mid- year examination in June of that year which were fast approaching. Most of the parents' working conditions during the winter season are of such a nature that it made it much easier for them to attend the homework session as their working conditions differ from season to season.

Attendance of respondents per session

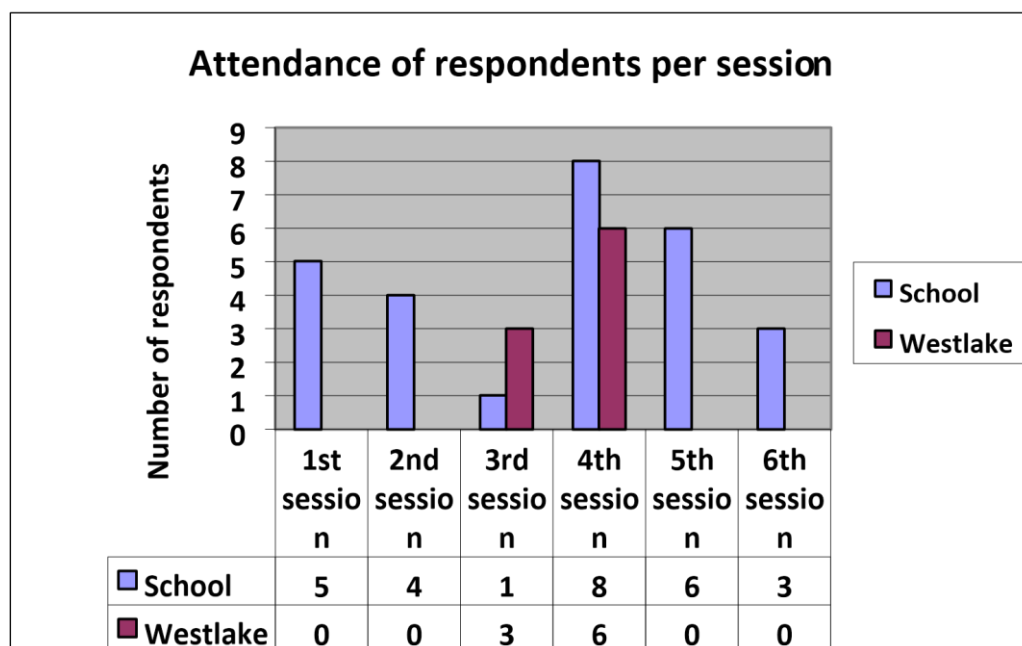|	1st session	2nd session	3rd session	4th session	5th session	6th session
School	5	4	1	8	6	3
Westlake	0	0	3	6	0	0

Figure 6. Attendance of homework programme at the different venues

After such interventions I was able to assess their involvement in the learners' homework activities to determine whether there has been a greater interest or a decline in the interest in their children's homework and schooling. One of these intervention strategies included interactive homework programmes between the educator and parents.

After each intervention I collected data on parents' perceptions of their duties and capabilities in assisting in their children's homework activities and to determine to what extent the interventions has brought about change in the perception and actions of parents. The spiral effects such as planning, acting, observing and reflecting of the action research were utilised and came into effect each time after the researcher made an assessment of the contact sessions with the parents.

Recommendations

How Parents Can Help Their Children

There are many ways in which parents can be of assistance to their children.   Parents can continue to build a good rapport with their child's teacher, seeking guidance and suggestions for learning.   It is further recommended that parents ascertain an invariable routine with their child for completing homework, including a regular study time and location, and encourage their child to maintain the routine. Parents can make a point of it to discuss school work, successes, concerns, and interests with their child. In addition to this parents can encourage their child to "exercise" his or her mind by doing crossword puzzles, brain teasers, and word searchers. Moreover parents can involve relatives and family friends to help support their child's learning.

Application Of Blooms Taxonomy At Home

It is recommended that parents, being partners in their children's' education, can implement the different learning activities and levels of questioning at home and assist their children to develop critical thinking skills apt to the classroom. It is for this reason that parents were constantly motivated to maintain the different levels of questioning to develop critical thinking abilities. Garland (2011:5) suggests the following as reference to Bloom's taxonomy:

When children are moved beyond Bloom's lowest level, **remembering,** to the next level of **understanding**, they are answering questions which ask them to organize previous information, such as: comparing, interpreting the meaning, or organizing the information.

According to Garland, children are mainly just reiterating the information verbatim.   Garland (2011:5) furthermore argues that critical thinking abilities are not developed if learners repeat the information word for word. Parents were urged during the homework sessions to encourage their children to reason for themselves and to avoid pressure of their age group (Garland, 2011:5).

It was noticeable during the intervention programme that parents want their children to have the necessary skills to listen, analyse and interpret the information that will be a continuous fragment of their lives. Recollection and insight are part of this process, but to succeed in further processing this flow of knowledge, requires a higher level of thinking and reasoning techniques especially in view of Blooms Taxonomy. Garland

(2011:5) encourages parents to continuously implement the following while assisting their children with homework.

Analyzing: It is recommended that parents ask their child/ren to identify motives and/or causes from real-life stories as was the case with the shopping list that parents and children encountered as part of the homework programme. Parents can encourage their children to conduct an interview or survey. They can also have their child make a flow chart, family tree or role play a real-life situation.

Evaluating: It is suggested that parents ask their child to form and defend an opinion on a subject. Children, especially teens are pretty good at this one for example children can be encouraged to write a letter to an

editor or evaluate a character's actions in a story. During one of the homework sessions the learners were asked to write a poem about the educator on one of the activity sheets.

Creating: Parents are advised to ask their children to put together several bits of old information to form a new idea. They can be asked to create, design or invent a new item, proposal or plan. This requires a bit of creativity and their ability to think in the abstract

Garland (2011: 2) continues by urging parents to help their children to utilise their critical thinking skills and to practise their minds so that their level of thinking will improve drastically. These higher level thinking skills are required especially from learners that are in Grades 1 to 6 as well as learners who are in Grade 9 to master the provincial and national testing which takes place in the form of the Annual National Assessment

(ANA) and the Systemic testing from learners in Grades 3, 6 and 9. It is for this reason that the researcher recommends to parents to implement and follow Bloom's taxonomy to improve their children's level of thinking as the parents are regarded as partners in their children's schoolwork.

According to Garland (2011 :2) teachers point out that with the enormous pressure of the departmental testing and the pressure to teach to the test, it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to be able to take their time and teach at a higher level.

The Focus Group

What is recommendable of a focus group is the interaction between the researcher and the participants. The researcher selected a group of nine participants whom she thought were the best equipped to discuss what was experienced during the intervention programme. It was evident that the participants shared certain characteristics that were relevant to study such as the importance of doing homework and their eagerness to assist their children with homework. Through the focus group interview the parents are allowed to express their views on the importance of homework and the vital part parents can play in it. In this way the researcher can obtained responses from non verbal cues such as facial expressions or body language. This can consequently be used to collect information to assemble qualitative data. Parents subsequently indicated that they were willing to help their children, but that they found the standard of the work demanding.

The researcher can ask focused questions to create and stimulate an environment that is supportive and to encourage discussion. This can also be done to encourage the expression of different viewpoints and opinions of the various respondents. Focus group interviews are further recommended because it is a popular way for gathering information in almost every area since the design is effortless. It consists of a selected group of respondents which the researcher selects. The group that are chosen are the best equipped to discuss what aspects the researcher hopes to investigate or explore.

The Questionnaires

It is suggested that the questions must be clear so that the respondents find it easy to understand so that they can easily interpret the questions as the sequence of the questions should be straightforward to follow. This can result that the participants could answer the questions to the best of their abilities. The researcher will have an indication of the levels of competency of the parents before the intervention programme started.

How Parents Assisted Their Children

There are many ways in which parents can assist a child with literacy homework for example by letting them do comprehension, reading, crossword puzzles, brain teasers and word searchers.

Parents can continue to build positive working relationships with the researcher by seeking advice and ideas on how to implement further learning through telephonic conversations and SMSs. Parents can also establish a consistent routine for completing homework with their children, including a regular study time and location that is beneficial for learning. In addition, parents can encourage their children to maintain the routine and also complimenting their achievements, and voicing their uncertainties. Parents can involve relatives and a family friend to assist in supporting their child's learning endeavours.

The Diversity Of The Class Population

It is recommended that the educators use diversity as a resource within the classroom, especially given that learners possess many talents. These strengths can be used as a motivation to the other learners. On the other hand, learners (especially those studying in an additional language) also need added support to deal with linguistic challenges. This can be very demanding and consideration should be afforded to stimulate the use of second language classes more often.

School Visitations By Parents To View Learner's Work

This should motivate and encourage parents to become involved in their children's schooling and it will motivate learners to progress in school. Parent and educator meetings must therefore be encouraged. Hornby and Lafeala (2011:40) state "schools which are welcoming to parents, and make it clear that they value parental involvement, develop more effective parental involvement than schools that do not appear inviting to parents." It is therefore recommended that parents and educators meet on a regular basis for parents to be acquainted to what is needed in their child's educational setting.

Parent Support Group

Support groups such as SGB's or parent support committees should encourage parents to have regular contact with the school and for children to become involved in the school. Some parents might experience problems whereby they are unable to pay the school fees, or they might have a complaint about an educator and the support group could be there to assist or advise them accordingly. Parents might find it difficult to assist their children with school work due to various reasons like low education levels of parents and language diversity. It is highly recommended that these support groups are representative of all racial groups in multi-cultural schools. Parents of multi-cultural communities may need further assistance with parenting tasks. Carrasquillo and Clement (1993:216) suggest that by assisting parents or other interested members of the community to

understand the school curriculum and by providing literacy training in the school, parents can tutor their children in their native language and the skills can then become transferable to which positive results can be achieved in diverse linguistic and cultural settings.

Written communication

Coleman (2013: 266) reckons that: "communication is often characterized as a dual responsibility." There should be constructive communication between the sender and the receiver of the message. Schools should therefore have language translators to assist families, as needed. Teachers may consider to send home weekly or monthly folders of student work for review and comments by parents. Educators can arrange for parentstudent pick-up of report cards, and plan conferences on improving grades. A regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters and other communication can be implemented. The school can provide clear information on all school policies, programmes, reforms and transitions.

Walker, Ramsey and Gresham (2004: 286) reckon that: "positive communication with parents needs to begin on the first day of school. Schools should always make the first move; they should never wait until something goes wrong to establish school-home communication." They refer to classroom calendars, newsletters, good news notes and phone calls as ways to communicate effectively with parents and guardians of children.

Written communication is a permanent product that requires careful consideration regarding format and content. The goal is to organise concise, accurate information so that parents will read and understand it. Newsletters are commonly used to share written information with a parent community. Consistent application of several specific strategies can make classroom and school newsletters even more effective communication tools. Educators can also make use of different colours of paper when sending written correspondence home.

Teachers should incorporate the same colour, quality, and paper size for all newsletters to create a communication "set", use everyday language and ensure grammar, spell checks, and proofing of the information. Schools can also develop an eloquent pamphlet to provide helpful information for new families moving into the school community. Teachers can also use a variety of school notes as a tool of communication between the school and home.

