

**GUIDELINES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN
ASSISTING DISADVANTAGED LEARNERS
IN THE JUNIOR PRIMARY PHASE**

by

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Supervisor : Professor L du Toit

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DECLARATION

*I declare that **GUIDELINES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN ASSISTING DISADVANTAGED LEARNERS IN THE JUNIOR PRIMARY PHASE**, is my own work and that all sources that I have consulted or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.*

SIGNED

.....
J J Joshua

J J JOSHUA

***Dedicated to my late parents Joseph and
Vaiduryam Moodley for their faith and
foresight in education in spite of being
disadvantaged in many ways.***

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Finally to God, who gave me strength and wisdom to pursue this study to its conclusion.

SUMMARY

TITLE: **GUIDELINES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN ASSISTING
DISADVANTAGED LEARNERS IN THE JUNIOR PRIMARY PHASE**

BY: **JENNIFER JOY JOSHUA**

DEGREE: **MASTER OF EDUCATION**

SUBJECT: **ORTHOPELAGOGICS**

AT: **UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

SUPERVISOR: **PROFESSOR L DU TOIT**

The Junior primary teachers have the task of catering for the needs of pupils of varying abilities in their charge. With the admission of culturally different groups of children (many of them from disadvantaged communities) to schools previously accustomed to having one cultural group, this task of catering for the needs of pupils presents a problem as teachers are not trained to deal with disadvantaged children.

The aim of this study was to formulate scientifically sound guidelines according to which class teachers can plan and implement language programmes for disadvantaged learners. In order to formulate such guidelines, a theoretical investigation was undertaken on normal language development and on the effects of disadvantage on the scholastic and language performance of the child. Various programmes available for disadvantaged learners which are being implemented in other countries were evaluated.

On the basis of these findings guidelines were suggested to class teachers for planning language programmes for disadvantaged learners.

KEY TERMS IN THE STUDY

Language acquisition; Junior primary children; Disadvantaged learners; Restricted and elaborate language codes; Expressive and receptive skills; Aid programmes and strategies; Academic performance; Inequalities in educational system; Compensatory education; Socio-economic status; Poverty; Health and family size; Parental involvement in education; Reading programmes; In-service and Pre-service teacher training.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION, STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Language is considered to be a method of "communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" (Petty & Jensen 1980:17). It may be used for a variety of purposes, but it is used especially for interaction between people. When people interact they use language to give and receive information and to achieve their goals (Bloom & Lahey 1978:10).

For the child, language is not only used for communication purposes but it also plays a significant part in his total development, including the development of school readiness. According to Davies (1977:110) one of the demands made by the primary school on its entrants is that of school membership. The child leaves home and moves into a world of other adults and more important, the peer group. He has to understand and make himself understood by them. Hence language becomes an important tool in developing his social, emotional and cognitive skills and also for learning about and exploring new situations. Language is also the basis of all instruction in schools. Teachers use language to impart knowledge, insight and skills.

However, the disadvantaged child presents many problems in acquiring and using language skills. This would not only influence the development of cognitive skills but also affects learning in general. Beck and Saxe (1965:119) indicate that a school beginner with severely restricted language, little exposure to books and generally limited personal experience may have difficulty in learning to read. The importance of reading has been well documented. Success in all school subjects require accurate reading. In South Africa, disadvantage, its effects on language and communication and school achievement in general is a major problem that needs to be addressed.

In this study the effects of disadvantage on the language of the children in the junior primary phase will be investigated as well as the methods of assisting such children.

1.2 EXPLANATION OF TERMS

1.2.1 Language

The Oxford dictionary defines language as "a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing in". Wilkinson (1971:13-14) refers to language as a "system of agreed sounds". These sounds are non-instinctive, distinguishing human beings from animals and making them unique beings.

From these views it can be deduced that language has the following characteristics:

- * language is a purely human function - a method of communication. It is a communication system that enables people to express their thoughts, feelings, needs and experiences;**
- * language is systematised and symbolic. It consists of a set of conventional arbitrary symbols (vocal and visual). It has structure and meaning as well as purpose; and**
- * language is bound to a speech community and is transferred on a cultural basis because people acquire language through their culture.**

The foregoing suggest that language cannot be confined to one specific ability but instead it is a complex set of interrelated abilities. These abilities include listening, vocalising and of course translating ideas into words and sentences, applying abstract rules to generate interesting grammatical sentences and using language to influence people in different ways. Hence, this encompasses the entire system of communication.

1.2.2 Disadvantagement

Given the complex nature of the concept disadvantage, researchers in this field use the term interchangeably with other terms such as environmental deprivation, social

disadvantagement or cultural deprivation. For the purpose of this study it is necessary to review some perspectives on the concept for a broad overview of the effect of disadvantagement on the scholastic performance of the child.

Passow and Elliot (1967:20) are of the opinion that the term disadvantaged is one of a number of labels being pinned to a population suffering from a cultural and economic deprivation which "did not attune" to the demands and opportunities of modern life. Other terms referring to disadvantagement in their new lexicon include: culturally deprived, socially disadvantaged, educationally deficient, under-educated, underachiever, chronically poor, socio-economically deprived, environmentally deprived and poverty stricken (Cheyney 1970:12; Lundsteen & Tarrow 1981:388). Implicit in each term is a hint of those factors that may contribute to the individual's disadvantage. Although these people differ from one another, Pretorius (van Greunen 1993:92) describes them as having in common such characteristics as low economic status, low social status, low educational achievement, tenuous or no employment and limited ready potential for upward mobility. In short, these people are handicapped by depressed social and economic status.

For the purpose of this study, the term disadvantagement will be used to cover all categories and interpretations outlined above.

1.2.3 Junior primary phase

According to Behr (1984:42) the junior primary phase enfolds the first three years of formal schooling, that is, the six to eight year period of the child's life. The classes in these three years are termed Grades I and II and Standard I or Substandards A and B and Standard I.

1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

1.3.1 The provision of education

Education is considered to be a basic human right. Through education, people gain knowledge and skills to survive, to learn to live dignified lives, and to contribute to the development of their communities and their nation. In addition, the provision of education is also an instrument through which other human needs such as, shelter, health care, nutrition and safe drinking water, are met. Most important, education is a capacity building activity which sustains and accelerates development through promoting income distribution, empowering women, improving knowledge and skills, as well as increasing productivity and capacity to address wider social issues (UNICEF 1993:53). Hence education and development are inextricably linked (Pillay 1990:36).

Squelch (1993:175) asserts that South African education has to a great extent, not been able to meet the needs of the majority of the population, namely, the African people. The education

system, its structure and organization as well as the political, social and economic factors have influenced and fashioned its development so that it served to promote the interests of the dominant group and ensured their participation in and integration into all spheres of society. A brief review of the policy of separatism and its subsequent unequal provision of education will follow.

*** Separatism**

Separatism has always been a significant feature of South African education. Since the early foundations of education in South Africa, separate education systems have been instituted for the four main population groups. The Education Act of 1907 which was one of the earliest policies of separate education, stated that "no coloured child or person shall be admitted to or be allowed to remain a pupil of any school, class and institution ... for white children" (Behr 1984:175). After 1948, when the National Party came into power, separate education became more formalized through various Education Acts (Squelch 1993:176).

*** Inequalities in provision and their consequences**

Although education in South Africa was meant to be separate but equal, it did not offer equal opportunities to all South Africans. The Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) (1981:209) evaluation of the educational dispensation in South Africa in 1981 revealed that education was based on "differentiation in different ways and on different grounds between educational clients". The same advantages were not

provided for everyone and it is clear that differentiation rested on the basis of colour and race (1981:209). Disparity in education among the races was evident in terms of per capita expenditure, proportion of qualified teachers, quality and quantity of facilities such as buildings, equipment and sports facilities. While white education, on one hand was advantaged, black education on the other hand was characterised largely by an inequitable allocation of resources, over-crowded classrooms, high drop out rates and insufficient and poorly qualified teachers and was generally considered by blacks to be inferior and designed to confine them to lower class occupations (Pillay 1990:30). In this system patterns of educational inequality and social class were entrenched (Christie 1985:54-55).

Statistics comparing the provision of education for the different race groups in South Africa will highlight some of the inequalities in the education system.

. Legislation for compulsory education

A profile of schooling in South Africa showed that while over the years compulsory education was phased in for white, coloured and Indian children, compulsory education has not been legislated for African children (UNICEF 1993:62).

Statistics show that in 1991, 1.4 million people of school going age (6-18 years) were not attending school and a further 3 million children who should have been in pre-primary school were

not (UNICEF 1993:64). This could be attributed to the absence of legislation for compulsory education for African children and the consequently high illiteracy rate.

. Per capita expenditure

The pattern of state expenditure has revealed the gross inequalities between African and white education. The figures in the table below show discrepancy in per capita expenditure between African and white education. African per capita expenditure was particularly low and even decreased in 1979/1980 and 1981/1982 as compared with white per capita expenditure.

FIGURE 1.1
State per capita expenditure on school pupils by race (rand per annum)

Year	Africans		Coloureds		Indians		Whites	
	Per capita expenditure (P.C.E)	% of White P.C.E	P.C.E	% of White P.C.E	P.C.E	% of White		
1971-2	25,31	5,5	94,41	20,5	124,40	27,0	1	461,00
1975-5	39,53	6,5	125,53	20,7	170,94	28,3	1	605,00
1975-6	41,80	6,5	139,62	21,7	189,53	29,4	1	644,00
1976-7	48,55	7,5	157,59	24,5	219,96	34,2	1	654,00
1978-9	71,28	9,8	225,54	31,2	357,15	49,3	1	724,00
1979-80	91,29	7,8	234,00	20,0	389,66	33,3	1	1 169,00
1980-1	176,20	17,3	286,08	28,0	n/a	n/a	1	1 021,00
1981-2	165,23	13,5	418,84	34,3	798,00	65,7	1	2 221,00
1982-3	192,34	13,9	593,37	42,8	871,87	63,0	1	3 385,00
1983-4	234,45	14,2	569,11	34,4	1 088,00	65,8	1	1 654,00
1986-7	476,95	19,0	1 021,41	40,7	1 904,20	75,9	2	2 508,00

(Pillay 1990:31)

Pupil progress

The low attainment levels for African children is an indication of the poor quality of education which has a direct bearing on pupil performance. Flanagan (1993:35) states that 25 percent of African children are growing up to be illiterate, indicating that the schooling system "is not contributing to a significant degree to the diminution of the problem of illiteracy". The high dropout rate of African pupils reflects the wastage of human potential.

On 22 May 1981, The Financial Mail (Pillay 1990:36) showed that only 60,9 percent of the class one group of 1972 reached standard two by 1975. This signifies that two out of five pupils had not reached the fourth year of education and would regress into illiteracy. In the same year the standard five group was 35,4 percent of the class one group of 1969. This implies that almost two thirds of the pupils had not reached the seventh year of education, which is generally regarded as the minimum level for further education. More recently Bot (UNICEF 1993:66) found that whereas 82 percent white pupils reached standard 10, only 16 percent of African pupils completed matriculation. The highest drop out rate seemed to be concentrated at grade I and grade II levels.

Failure at this early stage (grade I/II) is detrimental as at this level various notions about school and about one's ability are developed. The nature of the child's attitude

towards school and school-related activities such as reading are developed in grade I. Therefore, success in scholastic activities in grade I is very critical for the promotion of interest in education, the development of a positive attitude towards school and the development of a positive self-concept (Gumede 1993:5).

The high percentage of failure in grade I indicates that a large number of school beginners cannot cope with the demands of the curriculum which deals with basic literacy and numeracy. Failure occurring at any phase has adverse effects on individuals. Failure at grade I level may lead to pupils dropping out before they can get the opportunity to explore their learning potential (Gumede 1993:6-7).

Teacher/pupil ratios and pupil/classroom ratios

In March 1992, teacher/pupil ratios for white children at schools under House of Assembly averaged at 1 teacher to 20 pupils in comparison with an average African teacher/pupil rate of 1:38 in the common areas.

High pupil/classroom ratios point to overcrowding which contribute to poor quality of education, which in turn impacts negatively on achievement levels. Whilst the average number of pupils per classroom at schools administered by the Department of Education and Training (DET) declined from 55 to 41 in the primary classes, the homeland schools in 1991 registered an average of 51.2

pupils per classroom at primary level. The Transkei had pupil classroom ratios of 70:1 followed by Gazankulu with 62.4:1, KaNgwane 65.1:1 and KwaZulu 56.1 :1 (UNICEF 1993:66).

. Unequal allocation of resources and poorly qualified teachers

The unequal allocation of resources and the neglect of African education is seen by the lack of electrification in the schools, text book shortages, poor quality of instructional materials and lack of suitable furniture. In 1989, 81 percent of DET schools and 93 percent of farm schools had no electricity. Instructional materials were found to be culturally and politically biased which resulted in teachers not using the materials. Some instructional materials used language which was above the pupils' level and difficult for teacher's use. United States Aid (USAID) (UNICEF 1993:67) records the shortage of textbooks has been a sensitive issue in African communities and local organisations have disputed government figures related to the supply of books. Lack of furniture forces pupils to sit on the floors.

According to Waxman (1991:12) the teacher is the leader of the classroom and as such should lead by example. This implies that the teacher has a positive self-concept and thus influences the self-concept and learning of pupils. However, the South African Institute for Race Relations

(SAIRR) (UNICEF 1993:67) indicated that 48 575 African teachers in primary and secondary schools are underqualified and unqualified. Smit and le Roux (1993:36) add that they are "overworked and underpaid". This situation blurs the image of the teacher as a professional and promotes pupil failure rate through lack of sound educational instruction.

From the foregoing it can be deduced that poor quality of education contributed to low attainment levels and enmeshed the disadvantaged child in circumstances that are difficult to escape.

The failure of the "separate but equal policy" lies in the gap between policy and practice. The education principles embodied in education policies regarding the equal provision of education to all groups were not implemented in practice. Instead the system that emerged (from the foregoing surveys) was flawed with inequalities and failed to provide equal educational opportunities to all pupils.

Over the past decade, in response to the growing crisis in education, resulting from the policy of separate education, measures have been taken to reform the education system. The aforementioned report of the HSRC, 1981, (cf. page 6) was the basis for the process of reform (Nasson 1990:50). This report called for a reduction of differences in the quality of education between communities and that in

"striving towards equality education both the elimination of backlogs and the current needs be dealt with" (HSRC 1981:211).

However, measures to reform the education system have been limited and improvements have been quantitative but not qualitative. Although there have been increases in pupil enrolment, construction of more schools and of course increased expenditure, the fundamental inequalities still remained.

1.3.2 Educational requirements and preparation for a technological age

According to Galbally (1988:56) the world is undergoing a technological revolution. This technological revolution is described by Hawken (Galbally 1988:56-57) as "the transition from a mass intensive economy to an intelligence - intensive information economy". The mass intensive economy thrived on the talents of many uneducated, namely, strong backs, clever hands and simple manual strength and skill. However, the intelligence - intensive information economy, requires people to manage vast categories of knowledge and arrive at infinitely complex concepts and judgements in order to maintain, control and advance the technological and social organisation by which we live.

The economic development and progress of a country is dependent on the expertise of its citizens regardless of their culture or creed. Without the ability to communicate verbally

and through the print medium, the future of the country is at stake since individuals cannot attain excellence academically, vocationally, politically, socially and economically (Adams 1990:26). In every sphere of life the ability to speak and read is of utmost importance. Therefore the ability to communicate and accurately decode the written word has become a crucial skill of survival.

Crompton (1987:7) is of the view that fundamental changes in society recognise that the mere accumulation of knowledge and information is no longer important in itself, since it is not possible for one person to have a comprehensive understanding of knowledge in any particular area. The ability to find and use information is now considered more important. This requires the development of advanced cognitive skills. Thus the answer to Badenhorst's (Pretorius 1993:129) question, whether the school prepares individuals optimally for entry into adult life, is that education in South Africa is far from preparing the majority to meet the demands of this technological era. The provision of education (cf. 1.3.1) and the surveys conducted by the National Manpower Commission, below, reveal disparities that can be traced back to lack of quality and relevant educational opportunities for advancing skills that are necessary in high level jobs. The following statistics show the occupational distribution of blacks and whites, race composition of South Africa's high level manpower and percentage distribution of blacks in some key occupations.

