

# **The reading of self-help books by Intermediate Phase teachers in Gauteng townships**

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# **Abstract**

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This research focuses on the reading of self-help books, or 'advice literature', by Intermediate Phase teachers in Soweto schools. The study is based on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, other theories about the nature of literacy practices and how initial literacy is mediated. It includes a survey of the political and social factors that may have influenced the teachers' attitudes to reading. It includes interview data on the topics they favour, their perceptions of the effects of such books on their own lives, whether or not they read other genres, such as children's books, and whether or not their reading impacts on the methods they use in teaching children to read. It therefore contributes to a broader understanding of the literacy habitus of the subject group, and, viewed within the context of the literacy crisis in South African schools, provides insights into their attitudes towards reading and the reasons why they often fail to extend their learners' reading abilities beyond the level of basic decoding.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: Introduction**

### **1.1 The context in which this research takes place**

Over at least the last decade it has become evident that the South African public education system is failing local children, especially in the key area of literacy. Under the apartheid regime, the stress was on the transmission of the mechanics of learning to read and write, with little regard for relevance or self-expression. The effects of this were detrimental. According to Stein (2003, p. 69): “Apartheid influenced all aspects of children’s lives, which in the case of black children was uniformly destructive and debilitating.”

Under the democratic government, this trend has continued, and its negative effects have been confirmed by numerous studies. In 2006 the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), an international comparative study of the reading literacy of young students, was administered to a sample of Grade 4 learners in South Africa and 40 other countries, representing 45 different education systems. In South Africa the test was administered in all eleven official languages to a sample of 16 073 learners in Grades 4 and 5.

“Through the use of Item Response Theory (IRT) scaling, the PIRLS 2006 average is set at a fixed 500 points with a standard deviation of 100 points. Participants’ achievements are therefore placed relative to the international mean of 500 ... South Africa achieved the lowest score of the forty-five participating education systems. Grade Four learners achieved on average 253 points ..., while Grade Five learners achieved on average 302 ... Average achievement for both the Grades is well below the fixed international average of 500 points” (Van Staden and Howie 2010, p. 50).

Although there has been criticism of the suitability of this measure for South African children, other international and local studies confirm that the majority of South African children are performing well below the expected level (Fleisch, 2008). These include the SAQMED study evaluation and the broad-based systemic evaluations of Grades Three and Six literacy and maths, conducted by the Department of Education between 2002 and 2007.

The Annual National Assessments (ANAs), a series of benchmark tests conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council on Grades 2 to 7 learners (2011) have confirmed the fact that South Africa faces a literacy crisis.

These results clearly indicate that, despite fifteen years of in-service interventions, many local teachers lack the capacity to teach children to read at age-appropriate levels, and many of them are unable to deliver the requirements of the national curriculum with regard to reading. A large body of research over the last three decades indicates that, for children to become fully literate, they require interaction with literate adults. If teachers are not themselves habitual readers, and if their own reading or writing skills are inadequate, it follows that they will be unable to help learners develop their reading abilities beyond the level of basic decoding. This has led to a large-scale failure by our schooling system to produce sufficient numbers of students who are sufficiently literate to manage further training, let alone of matriculants who can cope at tertiary level.

## **1.2 Aim and rationale**

In order to formulate strategies that can help to break the cycle of illiteracy in our schools, it is necessary to find out more about the background and educational history of Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6) language teachers, who deal with learners at a crucial stage of their development. This is the stage when they have mastered basic decoding skills and now have specific pedagogic needs if they are to progress into adult readers. These teachers are a specific group: they fall within the age-group that grew up at a time of political struggle, when access to education was frequently disrupted. They belonged to a population group that had limited access to books and among whom leisure reading was not regarded as important, and who consequently did not develop literacy practices like reading novels or children's books.

The study includes an analysis of the extent to which the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) represents an adequate response to these needs in its recent reformulation by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS).

Anecdotal evidence and informal observations suggest that teachers do read, but within a narrow range of genres that includes ‘self-help’ or motivational books, and Christian devotional material. Since the capability of children to become literate depends to at least some extent on their interactions with literate adults, it follows that the literacy habitus of teachers will influence their ability to provide successful reading instruction for their learners.

The purpose of this study was, therefore, to find out what categories of self-help books are most popular with Intermediate Phase language teachers. It also explored their motives for making these choices and their own perceptions of what they gain from this kind of reading. Since, in order to teach reading successfully, teachers should be acquainted with some children’s books suited to the needs of the learners in their classes, this too was investigated.

Finally, this study includes an analysis of some of the self-help texts that were identified as most popular. An attempt has also been made to identify any links that exist between the teachers’ reading of this genre and their motivation to teach children to read, and the methods and materials they employ in doing so. The overall aim of the study is, therefore, to contribute to a more informed understanding of the literacy habits of South African township school teachers, which have not yet been investigated in depth.

In more general terms, there is no doubt that the lack of literacy among the South African population is a problem that demands urgent attention. In order to start addressing it, we need to investigate how the majority of South Africans understand literacy. In the South African context, there appears to be a significant discrepancy between two interpretations of literacy – on the one hand, that of the educators and officials who dominate the education system and, on the other hand, that of the majority of the population. The cultural norms that prevail are those of an elite group, educated according to traditional Western values and attitudes, including deference to the idea of literature and a sense that exposure to it is intellectually and morally beneficial to the student. This results in enforced study of novels, plays, stories and poetry that many students do not find either meaningful or useful, so that they become more firmly entrenched in their identity as non-readers.

In order to formulate strategies to promote literacy, we need to understand prevailing ideas of how literacy is perceived and practised. It is hoped that this study will make a tiny contribution towards the sum of this understanding.



### **1.3 Research questions**

The following research questions were designed to explore the reading of self-help books by teachers.

- 1. What self-help books are the most popular with Intermediate Phase language teachers?**
- 2. Do teachers perceive their reading of self-help books as affecting their personal lives? If so, how?**
- 3. What are some common features of the self-help books that they choose?**
- 4. What else, if anything, do they choose to read?**
- 5. Do teachers who read self-help books also read children's books?**

Subsequent chapters provide a review of some of the literature pertinent to the topic, as well as an outline of the research methodology that was employed in the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Literature review**

### **2.1 Political, social and cultural factors in teachers' own education**

As the teachers who participated in this research are products of apartheid education, one must consider the inadequacies of their own education as an important factor contributing to their failure to develop a habit of reading. Teachers who fall within the age range of the target group attended school from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, a period in South African history characterised by violent protest and continual disruptions in township schools as students participated in resistance to Bantu Education policies.

The accounts given by Ndlovu (2002) and Hyslop (1999) of township life on the Witwatersrand in the 1970s indicate why it is highly probable that those who lived there and were growing up at that time had sketchy and interrupted schooling, with little or no access to books and no opportunities or guidance to assist them in becoming habitual readers. Ndlovu notes that, at this time, political subcultures were emerging among the urban youth. Black Consciousness became a highly influential popular movement that partnered or co-existed with various socialist revolutionary groups. Political organisations, cultural groups and liberation movements proliferated especially among urbanised young people, including young teachers and university students.

Ndlovu notes that it was also a time of rapid urbanisation and social upheaval, largely resulting from the apartheid policy of dispossession and resettlement. To help their families survive, many children worked at jobs or as child-minders rather than attending school.

The factor that is probably the most pertinent in this context is the general lack of access to adequate schooling for young people in townships during the late 1960s and 1970s. The teachers who participated in this research are aged between 40 and 55, and therefore grew up during a time when, according to the apartheid government policy of “separate development”, state revenue was redirected from urban areas to the homelands. In 1965 the government halted the building of secondary schools in townships. Primary schools were crowded and under-resourced.

In response to business and economic pressure, some schools were built during 1972, but with the economic downturn of 1973-1975, the government once again cut spending on black schools. To save money, the Bantu Education Department reduced the number of school years from 13 to 12, dropping the last year of primary school.

Overcrowding was just one of the factors that caused a rapid decline in educational standards. Hartshorne (1992) provides accounts of the lack of resources in schools. Few books other than basic textbooks were provided. Schools did not give learners access to materials for leisure reading, such as novels, newspapers or magazines.

## **2.2 The language issue and student resistance**

Ndlovu outlines the reasons why Afrikaans was introduced as the medium of instruction in Soweto schools in 1973, the confusion this caused and the wave of resistance that it provoked from students, parents and teachers. Teachers in African schools were aware that Bantu Education did not promote critical thinking on the part of students, since they were discouraged from questioning real issues. Official policy required that students learn content by rote, and the ability to memorise was what they were assessed on (Ndlovu, 2002, p. 323).

Ndlovu (2002, p. 326) also documents the events that unfolded during June 1976 as well as its aftermath of violence, death and destruction. The students' uprising spread to urban centres, rural areas and homelands, and students throughout the country went on strike in solidarity with the Soweto students. The socio-political climate of the time caused many students to prioritise political activism over school learning. It is unlikely that students were afforded many opportunities to develop their personal tastes in reading, or that they had much exposure to books other than textbooks. Public libraries in "white" areas were closed to black schoolchildren until the 1980s.

## **2.3 Apartheid education policies**

Prinsloo (2002) gives a general account of the cognitively limited nature of language syllabi issued for matriculation students by the Department of Education and Training at this time. For example, literature was promoted as cultural heritage: the emphasis was on recalling

content and identifying literary techniques rather than on any kind of personal, reflective engagement with texts. This mechanistic approach was reinforced by the types of questions set in the matriculation examination papers, which consisted of short answers and concentrated on factual recall of content. It is not surprising that the subject group of teachers did not develop a taste for fiction when they were at school. Public libraries were only opened to black users from the early 1980s, and were used mainly for study purposes.

From 1984 onwards, non-governmental literacy organisations such as READ attempted to introduce the idea of reading for pleasure, personal growth and information. A significant amount of money and effort went into providing classroom libraries in Gauteng township schools, training teachers to use books in the classroom, motivating children to read for pleasure and developing appropriate reading materials.

After 1994, many literacy organisations ceased their operations. This was largely due to a lack of funding from international donors, as the money was diverted into government funds for education. Literacy initiatives were not subsequently sustained by the democratically-elected government, and in any case none of the organisations had succeeded in persuading teachers to become readers. From 1995, the general mood was against the provision even of basic textbooks.

## **2.4 Traditional attitudes towards reading**

A consideration of the literacy failure in South African schools calls for the recognition that reading is both an individual cognitive-linguistic achievement requiring continual practice, as well as a socially constructed form of human behaviour, so it is pertinent to examine the relationship between these two factors. Expectations about what literacy entails depend on the sociocultural context in which specific types of literacy occur, their functions and how they are valued by their communities.

The attitudes and values that prevailed in traditional communities when the teachers were growing up can also be counted among the reasons why the majority of them did not become readers. In many of these communities, leisure reading is often regarded as an anti-social pastime and a way of avoiding one's household responsibilities. At an in-service training

workshop in Limpopo in November 2008, an elderly teacher commented: ‘My mother, when she saw me reading, she said, “Haven’t you got something better to do? I’ll find something for you to do.” Then she would tell me to cook or wash ... I knew I mustn’t let her catch me with a book’ (Verbal communication, 2008).

For many of the teachers, English continues to be associated with studying rather than with leisure, especially since most of the literature available to them is in English, an additional language, rather than in their own vernaculars. Even more significantly for the purposes of this study, many see reading as fulfilling purely practical, instrumental functions, such as obtaining or upgrading qualifications, or communicating with bureaucracy (Pretorius, 2003, p. 58).

## **2.5 General theories relating to literacy**

In examining the literacy habitus of a particular group of teachers, it is also necessary to look at notions of literacy in general, as well as at frameworks for analysing them. In *Situated Literacies – Reading and Writing in Context*, Barton and Hamilton (2000) provide a basic framework for studies of literacies. They define literacies as “coherent configurations of literacy practices” and literacy practices as “the cultural ways of utilising written language that people draw upon in their lives” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 7). Since they see the idea of practices as central to a social theory of literacy, any examination of the literacy should relate to the following general principles:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts;
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life;
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others;
- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices;

- Literacy is historically situated; literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

(Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8)

The authors comment that literacy practices are “not always of observable units of behaviour, since they also involve values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 77). They include all the ways in which people construct, perceive and use literacy.

The other concept that they see as central to a study of literacies is that of literacy events, which they distinguish from literacy practices as routine and possibly repeated sequences of actions that are related to literacy and are part of wider social or institutional organisations within definable domains or discourse communities. The subject of this study, the observable patterns of reading of a particular group of teachers, can be regarded as such events.

Domains are defined as “structures, patterned contexts within which literacy is used and learned” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 11). Some literacy events relate to more formally structured domains such as educational institutions or religious bodies. These are the domains that tend to support the literary practices that are dominant in the society. Others deal with the literacies of everyday life, the less formal domains of family, community or the workplace. The authors point out that the boundaries of domains are seldom clear-cut – they may shift, and there are overlaps.

The functions of literacy activities are seldom easy to define, and in any case, such activities may serve multiple functions. Barton and Hamilton are less concerned with identifying the functions that literacy practices serve than with finding out “how literacy activities are supported, sustained, learned and impeded in people’s lives and relationships” (Barton and Hamilton, 2000, p. 12). Investigation of events involves examination of texts and the ways in which they are produced and used. The link to events and practices is explained like this: “literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these are observable in events, which are mediated by texts” (Barton and Hamilton, 2000, p. 9). The teachers may, therefore, have

multiple reasons for choosing to read particular books, and their motivation to do so may be complex.

In *Ways with Words*, Shirley Heath (1996) describes the contrasting literacy practices and communication strategies in two South Carolina communities in which she conducted ethnographic studies: a middle-income black community that she calls Trackton, and Roadville, a predominantly white community nearby. How the children of these communities acquire language is part of their socialisation into each community. She points out that the socialisation process that the Trackton children are subjected to does not equip them for academic success. They are not talked to, although the Trackton community is closely-knit and highly verbal, and they are not read to or encouraged to read. What is relevant here is that the literacy practices of the community are not built on by the school, which favour the practices of mainstream, middle-class families. The community that she describes has numerous parallels with the kind of communities that many black teachers grew up in, and her account offers useful insights into the process of developing a literacy habitus and corresponding cultural capital. Heath's work also highlights the need for the literacy practices of a community to be acknowledged and reflected in an education system that serves their needs. If the South African education system is to be made more relevant to local needs, more information will obviously be required about the literacy practices of groups within the society.

Freebody comments on literacy as “an emergent technology”, which “changes the environment in which it is used” (Freebody, 1992, p. 92). As well as affecting the organisation and underlying belief systems of a culture in which it occurs, literacy also shapes individual consciousness, as certain capabilities are more relevant than others for carrying out daily functions. This is obviously true of the group who participated in this study: as teachers, they must be aware of the crucial part that successful literacy acquisition plays in the lives of their learners, dictating both their success at school and their expectations of life beyond it. It is also probable that they perceive the power of literacy to bring about change in their own lives, hence their interest in self-help texts, which purport to do this in the most direct and overt manner.

Luke and Freebody (1999) suggest that a reader performs four distinct roles, which include the repertoire of literacy practices that enable learners to engage in reading and writing activities. These roles include the following:

- **Decoding texts** by using knowledge of basic textual features, including knowledge of the alphabet, phonics and grammatical structures,
- **Taking meaning from and bringing meaning to texts**, which involves understanding and composing written, visual and spoken texts from within the contexts of specific cultures, institutions and communities,
- **Using texts functionally**, which involves knowledge of how to use and interpret texts appropriately to perform their specific social functions, both in and out of school, as well as awareness of how function shapes the structure, tone and register of texts,
- **Critically analysing texts**, which refers to understanding and acting on the knowledge that texts represent particular views, have various degrees of influence on readers and can be critiqued and redesigned.

Freebody (1992, p. 102) suggests that induction into all four of these roles is essential for the successful mastery of literacy that is required in a modern society. For purposes of this study, the more relevant of these roles is that of participant and user, since children should become increasingly practised during the Intermediate Phase of their schooling. As will be discussed later in this chapter, this advance in a child's literacy development needs to be mediated through interaction with a literate adult, with the child participating as apprentice reader. This is unlikely to happen in circumstances where the adult (the teacher) has limited personal experience of this process.

## **2.6 The current situation in South African schools with regard to literacy teaching**

According to Pretorius (2002, cited in Van Staden & Howie, 2003, p. 54): "(t)he Intermediate Phase ... affords learners the opportunity to use reading as a language- and information-processing skill, as learners are largely expected to be able to decode text. At Grade 4 learners should also begin to switch from learning the "lower level" skills involved in learning to read, and to adapting those skills in order to use reading as a tool to learn." To



make this transition they need their teacher to be a guide and role-model, and teachers who themselves read texts for a range of purposes are likely to be better role models.

Pretorius and Matchett confirm that, in South African primary schools, “there is a strong reliance on the teaching of the more technical decoding skills of reading (i.e. learning the alphabetic principle and ‘translating’ written symbols into meaningful language), with far less attention given to reading for comprehension (Pretorius & Matchett , 2003, p. 46). Although decoding is a necessary reading skill, it is not sufficient, for it is comprehension that makes reading a meaningful activity Van Staaden and Howie corroborate this: “Most children in South African schools are exposed to certain reading skills only during the Foundation Phase (Grades 1 to 3), such as decoding strategies and understanding vocabulary” (Van Staden & Howie, 2010, p. 54).

The National Curriculum Statement and its current re-formulation, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) require that in their Grade 4 year, children should engage with an extensive list of print genres that includes books (fiction and non-fiction), poems, instructions, notices, book reports, recipes, timetables, diagrams, graphs and charts, maps and plans, photographs, cartoons, comics, puzzles and dictionaries.

The Learning Outcome for English as First Additional Language outlines the range of texts that learners must become familiar with in Grade 4, as well as the range of content and skills that they are expected to master in order to be considered able to ‘read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts’ (Revised National Curriculum Statement, Grades R-9: p 14). Assessment standards for this outcome include the ability to read storybooks for pleasure, to discuss features of fiction like plot, characterisation and the relationship between printed text and illustrations; to identify instances of gender stereotyping. The child must also be able to read for information, using reference books, non-fiction texts and textbooks in other subject areas. Paradoxically, although the entire Grade 4 literacy programme is based on book use, reading for enjoyment and for information, resources have not as yet been provided for developing either basic or more advanced reading skills. This is among the factors identified by Howie (2006) as contributing to our national failure to teach children to read: “... inadequate subject knowledge of teachers, inadequate communication between learners and teachers in the

language of instruction, lack of instructional materials, teachers' ability to manage classroom activities effectively and overcrowded classrooms" (Howie, 2006, p.26).

According to Van Staden and Howie, 61% of Grade 4 learners reported that their teacher read aloud to them every day or almost every day. "Of concern is the fact that reading aloud to the class is a teacher-centred approach where learners are only involved passively and where the teacher mostly assumes that learners are able to follow and able to understand what is being read. Also of concern are the low frequencies at which learners are afforded the opportunity to read independently (Van Staden & Howie, 2010, p. 55). It could be argued that teachers who have an adequate level of literacy themselves would realise that this is not the way to promote literacy in children. As Pretorius expresses it: '...(I)t is disquieting that reading seems to play a fairly peripheral role in the lives of a class of professionals who are deeply engaged on a daily basis with developing literacy in young learners' (Pretorius, 2003, p. 57).

## **2.7 Teachers' views of their own literacy practices**

Pretorius (2003) investigated teachers' perceptions of their own literacy practices. She administered a questionnaire to teachers in rural KwaZulu-Natal, collecting data on their own reading habits and preferences, the number of books in their homes, and other items designed to build up profiles of their literacy habits. While these are a more rural group, the patterns that emerge from Pretorius' research provide indications of trends among the many township teachers who come from rural backgrounds.

Pretorius found that the teachers saw themselves as average readers. Newspapers and magazines were their preferred reading texts; their favourite magazines were *Bona* and *Drum*. She noted that no teacher was a member of a public or community library, and comments that "(m)uch of their reading seemed to be more functionally oriented – the notion of reading novels for pleasure, for example, did not feature in their responses ... When asked to name a book they had read recently, only one teacher listed a book she would not have encountered in the school environment, namely Nelson Mandela's *A Long Walk to Freedom* – the rest all gave the titles of books that had been used in the past as prescribed set-work books. Although 42% of the teachers stated that they really liked reading and read a lot, 47% felt that reading

was ‘OK – they sometimes read a book or magazine’ and 11% didn’t like reading and only read when they had to study” (Pretorius, 2003, p. 54).