Figure 7. Example of School- Home Note. (Walker, Ramsey and Gresham, 2004:290)

Informing Parents About Homework

Further suggestions would focus on the relationship between educators and all stakeholders, especially on areas relating to parental support. Parents can be issued with circulars to answer questions that parents might have about homework. Questions such as: What is the purpose of homework? Does homework do more harm than good? How can the parents assist their children? In what way does homework frame formative assessments? These are all key areas that can illuminate the role and position of the parent, and provide a space for educators to intervene if such a need is mentioned by parents. It is however important for the educator when communicating to the parents in writing to be sensitive to family culture and their literacy levels. Educators must however limit the amount of written information to prevent parents from feeling overburdened with paper.

Limitations To The Study

The researcher encountered some restrictions while the study was in progress such as:

The Language Barrier

There is a huge diversity at the research site due of the different home languages that the learners speak at home as we all have a cultural heritage. Sands, Kozleski and French (2000:82) "The heritage of a family influences the behaviours, expectations, interactions and communications styles of family members." The language of instruction at the research site is Afrikaans which made it difficult for the foreign parents to assist their children with homework. Some parents, whose mother tongue is not the same as the language of instruction, lack confidence in helping their children. They also feel that they cannot communicate effectively with teachers.

The Low Literacy Levels Of Some Of The Parents

Parents with low literacy levels found it extremely difficult and awkward to assist their children and to address their educational needs. In such cases parents asked a family representative to attend the homework sessions. These low literacy levels can be the cause of parents leaving school at a young age due to various conditions which are common in sub economic societies. Fairclough (2001:19) endorsed this statement by stating that "linguistic phenomena are social in the sense that whatever people speak or listen or write or read, they do so in ways which are determined socially and have social effects."   Fairclough (2001: 20-21) refers to the discourse that involves communal circumstances. He continues by saying that it can be specified as "*social conditions of production*, and *social conditions of interpretation* (Fairclough, 2001:20)." He makes reference to the discourse as text by depicting it in the following figure
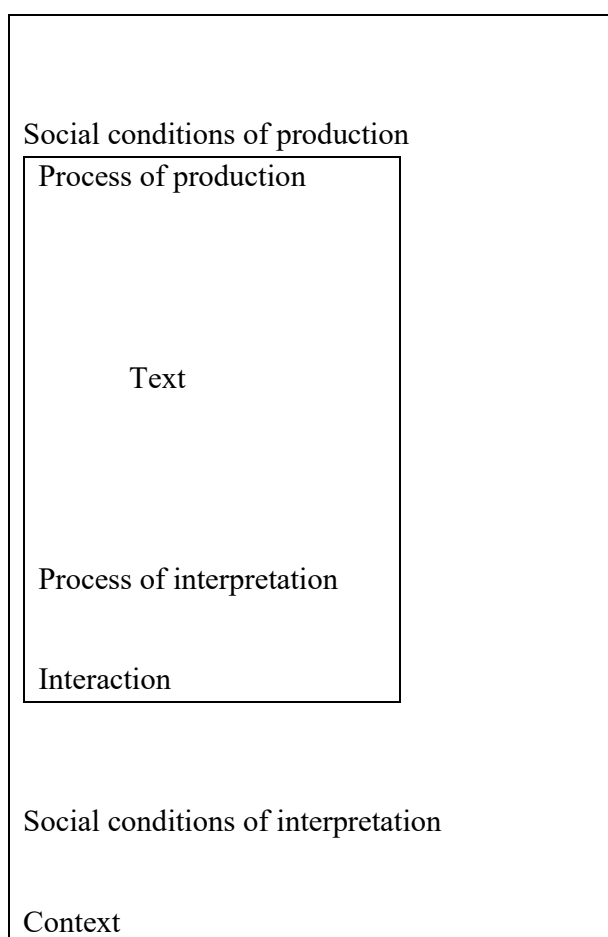
Social conditions of production

Process of production

Text

Process of interpretation

Interaction

Social conditions of interpretation

Context

Figure 8. Discourse as text, interaction and context (Fairclough, 2001:21)

Working Conditions Of Parents

Most of the parents worked as farm labourers on the neighbouring wine farms and they often worked long hours and over weekends which made it difficult for them to attend the workshops. Other parents worked as garderners or domestic workers in the area. This resulted in parents experiencing transport problems most of the time as they lived quite a distance from the research site.

Transport Problems

The majority of the parents does not possess their own transport and must rely on public transport and this caused problems for those who wanted to attend the homework sessions. Some of them did not live on a taxi, bus or train route and were always dependent on someone else for transport and this were not always readily available.

Location Of The School

The research site is a commuter school and not a community school. In other words, all the role players do not live within walking distance from the school but instead must depend on different modes of transport like taxis, cars, trucks, bakkies, etcetera.

Cultural Differences

There are different cultures because of the diversity of the school population. This in itself caused difficulties while the research study was conducted. The researcher developed effective partnerships with families. Respects for the different culture groups were promoted. All role players were encouraged to have a positive attitude towards each other. Effective communication was paramount. Culture plays a role in determining who the individuals are, how they interact with one another on daily basis and how they manage their lives (Sands, Kozleski and French, 2000:82).

Poor Socio-Economic Conditions

It is of utmost importance that the educator understands the socio-economic factors that have an influence on how families function. The composition of a family can have an effect on the socio-economic status of the family. These poor socio-economic circumstances were very eminent in the areas where the learners live.

Unemployment is rife in the areas which contributed to the poor living conditions.

Family Problems

The different family types contributes in most cases to many family problems such as homes that are overcrowded because of the number of family members that resides there, financial constraints, different family types, the medium of instruction, a low work status and a low level of education.

Hornby and Lafeala (2011:410) substantiates on these abovementioned factors by stating that: "family circumstances can be major barriers to parental involvement. For example, solo parents and those with young families or large families may find it more difficult to get involved in parental involvement because of their caretaking responsibilities. Parents' work situations can also be a factor. When parents are unemployed money could be an issue as they may not be able to afford a car or to pay babysitters in order to get to school meetings. For parents with jobs, whether both parents work and the kind of jobs they have may be issues. When both parents work, there will be less time available for both home-based and school-based parental involvement." (Hornby & Lafeala 2011:410).

SMSs

This can be a very effective way of keeping in contact with the parents informing them of homework, assignments or tests dates, the child's level of participation, or the percentage of work completed in class.

Ethical Considerations

 Permission to conduct the study at the school was obtained from the WCED. This pertained to a description of the research project, copies of the questionnaires the name of the school were the research was conducted and the duration of the research. Permission was also granted by the principal for the use of the school facilities as research site. In addition to this a permission letter was obtained from a member of the Westlake United

Church Trust for the use of their hall to accommodate the parents and guardians from the Grade 4 learners that took part in the study.

All participants received explanations of the aims and purpose of the research. Everyone that were part of this project and who agreed to participate namely the parents and guardians were assured of the fact that all the information which they shared, would be dealt with confidentially. They were assured that feedback would be given to them.

All parents were requested to complete an informed consent form granting permission for information collected to be used for research purposes by the researcher. Participants therefore gave their approval that the researcher could used the collected data which formed part of the study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, despite various challenges faced within the schooling system, this chapter highlighted key areas to serve as

key recommendations especially in structuring support mechanisms to parents to assist them in supporting their children's academic endeavours.

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Higher order reading skills and reader response theory: strategies for the classroom

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Abstract

South African learners' performance in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2006) assessment reinforced the need for reading instruction practices aimed at addressing the difficulties in language and reading in both the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, particularly comprehension. PIRLS (2006) highlights the areas of low achievement of South African learners by referring to strategies identified by current research as central to the learning of reading. South Africa lags behind in introducing these critical skills. We argued for the inclusion of an alternative reading programme to the phonics only approach currently and predominantly used in Foundation Phase.

The study was lodged in a qualitative paradigm and embedded in action research. The analysis is framed by constructivist grounded theory. Qualitative data generated by the respondents' response journals were analysed using the constant comparative method. Theories that inform the analysis of this data, are Bourdieu's theory of habitus, Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Bloom's taxonomy of thinking skills. The participants' were a non-exclusionary cohort of 58 third Graders.

1. Introduction

South African learners' performance in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2006) assessment reinforced the need for reading instruction practices aimed at addressing the difficulties in language and reading in both the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, particularly comprehension. PIRLS (2006) highlights the areas of low achievement of South African learners by referring to twelve reading skills and strategies identified by current research as central to the learning of reading. These skills are: knowing letters; knowing letter-sound relationships; reading words; reading isolated sentences; reading connected text; identifying the main idea of text; explaining or supporting understanding of text ; comparing text with personal experience; comparing different texts; making predictions about what will happen next; making generalisations and inferences and describing the style and structure of text. South Africa lags behind in introducing these critical skills. We argued for the inclusion of an alternative reading programme to the phonics only approach currently and predominantly used in Foundation Phase.

The study was lodged in a qualitative paradigm and embedded in action research. The analysis is framed by constructivist grounded theory. The qualitative data generated by the respondents' response journals were analysed using the constant comparative method. Theories that informed the analysis of this data are Bourdieu's theory of habitus, Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Bloom's taxonomy of thinking skills. The participants' were a non-ex clusionary cohort of 58 third Graders. The sample was representative in   terms of gender, language grouping- English, Afrikaans and Xhosa (Figure: 1) The Learning Centre at which the study was conducted, is a registered Non Profit Organisation which provides a holistic education to learners' from deprived areas. The teaching model employed is undergirded by an awareness of poverty's complex array of risk factors, and how it affects the school population in a multitude of ways. "Cognitive lags" Jensen (2005), are one of the primary factors, and is considered as an underpinning approach in the teaching model at the research site. Other aspects of this research focused on children's motivation to read. However for the purposes of this paper the focus is on higher order reading skills and how suitable children's literature can be employed to exploit strategies to increase these important reading skills in second language learners'.
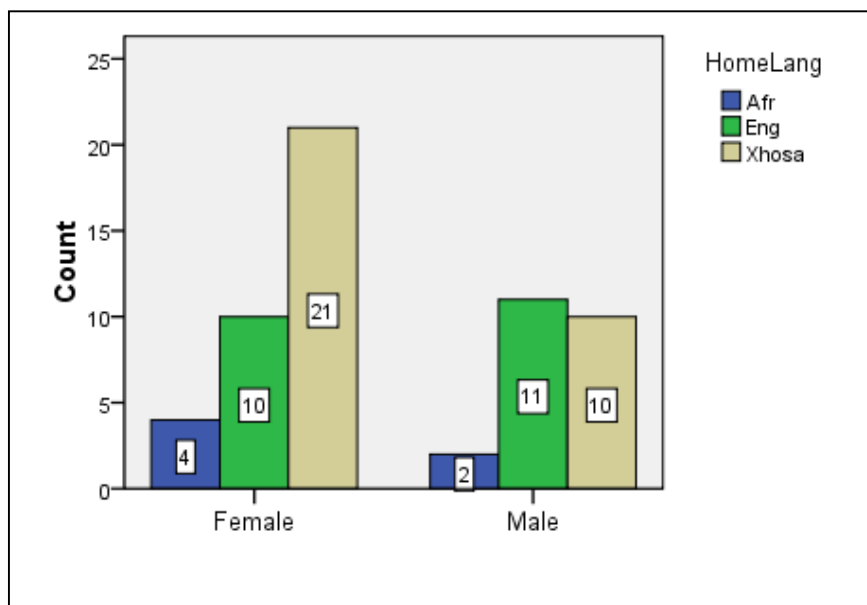
Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.**:   Respondents' home language profile**

To ameliorate the language and literacy delays experienced by second language speakers, who are taught in a language other than their own, we must theoretically concede to the humanness within all children; to their individual uniqueness and abilities; acknowledge their diversity; to their richly complex lives, language and experiences; to their abilities as learners to negotiate daily among multiple epistemologies, languages, and contexts. In recognising the complexity of children's experiences, interventions in literacy and language delays can be scaffolded to suit the individual child. To achieve this, the focus should be on effective and holistic teaching practices and interventions to improve outcomes for children, bearing in mind the link between children's cognitive growth and teachers' classroom practice. Teaching practices should always lead to improved literacy outcomes in the early years of school (Brophy and Good 1986:328). Brophy and Good (1986) assert that effective teachers have a wide repertoire of teaching practices, which they are able to skilfully employ to suit the classroom context, their purposes and the needs of their students. The importance of teaching based on detailed knowledge of children's literacy needs, that is, practice based on informed decision making, has been seen as a principle of 'best practice' for literacy teaching (Mazzoli & Gambrell, 2003).