FIGURE 1.2

The occupational distribution of blacks and whites in 1985

Category	Percentage distribution	
	Blacks	Whites
Professional and technical	39,9	60,1
Managerial and executive	12,4	87,6
Clerical & sales	47,1	52,9
Production workers	92,3	7,7
Unskilled	98,9	1,1

(Pillay 1990:46)

FIGURE 1.3

Race composition of South Africa's high level manpower, 1979, 1985

Race	High level manpower	
	1979	1985
Africans	17,1	20,2
Whites	71,9	69,2
Coloureds	7,8	7,2
Indians	3,2	3,4

(Pillay 1990:47)

FIGURE 1.4

Percentage distribution of blacks in some key occupations, 1965, 1975 and 1985

Occupation	1965	1975	1985
Engineers	0,0	0,5	0,1
Architects and surveyors	0,0	1,2	2,9
Doctors	2,0	5,7	8,1
Technicians	5,4	11,7	17,8
Scientists	0,6	3,7	5,5
Nurses	44,9	58,5	60,0
Accountants and auditors	0,3	4,5	7,4
Lawyers	0,9	5,0	6,0
Managing directors	3,6	6,9	3,9
Educationists	56,2	61,2	63,0

(Pillay 1990:47)

1.3.3 The shift towards multiculturalism

Over the years, the separate education system was challenged by various resistance movements which comprized students, parents and community organisations. These movements participated in sporadic protests and boycotts and culminated in the 1976 Soweto riots which marked the beginning of widespread protests against the education policy and social injustices (Squelch 1993:179).

However, since President F.W. de Klerk's opening speech in Parliament in February 1990, many reforms have taken place. At present, many economic, political and social reforms are being instituted and these will contribute positively to the upliftment of the disadvantaged (Smit & le Roux 1993:31).

One of the major changes affecting schools, is the opening of schools to all race groups. While this a major step in the removal of apartheid policies in education, this reform has significant challenges for education.

New problems have surfaced at schools that need to be addressed, and the most pressing issue being communication. As more children of different cultural backgrounds enrol at schools previously closed to them, the communication gap presents a difficult divide to cross. Children who are accustomed to instruction in their mother tongue both at school and home are now seeking admission at schools where English is the medium of instruction. Hence language presents an obstacle to learning (UNICEF 1993:67). This discontinuity in language between home and the new school may be particularly aggravating for the child who has to leap between languages twice a day - once when arriving at school and then again when going home. For many of these pupils, limitation in ability to understand and communicate in English are readily apparent. For others, there may be subtle, but real, differences in English language skills and communication styles that can lead to learning difficulties (Fradd 1991:35).

1.3.4 The need for special aid programmes

In the light of the above stated factors, there is a need for a school reform programme that will change the nature of teaching and learning so that the needs of all pupils will be met and suitable learning environments created for motivating pupils towards acquiring the necessary skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to enable them to participate meaningfully in a multicultural society. Special aid programmes that are designed to promote language competence inter alia, become necessary. Such programmes aim to bring children from disadvantaged backgrounds up to a level where they can profit from high quality classroom instruction (Madden et al 1991:594).

1.3.5 Teacher competencies with regard to special aid programmes

Junior primary specialist teachers enter the school situation after spending between two to four years of teacher training at a college of education. The programme at the teacher training institution covers the theory and methodology related to the junior primary subjects (reading, writing and elementary mathematics as core subjects) which equip them to teach the basic skills necessary to class I, class II and standard I pupils.

The teachers are expected to cope with the problem of and provide for pupils of varying abilities, but the children in their charge (for many years) have hailed from a similar language and cultural background and thus were able to understand their teachers and communicate with their peers.

With the admission of pupils from different cultural backgrounds the problem of catering for children of varying abilities has been compounded. Many of these pupils are disadvantaged to the degree that their "culture" has not provided them with the experiences that would enable them to integrate in the so-called "normal" school system which is oriented in a Western cultural context (Lundsteen & Tarrow 1981: 386). Pellegrini (1988:259) indicates that the home experiences of such pupils are different from those which are required for success in school and when interacting with the dominant, western culture in the school situation they are found to be ill-prepared for learning. Lennon (1988:417) is of the view that when the pupils' knowledge and intellectual skills acquired in their home cultural background are different from the tasks and information encountered at school it becomes difficult to link the two. He further iterates that effective learning is dependent on how well new experiences relate to existing experiences. If there is a discrepancy between the school beginner's experiences and those experiences which are considered necessary for adequate learning then the pupil will "face an insurmountable obstacle to successful learning".

The task of the teachers is to cater for the pedagogic needs of the pupils but most of them have not been trained to provide the type of assessment and instructional activities necessary to meet the instructional requirements of those students without assistance and support (Fradd 1991:35).

As Gordon (1966:56) aptly declares: "the best teachers fail in teaching disadvantaged children because the problem is not simply one of teaching but one of teaching the disadvantaged".

Furthermore, because of the large numbers of pupils requiring special aid and the lack of state resources to provide specialised services in the form of professional personnel to assess needs and implement programmes in the junior primary phase, it becomes necessary to provide a comprehensive language programme with explicit guidelines for teachers of disadvantaged children to alleviate the language problem in schools. Kapp (1989:147) rightly admonishes that "by offering accountable guidance to the environmentally deprived children, by showing sensitivity for their shortcomings and creating opportunities for the optimal development of their own particular potential, these children can be helped".

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem experienced by the junior primary teachers regarding teaching pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds as described in 1.3.5, brings the following question to the fore.

How can junior primary teachers assist disadvantaged pupils who are experiencing language problems, which, in effect sets them back with regard to educational achievement and language competence?

1.5 AIMS OF STUDY

1.5.1 General aim

The general aim is to provide guidelines, for language teachers who are assisting disadvantaged learners in the junior primary phase, to bridge the language gap that exists between the disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children in their charge.

1.5.2 Specific aims

In order to reach the above-mentioned general aim, more specific aims are required, inter alia the following:-

- (1) to trace the process of normal language development from birth to school age years;**
- (2) to focus on the various contributory factors to disadvantage and their effects on the scholastic performance and language competency of children in the junior primary phase;**
- (3) to provide an overview of existing language programmes and methods of assisting children in the junior primary phase with language; and**
- (4) to provide guidelines for language teachers of junior primary pupils, on the assistance of disadvantaged children with regard to language.**

1.6 METHOD OF STUDY

This dissertation is conducted by means of a literature study. Hence the information presented is of a descriptive and comparative nature. It is descriptive in that the disadvantaged child and his language and scholastic performance as well as existing methods of assistance are looked at closely. At the same time it is comparative in the sense that various forms of assistance will be described, compared and evaluated in order to choose the most effective and appropriate forms of aid for disadvantaged children in South Africa.

Although this research concerns the disadvantaged children in South Africa many of references will be cited from literature in the United Kingdom and United States of America because the assistance of disadvantaged children is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa and relevant literature is not available. However, information from foreign literature will not be applied directly but will be assessed with the view of adapting programmes and strategies to suit the needs of the disadvantaged in South Africa.

Resources such as books, articles in journals, periodicals, documents and reports of HSRC will be consulted.

1.7 THE FIELD OF STUDY

This study is undertaken in the field of Orthopedagogics (specialised education). The theoretical study of orthopedagogics is geared towards improving educational practice by making available scientifically based guidelines to help children who experience problems in pedagogical and didactical situations (du Toit 1989:55). Being a subdiscipline of pedagogics, orthopedagogics studies problems concerning the education and instruction of children and the correction of such problems (du Toit 1989:13).

These problems may have physical, medical, social, psychological or legal implications. Therefore the child cannot be fully understood or helped unless notice is taken of the findings of the allied sciences.

Thus it becomes necessary for orthopedagogics to sometimes cross the boundaries of pedagogics for insights relevant to the study of and aid to the child in problematic educational situations, for example, for insight on language, information from a developmental psychologist and linguist may be necessary for understanding the child's language problem.

In terms of this study, assistance to disadvantaged learners, remains within the broad field of orthopedagogics and as such will concern itself with providing junior primary teachers with practical guidelines for assisting disadvantaged children in the junior primary phase with language difficulties.

1.8 PROGRAMME OF STUDY

The programme followed in this study is as follows:

- * in chapter one the introduction, statement of the problem, demarcation of the field of study, aims of investigation, the method of research, and the programme of investigation are discussed;**
- * chapter two discusses language, its structure and normal development from birth to eight years;**
- * chapter three focuses on disadvantage, the factors associated with disadvantage and their effects on the scholastic and language performances of the child;**
- * chapter four describes the origin, organisation and the results of various forms of educational assistance programmes and methods for assisting disadvantaged learners;**
- * chapter five outlines guidelines for the assistance of disadvantaged pupils in the junior primary phase with regard to language instruction;**
- * chapter six contains a summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.**

1.9 SUMMARY

In this chapter, key terms in the title of the dissertation were defined, namely, "language", "disadvantage" and "junior primary phase".

Factors according to 1.3, namely, provision of education; educational requirements and preparation for a technological age; the shift towards multiculturalism; the need for special aid programmes and teacher competencies with regard to special aid programmes were outlined. The problem was stated, aims of the study were formulated and method and programme of study were set out.

Language instruction is the focus of this dissertation. The next chapter will trace normal language development from birth to school age years. This review will focus on areas such as, the components of language, theories of language acquisition and three phases of language development, namely, early language development, preschool language development and language development during the school-age years.

CHAPTER TWO

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

An investigation of normal language development is necessary to facilitate an understanding of the language problems encountered by the disadvantaged child and the assistance that may be rendered.

For this purpose, the following aspects of language will be reviewed in this chapter:

- * the components of language;
- * the theories of language acquisition; and
- * the acquisition of language from birth to school age years.

2.2 EXPLANATION OF TERMS

The following terminology used in this chapter will be explained.

2.2.1 Communication

According to Lerner (1981:314) communication is the collective understanding of a message which is sent and received. It takes place in a situation, the context of which has a direct bearing on the language which will be used. The elements of the communication situation include:

- (1) the speaker who composes a message in his mind according to his objective and then converts that message into language;**
- (2) the listener who listens to the sound symbols or sees the written symbols and decodes the symbols to reproduce the original message;**
- (3) the topic which is dependent on the speaker and listener; and**
- (4) the context or surroundings which may include objects as well as a certain atmosphere specific to that situation created by the aforementioned elements.**

2.2.2 Language

Language is described as "the communication of ideas through an arbitrary system of symbols used according to certain rules that determine meaning (Hallahan & Kauffman 1988:218). Fisher and Terry (1982:12) refer to language as being developed by humans in order to communicate effectively with others. The importance of language as a means of communication should, therefore, not be underestimated. Its function is to communicate ideas, feelings, thoughts, needs and experiences (cf.1.2.1).

For the purpose of this study the following terms regarding language will be used:

- (1) Oracy skills which refers to speaking and listening skills;**
- (2) Literacy skills which refers to writing and reading skills (Wilkinson 1971:14);**

- (3) Expressive language which is also referred to as output skills (Lerner 1981:113) is the ability to express ideas and thoughts verbally as well as through the written form; and
- (4) Receptive language, which encompasses receiving information by input skills, listening, reading as well as the interpretation of information (Wilkinson 1971:114).

2.2.3 Speech

The production of speech is a motor ability responsible for the articulation of sounds and words. This physical process requires the speech organs (muscles of the face, lips, chin, soft palate, tongue and larynx) to be in perfect working order if speech is to be intelligible. However, speech does not occur in a vacuum (Lahey 1988:16) but is dependent on language which consists of a series of speech sounds that are linked together (cf 1.2.1). According to Bryen and Joyce (Vandayar 1992:93) the common goal of speech and language is communication and as such, they cannot function in isolation as goals or ends in themselves. Hence speech, which facilitates expressive language, requires the combination of appropriate sounds to form words.

2.3 THE COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE

2.3.1 Introduction

Language consists of many subsystems that deal with sound, grammar, meaning and vocabulary as well as choosing appropriate things to say on a particular occasion to accomplish

a specific goal. Hence, knowing a language means understanding its phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics, as well as its pragmatics (Fromkin & Rodman 1978:24). According to Hymes (Berko Gleason 1989:18) the speaker who knows all this has acquired "communicative competence". The following components of language, namely, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics will be explained in this section.

2.3.2 Phonology

Sapir (Fromkin & Rodman 1978:70) states that "In the physical world the naive speaker and hearer actualize and are sensitive to sounds, but what they feel themselves to be pronouncing and hearing are phonemes".

From that statement it can be concluded that language sounds are "organised" noises which actually consist of units, classes, or families of sounds that are called phonemes (Hayes et al 1989:36) and phonology is the study of how speech sounds function to signal contrasts in meaning in a language (Bishop & Mogford 1988:11).

Each language has its own sounds or phonemes that are characteristic of that particular language. There are about forty-four phonemes in the English language. These comprise vowels, diphthongs and consonants. These phonemes are combined in specific ways to form linguistic units known as words. For example the words "bat" and "pat" differ in that their initial sound is not the same. This initial difference

produces two different words which have different meanings. Therefore /b/p/ are by definition two different phonemes (Wilkinson 1971:24). Classification of phonemes include their acoustic properties (the pattern of their sound waves), their articulatory properties (place of articulation) and their production properties (manner of articulation) (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:5). Two sets of rules govern the use of phonemes. One set describes how sounds can be used in various word positions. These are distributional rules. For example, in English, the "ng" sound, as in the word "song" is a single phoneme that can never appear at the beginning of a word. The other set of rules determines which sounds can be combined. These are called sequencing rules. For example, attention is immediately drawn to the obvious mistake in HAPPY BIRTFDAY because sequences such as BIRTFDAY do not occur in the language.

This demonstrates that the knowledge of the phonological system includes more than knowing just the inventory sounds in the language. It also determines which phonemes can begin a word, end a word and follow each other (Fromkin & Rodman 1978:73).

Hence it becomes evident that the phonological rules govern sounds, their distribution and sequencing within a language.

2.3.3 Morphology

The next component of language is morphology. This component governs word formation. The rules of morphology concern themselves with the internal structure of words and how they are constructed from morphemes (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:5; Mandell & Gold 1984:187). A morpheme can be defined as a smallest element of meaning. A word may be made up of one or more morphemes.

Free morphemes are words which are made up of one morpheme and can stand alone, for example, *toy*, *doll*, *play*. Bound morphemes cannot stand alone and therefore need to be bound as suffixes or prefixes to free morphemes, for example, *tallest* or *unhappy*. (Anisfeld 1984:204; Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:5).

Inflections make up another aspect of morphology. Bound morphemes that modify number, possession or tense are called inflectional morphemes, for example, by adding *s* to *pupil* to make *pupils* (plural); by adding *ed* to *walk* to make *walked* (past tense) or by adding *'s* to make *mother's* (possession).

Bound morphemes also have a derivational quality. That is they can be used to make new words; for example, the *ness* changes adjective *mad* into noun *madness* (Fromkin & Rodman 1978: 142-143).

It can be deduced that a morpheme is a sequence of sounds that has function in a word. Just as all languages have phonemes, all languages have morphemes. While all phonemes have a set of variants called allophones, morphemes also have a set of variants called allomorphs. While allophones need to be phonetically similar, allomorphs must be similar in meaning.

2.3.4 Syntax

Syntax refers to the rule system that governs the structure of sentences. It indicates the order in which words are organised to form different sentence types. It permits the combination of words into phrases and sentences as well as the transformation of sentences to form other sentences (Wilkinson 1971:26).

2.3.5 Semantics

The component of semantics is concerned with the study of meaning in language (Bishop & Mogford 1988:17). The semantic system involves meanings conveyed by individual words and the speaker's or listener's mental dictionary.

It maps knowledge about objects, events and people and the relationship among them (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:122-123). According to Aram and Nation (1982:22) the meaning of the words is largely determined by the individual's experience and what he abstracts from that experience. Hence a young child may use a word that occurs in the adult linguistic system, but that word may not mean the same thing to him as

to the adult. For example, a two year old may say the word doggie, but this word may refer to horses, cats, cows, sheep as well as to a dog.

Meaning can also be non-literal. For example, one may say "I had a ball", meaning that one had a good time. In this statement "ball" is used in a non-literal sense. Thus it can be concluded that meaning in language is conveyed through the use of words and their combinations. The semantic system maps an individual's knowledge about objects and their relationships.

2.4 THEORIES OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

2.4.1 Introduction

A number of theories of language acquisition are cited in the literature on language. Each theorist views the acquisition of language from a different standpoint.

The following are the most important of these theories.

2.4.2 The behaviorist theory

The behaviorist theory of language acquisition was developed in the USA by John Broadus Watson (Safford 1978:6). This theory states that language is learned according to the same principles that are applicable for the learning of other kinds of behaviour.