When one looks at the literature on approaches to teaching reading, it is immediately evident that these teachers are inadequately equipped to help young learners become habitual readers. Researchers such as Pretorius (2003) and Van Staden and Howie (2010) found that teachers, in general, do not value reading highly and it plays a very small part in their lives. What reading they do is for practical, instrumental purposes, which may be a factor in their possible favouring of self-help books.

## **2.8 Teachers’ literacy habitus in relation to their professional roles**

Through interviews and observations in Foundation Phase classrooms, Gains (2010) explored the role of teachers’ own early experiences of learning to read and how they conceptualised literacy, making a link with their current practices as teachers of literacy. Although her study was conducted with Foundation Phase teachers, there is no reason to suppose that Grade 4 teachers would respond very differently, and her research offers valuable insights into the habitus of teachers and also helps to explain why so many of them are ill-equipped to teach literacy.

Many of the teachers she interviewed linked their choice of teaching as a career to their memories of their own literacy teachers, and also linked their own literacy teaching practices to their early experiences of learning to read (Gains, 2010, p. 109). A strong link exists between these early experiences, both pleasurable and painful, and interviewees’ construction of their own identities as literacy teachers. For example, even when they positioned themselves as sympathetic to their learners, some of them were still, in practice, harsh and authoritarian in their teaching styles. Gains cites Bell (2002) and Mitchell and Weber (1999) in support of this evidence of a relationship between past experience and current practices. This accords with Bourdieu’s idea of habitus as a product of personal experiences and socio-cultural circumstances. (For an account of Bourdieu’s idea of habitus, see p. 30).

Although the teachers’ self-concepts appeared to be strongly linked to their early memories, Gains found that “there is often a disjuncture between the respondent’s expressed approach

and the content of their teaching” (Gains, 2010, p. 216). For example, many of them expressed the belief that reading development should involve both practice in phonics and exposure to text, while in fact they tended to spend a disproportionate amount of teaching time on phonics, especially initially. It is possible that they are reflecting the biases in their own early schooling, in situations where reading resources were in short supply. Their attitudes towards literacy per se were also significant: although they saw it as important “to the individual and to the state” (Gains, 2010, p. 135), this was mainly in an instrumental sense, for example, you have to be literate in order to get a job. None of the teachers saw it as enabling personal growth: literacy is something that “you have to know” (Gains, 2010, p. 218) rather than an intrinsic factor in personal development.

Very few teachers were able to give a coherent account of the methods they employed to teach reading, and appeared to have little concept of the process of literacy development. Gains acknowledges that “teachers’ theories can be implicit” (Gains, 2010, p. 217), citing evidence from Zeichner et al (1987), but also notes teachers’ inability to give a coherent account of any underlying theory to support their approach.

None of the interviewees had specific knowledge of additional language teaching methodology, despite the fact that the vast majority of children in South Africa are English additional language learners. Gains ascribes these shortfalls not just to the deficiencies in their apartheid education, but to the failure of tertiary institutions to acknowledge students’ personal histories, to train them in appropriate methodology or to equip them with the concepts and meta-language they require for reflecting on theory and applying it appropriately and consistently in their own professional practice. Gains suggests that teachers need to be equipped to ‘think critically and work strategically: “ ... It is not enough to know that a methodology works (or does not work) well, teachers need to know *why*, and be able to make strategic adaptations to suit the context and needs of their learners” (Gains, 2010, p. 222).

Teachers’ confusion was compounded by the introduction of the National Curriculum Statement and its subsequent permutations, which attempted to impose an approach of which they had no previous experience.

Gains notes a changing attitude among teachers towards learners, as is evident in their increasing tendency to recognise the children's experiences as significant when planning learning strategies, and their willingness to allow the children a greater degree of agency in classroom activities. However, this does not often translate into a reformulation of literacy-teaching methodology. As an example of this, she points out that, in the four classrooms where she conducted observations, there was "almost no evidence of expressive or imaginative writing" (Gains, 2010, p. 133).

All these observations are relevant to this study, since they contribute to a detailed profile of the habitus of the teachers, including a number of contradictory aspects. Some of Gains' conclusions were tested in my research. For example, I included questions that probed the link between teachers' own reading experiences and the texts and approaches they choose to employ with their learners.

Speaking of teachers' own concepts about the importance of literacy, Gains points out that, while they agree that it is an essential life-skill, "very few of the teachers constructed reading as a pleasurable activity or themselves as avid readers" (Gains 2010, p.217). She concludes: "If we wish to develop in this current generation of young learners a love of reading, creative self-expression and the power of the text, then we need to seriously consider how to work with teachers first, to generate these understandings and engage these practices" (Gains, 2010, p. 218).

This study was intended as a contribution towards formulating a strategy for the kind of intervention that Gains advocates.

## **2.9 The role of the teacher in children's reading development**

It is especially important that Intermediate Phase language teachers have attained a mature level of literacy, as learners at this stage of reading development are assumed to have acquired the basics of decoding simple texts and to be ready to extend their reading skills so that they develop a more personal and reflective relationship with print, gradually engaging with a range of different print genres, as well as with longer and more complex texts dealing with more abstract concepts. It is at this stage of schooling that learners make the important

transition to silent reading, in which they engage more personally with books, forming personal tastes and preferences for particular authors and genres.

What follows is an account of different approaches to the teaching of literacy, beginning with the whole language approach and outlining subsequent developments in the theory of literacy acquisition. This information provides a background against which to examine the professional knowledge and skills of the teachers who are the subjects of the proposed investigation.

The whole language movement in the United States of America was based on the idea that the best way for children to learn to read is not simply by systematically learning letters, phonics and orthography, as had been assumed until then, but through a more holistic process of meaning-making, in which reading behaviour is modelled by adults and children naturally acquire decoding skills while interacting with and enjoying books. This approach was based on a constructivist idea of knowledge creation, emphasising students' individual interpretation of their experiences and free expression of their perceptions through speaking and writing. Goodman (1967) was an important influence at this time. Referring to reading as a 'psycholinguistic guessing game', he promoted the idea that reading skills are acquired through making meaning from printed texts, utilising graphophonic, syntactic and semantic data rather than decoding through phonic instruction. As he expressed it, "... efficiency meant using minimal cues to get meaning, and efficiency was making sense of the text" (Goodman, 2000).

While Goodman's views have been widely criticised as over-generalised and based on inadequate research (Kozloff 2002), they have been very influential in shaping reading policy in North America, the United Kingdom and other parts of the 'developed' world.

Smith was another supporter of this approach, suggesting that the role of the teacher is to "facilitate and promote the admission of the children into the literacy club ... The classroom should be a place full of meaningful and useful reading and writing activities, where participation is possible without evaluation and collaboration is always available" (Smith, 1988, p. 11).

Enlarging on the role of the teacher, Smith (1988, p. 26) comments that teachers have two critical functions in helping children become literate. They must demonstrate uses for literacy

skills, and they must help children use these for themselves. They must show the advantages that membership of the literacy ‘club’ offers, and make sure their learners have every opportunity to join this club. The work of Pretorius and Matchett (2005) clearly shows that this is unlikely to happen in the majority of South African schools. If teachers do not value reading and do not engage in it, the children in their classes will not observe them reading. They will not provide models of reading behaviour and will fail to convince the children of its value. If, as these researchers suggest, they are not aware of the role of reading in personal growth and the development of reflective capacity, they will not share books with children and engage with them individually with regard to reading – the large classes in many schools, as well as the lack of books for individual reading, make this difficult to implement, even if teachers are aware of the need for it, which they do not appear to be.

Smith also stresses the social, collaborative nature of literacy acquisition and the need for children to be exposed to books: “People around them, including other children, help them to read what they are trying to read and to write what they want to write, expanding their horizons all the time” (Smith, 1988:66). Smith also comments on the manner in which literacy is unconsciously incorporated into a child’s sense of self, through their interactions with others: “Our most important and effective teachers are not those who try to instruct us in what they believe we should do, but those who ... teach us through demonstration and collaboration” (Smith, 1988, p. 66/67).

Smith is aware that the methods he espouses make stringent demands on the teacher: ‘... collaboration requires confidence in oneself as well as trust in others. But many teachers also do not see collaboration as their role. They should get on with the job of dispensing learning “... and unfortunately many teachers do not know things they ought to know ... Obviously, such teachers should learn to do the things they are hoping to encourage children to do” (Smith, 1988, p. 73).

Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) and Wray, Bloom and Hall (1989, p. 61) see the ability to make choices as the fundamental characteristic of a literate person, and maintain that curtailment of this freedom can also inhibit learning. The latter also outline some of the factors necessary for children to develop into competent readers: they must have access to an environment “where print is valued” and must witness the “multi-layered and multi-faceted” uses of print by older people (Wray, Bloom & Hall, 1989, p. 41). They must also be afforded

“opportunities for engagement in literacy” (Wray, Bloom & Hall, 1989, p. 62) – attempting to draw and write as they see adults do. Being read to is of optimal value to children in their development as readers as they experience the pleasure of sharing a story. The adult also models how to handle books, demonstrates how text works and uses opportunities to relate what is read to personal experiences.

Policy and in-service interventions have not resulted in these activities happening in our classrooms. To account for this failure, more information is required on the literacy practices of communities, in particular of leisure reading practices and attitudes towards reading. This focused investigation contributes a small piece to our understanding of what teachers choose to read, and why.

A lack of personal reading among teachers is probably an important factor inhibiting the literacy development of our learners. If it can be shown that teachers actually do a significant amount of reading (of self-help books or other functional texts), this information can be used to plan strategies in which teachers actually model reading behaviour.

From the late 1980s, champions of whole-language came into conflict with those who favoured a more structured approach to teaching reading, which includes initial instruction in phonics as a basis for decoding skills. In 1994 Marilyn Jager Adams advocated a “balanced approach” which includes both phonics-based instruction and elements of the whole-language approach, so that learners are exposed to quality books and other types of printed text, creating contexts in which they are motivated to actively create meaning from text and to gradually acquire more advanced reading strategies. This is done by encouraging them to develop their personal tastes in reading material and involving them in activities such as group reading (in which meaning is socially constructed) and silent reading (in which meanings and skills are personalised and extended). Margaret Meek (1991) also describes how literacy and cognition develop in tandem, and how the process of becoming truly literate is to participate in an intellectual realm that extends far beyond the ability to decode printed text.

Since, for various reasons, these conditions are seldom met in the majority of South African homes, there is an even greater need for them to be met at school. But the balanced approach is difficult to implement in the majority of South African schools, for obvious reasons: it requires that the learners have free access to large quantities of good-quality children’s books



and it makes demands that few of our local teachers are in a position to fulfil, even if they are aware of this kind of methodology. The teacher must be highly dedicated, literate and able to guide and stimulate children on an individual basis. The function of the teacher is also to create an environment in which “print has high status” (Wray, Bloom & Hall 1989, p. 61).

In broad terms, neither of these two approaches, sometimes characterised as “top down” (whole language) and “bottom up” (phonics instruction), has proved to be more successful than the other. Many teachers have incorporated elements of both approaches into their instructional strategies, but as Sebastian Wren (2003) points out, there is no reason to suppose that this can help to solve the problem of the enormous number of children, worldwide, who fail to master reading to the required level. Later research by Wren and Jennifer Watts indicates the need to provide practice in other skills that contribute to decoding ability, such as phonemic awareness and identification of rhyme. There is also a need for reading to be taught in an integrated way, in combination with the other language skills of listening, speaking and writing. This is sometimes referred to as the balanced literacy approach, not to be confused with the balanced approach to reading championed by Adams in the 1990s.

In general, successful literacy instruction seems to require specifically targeted strategies, based on detailed research, rather than adherence to particular theories about initial literacy acquisition. The implications for this study are clear: for optimally successful reading instruction to take place, teachers should be equipped to respond to the individual needs of their learners. This means that they should be aware of all the elements involved in becoming literate and conversant with the latest research on reading, as well as having access to the resources required to put it into practice. In other words, the teacher needs to be highly literate and well-informed about the field of literacy instruction, as well as flexible in her selection of teaching strategies. She also needs to have classes that are small enough for her to be able to meet the specific needs of learners on an individual basis, as they arise. Clearly, these criteria are seldom met by the teachers at any South African school, especially those in communities disadvantaged by the apartheid structures.

Since the majority of South African children are additional language learners who are reading in English, it is also necessary to explore methodologies for reading development that specifically target similar groups of learners. In her discussion of the literacy development of second-language children, Sarah Hudelson (1994) repeats the need, discussed above, for

literacy education to be concerned primarily with meaning rather than with form. She suggests that several general strategies are particularly important in helping children who are non-native speakers to become literate in English. These include the use of personal narratives as valuable teaching resources, getting children to write and “publish” their own stories, which presupposes some familiarity with books. Teachers demonstrate this use of literacy by writing their own personal stories, or by acting as scribes for learners who cannot yet cope with extensive writing in English. Hudelson outlines related activities such as keeping dialogue journals (Hudelson, 1994, p. 143), or utilising “predictable books” (Hudelson, 1994, p. 144). Since the school and classroom libraries supplied by READ in the 1980s and 1990s have largely fallen into disuse, comparatively few local learners have had sufficient exposure to suitable books. This is now starting to be remedied, at least in Gauteng, with the implementation of the Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy. Personal anecdotes are a common feature of self-help books, and it is possible that teachers could be convinced of the value of using such texts to motivate reading and writing among their learners.

Hudelson also suggests that it is necessary for teachers to create print-rich environments in their classrooms “for demonstrating some of the purposes of literacy and inviting children to engage in literate behaviours” (Hudelson, 1994, p. 141). The teacher should also read aloud to the children on a daily basis. Hudelson suggests that the teacher choose from a range of genres, and give particular consideration to books that portray other cultures, so that the children begin to see literature as “one way of understanding the world and the relationship of the individual to that world” (Peterson and Eeds, 1990, cited in Hudelson 1994, p. 146). Books that reflect the children’s home cultures are also valuable, as are books with clear illustrations or information books. Once again, reading stories aloud to children is not a common practice in our schools – a problem that has only been addressed recently.

The teacher should organise literacy as a component of content subjects. A classroom in which learners are involved in finding out about something that is of particular interest to them is the ideal environment for practising reading and writing. Hudelson recommends that this kind of activity be used to deal with political and environmental issues, combining critical language awareness with problem-solving practice. Emotive and engaging content is also highly motivating and allows the young learner to engage directly with the matter under

discussion. While self-help books target adults, many of them contain material that could be simplified, adapted or used as is, such as anecdotes, jokes, parables and cautionary narratives.

Hudelson makes her suggestions from within an American context, where schools are often well resourced and there is generally a high level of educational expertise and support for teachers. point out that the school plays an even more vital role in South Africa in getting children literate: Pretorius and Matchett comment that “Literacy instruction at school not only teaches children how to read but also enculturates them into the functions and value of literacy within society. This is especially true in areas where there is a high rate of illiteracy and where children are not exposed to many literacy events in the home. Literacy practices at school are thus exceptionally important in contexts where there is little literacy support in the home environment” (Pretorius & Matchett, 2003, p. 45).

However, not all of the recommendations would be impossible to implement if teachers knew what to do. For example, a capable teacher could collect books and build up an adequate classroom library over time, so that individual selection could take place.

So many of these suggestions rely on the teacher being a practised and confident user of books, who is able to demonstrate the kind of behaviour that is required from children if they are to develop habits of literacy. Such a teacher would be capable of choosing suitable books for the class and interacting with children in the role of fellow reader or writer. Although it may not constitute decisive evidence, the poor reading scores obtained by South African learners in the PIRLS study certainly indicate that teachers’ own literacy practices merit investigation.

Fader, Duggins, Finn and McNeil (1981) maintain that books must “hook” readers if those readers choose to read them in their leisure time. In order to understand teachers as literate subjects, it is therefore necessary to gain insight into what kind of books they choose to read, and why. There is reason to believe that self-help books are one such genre. For this reason, we will examine this genre in more detail in the following section.

## 2.10 A brief survey of the self-help genre

The study of teachers' literacy habitus, which is shaped by historical, political and psychological factors, is essentially the study of culture: "the world of knowledge, ideas, objects which are the product of human activity" (Robbins, cited in Grenfell and James, 1998, p. 10). Education and educational research are both a part of culture, so understanding the process and products of culture, i.e. literacy practices, will obviously provide insights into educational structures and processes. It is therefore necessary, in this context, to examine some general aspects of the self-help genre that account for its popularity among township teachers.

A glance at the stock of most bookshops in Johannesburg will show that the self-help genre, also known as "the advice industry" or "success literature", is a huge publishing phenomenon. The titles and subject matter are extremely diverse, and seem to change almost daily. According to a local retailer, these books are popular among all cultural groups, especially African customers. "There are large numbers of our black customers who never buy any fiction, but they'll spend a lot of money on the latest self-help" (S. Mayne, personal communication, May 2010).

Obviously these shoppers are the new middle classes who have the necessary disposable income, so it seems highly likely that this trend in reading has also taken hold among teachers. This was borne out by my observations in staffrooms over a number of years: I had seen teachers reading self-help books, at least often enough to consider this a significant literacy practice.

In order to investigate this phenomenon, it was necessary to look briefly at the scope and characteristics of the genre. It has a long history. The first book that is recognisable as an example of the genre was *Self-help* by Samuel Smiles, published in 1858. It conveyed the message that success could be achieved through the accepted Victorian virtues of hard work, thrift and honesty. In fact, the sub-text of most self-help books, whether overtly stated or not, is that anyone can achieve their goals, achieving success and happiness through self-knowledge and determination. The British theorist James Rozel comments that:

“Many sceptics condescendingly dismiss self-help as literature that peddles false hope to the weak-minded. Yet to deny this cultural form is to also reject some of the basic Enlightenment values of human perfectibility and the possibility of progress. Essentially, self-help books are offering packaged hope. They celebrate the idea that certain actions - be they affirmations, goal structures or mere directed thoughts - can deliver tangible and sustainable results” (Rozel, 2010)

In this tongue-in-cheek statement, Rozel is making an assumption that “human perfectibility” is achievable, or at least, that we have no evidence that it is not. He is also assuming that, if it is, it can be achieved by the reading of books. He presents a suitably vague and unsubstantiated argument in favour of self-help books, in which the phrase “human perfectibility” implies two interpretations of “Enlightenment values”: that it is possible for a human being to become perfect, and that it is possible to generalise this perfection to the whole of the human race. While he mocks the genre of self-help texts, he leaves it open as to whether or not they can actually “deliver tangible, sustainable results”. One of my aims in conducting this study is therefore to look for real evidence that self-help reading can deliver such results, at least in terms of the perceptions of the teacher-participants – evidence that could, to some degree, challenge sceptics.

Christine Whelan also comments on the “egalitarian message” (Whelan 2010, p. 18) that pervades such books: “In the world of advice literature, it’s perseverance, not genius, that predicts greatness” (Whelan, 2010, p. 21). Because of its emphasis on individual choice and practical action, self-help books are, according to Rozel, “a quintessentially American literary form” (Rozel, 2010). This has implications for our local teachers, many of whom aspire to the lifestyles they see depicted on American television programmes, and subscribe to the notions of success, self-improvement and problem-solving promoted by *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and *Doctor Phil*.

Self-help books reflect the prevailing attitudes and aspirations of the times when they appear. In *Self-help books: why do Americans keep reading them?* Whelan claims that they provide “invaluable windows into the social history and psychology of our country” (Whelan, 2010, p. 25). Dale Carnegie’s bestselling *How to win friends and influence people* (1937), a treatise on salesmanship, was a response to the sense of disempowerment experienced by many during the Great Depression of the 1930s. It emphasised techniques for achieving success

rather than developing intrinsic personal qualities. In Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (2004), the author describes the shift in these terms:

(A)lmost all the literature in the first 150 years or so focused on what could be called the *Character Ethic* as a foundation for success – things like integrity, humility, fidelity, temperance, courage, justice, patience, industry, simplicity, modesty and the Golden Rule ... I began to feel more and more that much of the success literature of the past 50 years was superficial ... filled with social image consciousness, techniques and quick fixes – with social band-aids and aspirin that addressed acute problems and sometimes even appeared to solve them temporarily, but left underlying problems untouched. Other parts of the personality approach were clearly manipulative, even deceptive, encouraging people to use techniques to get other people to like them ... Some of the literature acknowledged character as an ingredient of success, but tended to compartmentalise it rather than recognise it as foundational and catalytic.

(Covey, 2004, p. 16)

In the 1960s and early 1970s, there was a preoccupation with exploration of the unconscious mind, with or without the assistance of Mexican shamans or mind-altering chemicals. More recently, the emphasis is on effective planning and organisation, as well as on authentic living and positive attitudes, both of which are the focus of Covey's books. The North American shamans are still around, but now they promote principles of self-knowledge and correct behaviour, as in *The Four Agreements* (Ruiz, 1997).