The disparity in the reading experiences of children of varying skill may have many other consequences for their future reading and cognitive development. Less skilled readers' will therefore experience less rewarding

reading experiences, which ultimately will impact on the lack of reading motivation of a learner. According to Stanovich (1986) these consequences are reciprocal and exponential in nature. Accumulated over time – spiralling either upward or downward – they carry profound implications for a wide range of cognitive capabilities. As decoding skill develops and word recognition becomes more automatic, more general language skills, such as vocabulary, background knowledge, familiarity with complex syntactic structures, etc., become more apparent as the limiting factors on reading ability (Chall, 1983; Sticht, 1979). Thus, reading for meaning is hindered; unrewarding reading experiences multiply; and practice is avoided or merely tolerated without real cognitive engagement.

Proponents of critical literacy focus on the building of student capacity to analyse and criticise the texts and ideologies of contemporary work and culture (Luke, 1994: 44). They recognise that schools are implicated in the distribution and classification of knowledge. They shape and select what texts are studied and which classroom practices preferred, which work together to portray the world and position readers in a particular way. Critical literacy is strongly connected to poststructuralist understandings of language as socially constructed, and to where meanings in texts change in different times and places, and as they are read by readers in different circumstances (Misson & Morgan, 2006:6). Because of our interest in critical reading skills, including comprehension, we have chosen to foreground critical literacy.

This article further discusses the dimensions of reader response theory, also known as transactional theory, that illuminate the relationship between readers and texts as they co-construct understandings of texts. In her seminal work Rosenblatt (1986) expounds on the dynamic nature of transactions between reader and text and defines the process as a 'reciprocal, mutually defining relationship.' In the light of the relationship between critical literacy and reader response theory, the focussing question guiding the research into was: *How does the practice of a reader response approach develop critical literacy and higher order skills: cognition, knowledge construction and meaning making?*

2. Literature review

Critical literacy is an ambiguous term. Green (2001) highlights a dichotomous view: to some researchers it means higher order thinking skills, including the ability to analyze and synthesize what one has read and communicate its meaning to others; some argue that unless we take a stance where we go beyond mere

analysis, synthesis and transformation- we are not critically literate. There is a call for social and political criticism. If our students are to be critically literate, in the words of Freire (1970:6-65) they must be able to read the words and the world. This means that he encourages a broader view of reading that goes "beyond reading the word". Freire proposes a system in which students become more socially aware through critique of multiple forms of injustice. This awareness cannot be achieved if students are not given the opportunity to explore and construct knowledge. Freire adds a component of social and political activism to his definition of critical literacy (1970:53). Gee's (2001) conception of critical literacy, also includes a personal component, namely how the information influences the reader.

It is clear that critical literacy indicates a level of literacy that involves reading between and beyond the lines of print. With changing conceptions of literacy, the onus is on the educator to help students to become critically literate. What then is the potential application of critical literacy in the classroom for the child reader in Grade 3? How can these skills be employed so that the reader looks beyond the text? Looking beyond the text refers to dimensions of hidden agendas and power groups and their relationships:

Critical literacy views readers as active participants in the reading process and invites them to move beyond passively accepting the text's message to question, examine, or dispute the power relations that exist between readers and authors (McLaughlin & De Voogd, 2004:14). According to McDaniel (2006:5) critical literacy transcends conventional notions of reading and has at its core a focus on power - Who has it? How is it being used in hidden or invisible ways? Cervetti et al. (2001) state that when readers take this stance towards power, they develop a critical consciousness, fostering a search for justice and equity by reading the meaning behind the text. Conducting lessons that foster critical literacy requires that teachers explicitly confront their own beliefs and assumptions about the role of activities, discourse and power within the classrooms. Tobin (2000) further suggests that teachers must also be prepared to provide space for students to express the complex way in which we respond to texts, even in the Foundation Phase.

Educational theorists from a range of academic paradigms however, have expressed concern regarding students' abilities to think critically about issues (Ennis, 1997; Freire, 1982; Giroux, 1988; Langer & Applebee, 1978; Marzano, 1991). Traditionally, schools have taught reading and writing in a top-down fashion in that teachers act as experts and impart knowledge to students. This transmission model of education has been critiqued, because it forces students to take passive roles as consumers (often uncritical ones) of information (Freire, 1970).

There appears to be a relationship in research literature between learning and critical thinking. Mason (2008:1) proposes that students should be encouraged to ask critical questions if they are to learn and think. Ennis (1996) defends a conception of critical thinking as based primarily in particular skills, such as observing, inferring, generalizing, reasoning, and evaluating. He further maintains that skills associated with critical thinking can be learned independently of specific disciplines and can be transferred from one domain to another.

Critical thinking is broadly seen as the kind of logical thinking that helps us to analyze and make sense of, or interpret, all forms of situations or information so that the conclusions we draw from our interpretations are sound. It is pervasive and is seen as vital to any developed life since it entails "reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe and do" (Ennis, 1987:10).

Shannon (1995: 83) explains how critical perspectives embed literacy in social practice:

Critical perspectives push the definition of literacy beyond traditional decoding or encoding of words in order to reproduce the meaning of text or society until it becomes a means for understanding one's own history and culture, to recognize connections between one's life, and the social structure, to believe that change in one's life, and the lives of others and society are possible as well as desirable, and to act on this new knowledge in order to foster equal and just participation in all the decisions that affect and control our lives. Critical literacy in the classroom is seen by Kretovics (1985:51) as providing students not merely with functional skills, but with the conceptual tools necessary to critique and engage society along with its inequalities and injustices. Furthermore, critical literacy can stress the need for students to develop a collective vision of what it might be like to live in the best of all societies and how such a vision might be made practical.

Louise Rosenblatt has been particularly influential in framing how researchers and practitioners approach the interaction of children with literature. Rosenblatt speaks about immersion in transactional reading of literature as aesthetic reading. Aesthetic reading according to Rosenblatt (1994: 24) focuses on "what we are seeing and feeling and thinking, on what is aroused within us by the sound of the words, and by what they point to in the human and natural world."

According to her the reader brings his/her own experiences and feelings to the text, therefore the literary experience can be very personal. From a cognitivist and socio-cultural perspective, reading comprehension is extracting and constructing meaning from text. It entails three elements: the reader, the text and the activity. These elements are highly interactive and situated within a broad socio-cultural context that affects them and the nature of their interactions (Sweet & Snow, 2003). Many works on comprehension underline the active involvement of the reader in creating meaning from text (Pressley 2000; Pressley & Afflerback, 1995).

For example, Irwin (1986) categorizes five main types of interacting reading processes, from bottom-up micro-processes – such as decoding – to integration, macro-processes, elaboration and meta-cognition. Langer (1990) characterizes literary reading as "envisionment building" and proposes that readers approach reading by "being out and stepping into" a text, then "being in and moving through." This activity is sometimes interrupted by "stepping out and rethinking" what one already knows. Finally, readers have the opportunity to "step out and objectify" the experience of reading.

Shaped by private and social contexts, one's interpretations are never stagnant and result from the simultaneous interaction of many reading stances. Rosenblatt (1991) distinguishes two basic approaches to a text, to be situated on a continuum: an aesthetic one, defined as primarily "private", and an efferent one, defined as "public." In adopting this latter reading stance, readers are concerned with gathering information to use in some manner in the real world – with knowledge, facts, and eventually the products of reading.

Shine and Roser (1999) have investigated children's spontaneous responses during the reading of fiction books (fantasy and realism), information, and poetry books. Nine children participated in a small-group situation in which the adult refrained from directing the conversation. In response to the information books, children adopted an information stance, sharing their knowledge about the topic and associating texts with their own lives. With fantasy fiction books, children were more engaged; they tried to interpret the characters' emotions and understand the whole story line.

Literary theorists view literature reading essentially as an act of rereading, analysis and discourse production – a discourse which asks the readers to elaborate and rigorously support their thoughts (Cornis-Pope, 2000; Daunay, 1999). Such a view leads students to adopt a predominantly efferent stance in literature classes.

At the other extreme of the continuum, an aesthetic stance accords "more attention to the penumbra of private feelings, attitudes, sensations and ideas" (Rosenblatt, 1994:184). As such, reading literature is considered as a virtual lived - through experience, a transactional process, a unique and momentary event occurring between a reader, a text and a context. Rosenblatt, in considering these different reading stances, argues that "we do not have the cognitive, the referential, the factual, the analytic, the abstract on the one side and the affective, the emotive, the sensuous, on the other. Instead, both aspects of meaning – which might be termed the public and the private – are always present in our transactions".

Rosenblatt's, views on the aesthetic stance, as opposed to the efferent or more functional one, is the most effective way to read fiction and poetry and "the notion that children must 'understand' the text cognitively, efferently, before it can be responded to aesthetically is a rationalization that must be rejected" (Rosenblatt, 1982: 273).There is typically, however, a reluctance on the part of secondary teachers to consider this 'private' or aesthetic side of interpretation. Too often, it is treated as an optional portion of the lesson to be quickly and informally discussed at the end of class. Indeed, primary educators know that young readers participating in literature circles appear to feel more comfortable expressing personal and tentative thoughts (McMahon, 1992; Goatley et al. 1995; Alvermann et al., 1996). Rosenblatt posits that the relationship between readers and text is a dynamic, ever-changing transaction (Clark 1984:58-70, Meichenbaum 1985: 407-426). Gambrell (1996:10) states that "when children read, they activate their capacity for imagination, for creative and critical thinking, for empathy". World-making, childhood events, children's perceptions of the world, children's dreams and fantasies can become part of the literacy environment made and shaped for and with children through the use of literature and the uses to which literature is put in the context of learning (Barrs & Cork:2001).

Meek (2001:20) further underpins this notion of "world-making" and talks about competent authors "making worlds for children to enter and explore, where they meet the deep matters of meaning making; being and becoming, love and loss, doubt and despair, psychological realities presented as people and events".