Behaviorists are of the belief that :

- * language is shaped through the reinforcement of particular responses emitted in the presence of particular stimuli;**
- * in the shaping of a very complex behaviour such as language, there is a progressive selection or narrowing of responses which are positively reinforced; although more simple and general responses receive positive reinforcement initially, such reinforcement is later given for responses which are more complex and which more nearly match the ultimate behavioural goal (Berko Gleason 1989:176); and**
- * children are born without any specific learning abilities such as a special innate capacity for acquiring language but they have a general learning potential which enables them to acquire language skills through reinforced imitation of adults around them. Behaviorists, thus, subscribe to the "nurture rather than the nature" view as influencing language development (Mussen et al 1990:240).**

However, the behaviorists' heavy reliance on stimulus-response reinforcement learning poses serious problems. Lindfors (1987:100-102) points out that although children eventually come to use full adult forms of language, which are produced in accordance with an underlying system of structural principles like the system of the adult, yet very rarely are they reinforced positively or negatively for the forms they use.

Furthermore, it is difficult for the behaviorist view to account for the uniformity of language acquisition throughout the human species. Nearly all children acquire a language and in some very

similar ways. If language acquisition were simply the result of an innate general learning capacity plus a shaping environment, differences in language acquisition to reflect the wide range of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) differences from child to child in the learning of language would be expected. Those differences are not nearly so vast as the behaviorist theory would predict. If language acquisition were simply a matter of environment shaping the child's language, the resulting shapes and sequences and processes leading to those resulting shapes would be far more diverse than they in fact are.

Although children are exposed to many sentences, they learn the organisational principles underlying the sentences and not the sentences themselves. They tend to create sentences according to their own rule system as their language develops. Hence Fromkin and Rodman (1978:251) also support the view that reinforcement and imitation theories fail because they do not account for this.

2.4.3 The innatist theory

Innatists such as Chomsky, Lenneberg, McNeil and Menyuk are concerned with describing the potential knowledge of language of children.

Chomsky (Lindfors 1987:104; Wood 1988:93) asserts that children are born with universals of linguistic structure "wired in". This implies that children do not have to learn the structures that are common to all human languages, because the

semantic, syntactic and phonological possibilities of human language are innately present. Their task then is to work out how the particular language system of their community actualizes linguistic universals. Once they have discovered the grammatical rules, they can use them to generate and create novel utterances that may never have been heard or produced before.

Lenneberg (1967:142) and Lindfors (1987:104) drew attention to some important ways in which language acquisition is closely related to genetically determined skills (such as walking on two legs) rather than to culturally transmitted ones (such as writing) which result from training.

When a child is born, he is unable to walk and unable to write. However, he has an innate biological predisposition to learn to walk on two legs but no predisposition to write. Learning to write is a matter of training. Lenneberg (1967:142) pointed out that using language, like walking on two legs, is a behaviour which shows:

- * limited variation within the species;
- * no beginning point for the behaviour within the evolutionary history of the species;
- * evidence for inherited predisposition; and
- * apparent existence of organic correlates.

Thus, Lenneberg, by linking language acquisition to biological maturation, supports the innatist belief that genetic inheritance for mental abilities was not a general ability to learn but, rather, that it included a specific predisposition for language acquisition.

Although biological evidence proves the presence of a special innate capacity for language in humans, it does not suggest what the specific nature of such a capacity might be. Chomsky is of the belief that the special innate capacity is the content which he calls the body of unconscious knowledge of language universals already "wired in".

However, Slobin (Lindfors 1987:107) offered a differing view to Chomsky's "content approach". He advocates the "process approach". He holds the view that children are born with some sort of process mechanisms. These mechanisms are such that, applying them to the input data, the children will end up with something which is a member of the class of human languages. The linguistic universals, then, are the result of an innate cognitive competence rather than the content of such a competence.

2.4.4. The interactionist theory

Proponents of this theory view the child as a deeply social being, and his learning of language both reflects and uses his social self.

The view on language acquisition that brings social aspects of learning into focus is called the "interactionist" view. This view claims that every instance of language shows that language is used to express certain ideas in particular social settings and for particular communication purposes, for example, entertaining, sympathising, complaining or complimenting (Aram & Nation 1982:23). The interactionist emphasise the social nature of the learning of a language. Thus the child learning language is actively engaged in a social world of language in use.

Both Harris (1990:91) and Berko Gleason (1989:188) quote Vygotsky as being an ardent advocate of the social interactive language learning. Vygotsky (Berko Gleason 1989:188) states that for the young child, language is at first only a tool for social interaction. Gradually the child begins to use language in his own private interactions with the environment, by talking aloud during play or verbalising intended actions. As a result, language eventually becomes the source for structure of the child's actions, governing or directing thought. Thus the role of language changes over the course of development from a social tool to a private tool, as the child internalises linguistic forms. For Vygotsky, all higher mental processes are established at the level of interpersonal interaction and are, therefore, social in nature. It is only subsequently that "inter-mental" processes are understood to the point where the child can dispense with the adult and manipulate symbols "intra-mentally". Language is first learned as a means of

relating to other people where those others provide social and psychological supports which enable the child to be an effective communicator. In this sense the child's conversational partner creates the conditions which make meaningful communication possible.

As a result of this, the development of thought and language are seen as being very closely related and as taking place within the social structure and in social relationships.

Vygotsky believes that "learning and development are interconnected from the first days of a child's life". He also believes that thought and language are inseparable and explains it thus:

- * in their ontogenic development thought and speech have different origins;
- * in the child's acquisition of language there is a pre-intellectual stage, and in his thought there is a pre-linguistic stage;
- * up to a certain stage these two development processes run parallel but separately; and
- * at a certain point these lines of development meet and thought becomes verbal and speech rational.

Thus he stresses the interaction between thought and word and maintains that when speech sounds are studied without regard to their connection with thought they

become mere sounds, like any other sounds in nature, quite unassociated with human speech. Therefore, when the study of language amounts to no more than the analysis of its constituent element, communication the main function of speech is incorrectly dissociated from the intellectual function of speech.

He regards communication, that is social intercourse, as the primary function of speech. According to him all higher cognitive functions, such as speech, conscious attention, logical memory and motivation, occur twice in the child's development, first as a social activity and second as an individual activity. Man and therefore a child, becomes himself only through interaction with others.

2.4.5 The developmentalist theory

John Dewey and Jean Piaget are recognised theorists who exemplify a developmentalist view (Safford 1978:9-10). This perspective assumes that children play an active part in acquiring language. They are, in effect, the agents of their own development. Children learn from the language around them by attending to what they hear in contexts they can recognise and understand. They evaluate the input according to what they know about objects, events and relations in the situation and according to what they have heard before in similar situations (Bloom 1991:3).

According to Piaget (Berko Gleason 1989:181) language is not a separate innate characteristic but rather only one of several abilities that result from cognitive maturation. He avers that language is structured or constrained by reason; basic linguistic developments must be based upon or derived from even more basic, general changes in cognition. The sequence of cognitive development, then determines the sequence of language development. The complex structures of languages emerge as a result of continuing interaction between the child's current level of cognitive functioning and his current linguistic and non-linguistic environment.

The Piagetian approach suggests that language is only an expression of a more general set of human cognitive activities. Proper development of the cognitive system is considered a necessary precursor of linguistic expression (Mussen et al 1990:246).

2.4.6 Summary

The discussion of the various theories of language reveals that no single theory is absolutely correct in its elucidation. The following aspects of the various theories can be elicited:

- * from the behaviorist theory (cf. 2.4.2) - the environment, and the people, whom the child observes and imitates, contribute to language development;

- * from the innatist theory (cf. 2.4.3) - the child is born with a innate knowledge of certain grammatical structures and that language learning becomes operational only at a certain phase in the development of the child;
- * from the interactionist theory - the social interaction between children and adults is vital for developing language skills, especially expressive language (cf. 2.4.4);
- * from the developmentalist theory - the child is an agent of his own development. He learns from the language around by attending to what he hears in contexts he can recognise and understand (cf. 2.4.5).

From the foregoing it can be deduced that the development of language is a combination of various views held by the linguistic theories and is therefore dependent on the child's innate capacity to acquire language, and the people in the environment who provide the necessary learning experiences. These will form a frame of reference for this study as this study will focus on environmental factors that affect the language ability of the child.

2.5 THE CHILD'S ACQUISITION OF LANGUAGE

2.5.1 Introduction

Ingalls (1978:222) avers that the steps children go through in acquiring language are remarkably similar regardless of what language the child is learning. This section will discuss the factors influencing language development and describe the

various stages of language development, namely, early language development, preschool language development and school-age years language development.

2.5.2 Factors influencing language development

2.5.2.1 Introduction

Children display individual differences in language development. These differences exist because language development is a complex process that is influenced by many factors namely, the physiological, genetic and environmental factors. These factors will be discussed in this section.

2.5.2.2 Physiological factors

Language development has several physical requirements. These requirements include the normal development of speech organs, hearing organs and the neuromuscular system. All these organs must function effectively for language development to progress normally (Petty & Jensen 1980:69). Speech will be indistinct and unintelligible if speech organs are not in perfect working order. Being an interpreter of stimuli, the brain must function properly. Dysfunction of central nervous systems causes numerous language disabilities. Since a child's senses must be intact if he is to master language, hearing as well as vision in perceiving written language must progress normally.

2.5.2.3 Genetic factors

Many psycholinguists and linguists are convinced that genetic factors have a decisive role in determining the child's language development and ability (cf. 2.4.3). According to Chomsky (Bannatyne 1971:72-79) the generative grammar and the rules of transformational grammar, which produce a child's language utterances and language creations are genetically determined. He considers language ability to be genetically determined like other human qualities.

There is also evidence that the two sexes differ in language acquisition. According to a number of studies, girls begin to talk earlier than boys and as a result gain a head start in language development (Petty & Jensen 1980:69). However, according to Dale (1972:310) test in vocabulary, sentence comprehension and verbal expression given to children between two and half and early adolescence have shown no differences that may be attributed to sex.

2.5.2.4 Environmental factors

(1) Family factors

Many researchers hold to the view that family environment and more especially parent-child interaction and stimulation are most important determinants of the quality of language facility the

child develops (Scott-Jones 1991:260; Carrow-Woolfolk & Lynch 1982 : 90-94). Language competence develops in a caring, loving, nurturing environment.

In order to acquire language facility, exchanges with other persons and experiences on which thoughts and language are based become necessary. Farr and Roser (1979:95) are of the view that language growth stems from a child's first hand experiences. Children who do not have social interaction with other children or adults at home, have limited access to concept formation and extension of ideas. On the other hand, children whose parents and family members talk with , read to and interact verbally gain in language development (Petty & Jensen 1980:70).

Learning to read, commences when the parents and family expose the child to books. This may begin with looking at pictures in books in sequence of events of stories and reading the stories to the child. Extensive reading to young children before they are able to do so themselves may develop attitudes, abilities, and skills beyond the decoding related insights supposedly enhanced by other daily-life literacy events. According to Feitelson et al (1986:840) there are many reasons for expecting

reading to young children by mediating adults to have a positive influence on children's literacy abilities. These include the following:

- * Books for young children often contain themes that are outside the child's everyday experiences. Adults when reading, interpret these to listeners and elaborate beyond the text. Thus reading sessions may substantially enrich children's accumulating information base. Since comprehension involves the integration of new information with pre-existing schemata, it can be assumed that knowledge acquired through being read to will in turn improve children's ability to comprehend additional texts as appropriate schemata will be available when needed.

- * Being read to introduces children to a way of using language that is not familiar from face-to-face interaction. Speech addressed to young children lacks many of the complexities and sophisticated grammatical forms found in written texts. Through being read to, children are exposed to different aspects of literary language. This knowledge of literary language children acquire in this way should be useful when they read on their own.

Therefore a home environment that is print rich enriches the child's vocabulary and knowledge of language and broadens his field of interest and experience and extends his conceptualization of objects and situations since language, speech and concept formation are connected. Burke (1986:28) supports the view that rich literacy encounters require rich literary environments. The richer the home in diverse stimulation and the broader the social and cultural environment, the richer and more plentiful will be the associations the young child makes with the words he or she hears and later reads. There is no question that a home that values literacy exerts a powerful effect on that child's literacy development (Roser et al 1990:554).

(2) Socio-economic factors

Another major factor influencing the development of language is family socio-economic status. Statistics have shown that the language development of children from lower social status groups is restricted as compared with that of higher social status groups (Deutsch 1967:52). The former are at a disadvantage in respect of vocabulary, sentence construction, correct language usage and expression. This difference can be attributed to the lack of

concentration on verbal factors, less communication between parents and children and lack of stimulation and reinforcement.

Poverty is viewed as a debilitating factor that limits children's opportunities for experiences that facilitate and encourage learning. The low socio-economic status may prevent experiences for comparing, describing and contrasting objects. Items such as books, crayons and pencils may be scarce. Hence children may be unprepared for verbal experiences in the classroom.

(3) Bilingualism

The term used to describe pupils with English-language needs are important. Bilingualism implies that pupils are proficient in two languages. However, this term is inappropriate in that many pupils are only proficient in one language (mother-tongue) and the use of the term bilingualism to describe these pupils can lead teachers to hold inaccurate expectations of student's performance (Fradd 1991:36). The term "limited English proficient" is more accurate in that it refers to pupils who do not have English-language skills sufficient to enable them to participate in regular classroom programmes without assistance.

These children of other cultures, who seek admission to English medium schools (cf.1.3.3), experience a number of problems with English. They have vocabulary difficulties, they frequently intermingle words of both languages. Sentences in English are short, often incomplete and seldom of compound or complex forms. Errors in inflection, verb tenses and uses of connectives, articles and negative forms are common. They also misuse idiomatic expressions because they tend to translate literally. Spoken language in terms of pronunciation and enunciation is also affected (Petty & Jensen 1980:72).

Hence limited language proficiency, because of having to learn mother tongue language and English is a factor that has a bearing on language development.

2.5.2.5 Summary

While the physiological and genetic factors play a role in the language development of the child, of importance to this study is the environmental factors that impact upon language development. From the research it was gleaned that family interaction plays a decisive role in the language development of the child. A home where talk is promoted and experience enlarged by outdoor guided excursions etc., new insights are developed and this fosters language development. Reading and exposure to books from an early age lays a good foundation for later reading success.

However, the economic situation of the family affects the kind of educational provision that can be made available by parents. Families that are of low economic status are less able to provide experiences that promote language and preoccupation with economic problems do not encourage positive parent-child interaction and this affects the child's language progress.

2.5.3 Early language development

2.5.3.1 Introduction

Communicative intentions are manifested in a variety of forms in the first 24 months of life, and gradually these early intentions attain a linguistic form (Berko Gleason 1989:43).

Research has shown that communicative intent appears before the development of speech. The initial interactional intentions are expressed by the neonate in the form of gaze, gesture and vocal behaviours. These communicative forms of behaviour, gradually become word-like utterances as the child acquires the speech forms of his/her linguistic environment. Bates (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:69) and Smith and Locke (1988:344) suggested that semantics and syntactics are derived from pragmatics. Pragmatics involves the use of language within context. The child learns to use various forms of behaviour to carry out a

communicative function. Thus the early appearance of communicative acts provides a developmental time line across which various components of language are acquired.

The development of language use results from the interaction of child and context. The child learns how to create change within the context by combining and recombining behaviour in different ways. Bloom and Lahey's (1978:202-203) three chronological levels in the development of language use will serve to outline the stages of communication of children.

2.5.3.2 The three stages of language use

Stage 1

This stage involves the gradual change in reflexive types of behaviour such as crying to achieve ends. These types of behaviour are regarded as primary forms of communication. Infant behaviour is initially directed by basic biological and physiological needs. The involuntary reflexive behaviours gradually become voluntary motor acts, permitting infants to control their behaviour more directly.

Stage 2

Children still have only a limited repertoire of forms. However, they have the ability to combine and recombine those forms to express varied communicative functions.

They begin to evidence awareness of the conventional forms that signal intentionality and result in communication with the adult.

Stage 3

Children, at this stage, express the same message in different ways. They take into consideration the social variable, listener, context, etc. that affect the form of the message. The extent to which children adapt their use of language to the rules of the social context defines their skill as effective communicators (Bloom & Lahey 1978:203).