With the worldwide expansion of evangelistic Christianity, there is also an exponential proliferation of Christian self-help literature: the application of scriptural precepts to everyday problems and endeavours such as partnerships, parenting, business and so on. This is an enormously popular area: new titles appear almost daily and authors like the American televangelist Joyce Warner are reputed to have a huge following in South Africa.

In surveying this area of publishing, one cannot ignore the cult of Scientology, which produces a large quantities of reading matter based on principles of "dianetics", expounding a particular interpretation of personal development and of human society in general, and encouraging recruitment into the movement.

Rozel notes that “(S)cholars in the self-help field such as Butler-Bowdon have noted a fundamental divide in self-development books, between those that advocate strenuous personal effort and diligence to effect change and those that teach a spiritual reliance on a higher power” (Rozel, 2010). However, in recent years, innumerable sub-genres and permutations in self-help books have proliferated. The following list is by no means comprehensive, but some of the main categories are: achieving self-realisation and success; finding romantic love; better sex; generally improving existing relationships; parenting; nutrition; natural healing; health and beauty, including weight-loss; overcoming personal problems and addictions; all aspects of business. The latter is one of the two biggest categories and includes management skills, entrepreneurship, managing and making money.

Some books that fall within the self-help category may arouse interest through controversy, by contradicting prevailing attitudes. For example, Scott Peck’s *The road less traveled*, which appeared in 1986, informed cossetted and cushioned Generation Xers that, in order to lead fulfilled lives and grow spiritually, they should actively seek and confront adversity, since it is only by doing this that human beings can grow in wisdom and mental stamina.

An interesting recent development is the appearance of a range of self-help books written by South Africans and obviously aimed at a local, mainly black audience. The works of Dr M. Thabane are good examples of this. The author is a medical doctor and popular motivational speaker. His books are published by his own organisation: quasi-religious in nature, they promote the need for a balanced lifestyle. For example, his book *Take Five* stresses the need to spend time on relaxation and contemplation. According to anecdotal accounts, some of his books have been distributed, free of charge, to schools, so they can be read by teachers. They are generally very short and obviously modelled on overseas publications, as they conform to the characteristics outlined in the following section.

## **2.11 The significance of self-help reading in teachers’ professional practice**

This investigation identified a few of the most popular self-help books read by the teachers, and explored teachers’ accounts of why they are popular. The main aim of the study,

however, was to ascertain the extent to which teachers' predilection for this genre has influenced their ability to promote reading among their learners.

Given their political and social history, it was fair to assume that most teachers developed a taste for reading later in life, rather than as children. Research into teachers' attitudes towards their own reading (Pretorius, 2003) indicates a functionally orientated view of reading, and this is consistent with their choice of self-help texts over other genres. If they see reading mainly as serving instrumental purposes, they are less likely to view it as an important element in the intellectual and psychological development of children, especially as it is an element that they missed out on during their own formative years. An exclusive diet of self-help books could confirm their view that reading is primarily of functional significance, and its perceived relevance in improving their skills and the circumstances of their lives could serve to entrench this view and cause them to see self-help texts as superior to other genres. It was therefore relevant to discover whether or not they read anything else, and if so, what.

On the other hand, if teachers are enthusiastic about reading at all, it is possible that they will make greater efforts to impart reading skills to the learners in their care. While self-help texts are not generally accessible to children, their teachers' choice of reading matter might impact on their choice of reading materials for their learners. For example, it might cause them to choose moral tales, as indicators of 'correct' behaviour. (These choices make sense particularly when other influences are taken into consideration. Moral education is an important function of storytelling in most African traditions, as it is in Biblical narratives.)

## **2.12 Conceptual framework for the research**

Concepts developed by Bourdieu provide the theoretical framework for this research. In *Language and Symbolic Power*, Bourdieu (1984) views all communicative acts, including literacy practices, as inextricably linked to their social contexts, which are the domains or 'fields' in which they occur. The agents of these practices behave as they do because of their habitus, which is a set of dispositions – the attitudes, perceptions and practices that are communally structured and inculcated by the combination of their socialisation, education and life-experiences. These dispositions are durable, in that they are largely unconscious and



ingrained in the body. They are also generative and transposable – in other words, they can give rise to further practices, other than those deriving directly from the original dispositions.

Bourdieu (1986) also discusses aesthetic concepts such as taste, showing how they originate in the social class into which one is born, determining one's likes and interests, one's actions and the ways one presents oneself to the rest of the world, that is, one's habitus. Prevailing notions of "good taste" are therefore a means by which class distinctions are preserved, and the interests of the dominant class are served over time, since what they determine to be acceptable is legitimated as cultural capital.

In looking at the literacy habituses of teachers, it seems clear that their reading of self-help books would be an activity that is generated, not just from their original dispositions, but by their aspirations. Of particular relevance is Bourdieu's idea of capital, both cultural and symbolic. Examples of cultural capital are knowledge and skills that the individual has or acquires, which confer advantages on them in terms of prestige or economic gain. Symbolic capital refers to the possession of authority or prestige, which will also benefit the individual in a number of different ways. Bourdieu states that individuals, as agents, will consciously or unconsciously pursue their own interests.

Functioning within a plurality of contingent fields, such as those of religious organisations, the education system or the world of small business transactions, it seems clear that teachers might see self-help books as offering them ways of increasing all these forms of capital. As a result of the shortcomings of the education system, many of them are inadequately equipped to advance themselves economically because they lack the necessary formal qualifications, skills and information.

While Bourdieu emphasises that the pursuit of interests may be complex, and does not refer only to narrow economic interests, it seems probable that economic advancement might be an important factor for the teachers. Many of them believe that they have personal qualities that could help them achieve greater financial success or prestige within their communities, but need to remedy their perceived inadequacies before they can do so. They are therefore open to the assurances of this genre of reading matter, which offers short-cuts and quick fixes.

Bourdieu's aim is therefore to suggest an alternative paradigm for educational research which reconciles dichotomous paradigms. "His intent is to find a theory that is robust enough to be objective and generalisable, and yet accounts for individual, subjective thought and action" (Robbins, 1998, p. 10).

Central to his theory of research practice is his idea of culture (of which education is part) as shifting and dynamic – as social organisation which "gives rise to ideas which in turn shape the organization of society" (Robbins, 1998, p. 10). He sees culture, not just as structure, in the objective, positivist sense, but as "the structured structure that confers upon symbolic systems their structuring power" (Bourdieu, 1971, cited in Grenfell & James, 1998, p. 11). He stressed that his concern was with actual practice rather than with identifying abstract rules, and introduced the idea of reflexive objectivity, emphasising that the subject of research must be a "knowing subject" and that "objectivity can only be revealed in the nature of individuals' practice" (Bourdieu, 1971, cited in Grenfell & James, 1998, p. 12). He therefore wishes to avoid the extremes of both subjectivism and objectivism by observing the ways in which objective structures give rise to subjective dispositions in human consciousness, which, in turn, actualise and reproduce the structures.

Evolution and change occur because the process is a dynamic one, and variations occur according to the possibilities that arise. Human action is, therefore, shaped by the interplay between the objective world and individual thought – the habitus that "ensures the active presence of past experiences" (Harker, 1992, p. 16, cited in Grenfell & James, 1998, p. 14), embodying social and cultural messages.

His purpose is therefore two-fold: to explain educational phenomena as social activities and to provide guidelines for research into such activities, through the application of his concepts to real situations. What is investigated is structure, in its dynamic sense, and habitus as the site of the generation of structures and practices. Habitus is always related to its context in time and space and consists of a system of 'durable dispositions' "which guide and generate practice" (Bourdieu 1977, p. 72).

## **2.13 Bourdieu's principles of educational research**

Bourdieu aims to present a different paradigm for research, one which provides useful insights into educational phenomena while reconciling the objective and subjective outlooks. He does this by applying his notion of habitus (representing the subjective perspective) and field (representing the objective reality) to specific situations and examining the interplay between them as they mutually constitute each other, resulting in an accurate synthesis of information about individuals and how they construct and orientate their social practices. His research methodology also involves references to other aspects of his theory, such as symbolic capital (economic, social or cultural).

What is also relevant to this study is his concept of the market, specifically the academic market, which may be linked to the education of individuals in three ways: as individuals (for example, their accent, the amount of educated discourse they can produce), to objects such as books, degrees and diplomas, and to institutions such as places of learning. Bourdieu's idea of knowledge extends beyond the grasp of facts and also includes implicit familiarity, as well as "misrecognition", which refers to the manner in which the generating structures of fields are not overtly acknowledged as perpetuating social divisions – in other words, the motivation for a particular practice is not recognised at all, or it is ascribed to something else.

## **2.14 Drawing on practical applications of Bourdieu's approach to Research**

In examining some of the practical applications of Bourdieu's theories, I am indebted to Grenfell and James' *Bourdieu in Education* (1998) which provided three useful examples of research, each of which gives a different reference point and provides practical advice and information for researchers attempting to apply Bourdieu's principles.

In examining the relationship between parents and primary schools, Diane Reay focuses on the relationship between home and school as an element in cultural reproduction, and the ways in which parents of children at a British primary school attempt to compensate for the shortcomings of the school and ensure that their children acquire cultural capital. She refers to Bourdieu's notion that the family is an influential site for cultural reproduction (and therefore for class distinction), and that the role of mothers, as well as the time they can

afford to devote to their children's learning activities, is pivotal to the process. She acknowledges the interplay between the mothers' individual histories and their applications of their own cultural capital to their children's learning – in other words, between structure and agency. In her interviews with mothers, Reay breaks down the idea of cultural capital into more specific categories, and concludes that, in as far as it is possible to generalise, middle-class mothers are concerned with replicating habitus, while working-class women attempt to transform habitus. Generating cultural capital is a complex process that differs widely according to various contexts, pressures, the strategies formulated by the subjects, as well as their own levels of cultural capital. Also, in applying the idea of habitus as an analytic tool, it is productive to relate it to issues of gender, class and ethnicity.

In relation to my own study Reay's observations seem particularly relevant, since I focus on a group that consists mainly of women who, broadly speaking, are all victims of racism and educational deprivation during their formative years. As far as class is concerned, it is significant that teachers are generally people with middle-class aspirations and values, but limited incomes. These are definitely factors that might feed into their reading choices, in terms of their desire to acquire status and to make money, as well as their awareness of the possibility of individuals utilising and extending their personal skills and opportunities through their own efforts.

In his study of language in the classroom, Grenfell (1998, p. 74) regards the connection between language and linguistic capital as a significant instance of the relationship between habitus and field: a structuring and structured dynamic that exists between them. Language is constantly evolving, and has differing value, depending on the definitions and differentiations of the linguistic market. He points out the difference between knowing the value of a language norm and being able to actually generate it (in Bourdieu's terms, the difference between *reconnaissance* and *connaissance*). He states that 'those without the prestigious style constantly seek to appropriate it' (Grenfell, 1998, p. 75). This may be an over-generalisation, but it certainly applied to some of the interviewees, who chose to read as a means of enhancing their ability to reflect, to communicate better, to influence others or to access information.

In *The Practice of Theory*, James gives some general principles about how Bourdieu can be applied to research. To begin with, he emphasises the notion of reflexivity, which Bourdieu

himself saw as of paramount importance, since it goes to the heart of how research is formulated. The researcher is required to objectify the objectifying subject, in other words, to take into account his or her own history and provide an overt expression of the relationship between the researcher and the participant. This notion of reflexivity (or reflection) has been interpreted in various ways in the social sciences, and James attempts to define it more exactly in Bourdieu's terms. In interviewing participants, it was obviously essential to question my assumptions and to make a conscious attempt to avoid leading the interviewees in order to obtain the data that confirmed my preconceptions. It was also necessary to consider sources of information, such as observations of the school environment in which the interviews took place, and of the attitudes of their colleagues.

Domains are defined as "structures, patterned contexts within which literacy is used and learned" (Grenfell, 1998, p. 11). Some literacy events relate to more formally structured domains such as educational institutions or religious bodies. These are the domains that tend to support the literary practices that are dominant in the society. Others deal with the literacies of everyday life, the less formal domains of family, community or the workplace.

The functions of literacy activities are seldom easy to define, and in any case, such activities may serve multiple functions. James is less concerned with identifying the functions that literacy practices serve than with finding out 'how literacy activities are supported, sustained, learned and impeded in people's lives and relationships' (Grenfell, 1998, p.12). Investigation of events involves examination of texts and the ways in which they are produced and used. The link to events and practices is explained like this: "literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these are observable in events, which are mediated by texts" (Grenfell, 1998, p. 9). The teachers may, therefore, have multiple reasons for choosing to read particular books, and their motivation to do so may be complex. Reay, in particular, cautions against drawing simplistic conclusions about habitus.

## **CHAPTER THREE: Research design and methodology**

This piece of research can be classified as a basic or generic qualitative study since it has the following characteristics: “the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of fieldwork, and inductive orientation to analysis and findings that are richly descriptive” (Merriam, 1998, p. 11). As an exploration of a literacy phenomenon, its aim is largely explanatory in nature – “discovering what occurs, the implications of what occurs, and the relationships linking occurrences” (Honigmann, 1982, p. 84). For this reason, non-probabilistic or purposive sampling was employed. The research had two main components, namely semi-structured interviews, followed by an analysis of one of the self-help texts identified by the subjects as popular, useful and accessible.

### **3.1 An overview of the research methods used**

Participants are asked to respond to the questions that make up a recorded, semi-structured interview, used to obtain qualitative data about this literacy practice. The interview is therefore used to elicit some specific data while also allowing for more personal and in-depth responses through the more open-ended and flexible wording of the later questions.

It was not possible to predict the exact size of the sample, and the process was terminated by the time limitations of the study.

According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006, p. 214), semi-structured interviews are situations in which “the person interviewed is more a participant in meaning making than a conduit from which information is retrieved”. As a research method, this distinguishes the unstructured interview from more rigidly structured survey instruments such as questionnaires. It also allows for the researcher to capture, in depth, individual perspectives and opinions on specific issues, allowing for the sharing of rich descriptions of the phenomena under investigation. This is clearly the most appropriate means of data collection for this study, which is concerned with teachers’ personal responses to a particular category

of texts, the insights they have gained from reading them and the impact of their reading of these texts on their own professional practice.

The interviews are structured around a set of questions, most of which are open-ended. The asking of the questions, and the responses to them, create a dialogue between the interviewer and the respondent, and the interviewer aims to build up a rapport with the respondent that facilitates the sharing of authentic personal responses and in-depth information and allows the interviewer to explore the interviewee's personal perspectives on the topic that is being investigated.

The other research method employed is an analysis of one of the texts identified, through the interview process, by more than one of the informants, as useful and popular. I began by identifying the general characteristics of self-help books by analysing Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (2004) and Don Miguel Ruiz's *The Four Agreements* (1997). Book retailers confirmed that these books are among the most popular examples of the self-help genre: they have been best-sellers over the past decade, and continue to sell well. The self-help book that is most generally named in the interviews is read in relation to these general characteristics.

### **3.2 Ethical considerations**

As well as ensuring that prospective participants were thoroughly briefed about the nature of the proposed research, it was also necessary to ask them to sign a consent form (Appendix B.) This confirms their right to withdraw from the study whenever they choose to do so. It also ensures that the data that was collected remains confidential, and that the identity of the participants will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. In this report, I assign pseudonyms alphabetically, indicating the order in which the interviews take place.

Since it is necessary to conduct the interviews on school premises, the consent of the principal of each school was also required. The three principals were asked to sign consent forms (Appendix C).

### **3.3 Participants and research sites**

The participants are aged between 40 and 55 years of age, so that their schooling and tertiary studies fall within the time period when the majority of students were exposed to a narrow range of reading materials and had limited opportunities to become habitual readers.

To ensure that this type of sampling works successfully, it is necessary to establish the criteria for selection. In this instance, what Merriam (1998, p. 62) describes as “typical sampling” is most appropriate. The subjects fall within a particular age-range, are practising teachers of Intermediate Phase learners, teach, or have taught at least one language and work at schools in Gauteng townships. They have read at least one self-help book within the previous year.

The interviews are scheduled in advance. They are conducted in one-to-one sessions involving only the respondent and the interviewer. The only exception to this is during Visit 3 to Alexandra, when Jabu calls in her secretary to verify the titles of the books that the four teachers have all read.

The interviews take place at the three schools where the participants work. These are situated in Gauteng townships, namely Tembisa, Soweto (Diepkloof) and Alexandra.

Two of the Tembisa teachers are ex-students of mine: I had taught them in an in-service course (Advanced Certificate in Education) at Wits University the year before, but do not know them well. Three staff members were recruited by a colleague. When I visited the school to conduct the interviews, the deputy principal told me that he met the criteria and also wanted to be interviewed. One of the other interviewees also suggested that I interview a fifth teacher, Gugu, as they knew that he too read self-help books.

The Diepkloof school is one where I had worked before, doing research for an evaluation project. My participant in this research, Hlengiwe, is a deputy principal at the school. Five months before this interview, I asked her and her fellow-members of the School Management Team to complete a questionnaire. She volunteered to be interviewed, as she is a keen reader of self-help books. When we completed the interview, Ivan, the other deputy principal, asked



if he too could be interviewed. He also teaches language and falls within the required age-range, so I interviewed him as well.

I had conducted research previously at the Alexandra school. It is one of a cluster of four schools, each one offering a different vernacular language as medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase and as First Additional Language in the Intermediate and Senior Phases. I visited all four schools in search of participants, and found four suitable staff members, including the principal, at the school where I had worked before.

I conducted one interview with each teacher, except in the case of Jane, the Alexandra principal, whom I visited for a second time to get some extra information.

This is a summary of the numbers of Intermediate Phase language teachers interviewed at the three schools:

<b>INTERVIEWEE DETAILS</b>		
<b>AREA</b>	<b>No of interviewees</b>	<b>Total no of IP language teachers at the school</b>
<b>Tembisa</b>	4 teachers	5 teachers
<b>Alexandra</b>	3 teachers	3 teachers
<b>Diepkloof</b>	2 teachers	4 teachers

A more detailed account of the snowballing and interview process is given in 3.5 below.

### **3.4 Formulating the interview questions**

The structuring and sequencing of the questions is obviously important, and in doing so I tried to keep in mind the practical guidelines set out by Henning (2005), designing my questions so that they stimulate the interviewee's thinking about the topic. In this way he or she is primed to gradually explore more complex aspects of the topic. Where there is a transition to a different question, for example, when the topic of children's books is introduced, a rapport is already established, so the transition is smooth.

My initial aim is therefore to get each interviewee to relax and talk freely, building up, as far as possible, what Henning calls “a truly symmetrical relationship” (Henning, 2005, p. 67). Henning cites Bergman (2003), who suggests that preliminary questions should relate to the personal practices of the respondent, rather than looking for general truths. In this case, I ask a general question about the participant’s personal reading habits and preferences, then move on to questions that home in more specifically on the interviewee’s experience of self-help texts and children’s reading.

The interview questions (Appendix D) are therefore loosely grouped and each group has a different focus:

**Group 1 questions** focus on the participant’s personal reading habits and preferences.

**Group 2 questions** focus on the participant’s general attitude towards self-help books.

**Group 3 questions** focus on the participant’s personal experiences of reading self-help books, his or her personal preferences within the genre, and the participant’s perceptions of the effect of a specific book on his or her life.

**Group 4 questions** focus on the participant’s possible reading of children’s books. They foreground his or her personal response to a children’s book, as well as his or her awareness, or lack of awareness, of the need for teachers to be familiar with books suitable for the children they teach. A teacher’s response to this question will indicate whether or not he or she share this kind of reading with his or her class, and also provides information on how such a book is sourced.

### **3.5 Conducting the interviews**

It is my task to establish positive relationships with my interviewees – one of trust and respect, conducive to the sharing of personal experiences, information, attitudes and opinions, applying the principle that “... it is through the connection of many truths that interview research contributes to our knowledge of the meaning of the human experience” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). These authors describe the stages of rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee as involving apprehension, exploration, co-operation and participation. These do not necessarily occur in an unvarying sequence, as these authors suggest, but I tried to keep them in mind when formulating interview questions.

I try to lessen apprehension by informing the interviewees in advance of what the study is about. I also take care to point out that I view their participation as a personal favour and stress that their identities will remain confidential. I also try to make them feel valued by pointing out that they are helping to contribute valuable information on an important topic. During the initial discussions I am careful to emphasise that the research is intended, ultimately, to benefit the children. I also stress that there will be no come-back relating to the data they supply as the identities of the interviewees will be kept confidential. Finally, I express my gratitude to the respondents. I do not necessarily follow the exact wording nor the original sequence of the questions rigidly, as I wish to respond to themes as they arise, and to explore a respondent's line of thought or "emerging worldview" (Merriam, 1988, p. 74).