Rosenblatt (1938/1982:290-291) concludes: "When there is active participation in literature - the reader living through, reflecting on, and criticizing his [sic] own responses to text - there will be many kinds of benefits. We can call this growth in ability to share discriminatingly in the possibilities of language as it is used in literature".

But this means also the development of the imagination: the ability to escape from the limitations of time, place and environment, the capacity to envisage alternatives in ways of life and in moral and social choices, sensitivity to thought and feeling and needs of other personalities. Children's writing was also found to be more creative, meaningful and natural when a literature - based programme was followed (Rosenblatt, 1995).

When considering the meaning that any individual attributes to a text, it is important to note that the text is not interpreted alone, but in terms of the context in which it is read. According to Rosenblatt (1995: 175) literature should be personally experienced because it "may result in increased social sensitivity", encouraging individuals to become more empathetic toward others and to develop a greater sense of responsibility for their own behaviours. "This increased ability to imagine the human implications of any situation is just as important for the individual in his broader political and social relationships (Rosenblatt, 1995).

"Many political blunders or social injustices seem to be the result not so much of maliciousness or conscious cruelty as of the inability of citizens to translate into human terms the laws or political platforms they support. A democratic society, whose institutions and political and economic procedures are constantly being developed and remoulded, needs citizens with the imagination to see what political doctrines mean for human beings" (Rosenblatt 1995:176).

From the early days of the development of theory and research on response, studies have focused on (a) text, or how various texts affect response; (b) readers, or how experiences and attitudes situated in readers affect response; and (c) the context in which response is generated. These ways of discussing literature and response remain with us today (Galda, Ash, & Cullinan, 2000).

In responding to texts at the level of activity, students learn to go beyond the usual pedagogical focus on inferring characters' acts or dialogue (what is the character doing or saying), beliefs (what do characters believe about each other), and goals and motivations (what is the character trying to accomplish and why) to interpret and contextualize characters' actions or dialogue as involving various social practices within activities (Beach, 2000).

These social practices include(a) defining/constructing identities, (b) including/excluding/positioning others, (c) building relationships, (d) influencing others' actions or beliefs, (e) representing/serving institutions/systems, (f) establishing group allegiances/stances, (g) coping with conflicts/differences, (h)

engaging in shared rituals, or (i) constructing / sharing knowledge. By inferring these social practices, students are interpreting how characters' actions or dialogue function or serve as social agendas (Mosenthal, 1998) designed to fulfil the objects or motives driving activity systems. As Gee (2000) noted, people (and characters) are recognized as having certain agendas or being certain kinds of persons through their uses of language or discourses.

3. Strategies for the classroom

Unless research transitions and translates from theory into practice its value remains underutilized for the learner in the classroom. Our aim was to translate aspects of this theory into strategies for a reading programme to support the cognitive development and engagement of readers, and to track its impact by applying an action research model.

3.1 Shared reading as an instructional approach

Holdaway (1997) developed a procedure known as "shared book experience". Shared reading provides very strong support for learners. It allows for the modelling of real reading and accounts for the ways in which "natural readers" have learned to read by being read to, reading along with an adult and ultimately reading on their own. "Shared reading is a good way to immerse students in literature without worrying about the reading level of the story…" Cooper (1993:51). Young emerging readers, linguistically and culturally different readers, and reluctant readers feel more success through shared reading than when they struggle to read the text by themselves (Trachtenburg & Ferruggia, 1989; Wicklund, 1989).

The shared reading strategy involved three parts: read aloud, read along and read alone. This strategy is very flexible and can be used for learners who need stronger scaffolding to help them construct meaning (Cooper 1993:304-305). Routman (1991:33) defines shared reading as any rewarding reading situation in which a learner or group of learners sees the text, observes an expert (usually the teacher) reading it with fluency and expression, and is invited to read along. The learner is in the role of receiving support, and the teacher-expert accepts and encourages all efforts and approximations the learner (the novice) makes. Each reading situation is a relaxed, social one, with emphasis on enjoyment and appreciation of the stories, songs, rhymes, chants, raps and poems. This approach allows learners to hear fluent oral reading, while being introduced to and discussing literature they would not otherwise be able to read independently.

Allen (2002) believes that shared reading texts need to have certain characteristics: they should invite personal connections, should "create intense emotional experiences for the reader, and should expand the world of the reader." Reading aloud has many advantages in addition to modelling fluent reading: It builds background knowledge, exposes students to a wide variety of genres, makes reading pleasurable, motivates students to read independently, guides students in choosing books, develops higher-level thinking skills, improves listening skills, connects books to students' lives, teaches elements of literature, leads students in meaningful discussions, teaches students effective strategies, and ideally will help lead students to lifelong love of reading (Trelease, 2001).

The literature was carefully chosen for its high quality of language and illustrations and often included rereading of favourite stories and poems. Following shared reading, students had opportunities to reread the literature independently (Routman, 1991: 33). Shared storybook reading is viewed as particularly powerful because it provides an interactive context that is contextualized, authentic, meaningful, interesting, and motivating to the preschool child (Watkins & Bunce, 1996).

4. Research Method

The following instruments were employed for data collection in this qualitative research study to ensure data triangulation. These varied data sources provided opportunities for convergence and triangulation regarding assertions and the development of categories (Goetz & Lecompte 1984, Miles & Huberman, 1994). The approach to data collection was mainly qualitative, the quantitative component was used to support the validity of the data.

The primary data sources comprised the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS), The Burt Word Recognition Test and the Response Journals of the respondents. Supplementary data was also collected from a comprehension test adapted from PIRLS 2006.

The survey that was administered is known as The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) and was developed by McKenna and Kear (1990). This normed instrument was specifically designed to measure the attitude of primary school learners towards reading. The reason for including this survey is that it was used to make initial conjecture about the reading attitudes of the learners who were reading below grade level before

the intervention programme. This survey also provided a convenient group profile and it was a means of monitoring the attitudinal impact of the shared reading programme.

A supplementary comprehension test (PIRLS 2006) was administered after the intervention programme. This post test was included in order to obtain an objective perspective on whether respondents' higher order thinking skills could be discerned in their discourse. The comprehension test (*The Upside Down Mice*, Dahl, 1981) is based on the aspects of reading literacy which were assessed in PIRLS (2006) namely:

- Purposes for reading
- Processes of comprehension

These aspects formed the basis for the written test of reading comprehension. In literary reading, the reader engages with the text to become involved in imagined events, settings, actions, consequences, characters, atmosphere, feelings and ideas. The main genre of literary texts when reading for literary experience in PIRLS (2006) assessments is narrative fiction.

The Burt Word Recognition Test was used to determine the reading baselines of each of the three ability groups before and after the shared reading intervention literature-based reading programme. The reading process is a complex one and the Burt Word Recognition Test is not an indicator of reading age, but is used in conjunction with other information. However, it allows teachers to assess a child's reading achievement to aid decisions about appropriate teaching and reading materials and instructional groupings.

4.1 Response journals

Qualitative data was collected from the journal entries of the 58 3rd Grade respondents' in the sample. The learners' responses provided the narrative and qualitative data on their literacy progress. Writing is a critical component of any reading programme. They wrote and reflected on their reading, connecting themselves personally with the texts, which enhances comprehension and interpretive skills. They also wrote and reflected on their use of reading strategies, thus enhancing their critical thinking and meta-cognitive skills. The data that was collected focused on the learners' responses to the notions of aesthetic reading, efferent reading and "meaning making".

The aim of these response journals was to gain insight into how the child reader responds to and interprets literature. "When readers read literature, their personal memories, feelings, and thought associations may be evoked by the text". This perspective on reading is also known as reader response theory (Rosenblatt 1938, 1978). Martinez and Roser (1991: 652) refer to classrooms where responses to literature thrive. These classrooms seem to be characterized by teachers' valuing of responses as the crux of literacy growth.

Valuing of responses in the classroom is evident when teachers (a) provide opportunities for response, (b) provide response models, and (c) receive children's responses (in all their diversity). Permitting students to read fiction and poetry aesthetically enhances the goal of providing children with pleasurable experiences with literature (DeGroff & Galda 1992).

Using quality children's literature is fundamental in the process of individual response and creative interpretation (Meek 2001). Martin and Leather (1994:39) support this view when they state that books become something different for each reader and children respond to different literature in different ways. The context encourages children to verbalize their various interpretations while valuing the insights and understanding that peers offer (King 2001: 35). Selected genres of children's literature were included in the children's literature-based reading intervention programme:

- Fantasy: *Where The Wild Things Are* (Maurice Sendak, 1963).
- Fantasy: *The Magic Paint Brush* (Julia Donaldson, 2003).
- Folk tale: *The Spoiled Child* (1994, World folk tales).
- Fairy tale: *The Three Little Pigs* (Jon Scieszka, 1989).
- Modern fantasy: *The Tunnel* (Anthony Browne, 1989).
- High Fantasy: *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (C. S. Lewis, 1950).
- Folk tale: *The Genie* (translated Lang, A (1898 (From Arabian Nights).
- Traditional: *The Best Thing In The World*- (Unknown, from Dolche list).
- Fantasy: *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* (Roald Dahl, 1964).

Below are examples of summaries of two stories and the participants' responses. The story of *The Spoiled Child (1994)* helped the respondents see the consequence of disobedience. This relates to stage 1: Obedience and punishment in Kohlberg's (1981) theory of stages of moral development. In the recorded discussion respondents referred to the biblical aphorism derived from II Thessalonians 3:10,"He who does not work, neither shall he eat." The majority of respondents were familiar with this verse as it was often used in the home. Respondents had strong feelings about obeying God's word. Learners were introduced to setting in the context of the narrative being read as well as literary elements like sequencing and prediction.

Question: What did you like about the story?

Respondent: 12: I liked it when Galinka started to work and then she was given something to eat.

Respondent: 13: When the father said, if you don't clean the house, you will not eat or get bread.

Respondent: 14: I like it when you must work for your bread.

Respondent: 15: I liked the part when Galinka rolled up her sleeves and worked.

Question: What did you not like about the story?

Respondent: 16: I did not like it when she did not want to clean or light the fire.

Respondent: 17: I did not like it when she was lazy.

In *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* C.S. Lewis, (1950).The responses centred on themes of magic, fantasy and imagination. Many respondents referred to togetherness of family, feeling safe and being free to explore and having the right to remain in a magical place like Narnia as well as experiences of power and escape from limits of time and place. They had strong views on Edmund's betrayal of his siblings. Forgiveness was the right thing to do. "If God is able to forgive us, then we should do likewise". The majority of respondents were prepared to forgive Edmund for his lies and betrayal, because they felt that the bond of family was important no matter the transgression. Issues of morality and ethics were fore-grounded when they questioned Edward's betrayal and the White Witch's motives. These responses were also interspersed with philosophical diversions.

Task: Pretend that you are Edmund. Write a letter to your siblings and ask them to forgive you for what you have done.

Respondent: 20: I am sorry for what I have done. Lying was not the right thing to do.

Respondent: 21: I am so sorry; I was selfish and should be more respectful.

Respondent: 22: I am very sorry for lying to you and betraying you. I know now that I was only thinking of myself. I hope that you forgive me.