2.5.3.3 Semantic development

The development of meaning is closely related to children's perceptual and functional notions of the environment. Children's experiences with agents (people), actions (doing and manipulating) and objects enable them to develop relationships between and among these basic components. Children's variegated experiences result in the development of semantic relationships that express how an object relates to an agent (possession) or how an object or action is not repeated again and again (recurrence) (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:81). Although there may be many different lexical entries within each semantic category, the general categories that children learn are universal across language and cultures. The ideas about the world that are expressed by these semantic relationships are universal. By

combining children's lexical productions with their vocal and gestural behaviours within a context, the adult formulates a gestalt of what they are talking about.

2.5.3.4 Meaning and sentence structure

Nelson (1986:7) describes the multiword process as "meaning is not the exclusive province of individual words". Even at the single-word stage, children augment their limited linguistic productions with gestures to express broader semantic understanding of relational concepts. Children must learn how to express their ideas by learning to encode meaning syntactically in the form of phrases, sentences, and finally texts. Just as there are rules that govern the way in which words are constructed within a language, there are rules that determine how words are arranged in sentences.

Word order is one strategy used in some languages such as English. By following these word-order rules or arrangement rules for words, children can go beyond the meaning expressed by the individual word. De Villiers and De Villiers (1978:53-56) believe that by arranging words in orders agreed upon by the language community, the child can go beyond the words alone to express the relationships holding between them. Bloom and Lahey (1978:17) have described these early combinations as semantic-syntactic.

They are semantic in that their bases for combination are the meaning relations; they are syntactic in that children make use of the word order rules in governing them.

Word order is a powerful strategy that controls language production and comprehension for several years. Not until children are sophisticated language users can they manipulate the form or structure of a complex sentence in order to derive its meaning. After children begin to express the basic semantic-syntactic relations, they learn to express the relations between the events that contain those basic relations. Children begin to connect two occurrences or events by using *and*, *then*, *when* and *because* by thirty-three months of age.

2.5.3.5 Phonology

Phonology is that aspect of linguistic form that governs the relationship of sounds within a language (Wilkinson 1971:24). As a part of early linguistic learning, it is important because infants begin to vocalise and to use sounds as part of the communication process during the first nine months of life. Child phonology cannot be described independently of the total developmental process. A description of components is an arbitrary, but necessary separation for explicative purposes.

Phonological development is dependent upon many factors in child development:

- * physical, structural changes that affect sound production abilities;**
- * integration of sound production (not phoneme production) with communication;**
- * integration of sound production (phonemic production) with semantic meaning; and**
- * progressive development of phonemic structures and phonological rules (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:85).**

2.5.4 Preschool language development

2.5.4.1 Introduction

According to Bernstein and Tiegerman (1991:96-98) children at preschool level develop from simple one and two word utterances (telegraphic) to more adult like speech. Children gradually elaborate the way they say things by adding more detail.

In the early preschool years, children's vocabulary continues to grow and they learn many new word meanings. They also learn how to transform their ideas into sentences and they begin to use a variety of sentence types. By four years the syntax is adult like. They progress from talking about events in the "here-and-now" to talking about events in the "there-and-then".

As they develop cognitively they begin to refer to people, objects, actions and events that are displaced in terms of time and space. They talk about past and future events and objects and activities in the absence of external props or contextual support.

2.5.4.2 Syntactic development

The order in which the child acquires linguistic forms will be examined first. According to Brown's Stages (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:108-109) children's acquisition of syntactic structures is not as much a function of their chronological development as the mean length of their utterances (MLU). He noted that major linguistic changes took place as MLU increased. By identifying these developments, he could characterise certain MLU stages.

Stage 1

This stage is characterised by single-word utterances and early multi-word combinations that follow semantic rules. Examples of these are *more drink, milk, gimme juice, push car*.

Stage 2

At this stage, grammatical morphemes appear. Children expand and modify their linguistic productions by including morphological endings such as -ing, the plural-s and the prepositions in and on. Utterances such as *Amiel eating*, *Put ball in*, and *See Judith* are characteristic of this stage.

Stage 3

Utterance length continues to grow as children begin to use simple declarative sentences as well as imperatives, "who" questions and simple negative sentences. During this period children begin to use a variety of sentence types, for example *Judith hit the ball*, *Will I eat?* *Amiel is not eating*, *Push the truck*.

Stage 4

This stage is marked by the emergence of complex construction, although mastery continues beyond this stage. Children exhibit the use of noun-and-verb phrase elaborations as well as compound and complex sentences. Examples of utterances produced at stage 4 and beyond include *Daddy is driving and Mommy is writing*. *She likes chocolate ice-cream and I want to push the yellow car*.

According to Brown's stage 2 children begin lengthening their short, immature sentences by incorporating one or more of the fourteen grammatical morphemes studied by Brown. These grammatical morphemes begin to emerge in stage 2 and continue to develop until stage 5. They include the pronouns and noun and adjective suffixes.

(1) Pronoun acquisition

The pronoun is used to refer to the equivalent of a word or a group of words previously mentioned. The meaning of a sentence that contains a pronoun often cannot be understood without referring to the preceding sentence.

Some pronouns appear in Brown's stage 2 while others emerge much later. In general the earliest pronouns to emerge usually involve the child as subject (*I, mine, my, me*). Other subjective pronouns emerge later (*he, she, they*) (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:111).

(2) Adjective and noun suffixes

Preschool children acquire a few additional suffixes for adjectives and nouns. The adjectival comparative *-er* and the superlative form *-est* are learned during this period. Children add these forms to adjectives to create the words *nicer, biggest* and *smallest*. The

superlative is understood by children by three and a half years of age and the comparative at about five. It takes them longer to acquire comparatives and superlatives. Comparatives and superlatives that are exceptions to the rule (*better, best*) usually take longer to acquire (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:111).

(3) Phrase and clause development

Sentences are made up of phrases and clauses. There are two major types of phrases: noun phrases and verb phrases.

Noun phrases contain a noun and emerge at Brown's stage 2 but the greatest surge in their development occurs at stage 4.

Verb phrases contain a main verb and the verb phrase elaboration emerges at Brown's stage 2 and continues through stage 5.

In contrast to a phrase, a clause is a group of words that contain both a subject and a predicate. Some clauses can stand alone and can function as simple sentences. The use of complex sentences with main and subordinate clauses usually occur at early stage 5.

(4) Sentence development

By the end of stage 2 or early stage 3 children have mastered the rules of producing a variety of simple sentences. The emergence of more adult-like sentences occur in stage 3.

(5) Phonological development

Linguists have noted that children tend to simplify adult productions of a target word. The simplification "rules" used by children are called phonological or natural processes. Some of the phonological processes (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:121) used by children are described as the following:

*** Syllable structure processes**

Children frequently simplify words by reducing them to the basic consonant-vowel syllable. Four processes that accomplish this simplification are reduplication, final consonant deletion, cluster reduction and deletion of unstressed syllables.

*** Reduplication**

This is a well known childlike pattern that usually occurs in normal children's first words. Using this process, children repeat the first syllable and substitute it for subsequent syllables in multisyllabic words. For example *da-da* for daddy.

* **Final consonant deletion**

This is a syllable structure process in which the final consonant of a word is deleted.

* **Cluster reduction**

This is a structural simplification in which one or more consonants from a target consonant cluster are deleted.

* **Deletion of unstressed syllables**

A simplification resulting in a word like *na* for *banana*.

* **Substitution process**

A number of rule-governed substitutions are common in the speech of preschoolers. These substitutions are classified according to the place or manner of production of the speech sounds. Substitution processes are those in which one sound is substituted for another, depending on the sound's position in a word.

* **Assimilation processes**

Another group of processes are those in which two phonemes within a word become alike. Two assimilation processes are constant harmony and prevocalic voicing.

Constant harmony refers to consonants within a word which become more alike in terms of place or manner of articulation. An example of constant harmony is the production of *gogi* for *doggie*.

Prevocalic voicing takes place when unvoiced consonants are affected by the following vowel and take on the voicing feature of the vowel.

2.5.4.3 Semantic development

Semantics is the aspect of language that deals with meaning (cf.2.3.5). Without meaning there would be no point of language. People talk in order to express meaning, and they listen in order to discover the meaning of what others say.

* Lexical meaning

Lexical meaning is concerned with meanings of and the characteristics of the category to which a word belongs. The preschool period is one of rapid lexical growth. Halle et al (1978:96) estimates that the child adds approximately five words to his lexicon every day between one and half and six years. Children's lexical growth continues steadily during the preschool years. Their definitions are mainly concrete.

* **Relational meaning**

Children also acquire meanings that code relationships among people, objects and events. These relationships can be conveyed at the word level and the sentence level. As they develop cognitively, the relationships they map become increasingly complex.

While the sentence meanings expand during the preschool years, contextual meanings also develop. The children learn how to discern meanings from the linguistic and non-linguistic context and how to use linguistic forms to glue discourse together.

* **Contextual meaning**

Contexts affect many aspects of language. The linguistic context provides necessary information to derive intersentence meaning. The non-linguistic context gives clues about the meaning of words whose referents shift with the perspective of the speaker and the timing of the utterance.

The acquisition of the words, their meanings, and the links between them is a process that requires time. During the preschool period, children acquire new words and gradually develop an understanding of the nature of words, sentences and their relationships. The meanings that the children learn are the result of their encounters with the physical and social world and are dependent on their cognitive and social development.

2.5.4.4 Pragmatic development

During the preschool years children learn to describe objects and events that are removed from the immediate context. They talk about objects not within the immediate environment and about events both past and future. They use language effectively to convey their wants and needs and ask as well as answer a variety of questions. In addition, they become more aware of the general conditions governing co-operative conversations. They learn to take turns in a conversation, to stick to the conversational topic and to contribute new and relevant information to the discourse.

Moerk (1975:790) has outlined nine language functions that two to five year-olds use as they interact with adults.

They are:

- . imitating**
- . asking a question**
- . expressing a need**
- . answering a question**
- . encoding from picture books**
- . describing objects or events**
- . describing own actions**
- . describing plans**
- . describing a past experience.**

The internal cognitive and social changes that take place in children influence the ways they use language. For example, young preschoolers use language to direct themselves and to instruct others as well as to report on present and past experiences. Older preschoolers, however, add more complex communicative functions, they use language to reason, think and solve problems.

2.5.5 School age years - language development

2.5.5.1 Introduction

According to Prutting and Gallagher (1983:154) the school age years are a very creative period of language development. These years are characterised by growth in all aspects of language, namely, form, content and use.

However, the development of semantics and pragmatics seem to be the most prevalent. During this period the child not only masters new forms but also learns to use these forms as well as existing structures to communicate more effectively.

The child also develops metalinguistic skills that enable him or her to think and talk about language. Metalinguistic skills help the child master two important language related skills that will have great impact on his reading and writing.

2.5.5.2 Syntactic development

The school-age language development consists of simultaneous expansion of the existing forms of morphology and syntax as well as the acquisition of new ones. The child continues to expand sentences by elaborating noun phrases and verb phrases. Several morphological structures also emerge during the early school age years. Six year olds begin to produce gerunds (Menyuk 1969:57). Gerunds are verbs to which -ing has been added to produce a form that fulfils a noun function, for example fish becomes fishing. Between six and seven years of age children also acquire the derivational morphemes which change verbs into nouns -er (catcher), man (fireman) and -ist (cyclist). Lastly the adverbial -ly is understood and produced after the age of seven.

By the end of the second year at school children comprehend irregular noun and verb agreement, for example "the fish are eating" and several verb tenses such as the past participle "had eaten" and the perfect "has been eating".

As their comprehension abilities improve children begin to use passive sentences which they abandoned during preschool years. According to Baldie (1976:331-338) 80 percent of seven and a half to eight year olds produce full passive sentences. This development continues through to age nine.

2.5.5.3 Vocabulary development

During the school-age years, the child's size of vocabulary and specificity of word definition increases. Gradually the child acquires an abstract knowledge of meaning that is independent of particular contexts or individual interpretations. Meaning increases in two directions : horizontal and vertical (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:136). Horizontal meaning is the child's addition to a single definition features that are common to the adult definition. Vertical meaning involves bringing together all the definitions of a single word. Both horizontal and vertical growth occur during the school years.

Between the ages of seven and eleven, the child makes significant increases in comprehension of words that represent spatial, temporal, familial and logical relationships. In addition the child acquires the meaning of many words that have multiple meanings (Menyuk 1971:181). Children in the school age years, move from defining words to individual experiences to defining words with more socially shared meanings (Litowitz 1977:289-304). In about the second year at school their definitions become sentences that express complex relationships. Vocabulary knowledge is highly correlated with general linguistic competence and academic aptitude. The acquisition of a broad vocabulary will allow the child

not only to understand and express more complex ideas with great facility, but also to achieve a higher degree of competency in reading and writing.

2.5.5.4 The development of metalinguistic abilities

During the school-age years the child begins to reflect on language as a decontextualized object. This ability, called metalinguistic ability, enables the child to think and talk about language, that is, to treat language as an object of analysis and to use language to talk about language. The development of metalinguistic abilities is most obvious during middle childhood between about five and eight years of age (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:145).

Van Kleeck (1984:129-153) has suggested three important aspects of metalinguistic development:

- * recognising that language is an arbitrary conventional code. This includes understanding and using multiple meaning words; understanding and using figurative language; using different sentence forms to express the same meaning and detecting ambiguous sentences and explaining their ambiguity;
- * recognising that language is a system of units and has rules for combining them. This means that children are able to: segment words into phonemes and

sentences into words; judging grammatically; correcting ungrammatical sentences and applying appropriate inflections to new words; and

*** recognising that language is used for communication.**

Children are able to judge utterances as appropriate for a specific listener or setting and are aware of the politeness of various request forms.

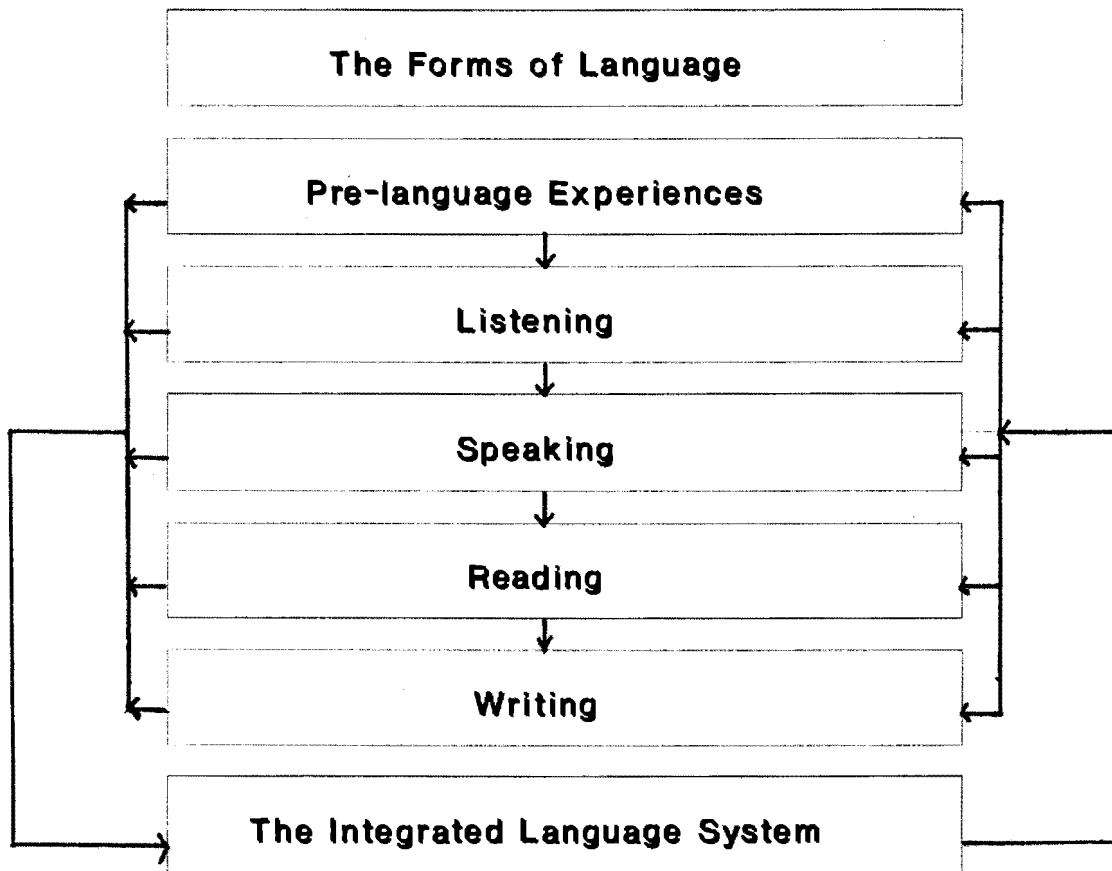
The language system

It becomes necessary at this stage to review the language system which will facilitate an understanding of the integration of the forms of language (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

The language system encompasses listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The Figure 2.1 below shows the integration of the different language forms. The individual's experience with each mode strengthens the underlying language system, which in turn influences an individual's abilities in each language form.