As each interviewee responds, I prompt them to build on what has already been said. This is done in order to add further data and extend the dialogue so that the transition from question to question, and to the expression of more personal and in-depth revelations, is as smooth as possible. In doing so, I try to be non-directive, avoiding formulations that suggest particular responses. I see my role as guiding and encouraging the participants to share as much information as possible, unselfconsciously and in their own words.

To cover all the questions fully, it is sometimes necessary to repeat or clarify them, giving the interviewee time to hear what is being asked and to think about how to respond. Conversely, if an interviewee has already answered a question fully, albeit out of sequence, I do not ask them to repeat themselves.

Since I will review the data as it is collected, I find it necessary to modify my questions. I find that two parts of Question 3 (*Did you like it – why or why not? Do you think this book helped you in any way – if so, how?*) do not produce, in the interview, responses that can be differentiated from each other, so the two questions are reworded and collapsed into one. I also encourage the respondent to digress in order to obtain useful material relating to his or her own interests and knowledge.

The fact that the questions are formulated in advance means that all the required aspects of the topic can be covered as long as I keep track of what has not yet been covered at all, or what can be revisited to elicit further detail. What I generally do is to keep a copy of the

interview questions with me and make ticks next to each one to indicate the units of information that are provided that are relevant to particular questions.

The exploration phase is when the interviewee becomes engaged in an in-depth description. This process is accompanied by learning, listening, testing and a sense of bonding and sharing. The next phase, the co-operative phase, is characterised by a comfort level in which the participants are not afraid of offending one another, find satisfaction in the interview process and participate in the creation of a coherent body of information through their mutual interaction.

To facilitate co-operation and exploration, I make every effort to establish an atmosphere conducive to a friendly, informal discussion. In general, I think I am successful, although obviously some of my interviewees respond more readily and have more to say than others. These are generally the people who have a leadership role within the school community – the ones I think of as my main informants, Celia, Hlengiwe, Jabu and Mpho. There are also two people who are officially in positions of authority and who insist on being interviewed.

In an attempt to keep the interview as much like a relaxed conversation as possible, I volunteer opinions and information myself, to a varying extent. Only once do I feel that I overdo this and ask questions that are too leading.

It is obviously essential that the interviewer reflect on the nature of the social roles involved in the interaction, and how inherent power relations could impact on the validity of the data. According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, “It could also be argued that the goal of finding out about people and establishing trust is best achieved by reducing the hierarchy between informants and researchers” (2006, p. 316).

Issues of internal validity are discussed in section 3.6 below. Social roles are not an issue in this instance as the researcher is already known to most of the interview subjects and has established cordial relations with them in different contexts. My most informative participants are, in any case, people who have superior official status within the school communities, as they are principals, deputy principals or heads of departments. Some of the others are people with whom I have already established cordial relations. They confirm, by their welcoming and co-operative attitude, that they regard me as a colleague rather than as

an authority figure. Most of them appear to enjoy being interviewed and are happy to speak at length.

Of course, every interview is very different in nature. Hlengiwe, for example, is a practised public speaker. She has obviously thought about the topic of the research since it was first explained to her. This was probably why her responses were unusually fluent and coherent.

### **3.6 The internal validity of the interviews**

McMillan and Schumaker (1993, p. 159) point out that in qualitative studies it is necessary to control, as far as possible, extraneous variables that might influence the interpretation of the findings and impact negatively on the internal validity of the study. The misinterpretation of terms is one such factor. It is necessary to clarify the term “self-help”, and I do this mainly by explaining carefully, giving popular examples and using synonyms. The term ‘motivational book’ appears to be the most familiar to the participants, possibly because of the growing use of the term “motivational speaker” i.e. someone invited to make inspirational speeches at businesses or at public and family functions.

Two teachers misinterpret the idea of self-help books, regarding mainstream literary works as “self-help” or “motivational” as they depict psychological processes and invite reflection on moral choices. Examples given are Shakespeare’s plays and George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. (Prinsloo reports that teachers interviewed about their reading practices also named these books, which, over a number of decades, have been popular choices as prescribed texts for matriculation English.) However, these teachers’ interviews were still included in the study as they had each read at least one book that could be categorised as “motivational”, according to the broad criteria that I formulate, which are described in section 3.10 below.

Another possible threat to internal validity is what McMillan and Schumaker (1993, p. 128) refer to as “subject effects”, in which interviewees pick up cues from the situation, or from the interviewer, which cause them to behave in certain ways. They also point out that “(m)ost people ... want to appear intelligent, competent, and emotionally stable”, and this could affect their responses. Many South African teachers are notoriously prone to a misplaced sense of politeness and goodwill: they want to make the interview a satisfying interaction for the interviewer and show their appreciation for the opportunity to express their views. This

makes them inclined to say what they think the interviewer wants to hear. In the case of this study, they may pick up that the interviewer is generally very in favour of reading, and that she is very focused on collecting as much information as possible about their self-help reading in order to complete this study. This could make them inclined to exaggerate the amount of self-help reading they have done, and/or the influence of self-help books in their lives.

Once again, this threat is reduced by the structure of the interview questions, which focuses on general and more specific aspects of the topic in a way that makes it possible to cross-check on the accuracy of the responses:

Question 1: The interviewees are first asked to talk about their general reading habits, making it less obvious that self-help reading is the main focus of the investigation.

Question 2: The interviewees are encouraged to talk about self-help books they have read. This is a point where interviewees may be tempted to exaggerate. However, the interviewer moves straight on to other more general aspects requiring the expression of general opinions about these books, such as why they are popular.

Question 3: Interviewees are asked to give the name of one self-help book they have read. If they have exaggerated their involvement with self-help reading, this will be picked up in their response to this question. In general, people whose reading of self-help books does not impact much on their lives seem less inclined to remember titles and authors of the self-help books they have read.

Question 4: This requires a direct response which provides the answer to the final and most important research question: whether or not the respondents' reading of self-help books has impacted on their ability to teach children to read, or added anything to their awareness of the importance of appropriate reading texts in children's development, and of the role of adults in children's reading development. The learners they teach are at the stage where they should be developing individual reading tastes and habits. Adults involved in teaching reading should recommend books to children, exposing them to a variety of genres, reading aloud to their classes and generally motivating them to read for pleasure. If self-help books influence their lives in important ways, one would suppose that they will easily perceive the value of facilitating the same experience for the children in their care.

In some cases it is also possible to verify the data provided by examining other cues. For example, Celia and Dudu maintain that they have flourished financially as a result of their reading of books on finance and investment. Since they work at the same school, they are, indirectly, able to verify each other's comments, and it is also possible to get a superficial idea of their relative affluence by observing the clothes and jewellery they wear, the cars they drive, and so on. In one case, a teacher claimed that she displayed a different set of self-help 'sayings' for the learners every week. Visiting the school two months later, on a different matter, it is interesting to see that she is not as zealous about bringing motivational texts to the learners as she first claimed, as the same set of sayings is still on the board.

### **3.7 External validity**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993, p. 157), research projects should be designed to ensure both internal validity, which involves the control of extraneous variables, and of external validity – the extent to which the findings can be generalised. With regard to the latter, the search for subjects is conducted by means of personal recommendations, as well as random enquiries. The final selection from the teacher population is according to age and location. Because no claim is made that the validity of the conclusions extends beyond the social and geographical context of the subjects, external validity is not an issue in this case.

### **3.8 Initial criteria for the selection of material for analysis**

I decide that further analysis of the self-help books identified in the interviews should not include magazines, which also contain self-help texts. This is because magazine material is more likely to be encountered in a random, unplanned fashion, while reading a separately published book is a deliberate, purposeful choice on the part of the subject, and makes him or her feel committed to spending time engaging with it. Since the study is concerned exclusively with the reading of print materials, the vast amount of audio-visual and on-line material that is currently available is also excluded, including items that are linked to the print material.

Aware of the huge popular market for books with a Christian focus, I decide that I will consider religious books for analysis only if they have practical, motivational applications, since the effects of texts that are purely devotional in nature fall outside the scope of this study. This will not present problems as the vast majority of contemporary Christian publishing has much in common with other self-help literature. Broadly speaking, it is designed to assist believers in applying Christian precepts to the complexities of modern life and provide guidelines for living in a balanced way to achieve personal fulfilment.

### **3.9 The snowball process**

This is an account of my experiences in conducting the interviews and how my approach changes and evolves over time. This process requires that I utilise a variety of sources and contacts. The selection process also produces some relevant data.

#### **First contact**

In 2010 I tutor an ACE (Advanced Certificate in Education) course at the University of the Witwatersrand. My students are all Intermediate Phase teachers of English and other languages. In October, when saying goodbye to the group, I ask the teachers if they or any of their colleagues read self-help books. I explain that I am interested in finding out more about what teachers read. I describe what I mean by such books, using words like “motivational” and ‘advice’, and giving examples of some of the most popular titles. I ask them to help by volunteering to be interviewed or helping me find interviewees, and stress that the identity of the interviewees will be kept confidential.

Most of the class seems to know what I am talking about and some of the students speak to me afterwards, saying that they know of such books, or have colleagues who read them. I hand out about a dozen copies of the information sheet (Appendix A) to those who say they might be able to help me find participants for my study.

One of these ACE students, Andile, phones me. He says that he and some of his school colleagues are keen readers of self-help books and are willing to be interviewed. From him, I get the contact details of the principal of the school. The school is in Tembisa, on the East Rand.



### **Testing the interview questions using a pilot interview with Andile**

Andile is not a research participant, as it emerges that he does not read self-help books. I meet him at a venue near his home to get directions and make arrangements to visit the school where he works. At this meeting, I also interview him. However, it is very useful to be able to trial the interview questions and reflect on my own involvement in participating in and guiding the interaction.

I already know that I will have to strike a balance between allowing the participants to digress and provide rich personal accounts, guiding the interview so that my questions are eventually covered, and keeping track of the random order in which the data is gathered, which will differ from participant to participant. However, I am glad to have the opportunity to put it all into practice before the ‘real’ interviews take place. I have not recorded interviews before, and Andile’s interview affords me an opportunity to experience the technical frustrations involved. My new tape-recorder does not work; I make shorthand notes of the interview.

Perhaps the most useful aspect of interviewing Andile is that it gives me an idea of some of the trends and attitudes I will encounter later with other interviewees. To illustrate this, here is a brief account of the interview contents:

Although he does not read books for pleasure, Andile is a keen reader of magazines like *Drum* and *Move*, especially the latter, and a magazine which he refers to as “Psychologists” (*Psychology Today*?) which, he says, deals with “everything you need to know”. We have a few moments’ confusion as I have forgotten that in the townships the word “book” is also used for a magazine.

Andile enjoys magazine articles that give practical advice on topics like health, finances, “love tips” and overcoming stress. He says that the articles appeal to the “new generation”, not just by providing practical advice, but by warning readers of “what to expect” in dealing with the “ups and downs” that life brings. He likes the fact that the articles are short, so “you don’t have to read a long, boring story”. He particularly likes advice columns like *Sus Dolly*, which give readers advice about their relationship problems. His reading of children’s books is limited, but as a

teacher of Arts and Culture he uses books of traditional myths and legends as source materials for art projects and role-plays.

### **Research site 1, located in Tembisa, first visit**

Through Andile, I arrange a meeting with the principal of School 1 in Tembisa. The school is one of the older schools in a very economically depressed area. The buildings are old and in bad repair, the grounds are bare and littered and there is an atmosphere of disorder, with many children outside and unsupervised during class time. There is no consistent reading plan in place at the school, and no books available other than small classroom collections or teachers' personal copies. The school has recently received a large donation of books from a school in London, but these are still packed in boxes.

The principal agrees to let me interview the staff on school premises and signs the form giving me permission to do so (Appendix C). He introduces me to Bheki, the deputy principal, who volunteers to be interviewed, saying that he is also a language teacher and a reader of self-help books.

I also meet Celia, one of the HODs, a charismatic person who is a leader among the staff. She is very enthusiastic about self-help books, which she buys, recommends and lends to other staff members. A total of five teachers agree to be interviewed: Bheki, Celia, Dudu, Fikile and Gugu. I brief them about the study and get them to sign the consent forms (Appendix B). We chat about books and reading, but I ask them to save what they were going to say about their own reading until my second visit, when I will be able to interview them more systematically, as individuals.

### **Research site 1, located in Tembisa, second visit**

On my second visit to the Tembisa school I am nervous about my ability to manage the tape-recorder while concentrating on the interviews, so I bring someone with me as technical back-up. This means that I can relax, enjoy the interactions with the participants and allow them to digress in their accounts. This is the only time that I have such assistance, as I then acquire a mobile phone with a recording function.

In retrospect, it is a mistake to have lengthy preliminary discussions during the first visit, as some of the responses (such as those of Dudu and Fikile), are less spontaneous when they are interviewed during the second visit. Some of the participants say things like “as I told you last time”. However, all the participants are very willing to share their reading experiences, if only as a break from the school routine.

There is an obvious discrepancy between those who have a lot to say, like Celia, and those who really have not read very much and tend to be repetitive, like Bheki and Ivan. I realise that certain people will be what I think of as main informants – in this case it is Celia, who is obviously an influential person at the school as she inspires other staff members to read and is thoughtful and discriminating about her own reading.

### **Research site 2, located in Diepkloof, first visit**

The school in Diepkloof is large and effectively administered. It has crowded classrooms but is comparatively well-resourced as it is the recipient of donations from educational organisations. I have visited the school on previous occasions for research purposes.

The deputy principal, Hlengiwe, gives permission for the interviews and volunteers to participate herself. She mentions that there are other members of staff in the Intermediate Phase who also read self-help books. I ask them to participate and they agree.

### **Research site 2, located in Diepkloof, second visit**

When I return to the school a week later, Hlengiwe is the first person I interview, followed by Ivan, the other deputy principal. Hlengiwe has spoken at length and Ivan’s interview is a bit shorter as we run out of time.

Hlengiwe claims that what she has read in self-help books has enriched her so much that she now sees herself as a motivational speaker. She addresses the staff and learners at assembly each week, on topics inspired by her reading. She also claims to share her wisdom with the older classes that she teaches, reading to them and sharing ‘wise sayings’ with them, many of them taken from motivational books. She claims that she gets the children to bring new

sayings every week, but when I visit the school again a month later, the same sayings are on the board.

The two deputy principals are my only participants, as the other two volunteers decide not to participate, saying that they are too busy. They ask if I can reformulate the interview questions as a questionnaire which they can complete in their own time. One of the other teachers suggests to me that someone may have told them that their words can be used against them in some way, or they are afraid that they will get into trouble with SADTU (South African Democratic Teachers' Union), which has banned interviews with the media.

### **Research site 2, located in Alexandra, first visit**

I ask some of my colleagues with good township connections to help me identify more participants. They do their best, but the contacts they arrange fail to materialise, and I decide to do some canvassing for myself. The Alexandra school is in a cluster with four other schools, each catering for different language groups. It is a very crowded area, even for Alexandra, but the school appears to be orderly and pleasant, with efficient office staff. This is also a school I have visited before to conduct research, and I know it is well administered and has an inspiring principal.

I visit the school and the principal, Jabu, confirms that she and some other members of her staff are readers of self-help books. We arrange that I will visit the school a few days later to interview them all.

### **Research site 2, located in Alexandra, second visit**

Jabu is a highly literate person and under her leadership there has been an enormous emphasis on the development of children's literacy skills. The school is assisted by an organisation called Reading Dynamics, which provides books and staff training.

Some years ago, Jabu was deeply affected by the loss of a younger brother. She read *On Death and Dying* by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross ( ) and found it useful in helping to come to terms with her grief. She recommends the book to other staff members who have also lost people

they were close to. The staff also read another self-help book together, but is not currently doing so.

During this visit I interview Jabu, Lefa and Mpho. The interviews that stand out as the most informative are with Jabu and Mpho. It seems that all the respondents have been inspired by Jabu to read the same book, which is on death and coping with the loss of a loved one.

In the interviews, and in casual conversation, I find out that the school was originally for Foundation Phase only, but about seven years ago was expanded to a full primary school. This was an enormous challenge for the staff, who had to teach Intermediate Phase classes that they were not trained for. Mpho was one of the teachers who accompanied her Grade 3s when they were promoted to Grade 4, and stayed with the same class until Grade 7. She made such a success of it that the school adopted the same system in subsequent years.

### **Research site 2, located in Alexandra, third visit**

I visit the school for a third time, to try to get more information from Jabu about how the staff shares books. She has to put me off as she has a lot of urgent administrative work to do, so I arrange to come back the following week. When I arrive she is obviously still very busy, but she gives me more detailed information about how she came to read the book on death and loss, and why she recommended it to the other teachers.

She calls the school secretary, who shares the reading that the staff do, to recall the title of a second book that they have passed round. It is called *Who Moved my Cheese?* and is a more conventional self-help title about being pro-active and embracing change.

### **3.10 Reformulating criteria for the inclusion of interviews**

I realise that the books that some of the respondents mention do not meet any of the criteria I originally identified as characteristic of the self-help genre. Instead, they label any book “motivational” if it provides useful information, or inspires or facilitates some kind of positive behaviour or change of attitude. For example, Bheki mentions biographies and political writings, while Dudu describes a novel that has made an impression on her.

This means that I need to decide if any of the interviews should be eliminated on the grounds that they do not meet the requirements for my research. I therefore reformulate my criteria as follows. An interview is acceptable if the interviewee meets at least one of these conditions:

- If they name at least one book that meets the criteria I originally identified, whether or not they also name other genres that do not do so. This means that I will not eliminate Bheki, Dudu or Gugu, none of whom seem to be aware of self-help books as a separate genre, in spite of the pains I took to explain this,
- If they name a book with a religious focus, as long as its primary function is to give practical advice. This means that I include Ivan, who mentions a Christian book he found useful, but who does not name any other self-help books,
- If they name a book that does not strictly fit the genre but is considered to be a self-help book by more than one participant, as long as it has clearly influenced their behaviour or attitudes in some way. A notable example is Elizabeth Kübler-Ross's *On Death and Dying*, which all the Alexandra teachers have read and found immensely valuable in helping them deal with bereavement,
- If they read an actual book, rather than just a magazine. Despite the ambiguity surrounding the word "book", I decide that it should be used here in the most widely accepted sense, rather than as a synonym for magazine, since to sit down and read a book is usually a more conscious choice. Magazines are available in all kinds of situations, and their articles are short and designed to be very accessible, so they can be picked up and skimmed through casually. This means that Andile's interview is eliminated, as magazines are the source of the self-help texts he reads.

Another dilemma is whether or not to exclude interviews because the interviewee cannot give the title of a qualifying book accurately, or at all. This applies to so many of the participants that in the end it is not feasible to implement it. I also reason that many people have trouble remembering the titles of books they have read, and often the more they read, the harder they find it to do so. This certainly applies to some of my main informants, such as Hlengiwe, Jabu and Mpho.

My criteria are therefore considerably broadened, but I conclude that it is more important to represent the views of my participants accurately than to impose my own preconceptions on them. So far, the participant whose interview I am most inclined to eliminate is Bheki's, as it seems to consist mainly of self-aggrandising verbiage. However, I feel that it is better to give him the benefit of the doubt than to assume that he is not speaking the truth when he claims to have read books on leadership and human relations. The other person who asks to be interviewed is Ivan, who is deputy principal of the Diepkloof school. He has not read any self-help books either, but he names a religious book that he says has influenced him, and therefore I include him in the final selection of interviews.

### **3.11 Analysis of the features of a self-help text named in the interviews**

Since a second component of this research project is an analysis of a book named in the interviews as popular and influential, it is necessary to identify, in advance, some of the characteristics that are typical of this genre, against which the book can be examined. This is done by analysing two self-help books, popular titles in this genre, namely *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 2004) and *The Four Agreements* (Ruiz, 1997).