Reader-response theory served as the framework used to analyse the journals. The rich data collected from the respondents in their journals led to employ a grounded theory approach. The use of the constructivist

paradigm, and particularly constructivist grounded theory, was the appropriate approach for grounding the findings of response journals in the real life engagement of the context of the respondents.

The use of grounded theory method provides a flexible and iterative process for dealing with multiple and conflicting meanings, interpretations and constructions that emanate from the individual's real world engagement with information. Researchers seek to analyse how research participants construct their lives (Charmaz, 2003: 69). "In seeking respondent's meanings, we must go further than surface meanings or presumed meanings. A constructivist approach necessitates a relationship with respondents in which they can cast their stories in their terms" (Charmaz, 2003: 525).

In understanding the analysis of the response journals it is necessary to define what constitutes a response. Purves and Beach (1972: 178) explain that "responses consist of cognition, perception, and some emotional or attitudinal reaction; it involves predispositions; it changes during the course of reading; and it might result in modification of concepts, attitudes or feelings."

In analysing the written responses of the respondents in this study it was clear that their lived experiences and social contexts were reflected in their responses. All the learners enjoyed listening to the selected children's literature and contributed to the discussions in an animated manner. This showed that the social context was a highly salient factor in the children's responses to literature. Analysing children's verbal responses qualitatively, captured the richness and complexity of the children's work. Higher order thinking was reflected when they compared the text to personal experience, making predictions, generalisations and inferencing.

The majority of the respondents had a very clear understanding of the literary elements such as the characters and their importance in the story, the setting, plot and events. After writing their responses to the first story in their journals, and based on our observations, and the written responses in their journals, we could scaffold the prompts for each of the successive stories that followed. In the practice of scaffolding the teacher extends children's learning through modelling, modifying and correcting, and is related to the work of Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1996). It involves demonstrations and modelling, such as when teachers say aloud what they are thinking while they are reading and writing in order to make clear the 'cognitive processes used by skilled readers and writers' (Strickland, 2002: 80).

During the reading sessions participants were asked what the story was about, if this was difficult for some participants, then they were prompted to retell the story in their own words, they were more confident when asked to retell. Initially the questions focused on literary elements like the title, setting, characters, climax, problem and solution in the story. Subsequent prompts included questions on text-to-self. In the story of Narnia: The Lion, the witch and the wardrobe, participants were asked to explain what they thought about the betrayal of one of the siblings. This question elicited discussions around morality and virtuous behaviour.

The response prompts were open-ended prompts that helped to move the respondents from initial retellings of stories and summaries to more analytical responses and greater emotional involvements. Martinez and Roser (2002) are of the view that response prompts move readers from writing in their journals to discussing their responses, fostering richer classroom discussion. Much of the data collected through the response journals revealed the respondents' assumptions about the world.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this research overall was to engage the child reader in all aspects of children's literature, and through the reading intervention programme, ignite their thought processes and responses and guide them to critical enquiry and higher order thinking. During the children's literature-based reading intervention programme we tried to understand the internal dynamic of the classroom activity in all its complexity, according to a particular teaching approach, which was a shared reading approach, and within a natural classroom environment. Allowing the respondents to engage in open dialogue within the framework of the shared reading activity, confirmed that children have the capacity for complex thinking at an earlier age than we credit them for.

The findings further revealed that;

- Prodigious amounts of vocabulary support fluency and comprehension.
- A strong relationship exists between reading motivation and academic achievement.
- The early introduction of literary reading skills has a significant impact on higher order reading ability.
- The respondents' transaction with text reflected their personal meaning making, their cultural and family habitus as well as their levels of moral reasoning.

This study has shown that it is possible for innovative teachers to develop children's literacy abilities through the implementation of a literature based approach in reading in Grade 3; and the understanding and use of reader response as a methodological approach. It acknowledges the roles of the learner, the educator and the school in the attainment of literacy.It is imperative that teachers make available quality fiction and informational literature for their students. The criteria for good children's literature varies, but Bishop (1992: 49) suggests that it should be "…well written, tell a good story, have strong characterization, and offer a worthwhile theme or themes children could be expected to understand." All literature shared in the classroom should meet these criteria.

The benefits of introducing a children's literature reading programme are far reaching for learners, enabling them to acquire the skills needed to become independent, confident lifelong readers, whose reading skills will allow them to participate in society and the academic world. It could therefore be concluded that emotional-aesthetic- experience drives cognition and therefore comprehension in young readers'. This is the area of greatest weakness in the South African PIRLS (2006) results. It hugely emphasises the importance of developing comprehension and critical thinking. Conclusions that have emerged from the research of the Grade 3 literature-based reading programme and, in the light of the reflection, propose recommendations for implementing literature based development of higher order reading skills. While the debate continues about South African learners' poor literacy and reading skills, much can be done to reverse this situation. A positive shift towards a more innovative instructional approach or methodology very often requires only enthusiasm by the educator and the willingness to embrace it. The Balanced Approach as proposed by the WCED (2006) has leanings towards including children's literature, when mention is made of 'real books.'

The current curriculum, (NCS, 2002) in South Africa demands that teachers use constructivist methods of teaching and learning, which means that when using this learner-centered approach it stimulates higher levels of thinking, encourages articulation of thinking, helps students remember, allows students to make connections and see different perspectives, as well as promoting deeper understanding. Selecting appropriate literature allows children to interpret and understand and make connections with the text and connect their own life experiences to the text. Consequently, constructivist activities in the classroom that focus on speaking and listening promote not only constructivist thought but also important connections between teacher and students. Problem-solving, higher-order thinking skills and deep understanding are emphasized (Honebein, 1996: 17-24). Social engagement is an integral component of constructivist-based instruction. It is this deeper level of understanding that must be promoted via a change in teaching strategies (Tovani, 2004).

From a constructivist perspective where the learner is perceived as meaning-maker, teacher-centered, text-centered and skills-oriented approaches to literature instruction are replaced by more learner-centered approaches where processes of understanding are emphasized. The learner-centeredness of a constructivist classroom is clearly apparent in a reader response approach to literature. These literary discursive practices promote constructivist thought. Another quality of a constructivist class is its interactive nature, which allows the learner to construct meaning drawing on their own "lived –worlds" to connect with text.

That a chasm exits between the intended curriculum and the implemented curriculum must be acknowledged. It is a well – known phenomenon in educational literature and research that there is usually a significant discrepancy between the intended, and implemented and attained curriculum. The implementation is influenced by the beliefs, attitudes, training and experiences of teachers who are ultimately responsible for defining and delivering the curriculum at classroom level (Hargreaves, 1989; Fullan & Pomfret, 1977).

In using this literature-based approach, whether to augment or replace the basal approach, the literature or reading teacher can implement appropriate strategies that will give learners an opportunity to react personally, reflect and respond to literature. The benefits for integrating and using the reader-response literary theories as a suitable base for instructional focus on reading is valuable, because the strategies are compatible with Piagetian and social constructivist theories of learning and development as outlined in the literature review. Goforth (1998:43) highlights the value of Transactional Theory, which also forms the framework for the intervention reading programme in this study.

The authors' are of the view, that as teachers' deepen their understanding of constructivist approaches and methods in teaching and learning, this proposed literature-based reading programme will provide the necessary focus and impetus to stimulate higher order reading skills and activities for second language learners,' ameliorating language and literacy delays.

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War for Peace in Pakistan

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Abstract

Pakistan because of its geographical location became a front line state in the war against terror since the attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001. Pakistan decided to align with USA to combat the fundamentalist. It's a war whose main purpose is to save people from terrorism but now lives of Pakistan own citizens are at stake. Innocent citizens have become the targets of deadly attacks. It has resulted in much more loss of lives than 9/11 attack. One obvious and tragic price of this open war is the toll of death and destruction. But there is an additional cost, a psychological cost borne by the survivors of war. The civilian population, and the children who have lost their parents in this war are the real casualties we need to take into consideration. This article will highlight the psycho-social aspects of war which could not achieve peace yet.

Peace and War

Peace is a condition of harmony described by the lack of intense conflict. It is generally understood as the absence of aggression. Considering international relations, peacetime is understood not only the absence of war or conflict, but also the presence of social and monetary understanding and unity. On the other hand War is a declared state of systematized conflict, represents by extreme hostility, societal disturbance, and great mortality. The traditional method used by a group to carry out war is known as warfare. When there is an absence of war, it is called peace.

The relationship between peace and conflict is narrowly linked. Usually, peace has a positive implication and conflict a negative one. However, in certain situations it might be sensible to report conflicts openly or to even live them out instead of brushing them under the carpet. Peace and conflict studies today is widely explored and taught in a large and mounting number of locations and institutions.

Pakistan.

Southern Asia comprises the countries of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives. The second largest country in the subcontinent population-wise and area-wise is Pakistan and has customarily maintained the stability of power in the region due to its strategic links with nearby Arab States and neighboring China. With over 170 million people, it is heavily populated country in the world and has the second biggest Muslim population after Indonesia. Pakistan has the seventh largest standing armed force and is the only Muslim-majority nation to possess nuclear weapons. Since attaining independence, Pakistan's history has been characterized by phases of military rule, political insecurity and conflicts with neighboring India. The country is exposed to challenging problems including poverty, violence, corruption and terrorism.

Background of terrorism in Pakistan.

Terrorism in Pakistan has become a major and extremely damaging occurrence in recent years.   This was started with debatable Islamization policies in the 1980s, during Soviet-Afghan War in which a guerilla holy war, termed as JIHAD was started which is branded as terrorism today. Pakistan's participation in the Soviet-Afghan War led to a larger entrance of ideologically motivated Afghan Arabs in the tribal regions and an invasion of ammunition and drugs. The national intelligence agencies, in association with the CIA, encouraged the "mujahideen" to fight a proxy war against the Soviet Union; and later these mujahideen were never disarmed after that warfare. A lot of overlapping and interconnected organizations were made. One of these organizations was al-Qaeda, formed by bin Laden in 1988.

Pakistan's Policy after attacks on USA.

There were a series of suicide attacks upon the United States on September 11, 2001.Nearly 3,000 fatalities and the 19 hijackers died in the attacks. Suspicion promptly fell on al-Qaeda. The United States reacted to the attacks by launching the War on Terror, invading Afghanistan to throw out the Taliban. Pakistan, due to its strategic importance and close relation with the Taliban regime, was asked to assist US and World alliance against al-Qaeda. Pakistani authorities moved reluctantly to align themselves with the United States in a war to combat the alleged fundamentalist and Islamic terrorist. Pakistan because of its geographical location became a front line state in the war against terror.

Impact on Pakistan.

This war against terrorism has triggered suffering, deaths and destruction to the general public. Pakistan is key victim of Afghanistan's insecurity and due to which Pakistan's economy has suffered. Terrorism has significantly affected the foreign investment, unemployment increased and World Bank has to block vital loans. On the other hand, war raises the overhead expenses of the forces to meet their needs. Education is affected up to a high level. Activists had demolished so many schools and colleges and students are waiting to go back to their homes and resume education. Health system is destroyed and hospitals are deficient in equipment. Acute shortage of Doctors has now paralyzed the health services and infant and maternal mortality

rates have significantly deteriorated. Tourism was the only main mode of income and financiers have moved their assets to other cities.