Figure 2.1

The forms of language and the Integrated Language System



(Lerner 1988:313)

There is a hierarchical sequence of development of these skills, namely:

- . listening;**
- . speaking;**
- . reading; and**
- . writing (Lerner 1988:312; Polloway et al 1989:186).**

Listening and speaking being referred to as the primary language system, since these skills are acquired first and reading and writing being the secondary language system (Lerner 1988:313).

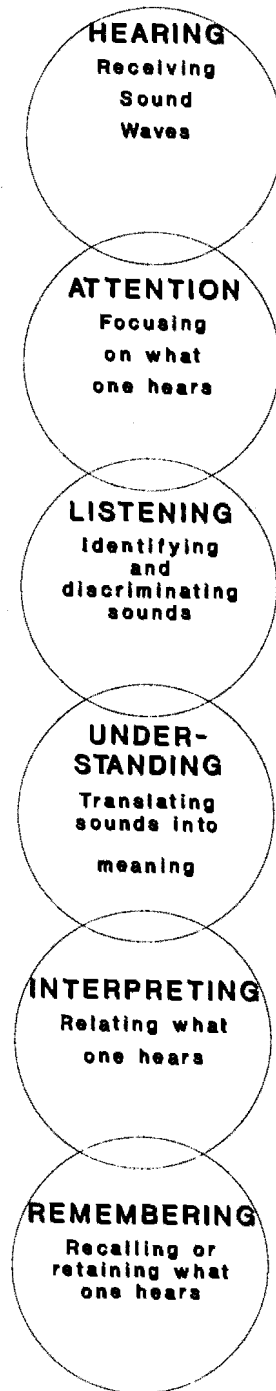
Listening and speaking skills

A brief overview of listening and speaking skills will establish their relationship as well as their contribution to developing reading and writing skills.

Listening is a receptive language skill and it is a learned skill. To acquire verbal communication abilities, the child must learn to listen. Listening, according to Lerner et al (1987:205) is an active process requiring concentration and thinking. Figure 2.2 shows that listening requires the deliberate attention to sounds so that the brain can translate, interpret and store them for later use.

Figure 2.2

The Links of Receptive and Organising Processes



(Lerner et al 1987:205)

The diagram above also points to important aspects regarding listening and reading. In reading, children not only need learn what to listen to and what to screen out as they concentrate on the written word, but also they must sharpen the skills needed to listen to and discriminate among differences in sounds. They need to listen to gain knowledge from virtually all communication activities (Petty & Jensen 1980:74). Therefore Hammill and Bartel (1990:27) concluded that children who listen well are at an enormous advantage in virtually every school task - following directions, understanding content and discerning the intention of teachers and peers.

Listening skills are the "readiness" stage of communication skills. They lead to the expressive speech skills using vocabulary as the bridge. Expressive language is the process of producing meaningful linguistic sounds. As the child listens, he becomes familiar with the rhythm, intonation and inflection of the language. Differences and similarities in enunciation are heard and the child must be able to recognise these differences so that he can reproduce them accurately (Lindberg & Swedlow 1985:147). Ability to discriminate sounds easily, augurs well for spelling instruction. Further, new and varied experiences and activities help to introduce new concepts and words and meanings to describe and explain them. Thus spoken language is extended.

From the review of the language system it becomes clear that a close relationship exists between expressive and receptive skills. Polloway et al (1989:237) very succinctly describe this relationship as:

"What I can think about, I can talk about,
What I can say, I can write,
What I can write, I can read."

The next section will review reading and writing skills.

Reading

According to Petty and Jensen (1980:209) some degree of language proficiency is essential to the child who is learning to read and many of the difficulties children encounter in reading are highly related to inadequacies in using language. Therefore, in order for the child to be successful in initial reading instruction it is important that the child's oral vocabulary include words he is to be taught to recognise in print (Farr & Roser 1979:125). Dechant (1982:45) confirms that words that are spoken provide the vocabulary for reading and are easily recognised in the reading process. In defining reading Goodman (Singer & Ruddell 1976:472) states that reading is a complex process in which the reader reconstructs, to some degree, a message encoded by the writer in graphic language. While the message is graphic, the end

product for the reader is meaning, which according to Dechant (1982:19) relates to one's own fund of experience.

This definition suggests that:

***Reading involves a knowledge of language**

Language has a surface structure, namely, the sounds and written representations of language which entail visualising and identifying words; and a deep structure which gives meaning. The basic requirement for reading is for the learner to be able to deal efficiently with both the surface and the deep structures (Dechant & Smith 1977:23-24).

***Reading involves perception**

Atkinson (1971:106) notes that perception involves the interaction of the sensory systems with those parts of the brain that are concerned with storage and retrieval of past experience. This implies that the perceptual process of reading includes initiation by the stimulus (graphic symbol), preparation for a response (meanings and interpretations drawn from the reader's past experiences and culmination of response (relating meaning to the symbol) (Dechant & Smith 1977:33). In order to read, the individual must be able to form a perceptual image from the graphic that he sees.

***Reading is a cognitive process**

While perception is a constructive process adding something to the stimulus aspects, cognition is defined as the interactive activity of the brain. It refers to all the processes by which the sensory input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered and used (Dechant & Smith 1977:16). Thus the cognitive process involves restructuring of perceptions or relationships. The individual is taught a system of attacking new words and he uses this system to make insightful responses to new words.

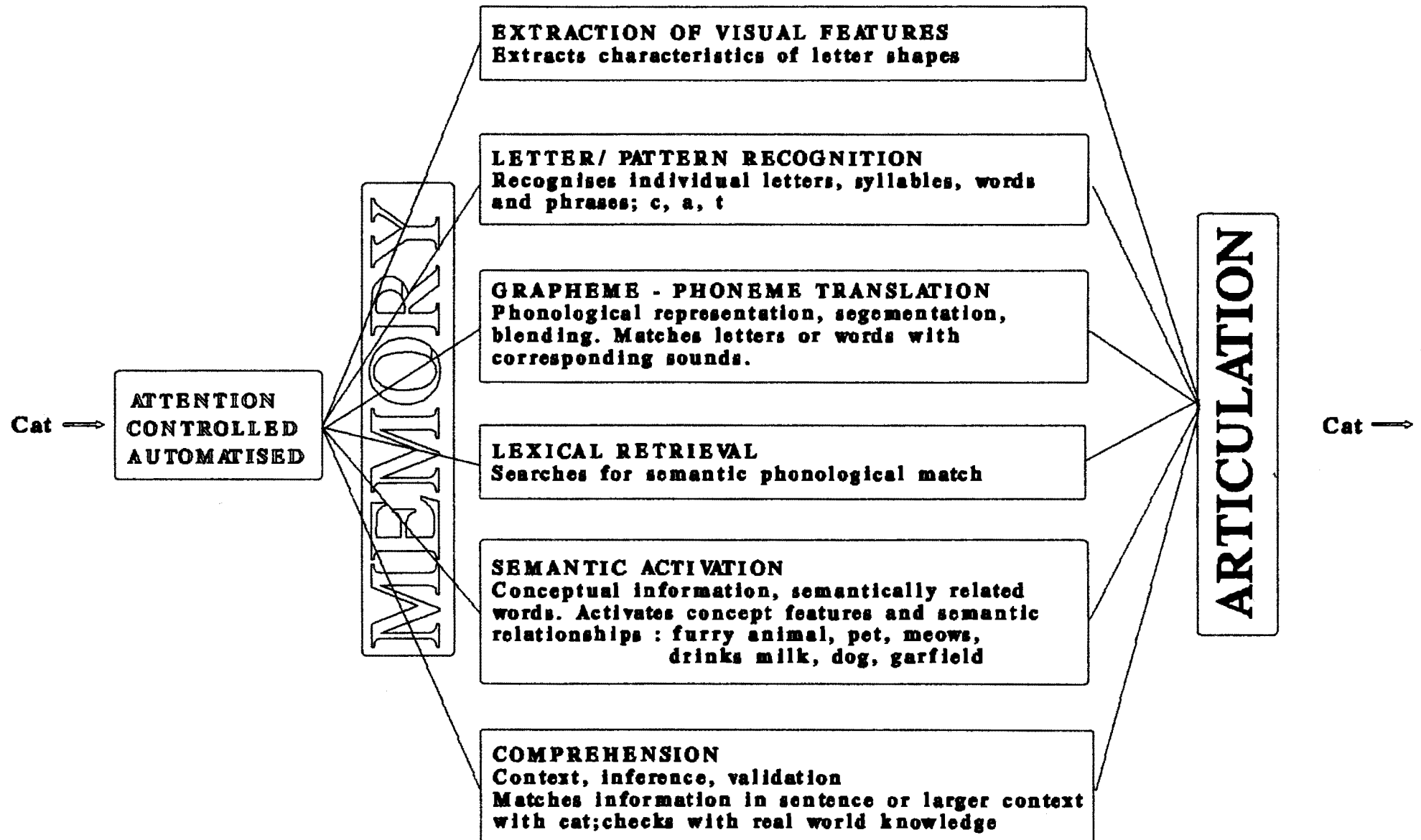
***Reading is an interactive process**

Reading is an interactive process in which the reader is actively involved. The reader uses his language ability, perception and cognitive skills to derive meaning from the written language. Lerner (Benjamin 1993:25) avers that effective reading is only possible if language, perception and cognition interact successfully.

***Reading development**

Many stages of reading development have been identified. Berko Gleason's (1989:235) model - the overview of processes in First Reading Cat Figure 2.3 is of significance to this aspect.

Figure 2.3 First Reading Cat



At the prereading stage (prior to age 6) the child learns to recognise and discriminate between the letters of the alphabet. At this stage, most children are able to scan print, identify letters, recognise their name in print and read a few memorized words such as those seen on common signs.

In the first stage of reading development the child concentrates on decoding single words in simple stories. Meaningful words in context are read faster than random words. At this stage, according to Waller and MacKinnon (1979:46) the child relies heavily on the visual configuration of a word in order to recognise it. She pays particular attention to the first letter of the word and the word length while ignoring the order of the letters. Next the child learns letter-sound correspondence rules, recognises their importance, and is able to sound out novel words by using the phonetic approach. In addition the child learns that the text provides messages and does more than just describe pictures (Ferreiro & Teberosky 1982: 36-37). Therefore, first grade oral readers begin to use the text to analyse unknown words. Whenever they read a word incorrectly, it is because they have substituted a word that makes sense in the context for a word they do not know. While poor readers in the first two years at school tend to make wild guesses when analysing unknown words, good readers try to use textual clues to figure them out (Biemiller 1970:75-76).

By stage two (approximately the third and fourth years at school) the child's ability to analyse unknown words by using orthographic patterns and contextual inferences is firmly

established. At stage three (from the fourth to the eighth grade) the emphasis in reading shifts from decoding skills to comprehension. During this stage the child's scanning rate continues to increase and his/her ability to answer complex questions based on textual information is tested in the classroom. By secondary school (stage four) lower level skills are firmly established. The adolescent must use higher-level skills, such as inference and the recognition of the author's viewpoint, to aid reading comprehension.

Learning to write

As in reading, children progress through various stages when learning to write. Writing development begins with children's drawing and scribbling, as they struggle to create forms that resemble letters. Although at this stage the child may pretend to write, he or she usually does not know that print represents spoken words (Bernstein & Tiegerman 1991:151).

Next the child learns to write names and "well-known" words. These familiar words help the child understand that different letters represent different sounds. With the emergence of the following stage, inventive spelling, the child tries to impose regularity on his/her writing system by matching sounds and letters (Frederiksen & Dominic 1981:64). The sound the child learns is matched to the letter, and his/her writing reflects this match. In the beginning, the child represents the entire word with the first

letter and pays little attention to the other letters of the word. For example "dbc" might represent "daddy". This is similar to the initial stage of reading, in which the child pays attention to only the first letter. Next, the child will represent syllabus, often without vowels. In the final stage of inventive spelling, called phonemic spelling, the child is aware of the alphabet and the correspondence of graphemes to phonemes. The formal instruction of school brings mastery of the conventional spelling system.

A recommended practice for reading and writing instruction

McCormick and Schiefelbusch (1990:373) advocate the teaching of oral language, reading and writing simultaneously and holistically through overlapping activities. The term holistic suggests an approach to teaching reading and writing in combination, with speaking and listening, in a unified instructional programme.

The same vocabulary and topics are introduced for concept building, oral discussion of word meanings, sight reading, spelling and formulating sentence both orally and in writing. Holistic instruction takes advantage of natural language situations and this ensures that pupils can discuss, read and write about a given topic so both peers and teachers can understand their communicators.

Spelling

According to Hammill (1982:123) spelling may be defined as the formation of words from letters, in its written and oral forms according to its accepted usage.

Petty and Jensen (1980:443) have outlined some skills that are necessary to spell. During the school age years children develop these skills.

They are:

- * the ability to recognise and write all the letters of the alphabet in upper and lower case forms;
- * the ability to hear words accurately as they are spoken and pronounce them clearly;
- * the ability to see printed words accurately and group and connect letters of word properly;
- * the ability to use elements of punctuation necessary for spelling in the correct manner; and
- * the ability to use recognised sound and symbol relationship.

Finally it is important to note that the stages of learning to read, write and spell develop simultaneously.

Comprehension

Dechant (1982:311) is of the view that comprehension includes the correct association of meanings with word symbols, the selection of the correct meaning suggested by the context, the organisation and retention of meanings, the ability to reason one's way through smaller idea segments and the ability to grasp the meaning of a larger unitary idea.

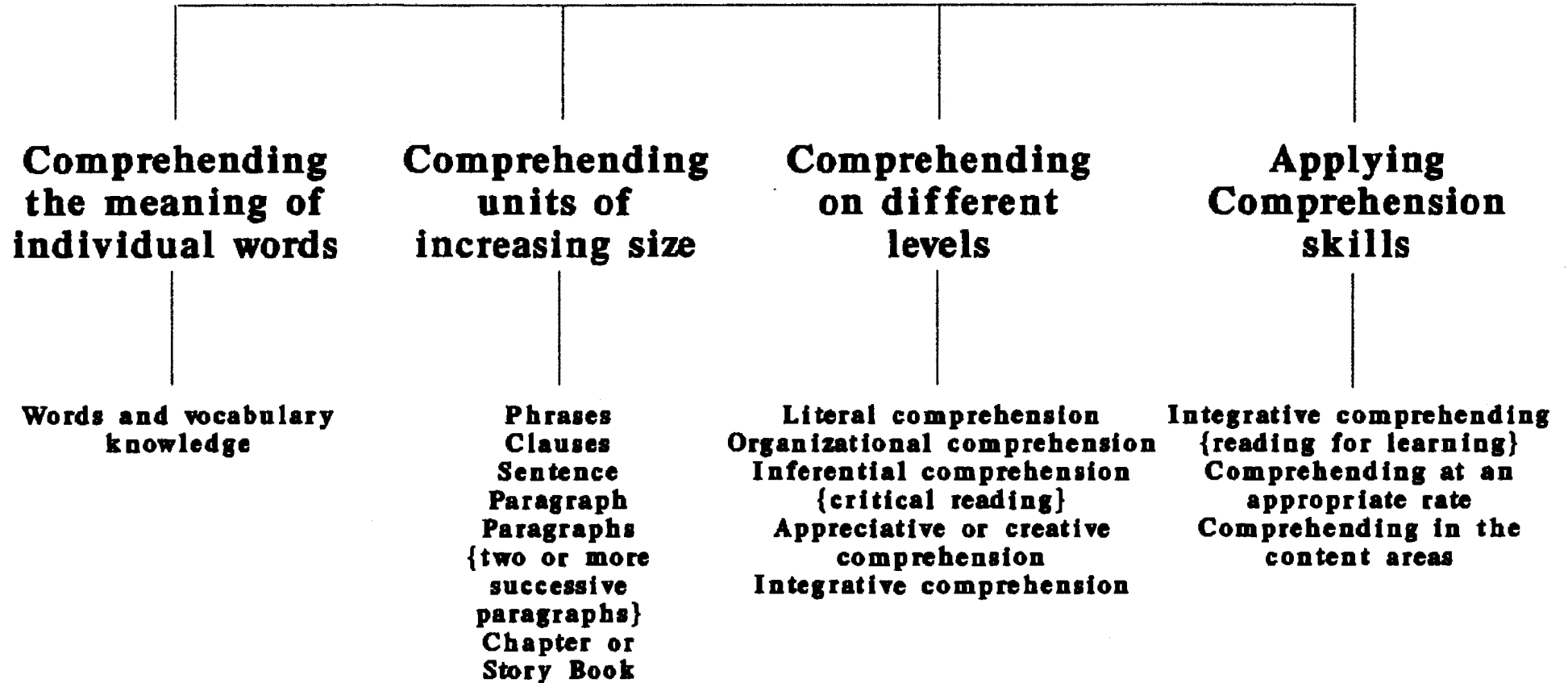
McCormick and Schiefelbusch (1990:376) explain that comprehension is actually reconstruction of meaning on another level.