This type of content analysis is described by Altheide as providing insights in which “situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances are key topics” (Altheide, 1987, p. 68, cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 160). The analysis is done according to the following categories: establishing authorial authority, approach to content, tone, diction, chapter length, use of specialised and coined terminology, and, more generally, the use of textual and extra-textual devices to motivate the reader and facilitate accessibility and memory. It seems probable that self-help books share at least some of the linguistic and stylistic features outlined below, and that these features probably contribute to the popularity of the genre:

- Self-help books often have racy, provocative or mysterious titles, aimed at ‘hooking’ the reader. For example, Covey’s title holds out the promise that if one masters only seven precepts, success is assured. The number seven has mystical overtones, making the book seem special and unique, but the phrase “highly effective” conveys the notion that the content is entirely practical,

- The book is divided into brief chapters and sub-headings are used to make sure that the information is “bite-sized”, easily absorbed at a sitting and easily remembered,
- The general style is consciously tailored to be highly accessible, and this tends to make many of these books formulaic,
- There is often an introductory section that establishes the authority of the writer to pronounce on the topic, for example: “In more than 25 years of working with people in business, university and marriage and family settings, I have come into contact with many individuals who have achieved an incredible degree of outward success ...” (Covey, 2004, p. 15).
- The reader is addressed directly, using first and second person pronouns: ‘you’ involves the reader directly in the discussion, while “I” emphasises that the writer is speaking from personal experience,
- Anecdotes are used to illustrate points. The impression is created that the writer has a fresh, down-to-earth attitude and is able to cut through impractical theorising. Other varieties of narrative are also employed, such as jokes, parables and case histories,
- The content is often expressed in terms coined by the writer, for example, in *The Four Agreements*, the word “agreement” is used rather than “rules” or “principles”. This serves various purposes: it makes the ideas that are presented appear unique, while also making them easier to remember,
- The use of sub-headings, bullet points, checklists and summaries also appear to have a mnemonic function.

It must be noted, however, that these features are not always present. In *The Four Agreements*, an effort is made to create a sense of gravitas. The writing style is still accessible, but the reader is not talked down to, and must make an effort to absorb the contents without the help of all the commonplace devices that Covey employs, listed in the final point above.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: Data analysis**

### **4.1 How the data was analysed**

The semi-structured interviews made up the main body of my data. In analysing it, I employed an ‘editing approach’ or ‘template approach’ to identify main themes. This involved ‘the simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document’s content’ (Merriam 1998, p. 160). This meant that I identified and categorised key segments of the text, looking for significant differences as well as points on which respondents concurred. To some extent it was also possible to get extra information and insights from my observation of the contexts in which the interviews took place. In this chapter, information relating to each research question is dealt with sequentially.

In conducting the interviews, I attempted to follow Bourdieu’s research principles, set out in *Outline of the Theory of Practice* (1972), taking his idea of habitus as the basis for this study. Habitus refers to the set of dispositions, which are practices and attitudes deeply inculcated into individuals through their socialisation and education. Bourdieu maintains that habitus is durable but also subject to dynamic social and cultural processes that generate further practices in response to changing circumstances. I wished to explore the connection between a particular literacy practice and the teachers’ aspirations. These involve them in efforts to transform their habitus and acquire the cultural and symbolic capital which they perceive as ensuring their economic and social advancement in particular fields or arenas of human activity, in other words, between their subjective and objective realities. In addition, when interviewing the teachers, I attempted to assemble accurate information about participants’ practices by maintaining a balance between objective enquiry and my subjective interactions with the interviewees.

I also applied my analysis of the main structural and stylistic features of self-help texts to one of the books that was most popular with the respondents. It is adherence to these features that, to a large extent, characterises the genre and makes it accessible to a general readership.

## 4.2 Interview data relating to research question 1

### What self-help books are the most popular with Intermediate Phase language teachers?

Figure 1 shows the self-help books named by the participants, the frequency with which they were named and their distribution between the three schools.

Title	Author	Tembisa	Diepkloof	Alexandra
<i>Rich Dad, Poor Dad</i>	Robert T. Kiyosaki	3	1	2
<i>On Death and Dying</i>	Elisabeth Kübler-Ross	0	0	5
<i>Capitalist Nigger</i>	Chika Onyeani	2	0	0
<i>Who Moved My Cheese?</i>	Spencer Johnson	1	0	5
<i>Laws of Attraction</i>	Steve Pavlina	1	0	0
<i>The Secret</i>	Rhonda Byrne	1	1	0
<i>God is my CEO</i>	Larry Julian	1	0	0
<i>Nice Girls don't get rich</i>	Lois P. Frankel	0	1	0
<i>When All You Ever Wanted Isn't Enough</i>	Harold Kushner	1	0	0

Total number of respondents: 10

**Figure 1: Titles, authors, number and distribution of self-help books named by teachers at three Gauteng schools**

Some of the books were borrowed by the respondent from other colleagues at their school, or were recommended by colleagues, so they were mentioned by respondents from the same school group. In the case of the Alexandra group, they were all motivated to read the same book by their common experiences of bereavement: this was the case with Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's *On Death and Dying* (1969), which was circulated and discussed among colleagues, and which one of the respondents now owns as she received it as a gift from her daughter. This was a very convincing example of a literacy practice as a communal activity.

Only one book was mentioned by at least one respondent at each of the three schools, namely *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Robert Kiyosaki. This was therefore the most widely read book.

Respondents also said that they had read self-help books or practical Christian books on the following topics, but did not supply titles or authors: single parenting; herbal remedies and nutrition; how to be a strong, courageous woman.

Two of the respondents, both men, did not give the titles or authors of any self-help books, but one of them mentioned a book by T.D. Jakes, and another by Joyce Warner. These are both popular and prolific Christian authors.

### **4.3 Interview data relating to research question 2**

**Do teachers perceive their reading of self-help books as affecting their personal lives?  
If so, how?**

All eleven participants expressed their appreciation for self-help books as a means of bringing about positive change in their lives and assisting them in furthering their goals. Eight were able to give specific accounts of how this had occurred.

The participants' attempts to generate cultural capital were evident in their choice of books belonging to the motivational genre, particularly those that they believed would give them access to economic advantage within particular fields by familiarising them with types of discourse from which they had largely been excluded. Unsurprisingly, the promise of financial success appears to be the strongest motivation for teachers choosing this kind of book. Books on business, investment and management were shown to be very popular, to the extent that they are virtually a separate category on their own. Two of the participants, Celia and Dudu, claim that following the precepts of Robert Kiyosaki and other financial gurus has enabled them to make money. Celia is already wealthy, while Dudu believes that she is "on the way" to becoming affluent. Mpho describes her son, an enthusiastic reader of self-help texts, as a devotee of Kiyosaki.

The biggest category of books named by the respondents as having profoundly affected their lives is that of general self-development, which covers the following kinds of topics: developing leadership qualities, management skills, understanding of oneself and others, building self-confidence, embracing change, practising a positive attitude.

Gugu spoke of how reading Pavlina's *Laws of Attraction* enabled him to overcome his diffidence and start expressing his opinions in professional meetings and workshops. Dudu used to feel nervous and at a disadvantage when engaging with strangers, and found her reading helpful in building up her confidence so that she could feel "on the same level with other people".

Mpho also revels in her new-found confidence. She and some of her colleagues were strongly influenced by Johnson's *Who Moved my Cheese?*, which advocates a proactive attitude in all aspects of life, so that one is able to embrace change and utilise opportunities. Mpho summed up the perceived benefits of reading these kinds of books: "I find that I grow personally and socially and they also equip me for living more successfully." She describes how this kind of reading enabled her to deal with new professional challenges that stretched her abilities and allowed her to engage more fully with her learners.

From all these points of view, a book that made a huge impression on three Tembisa teachers was Onyeani's provocatively titled *Capitalist Nigger*. As Gugu explained: "... it is about motivating us black people to be outgoing, to be innovative, not to wait for things to be done for us ... not to be afraid of opening up our own businesses, not to allow ourselves to be controlled by fear and doubt."

The respondents were in no doubt about the benefits of their self-help reading, and provided a strong argument against the scepticism of critics like Rozel, who see the doctrine of "human perfectibility" as anachronistic and irrational. In Bourdieu's terms, this could be seen as an instance of misrecognition, of the teachers failing to recognise that existing social structures inevitably perpetuate the interests of an elite class of which they are not members, although this view should probably be balanced against the objective reality of the changing social and political realities in South Africa.

The desire to acquire symbolic capital, in the form of status and power, was shown to be at least an equally compelling reason to read self-help books. Two respondents said that they did so in order to gain status and authority over others. Bheki, an office-bearer in his union and a deputy principal, was recently ousted from his job, apparently because of his disruptive union activities, and “promoted sideways” to his present post as deputy principal of a different school. He was anxious to assert his authority in the union and at the new school, and spoke of reading self-help books as a way of developing the skills and personal qualities necessary to do this successfully. He also mentioned the necessity of “carrying himself” in a way suited to “a charismatic kind of a leader”.

It is interesting to note that the very fact that one is a reader of self-help books seems to confer status. Both Celia and Jabu are looked up to by their colleagues, who rely on them to recommend and supply new titles. Both Bheki and Ivan volunteered to be interviewed although neither of them could give the titles of any self-help books, possibly because they felt that to be identified as readers was necessary in maintaining their status as deputy principals. Hlengiwe’s interview was also revealing from this point of view, as she feels that she has learnt so much from her reading that she is equipped to counsel and inspire others at the school, which she does by speaking at the school assemblies. Celia said that she uses the books to defuse conflict between colleagues, both by exercising her personal authority to intervene and negotiate in disagreements, and by using the authority of texts and precepts to defuse conflict situations.

In 2003, Pretorius claimed that reading was not valued among teachers of Grade 12s. This finding was supported by Gains, in relation to Foundation Phase teachers, in 2010. This study focuses on Intermediate Phase teachers, but there is no reason to assume that their attitudes will differ from those of the interviewees in Pretorius and Gains’ study. Van Staden and Howie’s 2010 study indicated that teachers viewed reading as a purely instrumental activity. In view of this, there appears to have been an enormous shift in attitude over a very short time. However, Van Staden and Howie conducted their study among rural teachers, so the discrepancy could also be due to a deepening rift between urban and rural societies, including the literacy practices of the two groups. It also provides a telling illustration of Bourdieu’s view that habitus is shifting and dynamic.

Another major theme that emerged from the interviews was that of illness and bereavement. Lefa had been in a coma and three others had dealt with the deaths of younger family members. Jabu, one of the principals, explained that she has brought a copy of Kübler-Ross's *On Death and Dying* (1969) to school. Some of the staff have passed it around and discussed it, finding that it helps them work through their grief.

The respondents also explained that self-help books have enabled them to be of service to family members, friends, colleagues and learners. Four of the teachers interviewed mentioned reading popular Christian authors and the Bible, and their habituses are obviously strongly imbued with Christian values, which stress service and sacrifice, which does not contradict the way in which qualities of conformity and obedience comprise cultural capital in many traditional African societies. Four of the teachers (Bheki, Celia, Hlengiwe and Jabu) expressed their wish to help and counsel others. In this context, the choice of books was also indicative of the personal concerns of the individual participants, for example, Fikile was interested to find out about single parenting and handling teenagers, while Dudu wanted to know about herbal remedies so she could treat her asthmatic son with medicinal herbs.

When asked about the general purpose of self-help books, two of the teachers summed up their ideas like this: '... there are so many conflicts at home, people are sick and they can't, they can't tolerate you know the, the environment that they live on. So I think now the motivational books are there to help us to show people, to say we can survive this, we can survive this!' (Celia). 'I feel we have to give our children hope ... as much as these books give me hope. I feel I must share it.' (Hlengiwe)

Another way in which the respondents feel that self-help books are valuable is that of simply extending basic information about the world. Teachers are aware of the deficits in their own education, and feel that they are remedying at least some of these by their reading. According to Celia: 'Amongst so many people you can discuss anything, even though ... you'll not be able to know things in depth but at least you'll be able to have an idea of what people are talking about.'

None of the respondents acknowledges directly that their reading could help to improve their English language skills. On the contrary, the teachers tend to stress the instrumental nature of the books in providing information and practical advice. This supports Prinsloo's contention

that in general they regard reading as a strategy to achieve practical ends, and are therefore attracted to this type of reading material.

It is generally accepted that increased reading in English leads to vocabulary development, increased oral fluency and an extended ability to process and use more complex syntax. If this is in fact happening, then self-help reading is providing the teachers with the kind of cultural capital that is most fundamental to economic advancement, namely a more fluent and versatile use of English. As Bourdieu points out, language use is inextricably linked to social contexts and to class divisions, and this is particularly the case in South Africa, where one's position in almost all fields is largely determined by proficiency in the dominant language. Whether or not the teachers enhanced language proficiency benefits their learners will probably depend on their willingness to adopt more progressive methodologies in reading instruction, as well as their awareness of the importance of developing the individual reading skills of their learners. They should be able to help students derive similar pleasure from reading by selecting suitable materials for their learners, relating to their needs and interests.

#### **4.4 Book analysis relating to research question 3**

For purposes of this study it was necessary to analyse one of the books identified by the interviewees in order to determine whether or not it conformed to the criteria I had identified as characteristic of self-help books, as described in section 3.11. The book I chose to analyse was *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Robert Kiyosaki (2003), since it was the most widely read by the interviewees.

##### **What are some common features of the self-help books that they choose?**

In general, the book conforms to the characteristics identified as typical of the motivational genre in the following respects:

##### **The content of the book**

The author debunks the notion that traditional academic attainment will automatically ensure a lifetime of financial security for an individual. It makes a case for training young people in the management of their personal finances – an area that is unaccountably neglected in most education systems. He offers sound basic principles for managing money intelligently and growing one's assets over time. His suggestions appear to be sound and practical; any

individual who follows them consistently will undoubtedly benefit from doing so. But the book does not offer simple solutions, or the “quick fix” that the title seems to offer. In fact, the author does the opposite, using detailed anecdotes to illustrate the discipline and sustained hard work required to achieve the goal of financial security.

### **The title**

The repeated “dad” invokes the stability of a close family relationship and suggests that the book’s contents have personal relevance to the welfare of the individual. In contrast, the rich-poor dichotomy implies an enormous shift from one extreme to another. Most of the public are interested in money and in acquiring wealth, and in this case the author uses basic antithetical concepts to suggest a shift from one polarity to the other.

The use of short, basic, single-syllable vocabulary implies that readers are being offered straightforward, down-to-earth formulae which will enable them to bridge a fundamental gap. The tension between these contrasting concepts makes the title intriguing to the average person.

The title is therefore memorable and catchy, and begins to establish authorial authority, with echoes of a fundamental, parental relationship.

### **The format of the book and its stylistic features**

The introduction to the book consists of an endorsement by the co-author, who describes how Robert Kiyosaki’s principles of financial planning and management have benefited her family. She relates in a personal, anecdotal style how she met the author, was impressed by the soundness of his ideas and agreed to co-author the book. The style is chatty, and the narrative unfolds through dialogue interspersed with personal reflection. She writes from the point of view of a parent who is concerned about her children’s future, and of a citizen who is aware of living in an era of social and economic instability. Both these points of view would resonate with the average reader. At the same time, the authority of the originator of the content is endorsed. In all these aspects it is similar to Stephen Covey’s book, as is the technique used throughout this book, of using a series of anecdotes to illustrate points and keep the attention of the reader.



In this introduction and throughout the book, first- and second-person pronouns are used: “I”, ‘we’ and ‘you’ heighten the effect that the author is speaking directly to the reader, and in this section the impression is also created that there is an intimate bond between the two authors – that they have combined their efforts in order to benefit the reader. Again, this echoes the two books originally examined as typical of the self-help genre.

## **Chapter One**

The first chapter is a first-person account of Kiyosaki’s interactions with his two fathers – his own and that of a close friend - and their contrasting attitudes towards money. Direct speech is used to strengthen the contrast between the two. Throughout the book, the points that the author wishes to make are expressed through the use of repeated elements, contrast and antithesis, for example:

“One dad said, ‘The reason I’m not rich is because I have you kids’. The other said, ‘The reason I must be rich is because I have you kids.’” (p. 15)

“...(O)ur culture has educated us to learn a profession so we can work for money, but has failed to teach us how to have money work for us.” (p. 165)

As well as providing neatly formulated maxims, these bald statements lend authority to the text, and an aura of indisputable truth. They are easily remembered, and the reader has a sense of sharing the wisdom and experience of a powerful and insightful leader – the archetypal father figure.

The author also quotes in full the Robert Frost poem *The Road not Taken*, relating it to his decision to learn from his “rich dad”. The juxtaposition of a popular text is thus used to validate his choice and reinforce his authority. It also rounds out the reader’s concept of the author as a person: he may say that the formal education system is inadequate, but he is, nonetheless, a literate person who reads and appreciates poetry.

Another technique is used towards the end of the chapter and repeated throughout the book: a set of contrasting statements are arranged in a logical sequence of cause and effect that progresses towards a resounding conclusion: “Money is one form of power. But what is more

important is financial education. Money comes and goes, but if you have the education about how money works, you gain power over it and can begin building wealth.” (p. 19).

### **Chapters Two to Seven**

These chapters deal, in turn, with the six lessons that the author learnt from his mentor. The lessons are expressed in very simple everyday language, e.g. “The Rich Don’t Work for Money”. Each lesson is repeated, elucidated and illustrated in a separate section. This is done partly by means of personal anecdotes, the main feature of which is direct speech: conversations are recounted which the author could not possibly remember verbatim, but which make lively and convincing reading. The mentor engages the young novice in question-and-answer sequences and leads him to conclusions in a manner reminiscent of Socratic dialogues; this heightens the impression that the ideas that are expressed have the status of universal truths.

The succinct language also contributes to the mnemonic aspect of the text. The straightforward syntax and everyday lexis give a sense of being spoken to directly by a wiser, more experienced mentor who has one’s best interests at heart and who wants, therefore, to share some common-sense information, taking us into his confidence in a way that is neither patronising nor pompous. The sense of being an initiate is heightened by some of the phrases that are used, for example: “Now that you know the secret of . . . , you are ready to . . . .” (p. 43).

Another device employed in this part of the book is traditional symbolism to explain concepts: in this case, the Japanese notion of the sword, the jewel and the mirror. Kiyosaki explains that these stand for different types of power – respectively, military power, the power of money and the power of self-knowledge. This is a neat way of making abstract concepts more concrete and comprehensible. It also invokes an element of ancient wisdom that adds to the gravitas and authority of Kiyosaki himself and the ideas he wishes to emphasise: that self-knowledge is the most important of the three. Covey and Ruiz also employ the device of using traditional stories and folklore to emphasise their points.

The author uses simple block diagrams to illustrate graphically the various kinds of relationships between income and expenses and assets and liabilities. These are probably the

least successful of the techniques he employs, but the diagrams do provide a change of mode after 60 pages of unrelieved words. The book is designed, after all, to appeal to an audience who do not necessarily have advanced literacy skills.

While there are no obviously “coined” words of the kind that I identified in my original analysis of typical self-help books, Kiyosaki is careful to define, reiterate and give his own interpretation of the key vocabulary that he employs: *asset*, *liability* and so on.

From this analysis, it should be clear that this book displays, in all its essential features, the main characteristics identified as typical of the self-help genre.

#### **4.5 Interview data relating to research question 4**

##### **What else, if anything, do they choose to read?**

Books that were named, other than self-help books, are as follows:

- *Distant View of a Minaret* by Alifa Rifaat: this is a collection of short stories about the lives of Muslim women in Egypt; the respondent gave the title but not the author
- *A Letter to My Daughter* by Maya Angelou
- *Animal Farm* by George Orwell: a satirical novel, frequently prescribed for Senior Phase or FET students; the respondent gave the title but named the author incorrectly
- Romances published by Mills and Boon (no authors named)
- The Bible was mentioned by three participants
- *The Man with Two Faces* by Bram Fischer, a memoir and collection of political essays
- Thrillers by James Hadley Chase.

Authors who were named by respondents, but without the titles of any of their books, were Nelson Mandela, Steven Biko, Desmond Tutu, the Pedi novelist O.K. Matsephe, T.D. Jakes and Joyce Warner (both popular writers of books about incorporating Christian principles into a modern lifestyle), Warren Buffet and Richard Branson.

The works of Shakespeare were mentioned, and the titles of two of his plays: *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

Magazines and newspapers named included *Daily Sun*, *the Sunday Times*, *Bona*, *True Love*, and *Destiny*. Writers of columns and articles, named without the periodicals in which their work appears: Jonathan Jansen, Ted Demetriou (the coach of a local football team).

#### **4.6 Interview data relating to research question 5**

##### **Do teachers who read self-help books also read children's books?**

Six of the respondents claim to read children's books. Only one, Jabu, specifically said that she read them for herself, found them amusing, and enjoyed the illustrations. The others who made the claim may not have meant reading for themselves, but in class, during shared reading lessons – this is a point that should definitely have been clarified during the interviews. Mpho mentioned using books supplied by an agency, but could not name any titles, possibly because the books used by the class were “little books” that are part of a reading scheme, and do not have memorable titles.

Two respondents besides Jabu specifically stated that they read aloud to their classes and were able to give the titles of the books they used for this purpose. Titles named for reading aloud were *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Celia), *Just Like Me* (Fikile), *Noddy and Big Ears* and *Mr Big Nose* (Jabu). Fikile uses *Just Like Me* as the basis for interactive storytelling rather than simply for reading aloud; she is an older person who was trained by READ in storytelling and using stories in the classroom. She uses the same story to entertain her own grandchildren.