In addition to the toll of death and destruction, the survivors of war may suffer the greatest psychological harm. The civilian victims including veteran population are facing difficulty in managing stress, shock, fright of violence and socio-economic pressure. People had to leave their houses, which also affected them financially. Prolonged exposure to war caused severe psychological impact on women and children. Moreover, psycho traumatized people are deprived of psychological help. A certain part of war-affected children are known in refugee conditions as "Unaccompanied children" where they wait for ages in sad situations for normal life to restart, if it ever does. There are children who are disabled in war; they may, in addition to loss of a limb, sight, or cognitive capability, lose the opportunity of schooling and of a social life. Even long after the war, these lives will never reach the level they had before the impact of war.

Conflicting war.

An argument fueled in people's mind that who will be consider as martyr as both Taliban and Pakistan army are Muslims? It's up to public to choose if Taliban are Muslims, Is this Islam to slaughter people? Is this Islam to execute innocent people? Is this Islam to blow up Mosques? Is this Islam to abolish schools? The Arabic word "ISLAM" means peace. The word Muslim means the person who submits to Allah in Peace. Currently, the major threat to the state is the killing of innocent civilians in deadly suicidal attacks. Suicide bombers often have faith in their actions, they justify suicide is against Islam but Martyrdom is not. However many mainstream Muslim experts have criticized attacks on civilians as inexcusable violence and sins in Islam. To resolve the conflict Pakistani troops decided to eradicate the bugs that are eating up country from inside before they flourish in their mission and destroy Pakistan.

Conclusion.

Pakistan has suffered massive setbacks in this war and faced trouble of terrorism with full strength and enthusiasm. Now this is the responsibility of all stake holders that they should let the Pakistan grab militancy in its own way, Pakistan army and intelligence agencies are quite efficient in handling such situation, but they need is adequate diplomatic support from other countries. They should trust Pakistan's efforts and must respect and integrity the sovereignty and independency of Pakistan.

It's a war whose main purpose is to save people from terrorism. But now lives of Pakistan own citizens are at stake. Peace requires safety in matters of social or economic welfare. But law and order situation in the country has constantly deteriorated since 2001. This conflict is still to resolve, whether peace is achieved or unrest is augmented since the war is carried out on Pakistan to achieve peace. Some debate that the term "war" is not suitable in this context, since they believe there is no identifiable enemy, and that it is unlikely worldwide terrorism can be brought to an end by armed means.

Further criticism maintains that the War on Terror delivers an agenda for everlasting war; the declaration of such flexible goals produces a state of limitless conflict, since "radical groups" can continue to arise indefinitely. "As many protestors have pointed out, terrorism is not an enemy. It is a tactic. There is need to create awareness on peace among researchers. Platform is required to share concern for understanding and discussing issues pertaining peace from various perspectives, including an Islamic perspective.

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Study of Socio-demographic Factors among Re-admitted Psychiatric Patients in relation to their diagnoses in Malaysia.

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Abstract

Objectives: The aim of this study is to find out the demographic, and clinical profile of frequently re-hospitalize psychiatric patients. The study will determine relationship between particular psychiatric illness and recurrer admissions. This study investigates and collects all relevant data to reflect the factual situation in Malaysia population. Methods: Cross sectional study of 250 psychiatric patients with different mental illnesses admitted b Psychiatrist in 6 months duration. Patients were included of age 18 years and above and excluded those who wer not conversant either in Malay or English language. The questioner with various demographic aspects was use and clinical data of the participants obtained for statistical analysis. Results: It has been noted that there is significant association between socio-demographic factors and frequent hospitalization of Psychiatric patients i relation to their diagnoses. Conclusion: Patients with mental illnesses have higher prevalence of readmission Although treatment facilities are available, environmental factors play a vital role in relapse of mental illness an readmission to the Psychiatric wards.

Keywords: Psychiatric patients, Psychiatric services, Readmissions , Clinical data, Malaysia

1. Introduction:

Deinstitutionalization is a global inclination which began with the wide-ranging starter of chlorpromazine. The development of supervisory mental health care and the accumulation of psychiatric beds in most developed countries peaked in the middle of this century. Malaysia is also following the trend of the developed countries when the government started employing decentralization of psychiatric facilities. In the last decade, the number of institutionalized beds has been reduced. Community-based psychiatric services were initiated in general hospitals to lessen readmission rates and to develop newer patient-oriented models of care, including the delivery of care near to where people live and work to improve accessibility. Decentralization evolution observed an immense

number of patients returning to the family. On the other hand, a large number of chronic patients failed community management because of the breakdown of family support. Some researchers have explained the increasing number of readmissions as a consequence of de-institutionalization policies.

A transition is taking place in the organization of psychiatric services. The length of stay in hospitals is reduced and relatively replaced by treatment and care in the community. The readmission rate is projected as one indicator to evaluate the effectiveness of this transition. Majority of all patients admitted to psychiatric hospitals are previously admitted patients. On the basis of the analysis of the literature review it is concluded that readmission rates are not a suitable indicator of quality of care in psychiatric hospitals. Readmission rates may, however, be an important tool in the planning of mental health services. In several countries the proportion of readmissions has been used as a performance indicator and for this motive it has gathered much consideration. Universally the monthly readmission rates have been said to be between 15-35%. The association between the consumption of services and treatment outcome is very multifaceted and may depend upon many factors other than the clinical variables. Comprehensive evidence has shown that social factors are strongly related to the readmission rate in psychiatric patients.

1. Methods:

his is a cross sectional study conducted on a sample of 250 psychiatric patients with different mental illnesses admitted by Psychiatrist at the Hospital Tengku Ampuan Afzan, Kuantan, Pahang state of Malaysia over a period

of 6 months duration. Before the start Raosoft sample size calculator was used to get expected sample size. Margi
of error was expected 5%, whereas confidence level was 95%. Estimated number of admissions was 40-50 patient
per month. An ethical approval from relevant authorities was sought before the study started. The researcher
introduced themselves to the patients/care givers and inform them about the aim and the methodology about th
research. Informed consent was obtained from the participants after the nature of the procedure was fully explaine
to the patients/care givers. All participants were ensured of the confidentiality and they were able to understan
that the information gathered will only be used for research purposes.

The patients were included following the strict inclusion criteria. To enter into the study the age limit of the subje
was kept from 18 years and above. All Participants were confirmed as diagnosed cases with psychiatric illness an
were indicated for admission by specialist psychiatrist to the psychiatric ward. During the data collection, patient
were not considered to include who were not conversant either in Malay or English language.

The questionnaire containing various aspects of the socio-demographic status and the clinical data of th
participants was used. The researchers interviewed the patients/care givers to obtain information using a list c
questions about the history of mental illness and other relevant information. All the data obtained was used fc
statistical analysis. Chi-square test was performed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) versio
21.

2. Results:

During the 6 months period from the beginning of 2013 to the end of June 2013, there were 250 patients admitte
to the Psychiatric ward of Hospital Tengku Ampuan Afzan, in Kuantan, Pahang state of Malaysia. These includ
201 patients with history of admissions before into Psychiatric ward. It was found that majority (80%) of th
patients were readmitted. Majority of the patients were males (121) with female patients (80).

Among the 201 readmitted patients, Scizophrenia was found to be the commonest illness (147) followed by Bipola
mood disorder (20) and other illnesses (34). Considerable association was recorded between the mental illnesse
and other demographic factors. Racial component (.002) has got significant association with Psychiatric diagnosi

whereas educational status (.038) also found important factor together with the occupational status (.007). Ther
is evident association (.011) between the diagnosis and duration of the illness.

It was also noted that the Age, financial status, marital status, and previous admissions were found non significar
to the prevalence of readmissions.(Tab:1).

Table:1   RE-ADMISSION OF PATIENTS IN PSYCHIATRIC WARDS FOR 6 MONTHS

Characteristic	Population, N (%)	Diagnosis, N (%)			Comparison towards Diagnoses, P-value
		Schizophrenia	Bipolar Mood Disorder	Other	
Gender					
Male	121 (60.2)	84 (41.8)	14 (7.0)	23 (11.4)	.339
Female	80 (39.8)	63 (31.3)	6 (3.0)	11 (5.5)	
Race					
Malay	156 (77.6)	116 (57.7)	13 (6.5)	27 (13.4)	
Chinese	27 (13.4)	20 (10.0)	7 (3.5)	0 (0)	**.002**
Indian	5 (2.50)	2 (1.0)	0 (0)	3 (1.5)	
Others	13 (6.50)	9 (4.5)	0 (0)	4 (2.0)	
Age					
24 years old and less	20 (10.0)	11 (5.5)	2 (1.0)	7 (3.5)	.207
25 – 49 years old	143 (71.1)	108 (53.7)	13 (6.5)	22 (10.9)	
50 years old and above	38 (18.9)	28 (13.9)	5 (2.5)	5 (2.5)	
Marital Status					
Single	131 (65.2)	96 (47.8)	10 (5.0)	25 (12.4)	.215
Married	70 (34.8)	51 (3.5)	10 (5.0)	9 (4.5)	
Education Status					
Low (Primary/Secondary)	187 (93.0)	140 (69.7)	16 (8.0)	31 (15.4)	**.038**
High (Collage/University)	14 (7.00)	7 (3.5)	4 (2.0)	3 (1.5)	
Occupation Status					
Employed	48 (23.9)	28 (13.9)	10 (5.0)	10 (5.0)	**.007**
Unemployed	153 (76.1)	119 (59.2)	10 (5.0)	24 (11.9)	
Duration of Illness					
Less than 1 year	25 (12.4)	11 (5.5)	6 (3.0)	8 (4.0)	**.011**
1 – 5 years	48 (23.9)	37 (18.4)	3 (1.5)	8 (4.0)	
More than 5 years	128 (63.7)	99 (49.3)	11 (5.5)	18 (9.0)	
Level of Income					
Low (RM1,500 and below)	192 (95.5)	143 (71.1)	18 (9.0)	31 (15.4)	.136
High (RM 1,500 and above)	9 (4.50)	4 (2.0)	2 (1.0)	3 (1.5)	
Re-admission Prevalence					
3 times and less	51 (25.4)	34 (16.9)	4 (2.0)	13 (6.5)	.190
3 – 10 times	68 (33.8)	48 (23.9)	10 (5.0)	10 (5.0)	
More than 10 times	82 (40.8)	65 (32.3)	6 (3.0)	11 (5.5)	

*Significant value is $\rho \leq 0.05$ with 95% confidence leve

3.Discussion:

Readmitted psychiatric patients are particularly pertinent if we bear in mind that, even if they are a minority, these are the patients who spend the most resources. The association between the utilization of services and treatment outcome is very complex and may depend upon many factors other than the clinical variables. The continuous collection of data is a way to go in minimizing responsible factors. Although efforts had produced impact in western countries, the data achieved might not be applicable to our patients due to the psycho-social and cultural diversity. This application seeks support for research initiative and shall provide a platform for more nationwide collaborative approach. The collected materials shall be source for future medical research.

Rehospitalisation is not an uncommon issue among Psychiatric patients. High readmission rate has been often measured as poor prognostic out comes in Psychiatric patients. More significantly, an elevated readmission rate can reveal a large number of patients who cannot be adequately contained in communities and can be used as a marker of insufficiency or inappropriateness of community-based after care. Furthermore there has been a huge amount of health budget consumed while the patients are admitted and the readmission rate is considered as a performance indicator.