From these definitions it is evident that comprehension is a complex process and the development of comprehension skills in the school age years cannot progress in isolation. It develops together with reading and writing. However, it is important to focus on the complex nature of comprehension.

Dechant's (1982:312) facets of comprehension draw attention to development of these skills.

Figure 2.4

Facets of Comprehension



For the purpose of this study, the levels of comprehension skills and how these develop among children in the junior primary phase will be focused on.

Levels of comprehension

The following levels of comprehension have been classified by Barrat (Dechant 1982:313).

- * Literal comprehension is text directed. It requires the identification, recognition and recall of ideas, information or happenings that are explicitly stated in the text.
- * Reorganisation includes classifying, outlining, summarising and synthesising. It requires the synthesis and analysis or organisation of ideas or information from the reading material.
- * Inference involves a combination of explanation and conjecture based on a synthesis of literal content, personal knowledge, imagination and intuition.
- * Evaluation or critical reading involves judgements about reality and fantasy, fact or opinion as well as judgements of adequacy or validity, of appropriateness, worth, desirability, completeness, suitability, truthfulness and probability of occurrence.
- * Appreciation - the reader reacts to the text from his own experience and gives a personal response to the views and styles of the text.

The child in the junior primary phase develops these skills in fairly predictable stages. These stages are outlined by Dechant (1982:319-330).

* **Word reading**

Vocabulary is highly related to comprehension. To comprehend, the pupil must have a knowledge of word meanings and be able to select the correct meaning from the context.

* **Phrase reading**

A phrase is more than the sum of the individual words that it contains. Pupils learn to comprehend phrase units together with competency in word reading.

* **Reading the sentence**

Effective reading implies an understanding and an interpretation of language patterns. Comprehension of written language requires the perception of language structures such as a complete sentence. The ability to read sentences improves as pupils grow in the ability to deal with word meanings, ability to read phrases, to use punctuation and to deal with basic sentence structure and sentence pattern.

* **Reading the punctuation**

Punctuation is not only a set of rules to be learnt but also a means of facilitating the grasp of meaning.

* **Reading the paragraph**

Paragraphs are basically a series of sentences that give one basic idea. The most important skill required for comprehending a paragraph is the ability to identify the main idea or central thought in the text. This requires the pupils to distinguish between important and subordinate details.

* **Reading for details**

After experiencing some success in reading for the main idea, the child is ready to read for details.

* **Reading for organisation**

Good readers also comprehend the organisation of what is being read. They see the relationship between the main idea and the subordinate ideas and are able to arrange them in a logical order.

* **Developing inferential reading skills**

Inferential reading requires readers to read for implied details and for implicit or latent meanings. They need to read between the lines, use verbal reasonings to infer additional supporting details, make inferences to the main idea and the sequence of what might happen next, predict outcomes and answer questions about material calling for inferential interpretative or connotative meanings.

* **Reading for evaluation**

Critical reading demands that the reader evaluate or pass judgement on the quality, logic, reliability, value, accuracy and truthfulness of what is read. It is a slow, sentence by sentence and thought by thought reading. It requires the reader to carefully analyse the writer's words, purpose and implications.

The various levels of comprehension have been discussed. Children need to master these levels in order to develop higher order thinking skills that govern success in any chosen sphere of life, namely primary and secondary school success and success in vocational areas.

2.6 SUMMARY

An investigation of the language problems encountered by the disadvantaged child necessitates an understanding of normal language development.

Language is made up of many components, namely, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. The various theories of language acquisition described in this study namely, behaviorist, innatist, social interactionist and developmentalist, revealed that while no single theory is altogether correct in its views, language development should be viewed as a combination of aspects

drawn from these theories. In short, the child's innate capacities, together with his interaction with adults in his environment shape his language ability.

A detailed study of language development from early years to school-age years showed that milestones of language development at each of these stages can be identified and various factors influence language development.

The findings in this chapter, will form a basis for an understanding of disadvantage and its effects on the scholastic performance of the child and more specifically his language acquisition. This will follow in chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE

DISADVANTAGEMENT AND ITS EFFECTS ON SCHOLASTIC PERFORMANCE AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter, traced the normal development of language from birth to school-age which included the development of metalinguistic skills during the school-age years. This chapter will assess the effects of disadvantage on the scholastic performance of children and, more particularly, on their language development. It will be indicated how various factors, associated with disadvantage may negatively affect the quality and quantity of children's language.

3.2 THE CONCEPT OF DISADVANTAGEMENT

Disadvantage is a broad concept and many views have been expressed in an attempt to define the concept. Some of these views put together collectively will provide a global perspective of the concept of disadvantage.

The disadvantaged have been described as being "at risk" of failure (Scott-Jones 1991:259) in that they are unlikely to graduate from high school because of failing one or more grades, poverty, ethnicity and speaking a language other than English. This risk of failure stems from lack of home and community resources to enable them to benefit from conventional school

practices. Consequently, according to Comer (Waxman et al 1991:3) this high risk group who underachieve in school will underachieve as adults.

According to Waxman et al (1991:3) in recent years the number of students in USA considered to be at risk of school failure has increased and their degree of disadvantage has also increased. He uses the following indicators to illustrate the critical status of learners at-risk:

- (1) high drop out rates;
- (2) large number of students who live in poverty; and
- (3) failure of students to do well on higher level applications, complex reasoning and problem solving.

These definitions and discussions imply that membership in a social group which differs in important ways from society at large, may create difficulties at points of interaction with that of larger society.

The next section will focus on the various factors associated with disadvantage and their relationship with the educational attainment of the disadvantaged child.

3.3 FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DISADVANTAGEMENT AND THEIR EFFECTS ON EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

3.3.1 Introduction

According to Cox (1987:219) researchers have accumulated an overwhelming body of evidence in support of the view that the child's home background acts as a major determinant, or rather set of determinants of his or her level of educational attainment and pattern of educational growth. Children from what might be termed culturally and materially disadvantaged homes tend, as a group, to underachieve in schools compared with more advantaged peers.

Todaro (1982:98) argues that "low levels of living" by which he means insufficient goods to sustain life and inadequate education, health and other services are all related in some way to low incomes. Low incomes, in his view, means low savings and less investments and may also contribute to large family size since children provide a major source of economic and social security for poor families in old age.

A survey by Townsend (Chazan et al 1976:9) showed that poverty was closely correlated with occupational status, the highest incidence being among unskilled manual workers and their dependents. Nearly half of those people whose husband's or father's occupations were in unskilled manual work were below, or on, the margin of the poverty datum line. The graphic illustration of the deprivation suffered by those families living in

poverty showed a bleak picture of comfortless housing, inadequate diet, lack of social life and holidays, no birthday parties or pocket money for the children and constant worry over unemployment and making ends meet. As this picture seems to reflect the life of almost half of the South African population, the various factors that contribute to disadvantage will be reviewed.

3.3.2 Material disadvantages

3.3.2.1 Occupation of father

The level of skill or training acquired by the father, determines his occupation, and the socio-economic status of the family is largely dependent on the father's occupation. In terms of this study social class will be used to describe the occupational group of children's fathers and the effect of social class on the educational achievement of children will be investigated.

Grouping, according to Davie et al (1972:2-3) is hierarchical with regard to level of skill or training required. The basic framework is of five occupational groups which are named social classes I to V. Social class I consists of occupations that necessitate the highest professional qualifications. Occupations in social class II also demand a professional qualification and this group includes teachers and others in managerial positions in industry and commerce. Social class III is divided into a non-manual and a manual section.

Social class IV is made up of semi-skilled manual occupations and social class V contains the unskilled manual occupations.

When considering the concept of deprivation at work, which included items such as the hours of work, length of notice and amount of sick pay to which employees were entitled, holidays, welfare and fringe benefits, and physical conditions of work, manual workers were found, in each item, to be disadvantaged to other workers.

Wedderburn (1970:593) found that improvements in terms of employment, retrenchment rights etc. have usually been accompanied by parallel improvements in the employment conditions of non-manual workers, thus maintaining the differential standard between occupational groups.

Those in social classes IV and V are also in constant risk of unemployment. Sinfield (Mortimore & Blackstone 1982:25) supports the view that unemployment is a cause of disadvantage in the labour-market and of subsequent poverty since the long-term unemployed may become labelled as "unemployables", and may be looked at suspiciously by possible employers or be referred, less often, for jobs by employment officers. Moreover, recurring unemployment does not allow time for resources to be built up to cushion the effects of further periods out of work.

It becomes evident that those in the lower social class groups (IV/V), because of lack of skill and training, earn low income and are subject to many disadvantaging factors at work and also unemployment.

***Effects of social class on scholastic achievement of children**

Attainment at primary school age of children of different social class groups in England showed that at age eight, children of parents in non-manual occupations performed better than the children whose parents followed manual occupations. The difference between the two groups, at this age was 7.59 points. Three years later it was found that this initial difference of 7.59 points had risen to 9.44, a rise of 12 per cent. The relative deterioration on norm-referenced tests shown by the children of manual workers was most marked in their performance on non-verbal intelligence tests (Douglas 1964:46).

Davie et al (1972:102) and Rutter and Madge (1976:104) found social class to be the variable with the strongest association with attainment in reading and arithmetic of a group of seven year olds from social classes I to V. They found that 50 per cent of the seven years olds in social class V had "poor" reading scores as compared with 7 per cent in social class I. This result leads to the claim that the

chances of the unskilled, manual worker's child being a poor reader are six times greater than those of a professional worker's child.

There is clear evidence that the lower the occupational status of the father, the poorer the attainment of the child at age seven (Kellmer-Pringle et al 1966:116). In reading 56.2 per cent of children of parents in social class I were considered to be good readers compared with 23.3 percent of children of parents in social class v. Attainment did not decrease by uniform amounts from social class I to V. Children from the non-manual groups had similar scores but there was a considerable gap between them and those children from the manual group.

In reviewing the effect of the working condition of fathers on their children, Mortimore and Blackstone (1982:26-27) record some adverse effects that poor conditions of work may have on employees' children and more especially their educational experience. The amount of time that these parents have available for their children is undesirable because of the long hours of work and short holidays they receive. Moreover, strenuous physical work may result in fatigue and this may mean that they are often too tired to attend to their children's needs. Indirectly this powerlessness that they feel at work may be transferred into other aspects of life. This may result in parents

passively accepting low standards of educational provision or decisions made about their children at school for which they are not pleased.

With regard to the effects of unemployment on the school performance of children, Macloyd (Scott-Jones 1991:258) concluded that children's academic performance declined when parents were unemployed. The diminished academic performance could have resulted from children's lowered expectations for educational and occupational success, emotional problems, physical health problems, or reduced parental involvement with schoolwork.

Although different statistical methods were used to analyse the information from the different studies, the evidence suggests that the gap in the measured attainment between different social groups in primary school has not narrowed and may, in some instances, have widened (Davie et al 1972:98).

Social class in South Africa

According to the National Commission on High-level Manpower in South Africa, the population of South Africa could be divided into four social class groups, namely, the executive group (class I), the highly skilled group (class II), the semi-skilled (class III) and the unskilled and unemployed group (class IV) (Behr 1984:300), with the majority of the population falling into the last group. These

unskilled workers occupy jobs that require minimal levels of education and training (NEPI 1993:169). The majority of the African population constitute the last group (IV). The educational attainment levels of children from the African group, according to UNICEF (1993:65), were considerably lower than other population groups. The following table supports their findings:

Figure 3.1

 Educational Attainment Levels for 1991 - A Racial Distribution
 (Expressed as Percentage of Total for each Population Group)

Attainment	White	Coloured	Indian	African
None	13.2	23.0	20.0	36.2
Primary	11.5	26.0	20.0	36.5
Secondary	59.3	49.0	59.3	26.3
Tertiary	16.0	2.0	0.7	01.0
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

In terms of working conditions the migrant labour system in South Africa has disrupted the traditional family structures. Parents are forced to be separated from their children for long periods. UNICEF (1993:20) records that in 1992 about 1.8 million children were permanently separated from their mothers mainly because the women working as domestic servants in town and could not have their children

with them. This type of work conditions has detrimental effects on all areas of life, and in terms of this study the language development of the child. Adult mediation with regard to reading to children which results in extending pupils' language and comprehension abilities (cf. 2.5.2.4) are diminished. With reference to unemployment in South Africa, Karodia (1991:13) states that unemployment exists on a massive scale, with a large sector of the population being economically inactive.

3.3.2.2 Poverty

Poverty defined

Rowntree (Sen 1981:11) defined families as living in a state of poverty if their total earnings are insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of physical efficiency.

According to Webster (1984:16-19) poverty is a relative term and should be defined by comparing the circumstances of one group of people with another. Thus poverty might be defined in terms of the degree to which people do not enjoy the basic standards of diet, living conditions, leisure activities and amenities which are socially perceived as "customary". In this view of poverty, disadvantage is measured both materially and socially. Participation in society is seen as being a norm, a right.

In his view on poverty, Chambers (1983:103) suggests that poverty encompasses a phenomenon called "the deprivation trap" which comprises five interlocking disadvantages entrapping the poor in a state of deprivation - poverty, physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability and powerlessness. These disadvantages cause many poverty stricken to move down into deeper and more tightly integrated poverty.

From the above definitions it can be concluded that the state of poverty has spiralling effects in that the low level of income determines the economic status of the family and this will determine the choice of accommodation and location, the state of health and nutrition of the family and family size. The last definition suggests that poverty can be perpetuated. This section will review the continuity of economic status and the effects of poverty on the educational attainment of children.

*Continuity of economic status

Klaus and Gray (1968:7) attest that poverty tends to perpetuate itself. They believe that individuals who have spent their childhood in an environment that provided neither the basic requirements for physical health and energy nor those for the development of the intellect and of personal and social competence will in turn provide an inadequate environment for their own offspring.

Rutter and Madge (1976:25-26) were not able to come to any definite conclusions about inter-generational transmission of economic status. However, since 1976 a very thorough investigation of poverty including some analyses of continuity has been carried out. The findings reveal that there are certain vulnerable groups who are likely to be in poverty, such as children of single parents and of the unemployed and sick, and therefore the likelihood of continuing poverty depends on the continuity of the vulnerable state (Essen & Wedge 1982:32).

Jencks (Halsey 1975:19) also presented data which have implications for continuity of economic status. Family background was not highly predictive of personal income, and appeared to attribute greater influence on economic status to luck, although it should be noted that their measure of family background did not include a variable for paternal income.

The likelihood of continuity of disadvantage among families experiencing multiple problems is greater because there are more mechanisms hindering any attempts to break out of such a cycle. Many studies reveal that the second generation repeated the problems of the first generation, although the extent of this is again reduced by a general trend toward improved circumstances (Rutter & Madge 1976: 252-256). Although it is difficult to form a general conclusion of the extent to which disadvantage occurs in succeeding generations, Rutter and Madge (Essen & Wedge

1982:33) do attempt to draw an overall picture in respect of "familial" continuities: "With respect to intelligence, educational attainment, occupational status, crime, psychiatric disorder and problem family status there are moderate continuities over two generations". But they add "continuities are much weaker over three generations than they are over two".

***Effects of poverty on educational attainment**

A principal conclusion of the Coleman Report (Breglio et al 1978:40) was that family background and socio-economic variables have a powerful effect on student achievement that does not diminish over time.

Jencks (1979:141) concluded that economic origins influence the amount of schooling a child receives, that the difference between poor and non poor children are partly a matter of academic aptitude and partly a matter of finance and finally that cultural factors and values have more to do with attainment than either aptitude or finance. The overall conclusion is that children from low-income families perform worse on achievement tests than children from high-income families.

Breglio et al (1978:40) released some findings which show a basic relationship between family income and student scores. The data collected from the study confirm the positive relationship between family economic status and the child's achievement.