Bheki and Ivan said that they did not use books in class – they preferred to use photocopied passages, some of them taken from newspapers.

Two of the teachers gave reasons why they do not read to their learners or encourage individual reading in general, although they are clearly aware that this is expected of them:

“I never read storybooks to my children because when we were growing up we were never exposed to such ... we never had such things. So maybe that is why we never read storybooks to our children.” (Dudu)

This kind of comment resonates with Diane Reay’s study, in which she finds confirmation of the family as the primary site for the reproduction of cultural capital, and therefore of class distinction.

Ivan had this to say about his language teaching: “I do not read for my children. I let them read, make mistakes, make corrections when necessary and before I make corrections I will then ask the class ... what do you think is the correct way to pronounce or to read this or to do that before I actually come into the picture. They’ve got to do the corrections first, until such time that I realise that they’ve exhausted everything, then can I come in.”

The interview data therefore confirmed that very few teachers read to their classes. Even though they are aware of the need to expose children to books, they find reasons not to do so and do not regard the matter of early literacy as particularly urgent. Very few of the teachers make the connection between reading aloud to children and sharing books with them to facilitate the process of making meaning from print – the kind of interaction with adults that is so strongly advocated by Fader (1981), Meek (1991) and Smith (1988). Neither do they acknowledge the connection between the modelling of reading behaviour, or between reading and writing, which Hudelson (1994) advocates as particularly valuable for children learning an additional language. The implications are that the learners in township schools are failing to acquire the cultural capital necessary for social and economic advancement, and are excluded from the dominant discourse in the same way as the children in the Trackton community documented by Shirley Heath (1996).

The teachers’ failure to share their regard for reading with their learners is particularly interesting when one considers it in the light of Barton and Hamilton’s view of literacy as being primarily social and embedded in broad social goals. In contrast to their failure to promote children’s literacy, the teachers’ reading has a strong communal element as they recommend, read and discuss books in groups at school, attempting to match particular texts to the perceived needs of individuals in the group.

Why the teachers do not perceive the need to promote an obviously highly-valued literacy practice with their learners is not clear. According to Luke and Freebody's repertoire of literacy practices (1992), the teachers are able to decode, and to participate in the meanings of text. From this research, it appears that they are less adept at using the texts functionally, at least in their professional roles, or at critically analysing and transforming texts so they can be utilised for the all-important task of facilitating early literacy. However, it is preferable to keep in mind Diane Reay's caution (2004) that the transformation of habitus and the generation of cultural capital is complex and one should avoid making simplistic generalisations about it.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion**

These are several concluding points that have not yet been touched on, or perhaps have not been sufficiently emphasised.

The interviewees were selected on the basis of their being readers of self-help texts, but the transcripts do not adequately convey the enthusiasm with which the majority of participants spoke of books that had positively affected their lives. Although there is a strong demand for publications that conform to the conventions of this genre, it is apparent from the data that “motivational” books have become the norm against which other books are measured, so that any book is termed “motivational” by the teachers if they find them particularly relevant or inspiring, for example, biographies of famous leaders, and any literary work that deals with controversial issues or moral dilemmas, such as Shakespeare’s plays.

The participants did not distinguish between Christian books that give practical advice and books that give advice but do not have a religious focus. Their socialisation into this belief system is so thorough that any of the forms of cultural capital that they perceive to be within their grasp as a result of their reading, such as self-development, confidence building, business success and so on, are seen as entirely compatible with their religious worldview and communal dispositions. Commentators like Christine Whelan (2010) see the self-help genre as being fundamentally linked to an egalitarian ideology, and this is obviously a factor in its success among local communities.

Although the interviews indicate that most of the teachers come from a Christian background, religious instruction is forbidden in schools and they have to find other ways to help the learners in their care, as well as their own families and communities.

Developing their personal abilities through the reading of self-help texts, whether presented as books or magazine articles, or through other media, is perceived as an accessible way of achieving this, and a means of exploring what an individualistic Western culture has to offer. Finally, it is clear that the efforts of the teachers to transform their habituses have not impacted on their professional practice in the teaching of reading. This suggests that the

transformation is far from complete, or largely superficial. Before effective interventions can be planned, a lot more information will be needed on teachers' literacy habitus.



## **APPENDIX A: Participant's information sheet**

### **Participant's information sheet**

My name is Hilary Wilson, and I'm completing a research study for my Master's degree at Wits University. I hope that you will help me by letting me interview you. The aim of my research is to find out what teachers read.

We all know that many of our learners struggle with reading, and that we need to find ways of helping them to become more proficient readers. I want to find out more about the reading habits of teachers – what books they choose to read, why they like those books and how they see them influencing their own lives. This information could be used to help teachers become better at teaching reading.

Many teachers enjoy reading self-help books. These are books that give practical advice, for example, on how to run businesses, how to feel more confident, or how to keep healthy. You have been chosen to take part in the study because you are a reader of books like these.

I'd like to ask you more detailed questions about the books you like. The interview shouldn't take longer than 30 minutes. I'll record your answers, and when I've used the information you give me, I'll erase the recording. No one will know who you are, and I'll keep your interview completely confidential. To make sure of this, I will ask you to sign a form giving me permission to use your interview and making sure that your privacy is protected.

If you have any questions, please contact me. My details are:

Tel: 0824134105 / 011 6735776

Email: [hilaryw@iafrica.com](mailto:hilaryw@iafrica.com)

## **APPENDIX B: Participant's consent form**

### **Participant's consent form**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to Hilary Wilson using my interview responses as research data for her study of teachers' reading practices. I understand that

- I may withdraw from the interview at any time
- I may withhold permission for the use of my interview responses at any time
- I will not be disadvantaged if I choose not to participate
- Any costs incurred in the course of the research, such as travel costs, will be met in full by Hilary Wilson
- no information that may identify me will be included in the research report and my writing will remain confidential.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX C: Principal's briefing letter and consent form**

### **Principal's briefing letter and consent form**

**To: The Principal**

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_

Sir/Madam

I am conducting research on teachers' leisure reading habits. I would be most grateful if you would allow me to conduct one or more interviews on school premises. The interviews will not take more than 30 minutes and will not disrupt school routines in any way. Any information relating to the identity of the school will be kept completely confidential, as will the names of the teachers who participate in the research.

If you agree to permit the interview/s on school premises, please sign the slip below.

With thanks

Hilary Wilson

-----

### **Principal's consent form**

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to allow Hilary Wilson to interview member/s of my staff on school premises.

**Signature of Principal:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX D: Interview questions**

### **Interview questions**

1. I believe that you enjoy reading. What kinds of things do you like to read - magazines, novels, any other types of books...? Why do you enjoy this kind of reading?
2. I understand that you like reading self-help books. How many of them have you read? What do you like about them? Why do you think people like reading this kind of book?
3. Can you give the title of a self-help book that you have read? Can you remember who wrote it? What was it about? Did you like it – why, or why not? Do you think this book helped you in any way – if so, how?
4. Do you ever read children's books? If so, tell me about a children's book that you liked. Where did you get it from? Did you read it for yourself, or did you read it to your class?

INTERVIEWEE DETAILS		
AREA	NAME	DESIGNATION
Tembisa	Bheki	deputy principal
	Celia	head of department
	Dudu	teacher
	Fikile	teacher
Alexandra	Jabu	principal
	Mpho	head of department
	Lefa	teacher
	Phindile (extra voice)	school secretary
Diepkloof	Hlengiwe	deputy principal
	Ivan	deputy principal

## Interview transcript: Bheki

### SPEAKERS

**B: Bheki, the interviewee**

**H: Hilary, the interviewer**

**T: Person supplying technical assistance**

H: When we spoke before, you saw it as a very necessary part of your role, as a leader ... to read various things ...

B: As I indicated to say, I don't like, I love reading. I'm addicted to reading. To such an extent, to every day in, day out. I'm not selective that much. But when I read seriously I read motivational books. But to a secondary level I read any piece of paper that has any information whether I read it from Daily Sun, whether I read it from magazine, whether from the local newspapers and so on and so on. So.. I.. I get different ideas on different topical issues from various experts because I am a leader in my own house, I am also a leader, also in the school as a man, as a deputy principal. I am also a leader, a office bearer in my union at the level of the... region and also province and also assist in the Department of Education. In that way you cannot be able to develop issues if you are not ahead of issues. The only way to be ahead of issues you must be informed. The only way to be informed is to read and also listen. So I read a lot.

H: You said you found it useful to read things about report-writing and Christian kind of literature. Would you...um... have you got... um...any... is that so, are there any other kinds of books that you...that you look at. You say you like motivational books?

B: Ja, of late.

H: Yes ...

B: Because I could see myself as a role-model. Because I have developed quite a number of people so I must be able to carry myself in a manner that I'll be able to be... to appear to be somebody being a kind of charismatic kind of a leader... you know because I... I'd pick from other... the great people. You check Mandela, I check what I want from him, I check the discipline from other. I check others and so on I take these qualities and modify them into myself and make myself what I am.

H: Can you think of some specific books that have... that you have read that have... um...been important for you?

B: It's just that I have... um... I have read a lot of books, but um... There um... there has been the one that I read when I was.. um.. doing grade 8...um... Animal Farm. By um... I'm not sure who's the writer whether it was Powell...

H: George Orwell?

B: Ja, because those characters there are able to show that where you are Snowball and so on and so on then I will be able to interpret it and visualise that one. So that is the one. And also the one..um.. the one that I like most.. the Merchant.. um by William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, The Merchant of Venice, So I look at these characters and look into what happens in this happen...

H: Yes ...

B: And um... also this Sepedi one. I like the ...by OK Matsephe was very good. In my own, it was... That was a great writer O K Matsephe. And I would... he..uh was our own...uh... William Shakespeare... in our own ingenious language.

H: Sepedi...

B: So those great philosophers and writers in my own language and in the other people's language would be also able to help me a lot and I also read...I think this is what fiction or non-fiction books ... ah... what is it... there's this guy... that always writes h sleeve' who's that, uh, and then I think a popular writer. Ja, eh, fictions, um, those are very good books but I only read that interestingly ...

H: what is it about, Bheki? Is it a story or uh...?

B: Ja, it's just stories about, uh, characters but... That's why I say as of now when I grow I have now to...to choose, yes I read but specifically which one interests me most of late. Then I choose motivational books. When I go there I only go into the motivational service ... and there's ....

H: And you... you can't think of an author that you like or is it just general ?

B: Uh... Eish...

H: It doesn't matter...

B: Ja, no like I said in the last time, eh, I just forgot that, he's... he's a professor . It's Doctor Somebody and in UK. Ja, but I said he's a mutual... motivational speakers, have got a Christian ...

background of how to motivate people and also, I'd also like, uh, also like, uh, ... what the, the, um, what is also like some pieces of information written by, eh, Desmond Tutu.

H: OK...

B Ja, he's... he's a clown. You know Desmond Tutu, and, ah....?

H: Does what... he's a writer also?

B: No, no he's a, a, he's an Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

H: Oh, Desmond Tutu.

B: Ja ...

H: Oh, of course yes ...

B: And, um, also ... I think Ted Demetriou, he's, he's a soccer coach but sometimes he ... the (?) he writes in other magazines, Ted Demetriou. Uh, ah, Sundowns now, is he? Ja, he was with Sundowns. So I think those pieces of information ...

H: Okay.

B: ... able to help me be what I am because I said they help. Ah, reading have helped me to be responsible, to take ownership and also to be accountable.

H: Yes, yes ...

B: I said those are the only three areas that make me in my work to survive even in life until today.

H: Hmm ...

B: Because whatever that I read I always associate it with something that I'm doing. Is it maybe helping me to be responsible? Is it helping me to take ownership of the environment that I'm in and the others are in? But would I be accountable in what I'm doing?

H: Lovely...

B: So... I, indeed I... I'm a great reader, it's just that, um, I'm reading every day, every day, every day, on internet ... and check also I like these books that talks about ... human resource management.

H: Okay...

B: Ja, I may not specifically talk about one author what, but all, every book that talks about human resources management because life is dynamic even in the, both in the work environment and even outside. I must know how a person thinks, what interests a person, how to motivate a person to become a better person out of it.

H: Hmm, Ben, do you ever read children's books?

B: Yes, um, but not to a greater extent. But, eh, of late, um, as deputy in this school last year, and I'm in charge of library... and I've learnt to, you might say, I'm myself time because I'm growing of age, I've got children, and I'll also be having grandchildren, I, uh, have one.

H: Oh!

B: So I must be in the know of how to help me to be knowing how children think.

H: Hmm, hmm, hmm...

B: Here, I've got an educational background of secondary school and, eh, my level are very high. Now, I'm here in a primary school and there are this little ones, grade R, up to, to grade 3 they are still little ones. They call me uncle, all of them, all of them.

H: (Laughs)

B: And, um, so I must always understand, eh, how they feel and how also, um, to respond to any utterance that they make. With, eh, the view that I do not hurt their feelings because we also come from different, eh, backgrounds. And I must be able to...

H: Also the reading, I'm sure they, eh, you want to turn them into readers especially if you, uh, you're in charge of the library.

B: Hmm, ja, the problem is just that I'm an overseer on that one.

H: Hmm, okay.

B: I, eh, I, because I come from Ridgely (?) Primary School, that side, uh, Winnie Mandela, there we, we... because when I came here, I, I also photocopied, ah, figuratively... the ... what we're using there, for learners to read for pleasure. Um, it's something I still have to ... I, I did introduce it here but it's something that I must inculcate as a culture in the teachers first. I did it for two months here, the kids were enjoying it, to read for pleasure in... every, they stand in front of their own classes in the morning, just for fifteen minutes, ah, a learner ... but we become selective to say you can't bring this kind of book ... you, eh, pornography and whatever, you can't bring this one. Read for... you return it, then I'll just handpick randomly, and pick it come and read. Read for me and then there will also be some days when we bring them in front and say this one is the best learner in that grade or in that class, read for them ... and, uh, so that encourages the learners, eh, to read more, because that is one of the challenges we are having here as also found by, eh, the Foundations for Learning document, and also the systemic evaluation in 2005-6. That indeed when I found them here, I found even learners in my class, because I'm also teaching, who cannot read ... and write... and, uh, it tells you that how is this learner going to approach another class if the learner is unable to read. So you cannot take this learner to read ... a very serious a very serious content issues ... for this learner to be able to read that you must, eh, what you call it? Inculcate ... the culture of reading for interest in this learner, so that when you write seriously you know that this is the reason behind.

H: Thank you, thanks very much Bheki, I think that's okay, Liam?

T: Is it?



H: Yes okay, thank you. That's a wonderful interview ... thank you.

## Interview transcript: Celia

### Speakers

**C:** Celia, the interviewee

**H:** Hilary, the interviewer

H: Okay Celia, last time you told me about some books that you enjoy ....

C: Uhm...

H: And you told me you were a great reader.

C: Yes, I am.

H: Just tell us about what you like to read.

C: Hm, actually I like reading everything I lay my eyes on. So, I even read, even, Afrikaans books, I do read. So, and I'm a subscriber to Krom (?) books and Exclusive Books, so every time when they've got, um, specials they call me and sms, then I go and buy. Because every month me and my husband we buy books.

H: And you also read lots of newspapers?

C: Yes I do, I read three newspapers every day. The Times, Sunday, eh... The Sowetan and, and Daily Sun. On Saturday... on Sunday we buy Sunday Times is delivered to our place. So we buy Citizens, Sunday Sun and Sunday World....

H: And were you...

C: And during the week, and then the Business Times again.

H: You say you buy books every month?

C: Yes we do

H: What kind of books? What kind of books, what are some of the titles that you've bought?

C: Um, I bought, um, motivational books and my husband will always buy financial books or business books, yes.

H: And, uh, you share, uh, you and your husband share the books?

C: Yes, we do. Like in most cases we're in, we're in property business. So in everything that he reads, he'll always say 'Hey come listen to this, you need to know this.' And then he will always buy, he got so many books on, um...um Kiyosaki, or whoever, eh, *Rich Boy*?

H: *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*?

C: *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*, all the versions mostly and then he's got another books for, who's this guy?  
The Virgin Active Guy...

H: Richard Branson?

C: Eh, Richard Branson.

H: Yes ...

C: He buys his books. And he buys books for... oh, I forgot the name of this guy.

H: Doesn't matter ....

C: Moffat?

H: Oh! Buffet?

C: Buffet, yes!

H: Warren Buffet.

C: Warren Buffet, ja. He's got all the... he's got his versions of Warren Buffet on business and stuff.

H: And you read them too?

C: Yes I do, when he says 'This is interesting, you need to read this' then that's when I read. But mostly I'm in motivational books.

H: Uh, uh, and have you ...

C: And autobiographies.

H: Have you found them, uh, anything that's useful to you personally?

C: A lot. I do, because every time you, you, eh, got sort of engaged and you're up to date with whatever is happening around you. That will affect you positively or negatively, then you are always, you know 'I like that or I heard about this or I read about this' like they say that property interest rates are going to go up and you said 'Oh this is what Warren Buffet said about such things, when the interest rates go high this is what's going to happen to the properties' you know, and you compare authors.

H: And you... you can apply them to, you... you know...

C: Yes, practically, yes you can... you can.

H: And, um, at school do you read children's books?

C: Yes I do. I re... I do. In my class we've got a library box.

H: Hmmmm....

C: So last year we received new books. It's a reader with, eh, it's some sort of a novel, short stories. So, there was, eh, *Charlie and the factories?* Eh, *the chocolate factories?* *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* book....

H: Hmm....

C: So we, I wanted them to read something and then they were far ahead of me, they said 'Mam can we please read *Charlie and the Factory*, eh, and the *Chocolate Factory?*' and we read that. And the other thing that they like that I also like reading, eh, it's me actually who is introduce *Oliver Twist* to...to ...

H: to them...

C: To them. And then last week they gave me *101 Dalmatian* book.

H: Oh, nice!

C: They said I must go and read that. So I, I, I haven't found time to read that.

H: So, you've got a class full of little readers and you also share books with them

C: Even my, my former students, they do come to me and say 'Mam, I remember when we were in grade 5 or grade 4 you spoke about such-and-such a book, so I found a book and I read the book.'

H: Oh, that's lovely.

C: Some do bring books to me to say 'Mam I know you like reading, can you please read this book for, for, just for interest's sake.'

H: Isn't that lovely?

C: it is, very much so. It is lovely.

H: Do you think that your reading of motivational books has also helped you as, eh, a teacher and a practitioner?

C: I think it has helped me a lot - especially after I lost my daughter. So that helped me, you know, to be on the same level with other people. (coughs) excuse me (coughs) because some of the things that people told you about that you'll go through, so you think most of the time, ah, this is just a story, but if you read and go down, uh, you know you digest and get down into what you are reading about and you're sort of have a broader focus of what is happening, a broader spectrum of what is happening or that what is going to happen about you. Especially when you are...

H: Especially when you are dealing with grief.

C: Ja, with grief, yes.

H: Ja, ja. Have you ever used, ah, any of your motivational, um, books, ah, with the children in class or is it not suitable?

C: I think some of the things they are suitable but you just bring them to their level.

H: Yes ... yes.

C: And they're not even aware that maybe it's that you have read or that you are practising in them.

H: Hmmm, hmmm

C: But mostly I liked doing thing... eh, talking to my colleagues, especially when there's a, a little bit of conflict, because I don't like conflict. So because I've read many things on conflicts and I've read many stories, you are able to, you know, to bring peace amongst the people, to say people it is not wise if maybe we can bring books that one day we don't eat for our lunch we just say okay let's read anything that you've got and after a week we'll sit down and share what we have read and we share ideas, because that will help us, especially us teachers. If we are with other people from especially from the corporate world you find us struggling to get engaged on things because we are not well versed but if you read a lot you are able to engage with...

H: Yes ...

C: Amongst so many people you can discuss anything, even though you, you'll not be able to know things in depth but at least you'll be able to have an idea of what people are talking about.

H: Yes, yes.

C: And you'll be able to maybe add one idea or share something with them.

H: Uh huh, no absolutely, it seems motivational books are very popular, as, you're a psychologist how do you account for the popularity of, ah, why do you think they are so popular, motivational books?

C: I think there are popular because of what the world is going through now. There are so many wars that we see on TV, there are so many conflicts at home, people are sick and they can't, they can't tolerate you know the, the environment that they live on. So I think now the motivational books are there to help us to show people to say, um, we can survive this, we can survive this.

H: So it's a message of hope...

C: Yes, of course it is.

H: And growth?