Malaysia is among those countries that are following the trend of decentralization of Psychiatric Services. This devolutionary process observed a great number of chronic mentally ill patients returning to the relatives. Presently the Psychiatric hospital is performing like the other psychiatric units of General hospitals and there is no more transfer for long-term stay. It has been noted that with reduction in number of patients in the Psychiatric hospitals in Malaysia, the Psychiatric department of general hospitals became overloaded.

4.Conclusion:

The aim of this study is to find out the social, demographic, and clinical profile of frequently re-hospitalized psychiatric patients. There are several collaborative studies explored the risks and rates of readmission and their predictors.In spite of the importance and high relevance only a few researches were done on this topic worldwide with limited studies published on this topic in Malaysia yet. Given the importance of comprehending this phenomenon and the lack of investigation in this area, the present analysis aims to characterize the population with repeated admissions.

Disclosure:

The Authors report no conflict of interest. The authors alone are Responsible for the content and writing of the paper

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The Effect of Annealing Temperature and Time on the Optical Properties of SnS Thin Films Prepared by Chemical Bath Deposition

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Abstract

A research on the deposition and Characterization of SnS Thin Films by Chemical Bath Deposition Technique using Ammonia (NH₃) as a complexing agent. Thin film of Tin (II) sulphide (SnS) is deposited onto glass substrates using chemical bath deposition (CBD) at room temperature for 3hours and 1hour. The optical properties of the film were measured using Double Beam UV- Spectrophotometer with serial number UV061514, Energy dispersive X-ray florescence (EDXRF) determines the compositions together with Rutherford Back Scattering (RBS) analysis revealed that thin films have percentage compositions of the elements (Sn/S, 50.1/49.9 for 3hours and Sn/S, 50.4/49.6 for 1hour) and their thicknesses are 100nm for 3hours and 150nm for 1hour. It was found that SnS thin film exhibits p-type conduction. Optical band gap values of direct and indirect transitions are estimated to be 1.98eV to 2.01eV and 1.82eV to 1.98eV for the two samples respectively. The other optical properties calculated from transmittance using appropriate equations are absorbance, reflectance, band gap , absorption coefficient, optical conductivity, refractive index and extinction coefficient.

Introduction

Rapid advances in renewable energy technology and implementation will be needed in the next several decades in order to ensure a stable electricity which will lead to smooth transition away from fossil fuels and nuclear energy, which comprised about 93% of the world's energy budget with a negligible contribution from solar energy. And also demand for development of smaller and smaller devices with higher speed and performance which is applicable in the world of technology called *Nanotechnology*[1]. Among these possible materials is Tin (II) Sulfide (SnS), a non-toxic, abundant, p-type absorber well matched for solar absorption with high absorption coefficient. In recent years, thin films of SnS have attracted much attention for the photovoltaic applications due to the high absorption coefficient and high conductivity[1,2]. Tin (II) sulphide thin films attracted extensive interest due to their photoconductivity properties for solar energy conversion.

SnS thin films can be generated by many methods such as thermal evaporation[3], pulse electron deposition[4], spray pyrolysis[5], SILAR[6], chemical bath deposition[7]. The film in this study is grown by chemical bath deposition (CBD) which creates a thin film on a solid substrate via a reaction in a liquid solution. The CBD method is inexpensive, easy to prepare and its necessary vessels can be found in an ordinary chemistry laboratory. Therefore, this method has many advantages over others used to grow semiconductor thin films.

The direct and indirect band gaps of SnS thin film vary depending on the method of preparation and fabrication but some results agree with the literature values between 1.0eV-1.2eV and 1.2eV-1.5eV respectively. SnS thin has been used as an absorption layer in the manufacture of heterojunction solar cell due to its narrow band gap[8,9].
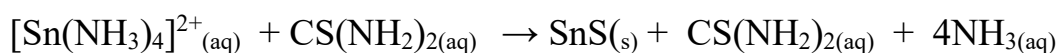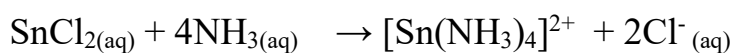
Experiment

In the present work SnS thin films were prepared by chemical bath deposition on microscope glass substrate kept at room temperature with varying other compounds. To make 50ml solution, 0.5M solution of $SnCl_2$ which is the source of Sn^{+2} was made to react with 3M of 99% Ammonia as complexing agent Subsequently with 1M solution of Thiourea which is the source of S^{-2}. 1M of Sodium hydroxide was added create an alkaline environment for deposition to take place and deionized water added to make-up to 50ml in a glass beaker. Cleaned glass substrates were immersed into the solution and were allowed between 60 to 180 minutes after

which the substrates were removed and rinsed in de-ionized water and were allowed to dry in air . Different samples of SnS thin films with A and B chosen as representative samples. The samples were subjected to annealing temperatures and time of 250 °C for 3hours for A and 200 °C for 1hour for B respectively.Table 1 shows the various combinations adopted in the deposition processes.

Table: 1 Experimental Summary

Exp.	Volume of 0.5M of SnCl$_2$ (ml)	Volume of 1M of Thiourea (ml)	Volume of 3M of Ammonia (NH$_3$) (ml)	Volume of 1M of NaOH (ml)	Volume of Water (ml)	Deposition Period
A	20	10	7.5	5	7.5	3hrs
B	20	11	4	5	10	1hr
C	20	16	4	4	6	2hrs
D	25	10	7	-	8	1hr 48m
E	15	10	10	6	9	1hr 28m
F	23	10	6.5	5	5.5	1hr 10m

Reaction Mechanism

$$SnCl_{2(aq)} + 4NH_{3(aq)} \rightarrow [Sn(NH_3)_4]^{2+} + 2Cl^-_{(aq)}$$

$$[Sn(NH_3)_4]^{2+}_{(aq)} + CS(NH_2)_{2(aq)} \rightarrow SnS_{(s)} + CS(NH_2)_{2(aq)} + 4NH_{3(aq)}$$

Results and Discursion

In the deposition processes, deposition time, annealing temperatures, pH of solution and annealing time were considered, and changes in the properties of the films were observed. Many samples were deposited under varying conditions. Two samples A and B were chosen as representative samples. They were deposited at room temperature, with pH value of 8.8. Samples A and B were subjected to annealing temperatures of 250°C and 200°C and annealing time of 3hours and 1hour respectively. Thickness is measured by optical method using Rutherford Backscattering (RBS) equipment. The films were subjected to optical measurements using double beam UV- Spectrophotometer with wavelength ranging from 200-1100nm.

Composition Analysis

Table 2. EDXRF of the Deposited samples

Elements	Concentration (3hours)	Concentration (1hour)
S	< 2.383	< 2.394
Cl	1.566 ± 0.423 %w	1.566 ± 0.423 %w
K	1.410 ± 0.298 %w	1.410 ± 0.298 %w
Ca	6.969 ± 0.857 %w	6.969 ± 0.857 %w
Ti	149.948 ± 32.524 ppm	149.948 ± 32.524 ppm
Mn	20.529 ± 2.637 ppm	20.529 ± 2.637 ppm
Fe	242.414 ± 25.468 ppm	242.414 ± 25.468 ppm
Ni	15.797 ± 2.822 ppm	15.797 ± 2.822 ppm
Cu	33.608 ± 8.163 ppm	33.608 ± 8.163 ppm
Zn	89.276 ± 19.390 ppm	89.276 ± 19.390 ppm
Sn	7550.161 ± 1247.832 ppm	7561.161 ± 1248.822 ppm

Energy (MeV)
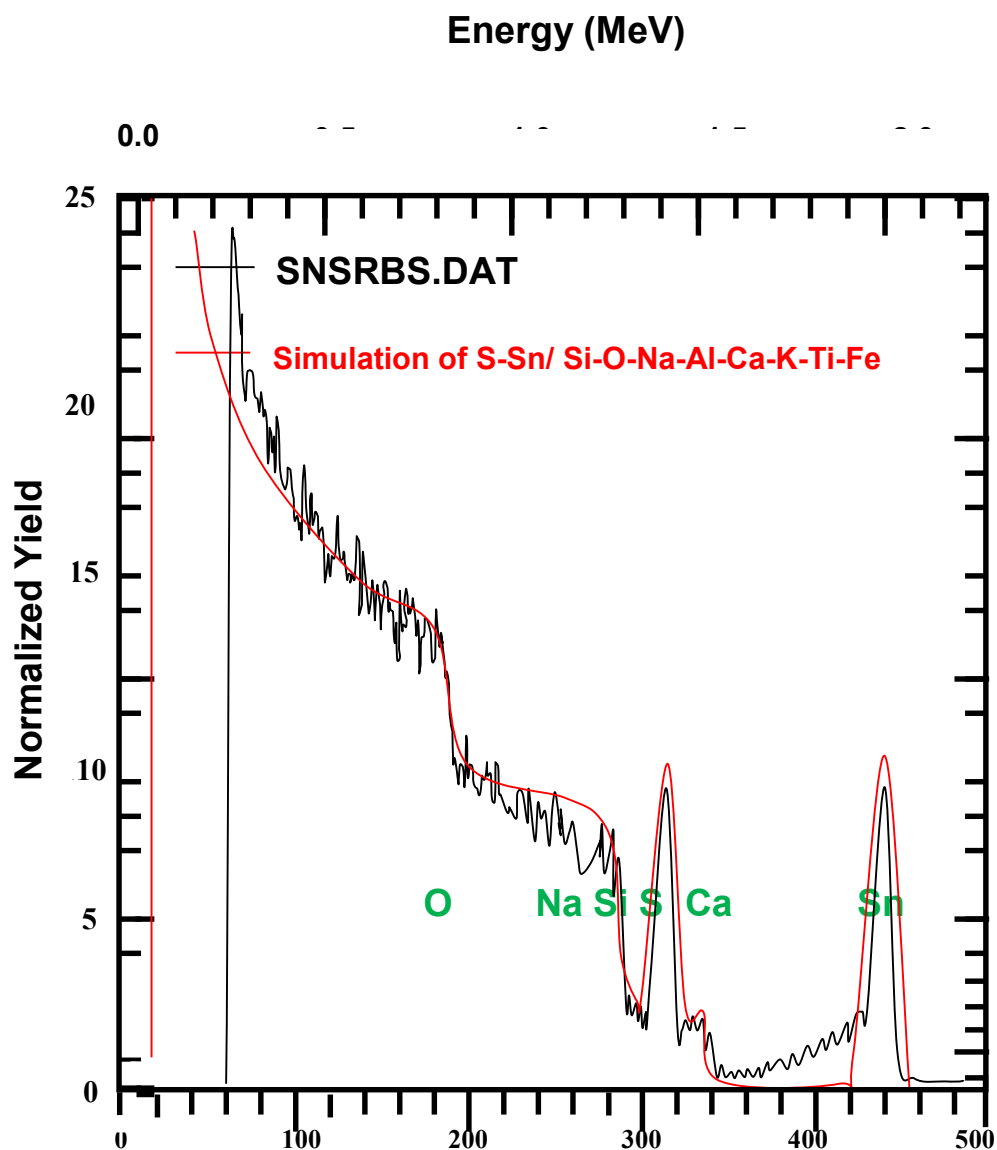
LAYER   Thickness   Sublayers   Channel

Composition …

1   100.00 nm   auto   Sn 0.501 S 0.499

Fig. 1 Rutherford Back Scattering Analysis of Sample A Annealed at 250 ^{0} C for 3 hours.