The basic relationship between family economic status and student achievement, seen as one year or more below grade level, is presented in Figure 3.2. The X^2 values, 560.06, is statistically significant ($p < .001$); based on the percentages in Figure 3.2, this indicates that there is a systematic relationship between economic and educational status. Students from non-poor have a ratio of four to one. Economically disadvantaged children are more likely to be low achievers, in fact, 43 percent of the students from poor families are low achievers. Four out of every ten children in grades 2 through 6 whose families are classified as poor are achieving one year or more below grade level. In contrast, only two of every ten elementary children whose family economic situation is considered to be non-poor are low achievers. These data mean that if a child comes from a poor economic environment, there is about one chance in two that the student will be a low achiever. For a child from a non-poor family, the chances are only one out of five will perform poorly. Hence the conclusion is that students from poor families are more likely to be low achievers than are students from non-poor families.

Figure 3.2 : Students' basic educational achievement by family economic status

Basic Achievement*			
	Low Achiever	Regular Achiever	Row Totals
Economic Status	%	%	%
Poor	42.7 (909)	57.3 (1,219)	100.0 (2,128)
Non-Poor	19.0 (1,955)	81.0 (8,361)	100.0 (10,316)
Column Totals	23.0 (2,864)	77.0 (9,580)	100.0 (12,444)

$\chi^2 = 560.06, df=1, P<0.001$

*Grades 2-6 Only

(Breglio et al 1978:40)

The tendency for low economic status to be associated with low educational achievement appears even more pronounced when educational achievement is sub-divided into quarters. Forty-six percent of the children from poor homes are in the bottom quarter of the distribution, and another twenty-nine percent are in the second quarter. Consequently, nearly seventy-five percent of all the children characterised as poor are scoring at or below the fiftieth percentile. It has already been deduced that if a child comes from a low-income family, there is a forty-three percent chance that the child's achievement is one year or more below grade level. But these data (Figure 3.3) suggest that there is a forty-six percent chance that a child

from a low-income family will score at or below the twenty-fifth percentile, and a seventy-five percent chance that such a child will be below the national mean. Only twenty-five percent of the poor score above the fiftieth percentile, whereas fifty-six percent of the non-poor score above it. Therefore, not only do the poor have a tendency to score in the bottom quarter, but a significant proportion of them (seventy-five percent) are clustered below the fiftieth percentile.

On the basis of the data, it is unlikely that children coming from poor family backgrounds will score the fiftieth percentile. On the other hand among children whose family incomes exceed the poverty thresholds for 1976, only twenty percent are in the bottom quarter, fifty-six percent are above the fifth percentile and twenty-nine percent are in the top quarter. In effect, learners from poor backgrounds cluster in the bottom two quarters, while learners from non-poor backgrounds, cluster in the upper two quarters.

Figure 3.3 : Students' educational achievement in quarters by family economic status.

Educational Status					

	Bottom	Second	Third	Top	Row
Economic	Quarter	Quarter	Quarter	Quarter	Totals
Status	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)

Poor	46.1	28.7	17.5	7.6	100.0
	(1,173)	(732)	(446)	(194)	(2,545)
Non-Poor	20.3	23.5	27.4	28.8	100.0
	(2,553)	(2,952)	(3,441)	(3,624)	(12,570)
Column					
Totals	24.7	24.4	25.7	25.3	100.0
	(3,726)	(3,684)	(3,887)	(3,818)	(15,115)

$$x^2 = 1052.90, df=3, P<0.001$$

*Grades 1-6 Only

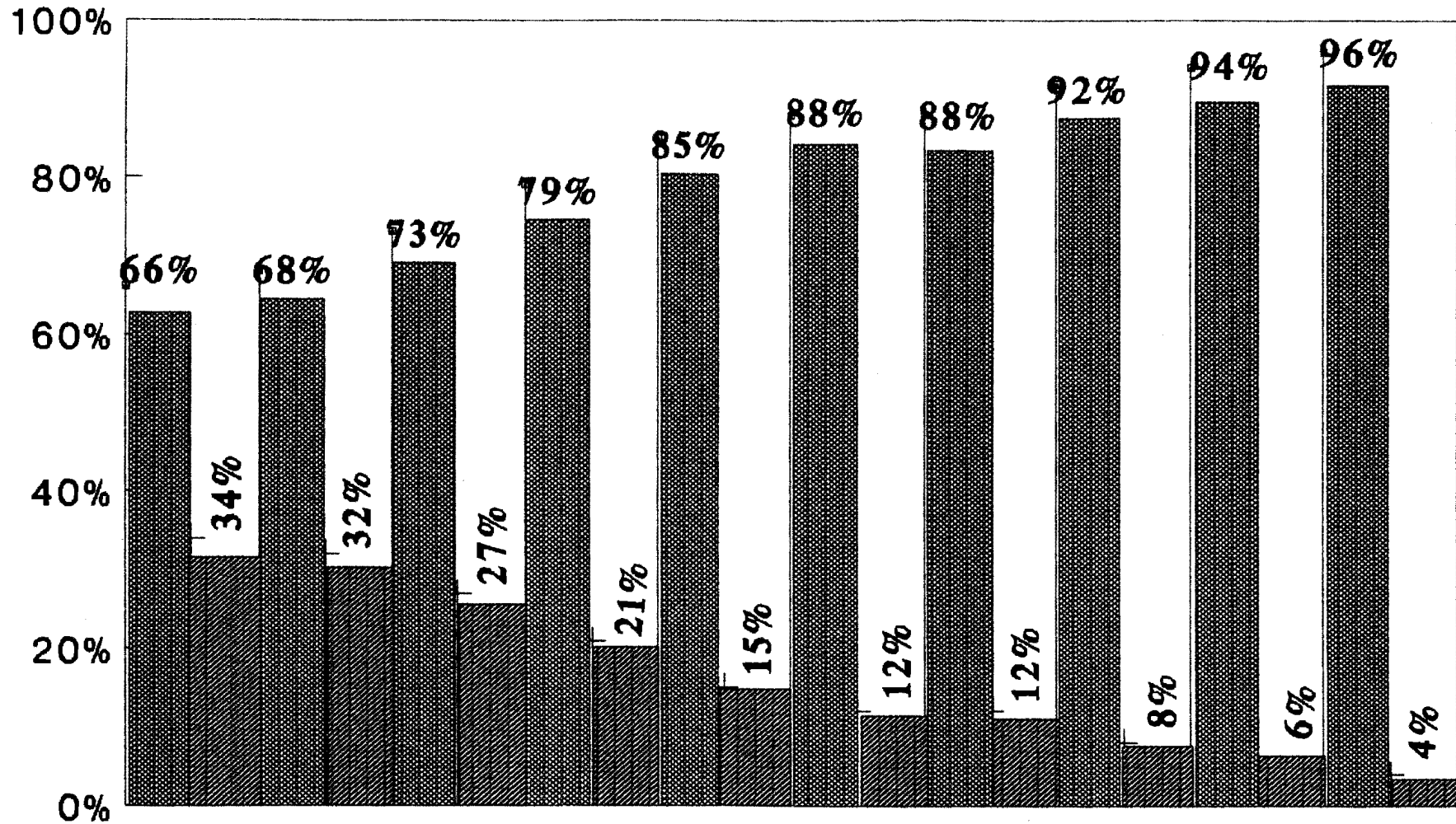
(Breglio et al 1978:42)

Figure 3.4 displays graphically the percentage of contribution from poor and non poor to each decile of the scale of educational achievement. The non-poor are the larger of the two income sub groups (eighty-three percent) and naturally constitute the largest percentage of each

decile. What is interesting, however, are the relative and comparative proportions of the non-poor to poor in each decile. The ratio of non-poor to poor in the first decile is 19:10, and in the second is 21:10. In the third decile, the ratio increases to 27:10. But the ratio of non-poor to poor becomes progressively larger in each of the upper deciles such that in the ninth decile it is 156:10 and in the tenth it is 240:10. The gamma, a measure of the relationship between variables based on the number of concordant pairs minus the number of discordant pairs divided by the total number of pairs is .455.

Figure 3.4

Student Educational Achievement in tenths



 Percentage of non-poor elementary students

 Percentage of poor elementary students

(Breglio et al 1978:46)

The conclusion to be drawn from Figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 about the basic relationship between family economic status and a child's educational achievement (measured in terms of a standardized test) is that there is a statistically significant association between poverty and a tendency to score poorly. If the child comes from a low income family, there is a seventy-five percent chance that the child's score will fall in the bottom half of the educational achievement distribution.

*Poverty in South Africa

A review of poverty reveals that while very many factors contribute to the high level of underachievement by black children in the formally organised South African schooling system, not least the vast problems within the apartheid schooling system itself, research findings from local and international studies indicate a strong relationship between school achievement and socio-economic background. Although household income cannot be simply equated to skill levels, employment and education, it has been used as an important indicator of educational disadvantage (UNICEF 1993:56).

Research on the income categories of South Africans revealed that 5.4 million children and their families can be considered to be disadvantaged (income of R8 000-R22 500 pa) and severely disadvantaged (Below R8 000 pa). Furthermore 64% of children of preschool age live

below the Minimum Living Level. However, the vast majority of children who are severely disadvantaged are African (97%) (UNICEF 1993:56).

Hence, a picture of the particularly handicapping elements of the low-income home in relation to the later cognitive development of the child has been reviewed.

3.3.2.3 Health

Health defined

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (1978:2) health is a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". As a minimum all people in all countries should have the highest possible level of health so that they are capable of working productively and participating actively in the social life of the community in which they live (WHO 1981:15).

A point that comes to the fore from the definition, is that people have to be healthy to participate fully in the realization of goals and the improvement of their circumstances. To be healthy is to be truly productive, to be capable of supporting one's family and of participating in the social activities of the community in which one lives.

For the disadvantaged, poor socio-economic conditions caused by low income levels and poverty adversely affect the health and well being of the family. This section will review the effect of poor health of mothers on the development of babies and the effect of the health of parents on the school performance of children.

***The effects of low socio-economic status on health of mothers and the development of babies**

Baird and Illsley (1953:2) and Illsley (1966:4-5) found that low socio-economic status was related to low birth weight babies with perinatal deaths. While Birch and Gussow (1970:100) recorded that there are certain interweaving factors which contribute to the adverse ante-natal and post-natal conditions of socially disadvantaged mothers. These women tend to be physically weaker, to have children earlier, more frequently and until a later age. They are less likely to be delivered in adequate conditions.

When the disadvantaged group was compared with other children at age eleven, Wedge and Prosser (Mortimore & Blackstone 1982:29) found that the social circumstances were "at the time of birth already facing substantially diminished prospects of normal development of their chances in life".

Drillien (Birch & Gussow 1970:67) suggests that among low socio-economic groups there is an association between low birth weight and a depressed IQ score. He records that only 4.5 percent of babies of social class I and II weigh less than 5 and half lbs. (2.5kg) at birth compared with 8.2 percent of babies of social class IV and V.

From the above findings it can be deduced that some mothers from a low socio-economic status tend to produce low birth weight babies, and there is an association between low birth weight and depressed IQ scores in children.

Research also showed that the health of parents affected school performance of children.

Essen and Wedge (1982:66) showed that some of the families' hardships stemmed from the ill-health of parents, particularly the father. Ill-health of parents would mean that they collect sickness benefits, hence the choice of housing maybe restricted, particularly if the family is large. Douglas et al (1968:93) recorded that children's absence from school was worse when either parent was in poor health. Absence was associated with poor results in tests.

The death of a father after prolonged illness seemed to result in poor attainment. This was due to preceding stress and possible disruption involved in caring for or visiting the sick father and might have contributed to the poor attainment (Douglas et al 1968:96-97).

The conclusions drawn from the foregoing reveal that poor health of children and parents have detrimental effects on the educational attainment of children.

***Health of the disadvantaged in South Africa**

The situation of health of the children in South Africa cannot be described positively. Smit and le Roux (1993:40) affirm that basic deficiencies in water supply, sanitation and housing for Africans have resulted in diarrhoea being a major cause of death in infancy and infestation with intestinal parasites being widespread. Their studies have also indicated that one third of African children under the age of fourteen are underweight and stunted; malnutrition, kwashiorkor and marasmus occur in up to three percent of the preschool population leading to considerable morbidity. In many cases children lacking access to educare programmes also lack access to health and nutritional supplementation. According to Davie (UNICEF 1993:59) many children run away from primary schools and crowd the creches so that they can be fed. Non-governmental organisations concerned with educare services have become involved in administering the R440 million earmarked in

1992 by the state for the Food Aid Programme. The aim of the programme is to supplement nutrition. Educare service provision aim to play a significant role in the reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among children under 6 years of age. This is a significant measure since, according to Kvalsvig et al (1991:558) health and nutrition are considered to be closely related to cognitive performance and educational attainment.

3.3.2.4 Housing and family size

Deutsch (1967:44) and Klaus and Gray (1968:7) agree that the living conditions of the disadvantaged are often characterised by a great overcrowding in sub-standard housing, often lacking inadequate sanitary and other facilities. These houses are often located in depressed conditions where there is little opportunity to observe natural beauty and clean landscapes because there is an absence of congenial surroundings. In addition, there are likely to be big numbers of siblings resulting in little time for individuation.

*Effects of overcrowding and family size on educational attainment

Davie et al (1972:50) collected information on overcrowding and amenities in the English home. "Overcrowding" was defined as more than 1.5 persons sleeping in one room. The three basic amenities were a hot water supply, a

bathroom and an indoor toilet. They found that for social class I the figure was 1 percent while for social class V it was 37 percent. They estimated that overcrowding was responsible for two or three month's retardation in reading age and absence or shared use of basic amenities was equivalent to about nine months retardation in reading age.

Essen and Wedge (1982:52) noted that in terms of each of the measures of space available (that is, bed-sharing and having a room for homework) the long-term disadvantaged appeared to be the worst off of all disadvantaged groups. For example, the long-term disadvantaged were particularly likely to be sharing a bed long term as well (34 percent of them shared a bed). This score was 15 times as many as the long-term ordinary group.

In a study of nine year olds, Murray (1974:121-122) showed that overcrowding was associated with aggression, lack of curiosity, impulsiveness and extraversion. Furthermore, the disadvantaged child has a short attention span and poor auditory discrimination which point to "overcrowding" in the home as a disadvantaging factor as it forces the child to "tune out" or disregard sounds in the immediate environment (Wallace et al 1987:73). Owing to having poor language he is likely to engage in marginal listening, that is, he may listen part of the time, then let his thoughts wander.

With regard to family size Anastasi (1956:205) showed that individuals from large families tend to have a lower level of intelligence and inferior reading attainment.

The impact of family size on educational performance was greater among the manual than the middle class children (Douglas 1964:91). In the manual working classes the children are progressively handicapped with every increase in family size. Thus children from large families are at a disadvantage when parents come from the lower manual working class.

***Housing in South Africa**

The shortage of houses is a major problem in South Africa. Lack of housing for the masses has resulted in many informal settlements mushrooming. Platzky and Walker (van Greunen 1993:89) view informal settlements as areas of settlement that are not planned or approved of by the occupants themselves, generally built with unorthodox building materials. These areas are often densely populated and generally poorly serviced. Their studies reveal that from the period 1960 to 1983 close to 3.5 million Africans were forced to move. Of these about 112 000 were settled informally and squatted. Over the past five years there has been an acceleration in the growth of informal settlements, shanty towns and squatting. These houses comprize anything from tin shacks, cardboard shacks, tents, old cars, to empty drums. According to Karodia (1991:14) the squatter settlement in Durban has resulted in an "uncontrollable concentration of people". This has resulted in competition for

the few available resources, particularly land to build informal shacks, for the limited water resources and for access to transportation.

Schooling is virtually non-existent in squatter areas. The nearest schools are not easily accessible to these children because of inadequate transport facilities. If they do enrol at schools, their attendance is often poor because of transport difficulties. Children from these deprived conditions present many learning problems associated with poor housing and lack of basic amenities, particularly related to language and reading since they lack experiences that promote concept formation and vocabulary that are necessary for success at school (cf. 2.5.2.4(1)).

3.3.3 Child-rearing and attitudes to education

The evidence concerning mother-child interactions and parental attitudes is reviewed.

3.3.3.1 Introduction

Krugman (1956:8) maintained that school failure of disadvantaged children was embodied in the concepts of "cultural deprivation". She believed that low achievement result from early environmental experiences and different child-rearing practices gave rise to cognitive and linguistic setbacks in children (1956:16).