C: Yes, it is, mmm ...

H: and the... the community, this community here, why do you think, uh, they respond to motivational books?

C: The community around us?

H: Yes.

C: I think another thing is maybe if you, you, you compare yourself to the situation around you. You are able to get hope from what you... when somebody you know went through... to say if that person was able to come out of that situation, me too out through discussion anyway. You cannot

just get, eh, motivated when you seated alone in the corner, you don't share your problems with people, but if you are able to go out there and say people this is the problem I'm having... (coughs)

H: Let me get you some water.

C: Uh huh...

H: Sorry I'm just trying to get some water...

(Pause )

C: Thank you ....

H: So, um, it's a way of sharing, reading motivational books is a way of sharing and of...

C: We share feelings, yes ... We share emotions and stuff... and give support yes.

H: Oh! Okay, very interesting.

C: Thank you

H: Ja, it's a different idea of reading ...

C: Hmm...

H: And you discuss among yourselves, among the staff with, ah, Simon and so on, you discuss what you read?

C: Yes, we do. We occasionally do that, sometimes you know like I've borrowed him some books, um, I've borrowed him, eh, *Attraction*, *Force of Attraction*, something like that....

H: Hmm, he was mentioning that ...

C: Because they were different books on attraction, so like I've, um, *The Secret* and then I've shared with him, um, *A Letter to my Daughter*, I've shared with him, um, *How to Become a Man and Survive*. So, and he gives me books and we share ideas.

H: Hmm, okay, That's great that you do that ....

C: Thank you very much.

H: Celia, thank you very much.

C: It's a pleasure.

## Interview transcript: Dudu

### SPEAKERS

D: Dudu, the interviewee

H: Hilary, the interviewer

H: This is teacher ...um...Dudu. Would you mind telling me again about your reading and what you enjoy reading.

D: Um...The last time when we were here I told you that I like to read fiction and non-fiction books. With non-fiction books I'm looking at books that really empower us. Because I told you that I have a son who is asthmatic so I like to read such books because sometimes if he has an attack...at least if then I have that knowledge I am able to assist him with that seizure.

H: And uh... any...anything else? Do any other medical sort of books or uh motivational books?

D: Yes. Yes I do read motivational books uh...especially the ones that talk about how to become wealthy, like the rich son...rich dad, rich son. Because that way you know how to handle your finances and it really helps.

H: It really helps. Has it helped you?

D: Yeah in a way because now I know how to invest and because I'm...I'm also investing in property at the moment and I'm looking at diversifying my...my investments.

H: Ok

D: Yes.

H: That is exciting.

D: Yes it is.

H: So you...you actually are making money from...with the help of...of the books?

D: Yes.

H: um

D: Not that I'm really making money but I think I'm on the way....

H: On the way...

D: Yes...of making money.

H: Oh, that is very nice. And um...anything else that you can think of?

D: Um...As I told you I did English as my Honours because... I also read more books on how woman are oppressed.

H: Yes.

D: Yes. And I remember the book that I told you about it was a 'View from the Minaret'-

H: Yes.

D: It was about an Egyptian woman. Then she explains how she met her husband. And she says according to their religion as a Muslim they are not allowed to see the body of a woman. So for her

husband to see all her parts she had to go to the...because her husband was a doctor... she had to consult every day so that he can just see on piece today the other time she will...he will see the other piece until he saw all her body. That...and then after that they got married.

H; Oh, that is very strange isn't it?

D: Yeah, it is. It is. If...if you think of like their culture how woman are oppressed because you will think that it only...especially...it only happens to...to the black culture. Because uh...sometimes you believe that men are oppressive to woman. But it...when you read such books it opens up your mind to say some...cultures also experience the same thing.

H: Yes, yes. No, absolutely.

D: Yes.

H: And uh...um... did we mention...did we discuss children's books at all? Did you ah...

D: Yeah we did and...and I told you that I never read story books to my children because when we were growing up we were never exposed to such-

H: It wasn't a cultural thing-

D: Yeah we got...it wasn't a cultural thing. Yeah but I think it is beneficial to the... especially to the... to the children who are growing now because they are exposed to more books. And it is because they also attend eh... kindergarten and they want... they go to grade R and then to school...

H: So it helps to get them used to i-

D: So when we are growing up we never had such things. So maybe that is why we never read story books to our children.

H: But maybe that is why you enjoy books now.

D: Yes, I...I think...

H: You're discovering them....

D: Yes.

H: And your own children? Do you read to them?

D: Not that much.

H: But uh...uh maybe you will.

D: No... no I... I will read to my grandchildren because my... my children are older.

H: Are grown...are older...Yes. And the children at school?

D: Yes, yeah, we do actually encourage them to read because eh... we received a donation of books from a London school. So they gave us so many books. And then we also encourage the learners to read. And as I told you the other day that I also want to start a... a book club.

H: Oh yes...yes I remember you said that. That's lovely um...I think that is fine. Thanks. Thank you very much. That's...that's another lovely interview.

## **Interview transcript: Gugu**

### **SPEAKERS**

**G: Gugu, the interviewee**

**H: Hilary, the interviewer**

H: Gugu, I just wanted to...first of all, thank you very much for taking part. And also just to ask you about your reading and...and the kinds of books you enjoy. And whether you do much reading of motivational kind of books?

G: Yes. I like reading mostly motivational books. Yeah, they are very... books that I prefer reading most of the time.

H: What uh...can you think of some that you have enjoyed?

G: Yes there is a certain one that I was reading was about law of attraction. By Michael Lusier.

H: Yes?

G: Very much inspiring. Gives one a lot of insight. How to be confident... stay informed at all times. So....

H: Is that what it is about? Is it uh...the law of attraction?

G: Well it covers a lot of areas...a lot of areas. Yes so....

H: Has it helped you personally?

G: Personally, it did. For...because I am able to plan easily when I meet people I am able to participate in many of their workshops, especially the ones that are organized by the D.E.T.

H: Yes.....

G: I

H: Oh, that's wonderful ...

G: It was like I was looking confident....yes.

H: A bit shy and then...then it has helped you overcome that?

G: Exactly.

H: O, that's wonderful. And anything else? Any other books that you er...you...last time you told me about Capitalist Nigger which you read at night.



G: That one I did...about six months ago. Yeah, it is about motivating us black people to be outgoing. To be innovative. Not to wait for things to be done for us. We must also be outgoing. Not to be afraid of opening up our own businesses. Not to allow ourselves to be controlled by fear and doubt.

H: Did you find it quite powerful?

G: Yeah, it was powerful. Because you relate mostly about his personal experiences of where he comes from, how he started to reach his present status.

H: He is an American, is he?

G: No, he is, eh... guy from Nigeria.

H: OK.

G: Yeah, he is from Nigeria. He is of African origin.

H: So that ... that's why he speaks...with authority?

G: Yes...

H: And um... can you... anything else that leaps to mind that you enjoyed?

G: um... about his message in the book?

H: No... even any other book.

G: OK.

H: Where do you look when you choose motivational books? What sort of thing do you look for?

G: Um...The ones that would give me personal growth. Ones that will help me grow as a person, mentally, in general.

H: And you...have you found many that...that fit the bill?

G: Yeah, most of them are...books I find them interesting.

H: You always find something in them?

G: Yes, most definitely because I know once I read a book that you keep me on the edge of the seat.

H: Yes....

G: Definitely, for sure, I am not going to let go.

H: I'm very interested to find out how people uh...how the staff here lend books to each other. And recommend books to each other.

G: About uh... about the other side I don't know but mostly I do that with Mrs Nkosi.

H: Yes.

G: Yeah, we exchange books a lot. Especially motivational books.

H: Do you read them? I mean do you buy them uh...buy your own books or do you mainly borrow from others?

G: No I buy my own books. I buy my own.

H: So you must be building up a...quite a library.

G: Yeah, because there is one that I have bought. It is about this other guy but I didn't read the book. I just only read the preface. It says God is my CEO...yeah, my CEO.

H: OK ....

G: It is like that one is more aligned with eh... encouraging business and business people, so to say....

H: For... It is for business people. Is it a sort of Christian message?

G: Yeah it touches on the Bible in some of the ...

H: Interesting. Um... Do you go for more... for books that are about business or general empowerment, personal empowerment?

G: General empowerment.

H: Have you found that...you said it helped you to be more confident. Does it...do you think it makes a difference to you as a teacher?

G: Yes.

H: How so?

G: Uh... not only focusing on the sub...making sure that I relate while I'm teaching the class we doing practical so that they can...able to get the clear picture of what I'm doing to them in the class.

H: Would you ever use any of those motivational kind of ideas for the children?

G: A lot.

H: You do that?

G: Yes.

H: So...so your reading really has impacted on your... on your professional practice as well?

G: Yes.

H: Um...do you ever read children's books at all?

G: At times, yes I read them many times.

H: Can you tell me the names of some that you might have read?

G: The one that I read was about the reporter.

H: OK?

G: Yeah, but I didn't finish the book.

H: You found it heavy going?

G: Yeah.

H: OK. And for the children? Do you ever read to the children?

G: Yes in the class. Especially in the English lessons.

H: Yes?

G: In the comprehensions mostly...the newspaper cuttings I do get them eh... get them from there.

H: Ok. That's lovely thank you.

## **Interview transcript: Hlengiwe**

### **SPEAKERS**

**HI: Hlengiwe, the interviewee**

**H: Hilary, the interviewer**

H: Hlengiwe, I believe you're interested in reading motivational books?

HI: Yes mam – I love motivational books and magazines like O.

H: Has your reading benefited you in any way?

HI: It has transformed me a lot. I find that I grow personally and socially and they also equip me for living more successfully....

H: Anything else?

HI: I like to read religious books ... religious stories, autobiographies, real-life stories.

H: Tor example?

HI: The time I was reading a religious book by Joyce Warner...

H: Do you remember the title?

HI: Me and my big mouth ... Christian books and self-help books ...

H: Can you tell me any other title?

Hl: The seven habits of highly successful people. Every time I read it ... I never stop enjoying it ... I read it again ...

H: OK.

Hl: It's inspired me to take a position of leadership... strength .... so I can help people and give advice. It has influenced my leadership style and my management style.

H: Any other titles?

Hl: The other one... I always forget... Who moved ... who moved my cheese?

H: Oh yes?

Hl: It's about change ....accepting change... not being threatened by new situations ... avoiding conflict zones ..

H: Have these books affected your life?

Hl: They have, in an amazing way...most of the people I interact with see me as a motivational speaker ... they say I'm in the wrong profession... I know what the secret is from reading these books.

H: Do they have different message?

Hl: They do ... They cover professional growth, personal growth, dealing with stress, conflict management ...

H: That's great ...

Hl: When I speak at assembly... the teachers come early to listen and afterwards they come to thank me ... I thought of some more books that have helped me ... Harold Kusher ... When all you ever wanted isn't enough....

H: Where do you get all these books from?

Hl: I got that one from the Grade 7 LO teacher.... There is another book, What does the Bible really tell us? During my free time I pull out a paragraph every day... it makes a difference .. I think it's because of these messages that I can use it in my teaching ...

H: Do you share them with the learners?

Hl: I do. I feel we have to give our children hope ... as much as these books give me hope, I feel I must share it.

H: Do you recommend any books to them?

Hl: I do. I recommend books to my teachers at staff meetings. Anything of help to learners, teachers, staff members...

H: You recommend books to colleagues, but do you recommend anything to the children?

HI: Every inspiring saying I take and put on the wall, to share with the learners. I encourage them to bring the sayings they find. We have weekly food for thoughts. Every Monday we change the sayings. This encourages them to read a lot. One quote that I got from a motivational book is about young people: The attitude to bring to people is the attitude you get from them...

H: Do you know if any of the children read motivational books?

HI: They have them. They join the library, and they get them from parents.

H: Which books?

HI: The one child has Nice girls don't get rich. I asked her ...her father bought it for her... her father wants her to get rich tomorrow.

H: So it seems that many people at school are reading motivational books ...

HI: A lot.

H: Do you exchange motivational books among the staff?

HI: Not really, no.

T: Would you buy them for the school library?

HI: I would.

[Wise sayings on the board:

Never laugh at anyone's dreams, people who don't have dreams don't have much.

When you lose, don't lose the lesson

Don't judge people by their relatives.]

## **Interview transcript: Ivan**

### **SPEAKERS**

**I: Ivan, the interviewee**

**H: Hilary, the interviewer**

H: I'm just gonna put that there

I: Okay ...

H: And um... um... a few questions.

I: Okay

H: Umm... I believe you are obviously a reader...

I: Yup.

H: And umm... could you tell me what sort of books you enjoy reading?

I: Ah... I'm particularly reading besides my school work that I'm taking too much of my time, you know academic stuff. I'll also be reading T.D. Jakes... you know, religious books so ... to pep me up you know.

H: Okay.

I: And any book that I come across I read the title then I take it and read it and put it aside. You know, very seldom do I read the bible because T.D. Jakes books ... most of them are religious books, you know.

H: Hmm Hmmm...

I: Ja...

H: So they give you insights into religious matters?

I: Into religious matters, just to pep me up ... in fact, you know, in fact, because the kind of work that uses the... the really gives me some kind of spirit out there to go and do things.

H: And other books that are just motivational?

I: Motivational books, ja, that's what T.D. Jakes writes you know.

H: Okay.

I: He writes motivational books, inspirational books you know. I've got a number of them. Ja

H: So they are motivational from a... a religious point of view?

I: From ah.... From just a mixture of religions and motivation. Ja

H: Hmmm, do they give practical advice?

I: Ja, they do. They definitely do give, uh, practical advices because every time he writes something that is in line with religion then he comes back into the way we're living hard today. One example is, uh, where he calls somewhere in the Bible, I'm not a religious person, I teach a lot of science. I'm from my academic perspective, uh, what he said is that somewhere in the Bible the shortest, uh, statement in the... in the Bible is where they say 'Jesus wept', two words only, you know, and he says in his... in his... in his comparison to how we live today that, uh, 'Who are we not to weep?' You know we've got to weep if Jesus Christ wept then we've got to weep because if you continue to hold things within yourself, you're creating a bomb within yourself, you know.

H: Yes ...

I: Ja, he made it quite clear. Ja ...

H: And uh... can you think of some other books that have, or authors, that have meant a lot to you?

I: Ja, ehh, I'm not very particularly, you know, I don't keep authors names in my head

H: Yes?

I: Unless if I have the book, and because the week (?), I knew you were coming – I looked through a number of books to say which author can I take so that quote authors but one of the books that I like... one of the writers that I always, I quote every time is Shakespeare.

H: Hmm ...

I: Well he's very popular.

H: Of course.

I: Besides Shakespeare, uhhh, the... the animal ... the animal farm. Which is an old book, I like reading it and comparing our lifestyles to what those animals were actually doing. I like reading it again and again and again and again. And of course I read newspapers as well.

H: Yes.

I: You know I... I'm very fond of reading professor Jonathan Jansen's, uhh, work you know. Every time whenever he says on paper it's some stuff that really moves me, you know, such an example, sorry to intervene, one such example. Uhh, ... two three years back he wrote something like 'How sure are we that teachers are competent?'. You know, and I looked into it before I took into my M Ed, I looked into how sure am I that M Ed teachers are competent in the teaching of science. You know, uhh, and those are the kind of ways I go in terms of my reading.

H: Yes, no ... he's a very clear thinker.

I: Ja, he's a very very clear thinker.

H: Ja, I see he has a new book out.

I: Is it? I haven't –

H: Called 'We Need to Talk'

I: Oh! 'We Need to Talk'?

H: It's a whole book of his essays and articles.

I: Okay, I'd love to have that one. I'll have to just take the name and go and buy that one. At the –

H: Yes.

I: I also read a lot of, ehh, Mandela's stuff, you know, the political people's stuff.

H: Yes.

I: And there's a book that eh, I had hidden for many, many years. I was given that book by an uncle of mine, uh, who's ... he lived in Oslo for about 35 years in exile. It was called ahh, it's a Bram Fischer book, written by Bram Fischer, the late Bram Fischer, it's called *The Man with Two Faces*.

H: Hmm ...

I: You know, it's a wonderful book because he was setting an example to say if you take, uhh, a black kid and, eh, a so-called white kid and you live with them and you treat them without seeing any colour, ah, they do... they eat the same way, they use to eat the same food, put on the same school uniform, go to the same school, that there's no difference and it was during those times...

H: Yes.

I: And I still have that book, you know, it uh, it really inspired me and that's what... that's one of the ways that I always send messages to teachers to say 'You've got to teach and treat your kids the same way.' Uh, you know, irrespective of their academic assessment levels, but you'll see human beings and treat them differently in that perspective.

H: Yes, that's a very important lesson to... do you ever, uh, um, share your reading with the children?

T: Yes, I do. Yes, I do most of my time, especially in my classes that I teach, I teach grade 9, 8 and 7, eh, most of the time I really do encourage them, I really do encourage them to do a lot of reading. I... I do a lot of quotations for them, and eh, you know, there's one quotation that I'm very fond of... of giving them, ah, from Doctor Shakasani. He speaks of the voice of America he says 'Don't be beat up, be better and keep your ...', usually he says your African hopes alive, and I then turn it around to say keep your educational hopes alive. You know, move from that area to another classroom area, but I do, I do inspire my kids to do a lot of reading. You know I've sent them to a number of libraries, you know, one of them has asked me to open up a book club at school. That's a brilliant idea but you've got to start small, have you read books, you've got to be the first one to read books, be a member of a library, you know, read newspapers and ,um, speak this language that everybody speaks. 80% of the people on the planet speak English. Then speak this language so that the people you're going to recruit into your group, into your book club should be aware that this is the starting point. And then you spread your wings as you go on.

H: Okay, and would you choose, if you were choosing books for the library would you choose motivational books? Uh, or would you stay with Shakespeare and -

I: Not necessarily staying with Shakespeare, I would choose motivational books depending on the title of the book. Ja, once I look at the title I then say... I look at the blurb, you call it the blurb? At the back?

H: Yes.

I: Ja, and read and hear what they have to say and just check one or two things there because there's a reason why I ask readers to read a lot, just to get their level of their vocabulary at a different level because they... the only time that they speak English is when they are with us here in school. And I said to them, ah you know, I'd love to code-switch, you know, to teach in English when you don't understand then get to various because I'm capable of speaking about 9 to 10 South African languages. You know, and I say to them ' But I'd appreciate if we keep to this language because these books I teach science is written in English, ah, if we have to move to another language, to explain to you, it must be that indeed we really do not have other means to explain then we can resort to code switching'. I've actually explained to them what code switching is all about. But, eh, motivational books, inspirational books, any book that have got you know the title that says 'Hey pick me up and read and hear what I have to say inside the book.'



H: And you feel that they're able to cope with the... the language, it's not too difficult for them?

I: No well I changed from grade to grade. Ja, I change from I want to believe that I have that type of a skill, I told myself that if I'm grade 7 I've got to speak at that level and move to grade 8 I up my level and move to grade 9 up to that level because I've only said to them, ah, I've listened to a lot of other children out there. They speak about language that is above their age, above their grade so if they're capable to do that I want to believe that you can also be in the same level as they are. You know.

H: In their reading, uh, you believe that they must read more or improve their reading skills?

I: I think that is a very, very key question. That keep, especially in our township schools that they've got to read a lot of books, ah, and teachers must not read, because I do not read for my children. I let them read, make mistakes, ah, make corrections when necessary and before I make corrections I will then ask the class find out if, identify if the reader has committed any mistakes, if there is any what do you think the correct way to pronounce or to read this or to do that before I actually come into the picture. They've got to do the corrections first, until such time that I realize that, uh, they've exhausted everything then can I come in. But I really encourage them to do a lot of reading to just pick their vocabulary up so that they, eh, you know, they must be able to get a feel that their also there as human beings. Uh, uh, I'm looking for this word in my head. You know, just to be proud of themselves, you know.

H: Self-confidence?

I: Ja, self-confidence. They've got to be self-confident but yes here is a teacher because most of them with due respect to my colleagues, they also do not encourage kids, you know. They, they teach in this language and they move from this language to English rather than vice versa. You know that let's do it in English because for an example in mathematics is in English, you know, and the concepts that are there are English concepts and we don't have them in many of our African languages. So you have got to at least make an example to that regard. To say when we talk of a triangle this constructivism must come in. where you bring in the actual thing, oh, when we talk of a triangle this is what we mean. Ah, do you, do you think if we have it in Tswana, Zulu what is it because most of us don't know those things in our African language. You know, ja.

H: Very interesting... very interesting. Thank you so much. That was a very interesting interview and that will help me a lot.