Energy (MeV)
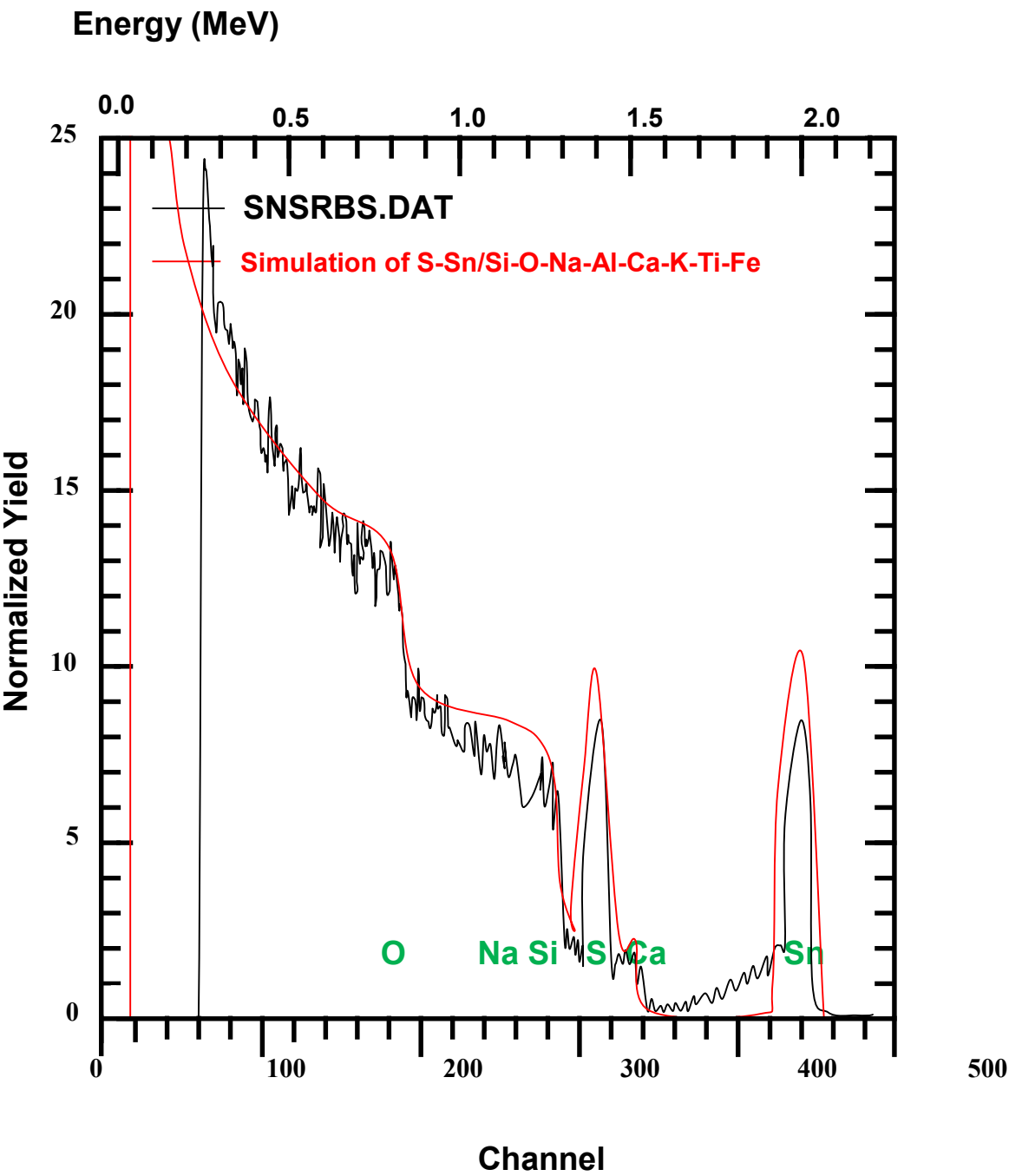
LAYER   Thickness   Sublayers   Composition …

1   150.00 nm   auto   Sn 0.504   S 0.496

The thickness of the films are 100.00nm for 3hours and 150.00nm for 1hour and the percentage compositions of Tin (Sn) is 50.1% and Sulphur (S) is 49.9 % for 3hours and Tin (Sn) is 50.4% and Sulphur (S) is 49.6% for 1hour sample.

Optical Properties

The values of optical transmittance, T were obtained from a Double Beam UV-Spectrophotometer in the range from 200-1100nm. In order to estimate the optical band gap, the equation connecting the photon energy a nd optical absorption is used:

$$(\alpha h\upsilon) \ \alpha \ (h\upsilon - E_g)^n$$

$$(\alpha h\upsilon) = f(h\upsilon - E_g)^n$$

where E_g is the energy band gap, α is the absorption coefficient, f is the constant which depends on the film, *n* is a coefficient having the value 1/2 or 2 depending on the nature of electronic transitions and *h* is Planck constant. *n* has the value 1/2 for allowed direct transition, and 2 for allowed indirect transition. Figure 3 shows the optical transmission spectrum of the SnS thin films.
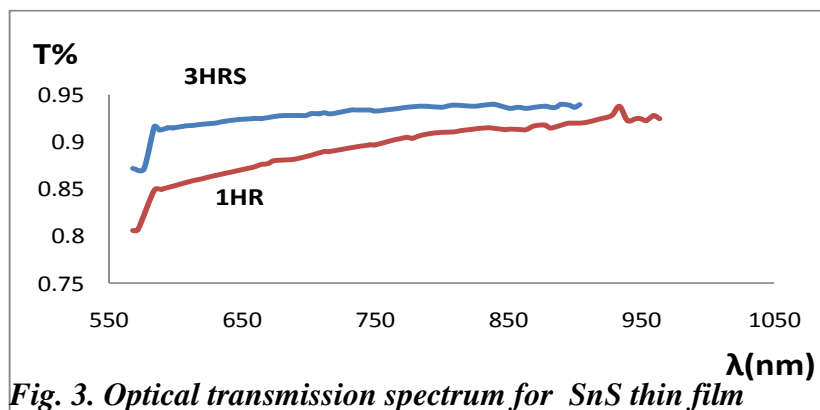

Fig. 3. Optical transmission spectrum for SnS thin film

The point where the linear part of $(\alpha h\upsilon)^2$ against $(h\upsilon)$ graph intersects the *hυ axis* gives the forbidden band value for allowed direct transitions; on the other hand, the point where linear part

of $(\alpha h\upsilon)^{1/2}$ against $(h\upsilon)$ graph intersects the *hv* axis gives us the forbidden band value for allowed indirect transitions. The two graphs of direct and indirect band gap are given in Fig. 4. and Fig. 5 respectively.

Fig. 4   For Direct band gap $(\alpha h\upsilon)^2$ against hυ

Fig. 5   For Indirect band gap $(\alpha h\upsilon)^{1/2}$ against hυ
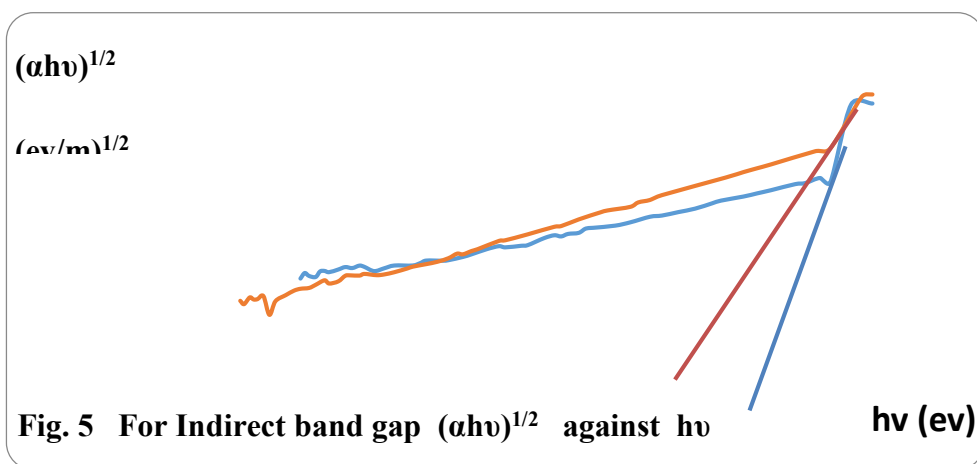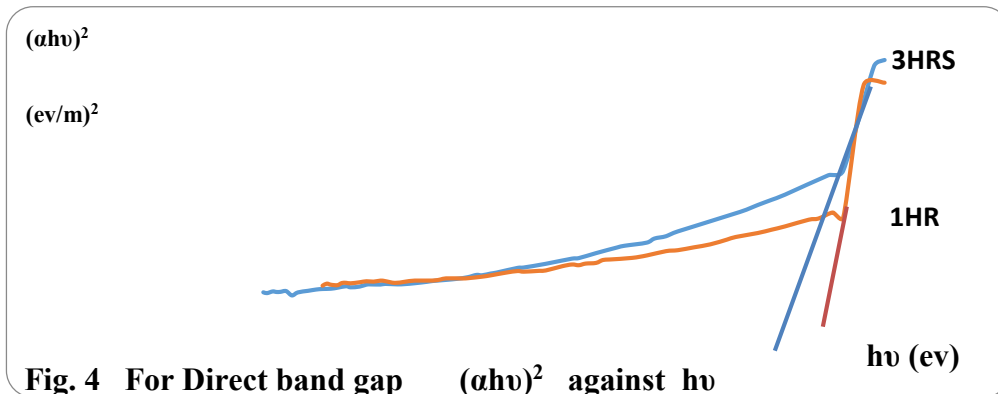
The direct band gap of the two samples are estimated to be ***1.98eV*** and ***2.01eV*** for the samples annealed for 3hours and 1hour respectively.

The indirect band gap of the two samples were estimated to be ***1.82eV*** and ***1.98eV*** for the samples annealed for 3hours and 1hour respectively.

Conclusion

In summary, SnS thin film was successfully deposited onto glass substrates by chemical bath deposition technique at room temperature for 3hours and 1hour. Energy dispersive X-ray florescence (ED-XRF) shows there is a presence of SnS on the slide. According to Rutherford Backscattering (RBS), the thickness of the two samples were measured to be 100nm and 150nm for 3hours and 1hour respectively, also the composition of the thin film on the substrates shows that there is a presence of Sn and S. Optical studies reveal that the film has high transmittance and high optical conductivity which will absorb photons faster. The direct band gaps of the two samples were found to be *1.98eV* and *2.01eV* for the samples annealed for 3hours and 1hour respectively. The indirect band gaps of the two samples were found to be *1.82eV* and *1.98eV* for the samples annealed for 3hours and 1hour respectively. Due to the suitable direct band gap value for an absorbing layer for efficient light absorption. Finally, SnS thin films can be used as absorber layer in solar cells.

Acknowledgement

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