## **Interview transcript: Jabu**

### **SPEAKERS**

**J: Jabu, the interviewee**

**H: Hilary, the interviewer**

H: ... Here we go... interview 1 at Ikhge 22 January 2012 .... 23 ... it's okay... Mam, I believe you are a keen reader and that there's a lot things you enjoy reading. Could you tell me the sort of things you enjoy?

J: Um... I love reading. I love, um, reading novels, I love reading newspapers, I love reading, um, the bible and eh...eh... some motivational books.

H: Um...

J: You know, I just love reading...

H: Can you tell me some of the newspapers or magazines you enjoy?

J: Every week I read City Press, The Sunday Times and Sunday Wor... eh... Sun. Those are the newspapers that I read every weekend. And, eh, the books that I read, um, I read magazines like, eh, The Hartley Chases, The ... eh ... well with the bible it's a daily thing, I read the bible every day. And, eh, of course, eh, story books, short story books, uh, I enjoy short stories, eh, although I also enjoy motivational books ... um... it gives me pleasure just by reading.

H: That's lovely, can you tell me something about some of the motivational books that you enjoy

J: \*laughs\*

H: Are you .... You can't think of titles off hand

J: Ja, but, eh, I do have books in my home and you know I read and put aside, read and put aside.

H: Hmmm ...

J: And, eh, ja...

H: Can you tell me, uh, of how they help you. How have motivational books helped you in your life?

J: They do help in that... in times, eh, you find that, eh, that, the author puts a scenario whereby, eh, they had challenges, similar to yours and, eh, but they were able to overcome those challenges and in that manner then he gives me some, some, eh, information or some ways of, eh, tackling those challenges that are similar challenges that I may be having ...

H: I see, I mean you're in a leadership position here. Do you find that such books assist you in your daily routines and your daily tasks?

J: Definitely, definitely they do because as a leader, as a manager, you deal with an... an... an, eh, come across many people, different characters so you have to have the skills of handling the different characters ...

H: Hmmm, Hmmm... can you tell ...there are also books about money and things like that...

J: I've heard of... which one is this... um...

H: The Seven Habits...

J: I think the Seven Habits, yes, ja... ja...

H: Those are none of the one's that you've read?

J: No, but I do have a pile of books that I read...

H: Oh, I would love to know some titles...

J: Ok, I will come up with the titles. At the moment, you know I was just... hehehe

H: Ja, you were on other things...

J: Ja ...

H: Ja, why do you think these kinds of books are so popular?

J: I, I should think they give hope when you think that, eh, everything in your life has gone apart...

H: Hhmmm, hmmm.

J: I think they give hope and for one to stand up and pick up the pieces and go on with your life

H: hmm, hmm... Have you had some experience, personal experience of that?

J: Well, as, as a human being, every now and then you do go through some... some personal stuff.

H: Of course, we all do. And you also experience self-doubt and some people experience a lack of confidence and they feel that they get some support and some...

J: Yes.

H: Advice from those books...

J: Yes, yes... yes when have a low self-esteem I think really it's... it's very important because, eh, reading, eh, empowers you to communicate...

H: Yes...

J: Because I think, eh, many people are... have a low self-esteem because of communication.

H: Ah!

J: Yes, so with by reading you gain a lot of vocabulary and, eh, you are able to stand up and, you know, talk...

H: Yes.

J: Ja.

H: Yes, and, but a lot of people who never read novels or stories will read motivational book...

T: They will, yes, they will...

H: And... maybe that's, there's a reason for that... afternoon .

P: Afternoon.

J: Yes...

H: Um, um, what about children and teaching children? Do you think, um, motivational books help teachers?

J: Yes, I, I think it helps teachers to encourage them to also encourage the learners to teach. So if a teacher is motivated and, eh, and loves teaching then automatically the teacher will love you know reading, teaching reading and by so doing passing on the knowledge to the learners

H: Do you yourself, do you read children's books ever?

J: Hmmm, yes, yes, those are very interesting. You know those are very interesting because, eh, they make you laugh....

H: Hmmm

J: You know and, eh, most of the time when you read them they have some illustrations and funny illustrations, and, eh, it encourages when you teach, eh, those young ones, eh, to how to read. Eh, and those stories are very interesting.

H: You yourself are not actually teaching this year are you?

J: This year I'm not teaching unfortunately. But I used to teach English and I loved it.

H: Did you read aloud to the children?

J: I, yes, I, a lot, reading aloud for the children, storytelling...

H: Oh, lovely, yes.

J: Yes, yes...

H: And, um, can you... now I'm going to put you on the spot again, can you think of a title of a children's book that you used or enjoyed?

J: Well from, ah, the very small ones cause I used to teach the grade 1.

H: Oh, yes.

J: From the very small ones I know, eh, maybe two. Our children, their level is very but, eh, that's where we start them...

H: Hmm ...

J: Eh, *Noddy and Big Ears and the Mr Big Nose* and so on ...

H: Oh, did they enjoy that?

J: Yes, yes they do. They do enjoy those, eh, books. Eh, Benny and Betty...

H: Hmm ...

J: Those are the little books that the children enjoy.

H: Hmm, no, lovely. Oh well, that's, it's very inspiring to hear that you're actually using books. That people are using books in the classroom.

J: Definitely...

H: Um, thank you very much. I'm... I'm going to ask you to look at home and I'm going to, if you don't mind, I'm going to phone you and ask you for titles?

J: The titles of the other books, yes, I would ...

H: Just one or two ...

J: It's okay ...

H: And I if you could also just think about perhaps how its helped you in your own life?

J: Yes, I will.

H: Brilliant, thank you very much mam.

J: Thank, eh, thank you.

### **Interview transcript: Jabu, second interview**

#### **SPEAKERS**

**J: Jabu, the interviewee (school principal)**

**H: Hilary, the interviewer**

**P: Phindile, the school secretary**

H: Um...You are someone who has really taken the lead in getting teachers to read. Why do you think that is important?

J: It's very important because reading is informative. It gives us information ... and it broadens our minds and reading is fun at the same time.

H: Do you think it is specially important for teachers?

J: It is...it is ... definitely. Cause as a teacher you need to be updated throughout. You just need to know what is happening and um... to know how to solve some of the problems. Cause...uh reading at the same time tell us about experiences. Of life experiences of other people, the authors and that characters in the books.

H: And so you have been able to ask the staff here to all read. How do you do it? Do you recommend books? Do you provide books? Are there some events that make you feel that people should read certain books?

J: I just encourage reading. But I don't provide books. Any of the staff members who has a book, or who has read a book shares it with us and then passes it on to the next person. So we share the

books just like that. I also have books...If I have a book that I've read I also pass it on to the next staff member.

H: It seems a lot of the staff have been reading your recommendation about Elizabeth Kübler Ross. Can you tell me how that came about?

J: Well I started...when my brother passed away I read a book called 'Five minutes before death and five minutes after death'. And I read it and it gave me some hope and motivation you know, to say that when a person dies that person is not like lost that person has just moved on to another life. So in that way... I... I... I it eased my grief. And thereafter our secretary Phindile also had a loss in her family, her uncle passed away. And after her uncle passed away...in fact I had shared the one 'Five minutes before and five minutes after death' with them. After her uncle passed away she also got this other book about...(background voice)... 'Death and Dying' she read it and she shared with us also. And you know it just kind of gives us courage and soothes us you know.

H: So you sit together and you share books?

J: We share books. We do share books.

H: And discuss them?

J: Yes.

H: Are there any other books that you can think of that the staff have read together?

(background voices)

P: Something about the cheese.

H: You moved my cheese?

J: Yes. Yes.

H: Tell me about that? Was that something that everybody enjoyed together?

P: uh we just... we just you know shared with them what was happening.

H: Can you tell me something about that book? How did it help you?

P: (laughs) It tells us of uh... not to... not to... give up on things. To keep on striving for more for more for more because eh...it talks about the mouse who wanted the cheese so badly-

J: So badly.

P: -in that he went all the way and some of them turned back... no cheese we are not going further. The one he said I am going. At the end of the day he got what he want. So it gave us that in life we don't have to give up. We may fall but we have to stand up and continue.

H: And have a lot of the staff enjoyed that book together?

P: Unfortunately the book... we borrowed the book from a principal from Inzenzale so we read the book and we only shared the information with the other staff. They didn't get a chance to read it.

H: But you yourself got a chance to read it. And you did to?

J: Yes.

H: Ok so um... you will share the books together. Have you got an idea for what kind of thing you look for? What kind of books you would like to share in the future?

J: Motivational books. Books that give courage in life you know. Because most of the time we find that people are in difficulties eh... having some challenges in their lives and eh...some people just bottle up and are not able to share their challenges. And by reading at least a person will be able to know that they are not alone. There are other people and there are other ways of resolving their challenges. Just to motivate them you know.

H: Do you think that these books have a special purpose? Especially for people who have are under an oppressive system and perhaps lack confidence or feel ...

J: I think most books have messages. Most books have messages. Once you read a book there is definitely a message in a book. And it is just to understand what the message is saying. Some books are fun but at the same time they have messages.

H: So you have to apply that to who you are and where you are.

J: Yes.

H: Thank you so much I am so grateful to you. And thank you Phindile very much. And I will leave you alone now. (everyone laughs) This is a difficult job for a shy person to do.

## **Interview transcript: Lefa**

### **SPEAKERS**

**L: Lefa, the interviewee**

**H: Hilary, the interviewer**

H: Lefa, thanks so much for being interviewed I really appreciate it. I believe that you enjoy reading.

L: Yes

H: What sort of thing do you like reading?

L: I like reading because most of the time I read for enjoyment. Sometimes it keeps the stress out, something to gain new knowledge and information.

H: And what sort of thing do you enjoy reading? Do you like reading novels?

L: Yes most of the time novels.

H: Newspapers?

L: Yes newspapers. I intend to read daily everything.

H: Every day?

L: Yes.

H: And Christian books also?

L: Yes Christian books.

H: And magazines maybe?

L: Magazines I read sometimes.

H: Not so much.,,?

L: Not so much. The newspaper I read when I see I can't buy a newspaper every day.

H: N, sure.

L: Honestly speaking but I like reading.

H: And motivational books?

L: I like to read motivational books because in 2006 it happens that I was in a coma. So when I come out, to improve my speech and improve my knowledge, I started reading lots of motivational books. Eish I forgot the name of this book. You see the books that motivate life after death; I like to read such books.

H: Was it about death or was it a Christian book maybe?

L: It is a Christian book but this lady is talking about life after death. When you are in a coma other people are saying you are seeing god, you are with god, you are seeing the green pastures. But I like to read books, such books like this. The other book was about when you are stressed you know there are people there. Maybe you thought your problems where more but ...

H: There are people with bigger problems...

L: There are people with bigger problems.

H: I see. That must have been a terrible thing in your life.

L: (laughs) No but ...

H: What was it...why where you in a coma?

L: I was very ill. I was very ill, so ....

H: For a long time?

L: Yes. But not for a long time since... 8 days... 6 days I don't remember that much but it was helpful.

H: These books have helped you afterwards.



L: The books helped me. And then reading also helped us to understand the knowledge... to improve the knowledge. You know English is not our mother tongue but while we are reading sometimes we share the information. As we teach in the classroom we need to read. You need to teach what you read. Before you get into the classroom you know what you are going to teach these children.

H: You are quite right. So do you actually read to them in class?

L: Yes we used to read to them. The children enjoy reading. As you know we have to follow the procedure of the government so we've got novels in the classroom, we've got library books. Children keep the books and read at home. They summarise it.

H: And they enjoy it?

L: They enjoy it.

H: A lot of people really enjoy these advice kind of books. The books that give advice about something.

L: About life.

H: About life or about health or about management or ... you know this sort of thing. They are not novels.. Do you ever read books like that?

L: I don't even remember one.

H: You spoke about a book about death and life after death and how that helped you?

L: You understand life. You understand life.

H: The purpose of –

L: Everything is possible in life.

H: Ok. That sounds like a wonderful book.

L: (laughs) It is, yes.

H: Can you...Would I be able to ask you the title? Not now but do you have that book at home?

L: The title of the book?

H: Yes. Can you remember?

L: The title is 'Life After Death'.

H: 'Life After Death'. OK that's fine. And do you remember who wrote it?

L: No....

H: Not....

L: I remember, I will tell you the other book. The other book I've got it at home.

H: Would you mind if I phoned you to ask you for that title?

L: No

H: Is that ok?

L: Yes it is no problem. As long as you like reading and you are going to help us with this thing. As you know sometimes we like reading but you are lazy for it.

H: Oh everybody is. Everybody is.

L: But to read an hour every day means a lot. Twice a day means a lot.

H: So it inspires you?

L: Yes it inspires me. Reading inspires me.

H: And it is lovely that you read with the children.'

L: Reading, and .... maybe you say you are listening to the youth, you say come to me and tell me what happened yesterday.

H: Yes, that all helps their language. That's just lovely. Thank you very much indeed. I am very grateful to you for the interview.

L: Thank you ma'm. Nice to meet you.

H: Lovely for me.

## **Interview transcript: Mpho**

### **SPEAKERS**

**M: Mpho, the interviewee**

**H: Hilary, the interviewer**

H: This is wonderful ... I must interview you!

M: (laughs) OK.

(Pause)

H: So you .. you like reading ... er... motivational books?

M: I do like them. I ..I was reading a ...a... just a small book .. it's a ...Who took my cheese ...

H: Yes. Yes, yes...

M: I was reading.... it made me aware that ... you know ... we are all so afraid of change. We can even stay being hungry ...

H: Yes ... because we ... why do we ... why are we so afraid of change, do you think?

M: Maybe, those people who are afraid of change, it's those people who are born that long ago. You know we stayed ... we used to stay in one class, you know, concerning we as teachers ...

H: Yes ...

M: We were ... I was teaching in the Foundation Phase for a long time, and our school ended at Grade 4. So I come to class, and I'm going... the first period I know I'm going to teach English, Maths... then I know I'm going to teach English. So you know what you are going to do. So when it came to change, the new curriculum and what-what, it was so difficult, because we ... we don't want to change. I don't know why we are stuck ...

H: Maybe...

M: No, we are too stuck!

H: I know, but teachers are like that, and maybe we lack confidence sometimes?

M: I think maybe we have a... a low self-esteem.

H: Mm..

M: We thought that we won't make it ... we are afraid to use computers, we are afraid of so many things.

H: And you yourself, did you find that that ....that book ...helped you?

M: I think it helped me a little bit because I saw that no ... you know....you must go with the changes, ... if you are supposed to change, you know, you go like that. And I think maybe I.. I grew from what I was.

H: Mm, Hmm....

M: Because at first, because, even at first t when when I started teaching, I was so afraid to talk, even in the meetings, you know, I didn't want to take part...

H: And now ...?

M: But at the moment ... no, I am free.

H: That's wonderful!

M: When I meet people, I am able to talk to them.

H: So that book ... what ... was it ... all these books, , or ....

M: No, it's that book... you know I do take from there and there and most of the time, I like reading Destiny, the magazine. Destiny - you know Destiny? somehow motivates people, telling about someone who started from laughing, now they are suffering. That person, they were nothing, now they are something. So I do like to read it... most of the time I buy it monthly.

H: So you take from here...

M: I don't read same things, all the time, at times when I want to relax I go back to fiction. Mills and Boon. I thought it's very small I'm going to read it ...

H: I like that too....

M: When I want to calm myself down I just take Mills and Boon, because it's nothing serious.

H: And from motivational books, you've got a feeling of confidence, and ... accepting change.

M: Mm You know and then there's this other book ... it is religious book ... What is the name of that book? Its talking about change also. We as people, we like to complain - I don't have money, no My children are sick, what-what, but we don't do anything about it.

H: Aha.

M: You know I just take there and there and read. I can't sleep without reading. Maybe in the evening I watch TV, Then at about 10 I take something to read. Whether a magazine, whether book, even if I read two or three pages, then I'll be satisfied for that night

H: Yes I know, I'm the same... was it a Christian book, that other one about change?

M: Yes, it was about.... Deal with it.

H: Deal with it?

M: You know, that book, it opens your eyes...

H: Did...do you remember who wrote it?

H: Hm, that lady... someone Smith.

H: Somebody Smith, ja, ja, ja. And with the children that you teach, do you read with them?

M: At times we read aloud, at times everyone must go to her corner and read for themself. Then most of the time here art school we have reading time. We have a competition at August. We go to the library. You know the new library at River Park? They're going to bring us books, from now, maybe ... March., so the learners can read those books. So that In August, they compete with other learners at other schools. The learners can read these books. Yes, we do share books, and at times we ask them questions. They know they must know the title of the book, the characters, the story of the books.. so ....

H: So you're able to share books with the ...

M: At times we ask them questions. You know you have read it, so you are able to communicate with the children...

H: Can you think of the name of a book that they enjoyed... enjoy?

M: No, I am having new children at the moment, so I'm not sure. Not sure at the moment

H: Where do you get your own books?

M: I buy them?

H: You buy them for yourself?

M: So I just buy them, even if I don't read them at that time, so I know I have books. They are on sale in mid-January. So I buy them.

H: Do you ever share them with other members of staff?

M: Not really, how can I say – that book you know we all read that book. It talks about life after... afterwards, something like that. About people dying. Those are in coma... you know, there are going to be two types, those who are coming out of that coma and those who are going to die. So they say, There are two types

Most of the time, these people are even to see their bodies. Those who die, they look at their bodies, and they say I'm not going to live like that, I'm not going back to that cocoon. They say it's a cocoon, not a body... Those who live, they are fighters about what is happening....

H: And does that help you?

M: I think it gave me another side of life. That's when you see people... when people are sick But It gave me a problem, because after I had read that book. After I have read that book, my brother, that is my cousin brother, became ill and he was in hospital, and he was in a coma.

H: Hm.

M: So I was asking myself is he going to make it? Maybe he's just waiting for the day or is he fighting? You know In coma for two months but he woke up.

H: Hm..

M: So this is a fighter...

H: And that book helped you to deal with ....Who moved my cheese, you say that gave you confidence to deal with change?

M: I had a lot of I was teaching in the Foundation, then I went up, I was in Grade 4, for a long time. Then we... we improved the school. Then we went to Grade 6. Then we went to grade 7. I was there at grade 7. At the moment, those children who I started teaching in Grade 7, they are in Grade 12. I'm so proud of them. I loved that group because I stayed with them from Grade 4. Grade 5, 6, 7. It was so nice.

H: So that book didn't only help you. It helped all your learners.

M: They were the first group And there to enter for that competition, the Battle of Books, then when they were in Grade 4 they read small books. But when they were in Grade 6 and seven they started to read .. er... novels.

H: Oh, that's wonderful. That was a very wonderful thing you did for them ... you motivated them to read.

M: I think so. I think I did something for them. And ... I follow them. I still want to know their progress. They did Grade 8 and Grade 9 So most of them, they got bursaries. At the moment they are in a school up there. They are doing science only.

H: Lovely ... lovely!

M: are those who are doing commercials....

H: Are they at Alex High?

M: No ... outside Alexandra... Limbro Park there is a school there... it is a science school.

H: Oh, Linbro Park.

M: I am waiting for results for this year, because I know you are going to pass.

H: Tell me a bit more about Who move my cheese. Does it give you ... advice on what to do when you're faced with a situation'?

M: You must do something about your problem....There are mice, and the other group. Then the mice, they saw that the cheese is fading, but they did not find other place to move, they stayed there until there was no cheese there all...

H: OK...

M: They find there is no cheese at all . But still they went there. There was no cheese, they went back home, there is no cheese... they go back home. They were not eating at that time, instead ...

M: Wanting know more ....like when you are reading a book, You know what's going to happen next...

H: And life is like that?

M: If you want to know more, but if you don't want to know more, you don 't do anything.

H: Let me ask you this, because this a general question. A lot of people like to read that kind of book, these how-to books Why do people enjoy those books so much?

M: Which books?

H: The ones that give you advice.

M: These people who want to go forward, those people who want to progress...

H: So they help people, in a practical way...

M: Without going to school. As long as you are able to read, you are able to read those books.

H: And also if you want to ... we haven't all had a wonderful education, so we can take control of ourselves.

M: So we are trying. My firstborn, - it's a boy. But what made him more, he was working at CNA. So he used to come with books...

H: Does he share them with you?

M: We are going to discuss it.

H: So you discuss it in the family But that's lovely.

M: Yes. He used to read that book ... what ... it is liked by boys. It said Rich dad poor dad.

H: Hmm.

M: He used to read that book and he liked it. You know if you come to his bedroom you see some novels there.

H: Which ones?

M: I think... but you know when they are... they don't ....

H: I know, especially boys.. they are very secretive...

M: They are going to ...

H: Maybe he is still going to be rich... and look after you? Thank you very much for the interview.

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