Poverty is the basic factor that hinders the progress of the culturally deprived children (Crow et al 1966:6). These children come to school with the scars of poverty. According to Deutsch (1967:44) objects such as books, toys, puzzles, pencils and scribbling paper are scarce. He acknowledges that the mere presence of these materials will not necessarily result in their productive use, but it would increase the child's familiarity with the tools that will confront him or her in school (cf.2.5.2.4). Their parents may be unschooled and they (children) may even display an attitude of indifference and defiance or even destructiveness. Because of lack of security or sufficient emotional or intellectual stimulation and poor language development they find it difficult to communicate with their teachers and peers and they respond to strangers with silence because of distrust of unfamiliar adults, and to other children with monosyllables or a shaking of the head (Crow et al 1966:203-208). They lack understanding of concepts of time, size and shape even if these are explained in the most simple terms. Concepts such as "before -after" or "in front of-at the back of" are unfamiliar. They are also motivated to drop out of school before being graduated. These factors contribute to cultural deprivation and result in diminished chances of educational achievement.

Poor motivation, lack of quality mother-child interactions, lack of language skills and lack of parental interest in the child's education are factors that result in a poor performance in school attainment.

3.3.3.2 Mother-child interactions

Adult-child interactions give rise to some important handicapping elements of the deprived home.

The mother of a young child in a disadvantaged home is likely herself to have come from similar home conditions. This means that, in general her educational level will be low and her experience limited. Her physical health and energy level are probably below normal requirements, her diet (past and present) are most likely to be grossly inadequate (Klaus & Gray 1968:8). Thus her pre-occupation with her own problems will have a bearing on her interaction with her children.

Early mother-child interactions have a direct bearing on the later mental health of the offspring (Bowlby 1953:13).

Lewis and Wilson (1972:121-122) found that while there were no social class differences in the mother's verbal contacts with the child, children of women from lower socio-economic groups tended to be ahead in mental development. However, Tulkin and Kagan (1972:37-38) found from their sample, that middle-class mothers of ten month old, first born girls spent less time on physical contact but more time in verbal interaction and cognitive stimulation with their children. They believe that verbal interaction between mother and child rather than physical stimulation fosters mental development during the child's

second year of life. Therefore the ability to communicate is carefully nurtured. Children are encouraged to speak in words, phrases and complete sentences; they have a repertoire of nursery rhymes, poems, stories, and songs which have been taught by rote. Their curiosity is cultivated, and questions are answered by parents.

Active learning and goal-directed behaviour has been studied extensively by psychologists. Some of their research findings have implications for underachievement of the disadvantaged. Greenfield (Bruner 1971:139) believes that a conducive environment and the sequence of goals set for the child by the parent in the child's cognitive development is of great importance.

Schoggen (Bruner 1971:140) found that middle class children received more stimulation towards attaining a goal than did working class children. Hess and Shipman (1965:883) and Bee (1969:727) found that middle-class mothers paid more attention to guiding their children in goal directed activities. They allowed their children to achieve goals at their own pace and to make more decisions. They used questioning methods for problem-solving and they praised successful efforts rather than criticising failure.

Methods of controlling children varied between the different social classes. Cook-Gumperz (1973:83) found that middle class mothers used strategies which included more information about consequence of an action, whilst lower class mothers used more imperatives.

With regard to later achievement, Robinson and Robinson (1966:48) concluded that children who came from homes where there was a high degree of achievement motivation tend to be brighter as they grow older and those with a more subdued outlook tend to fall behind,

More recent evidence showed that irrespective of socio-economic status, the characteristics of adult caregivers are important in the resilience and competence of children reared in settings that typically lead to negative developmental outcomes. The responsiveness of mothers may facilitate self-regulation, self-efficacy, security, motivation or persistence in children (Scott Jones 1991:260). Children who enjoyed better relationships with parents performed better at school.

Thus it can be concluded that although research shows that middle class children are more strongly motivated towards achievement than lower class children, it must be remembered that achievement motivation is related more to parents' responsiveness than to socio-economic status.

3.3.3.3 Parental attitudes

Douglas (1964:60-61) in his study of parental interest in their children's work, records that working class children were disadvantaged at school largely because of their parents' lack of interest in their educational progress. He notes that where parents showed interest in the children's work, their scores increased in achievement tests while the scores of those children whose parents remained uninterested remained low. He concluded that parental attitudes to school were more strongly associated with educational achievement than any other factor.

Deutsch (1967:33) maintains that the middle-class child is more likely to have been continuously "prodded intellectually" by his parents and rewarded for positive responses. Further this child would be more likely to have experienced in the behaviour of adults in his environment, the role of the teacher, while in the case of the lower class, the children were not subjected to any kind of pressure and they were rarely likely to find relating to school officials as this required a new kind of behaviour.

Davie et al (1972:39) used three criteria to assess parental interest and attitude : the teacher's rating; parents' visits to school; and parents' aspirations for the child. Using these measures a large difference in social classes was found. For

example, seventy-six percent of children in social class I had parents who had contact with teachers while for social class V the figure remained at forty-three percent.

They advanced reasons for this possible discrepancy: middle-class children were more likely to be at a school which had established parent-school contacts (eighty-nine per cent) than were working-class children (seventy-five per cent). The next possibility was that working-class parents feel ill at ease with teachers, particularly if they had unhappy experiences at school themselves (Davie et al 1972:137).

Midwinter (1977:14) records that the disadvantage of many working class children at school is due to their parents' lack of educational knowledge. Jackson and Marsden (1962:97) found that middle-class parents knew how to choose a school for their children based on good academic record while working-class parents made choices on quite trivial grounds. Many of them were ill-informed about the curriculum and even the smallest change in methods can be a source of confusion to working-class parents.

Thus it can be concluded that parental attitudes and interests in children's education influence their performance greatly.

3.3.4 School Factors

3.3.4.1 Introduction

The school should provide a supportive, positive environment for all pupils. Children should be embraced as individuals and encouraged to develop a school spirit (Prentice Baptiste Jr. 1991:13-14). However, according to Comer (Natriello et al 1990:180) the typical school presents an incompatible environment for many disadvantaged pupils. Waxman (1991:5) further argues that schools that provide a low quality of education, have differential expectations for learners and are unresponsive to pupils' needs, inter alia, do not adequately prepare individuals for the future and are to be considered to be at risk. The following section will discuss some school factors that disadvantage pupils.

3.3.4.2 Factors that disadvantage pupils.

*** Insufficient time for planning by teachers**

Thorough planning is necessary if successful teaching is the objective and according to Elmore (Natriello et al 1990:182) participation and concerted action require time away from regular school duties so that new ideas could be developed and implemented. However, school timetables rarely reflect significant blocks of time during which teachers can interact with one

another or with a small number of pupils. Failure to allocate time for planning and discussion by teachers may result in inadequate appropriate instruction to cater for the needs of the disadvantaged.

* School administrative duties

Very often, the school management and more especially the principal has to deal with exceptions to rules, programmes and procedures. When unanticipated events arise, the principal's advice is sought. The administrative ranks have long played a primary role in the organisation and management of schools. In disadvantaged areas or schools where the majority of pupils are disadvantaged, the administrative staff may become overloaded with referrals by teachers. Given the many problems that the disadvantaged children are exposed to (cf.3.3), if prompt attention is not paid when problems arise, these problems can be aggravated.

* System of grade retention

Nearly all children, whatever their environment, enter school with a sense of awe and wonder. By the third grade, however, there is a dissipation of inquisitiveness and many of them are retained a grade or two. Hence the meaningfulness of education is questionable (Bitting et al 1991:25; Madden et al

1991:593). Emphasis, in the western-oriented formal teaching-learning situation, is on individualism, personal initiative and achievement. These values require the pupils to compete as individuals. However, many of them hail from non-western backgrounds where the emphasis is on group orientation and group co-operation (Anderson 1988:6). It is quite probable that these pupils on entering school experience an emotional upset since their home situation encourages co-operation and promotion of group interests and at school they are expected to compete against one another. These differences in expectations at home and school can "decrease the quality of learning and accomplishment" of the pupil (Bempechat 1989:5).

* Curriculum

The purpose of the school is to maximise learning of all pupils. The most obvious way in which schools attempt to carry out their mission is through direct instruction in curriculum areas (Ogden & Germinario 1988:1). However, in an evaluation of education in South Africa, Holdstock (1987:204) stated that the major shortcoming of South African education is that it ignores the fact that South Africa is part of the African, and not of the European continent. Curriculum content based on the worldview of the dominant culture, engenders feelings of inferiority

among the disadvantaged and promotes feelings of powerlessness and lack of pride in their culture. Reglin (1993:18) is of the view that unfamiliarity with culture and habits of disadvantaged pupils result in a "hands off" and teaching from a distance approach to teaching.

From the foregoing it becomes evident that even educational institutions have the potential to disadvantage pupils.

3.4 THE DISADVANTAGED CHILD AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

3.4.1 Introduction

The previous section (cf.3.3) focussed on the general effects of disadvantage on the scholastic performance of the child. This section will deal specifically with the language of the disadvantaged child. Although some references have been made in Chapter 2 to the effects of environmental factors on language development, in this section it will be viewed from an environment-deficit perspective. It will be indicated that disadvantaged children arrive at school unprepared for the demands and challenges which await them. Their deficiencies in school and, by extension in later life, derive largely from the unsatisfactory nature of their early physical, social and psychological background (Edwards 1979:14).

According to Deutsch (1967:83) language is one of the most important areas for the later development of conceptual systems. If a child needs to develop capabilities for organising and categorising concepts, he must have a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. In this section Bernstein's language codes, which distinguishes the language of the non-disadvantaged from the disadvantaged, will be used as a frame of reference. The focus will be on the personal characteristics of the disadvantaged child and the bearing these have on the language patterns of the disadvantaged child.

3.4.2 Bernstein's language codes

Bernstein (Brembeck & Grandstaff 1969:137) the English sociologist identified two forms of communication codes or styles of verbal behaviour, namely, restrictive and elaborate. He views the restrictive code as being "stereotyped, limited, and condensed, lacking in specificity and the exactness needed for precise conceptualization and differentiation. Sentences are short, simple, often unfinished, there is little use of subordinate clauses for elaborating the content of the sentence; it is a language of implicit meaning, easily understood and commonly shared. It is the language form often used in impersonal situations when the intent is to promote solidarity or reduce tension."

Restrictive codes are non-specific cliches, statements, or observations about events made in general terms that will be readily understood. The basic quality of this mode is to limit the range and detail of concept and information involved. That is, it is "predictable".

According to Bernstein (Crow et al 1966:79) this restrictive code is used largely by the people from the lower-class. Hence Bernstein's description of the restrictive code will form the basis of understanding the language of the disadvantaged child since it has been established that children from the lower-classes form a large percentage of the disadvantaged group.

However, a description of the elaborate code is necessary for the purpose of comparison. Bernstein (Brembeck & Grandstaff 1969:139) distinguishes the elaborate codes as "those in which communication is individualised and the message is specific to a particular situation, topic and person. It is more particular, more differentiated, and more precise. It permits expression of a wider and more complex range of thought, tending toward discrimination among cognitive and affective content".

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that children from disadvantaged backgrounds enter school with a different language system as compared with middle-class children. These differences manifest in the grammatical structure of the language used, and in language used to relate one thing to another, as contrasted with the more simple descriptive uses. In sum, the language used by disadvantaged children may be described as

simpler in syntax and less rich in descriptive terms and modifiers than is the language of the middle-class child (Deutsch 1967:149).

3.4.3 The characteristics of the disadvantaged child

The characteristics of the disadvantaged in terms of an adequate self-concept and the inadequate cognitive development and problem solving skills will be reviewed.

The years before school are important years of learning and determine largely the learning that will follow. The comparison made in 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 has outlined learning gaps that children from disadvantaged homes present. An explicit description of the disadvantaged child will bring to the fore the learning needs of the child.

3.4.3.1 An inadequate self-concept

The self-concept "which includes one's beliefs, convictions, values and aspirations" (Battle 1982:30) plays an important role in the lives of all people. People want to know that they are valued by others. They want to experience a sense of self-worth and self-respect. Success as well as impressions of significant influential people are major forces in shaping one's perceptions of one's worth (Battle 1982:29). However, the disadvantaged child comes to

school with a poor self-concept. Crow et al (1966:117) state that deficiencies in his self-concept increase the difficulty for him to acquire:

- . effective cognitive concepts;
- . proper attitudes toward school; and
- . wholesome cultural values.

Curtis and Blatchford (1975:40) state that deprived children internalize a low or negative attitude toward their own esteem. This may be due to the little scope they have for expressing feelings and less intense parent-child contacts which result in children not being able to develop a sense of their own identity. They expect to fail and therefore seldom develop the habit of achievement. When they do fail, the failure reinforces their feelings of inadequacy (Metfessel & Seng 1970:77).

3.4.3.2 Inadequate cognitive development and problem-solving skills

Cognitive development refers to the growth of those capacities which contribute to the process of knowing (Beck & Saxe 1965:67). Ausubel (Crow et al 1966:118) sees cognitive development as resulting largely in response to a variable range of stimulation. Cognition enables the child to understand new experiences and manipulate symbols, concepts and rules to solve a problem (Frost 1973:189). For example, a child's acquisition of a level of cognitive functioning for his/her age will enable him/her to

appropriately manipulate symbols, concepts and rules in order to express himself/herself verbally and also to learn to read.

Characteristic of the disadvantaged environment, however, is a restricted range and a less adequate and systematic ordering of stimulation sequences. The effect of this restricted environment includes poor perceptual discrimination skills; inability to use adults as sources of information, correction and reality testing as instruments of satisfying curiosity; and impoverished language system and a paucity of information concepts and relational propositions (Crow et al 1966:118).

White (1971:8-9), when reviewing the thinking patterns of the disadvantaged, stated that their transition from concrete to abstract levels of thinking when using signs and symbols to interpret perceived objects is slower and less automatic. This limitation in dealing with the abstract restricts conceptualising.

3.4.4 Language patterns of the disadvantaged child

Bernstein's (Shiach 1981:12) thesis is that social relationship acts upon and develops language style which is eventually used; different language styles are developed by people from different social classes and these influence intellectual growth and performance in school to a large extent.

Hess and Shipman (1965:870) are of the view that the structure of the social system and the structure of the family shape communication and language and that language shapes thought and cognitive styles of problem-solving.

These views when studied in the context of the disadvantaged family, would mean that the nature of the control system which relates adult to child restricts the number and kind of alternatives for action and thought that are opened to the child. This would preclude the tendency for the child to reflect, to consider and choose among alternatives for speech and action. It produces ways of dealing with problems that are impulsive rather than reflective, which concentrate on the immediate rather than the future and which are disconnected rather than sequential (Hess & Shipman 1965: 870-871).

There are several factors in both the middle-class and lower-class environments which determine their language styles. According to Bernstein (Shiach 1981:13) the child from a middle-class home is treated as an individual with a definite social status and is the subject of comment and opinion. The child is oriented to certain values which are made verbally explicit and is encouraged by verbal persuasion to make a personal adjustment to these values. The individual is guided against direct expression of hostility but rather to express feelings verbally. Constant verbal explanations on why certain things should or should

not be done are encouraged. Distinctions are made between objects and classes of objects and objects and actions are seen not in isolation but as relationships. This style of language promotes abstract thinking and helps children develop comprehension skills (cf. 2.5.5.4).

Formal language is promoted in the middle-class home. Correct grammar is emphasised and the child learns meaning from this conventional sequencing. General expression of individual feeling and intention is encouraged and frequent use of the pronouns "I" and impersonal "one" or "it" allows abstract thought. The ability to use passive and modal verbs such as "may have been" allows use and understanding of subtle changes of meaning (Shiach 1981:13).

The analysis of the working class language reveals a vast difference from the middle-class. There is not the same stress on individualism, nor the same comment on the child as an individual. The child is regarded more as merely a member of the family group where the social structure is geared to maximum group solidarity with shared ideas, attitudes and assumptions. The need for articulation is not encouraged since personal individual observation is not needed. Individual response may even be suppressed, while the language developed is geared to increase consensus and agreement. Feelings are not verbalised; there are not detailed descriptions of objects, and categories are not built up or broken down. Emphasis is placed on the present,

concrete and immediate with little attention paid to sequence and, relationships between objects are ignored. Level of thinking is restricted to concrete and tangible rather than the abstract (Deutsch 1967:52). These characteristics are peculiar to those from low socio-economic backgrounds where there is less intense parent-child communication and stimulation (cf. 2.5.2.4 (2)).

These pupils are deficient in aspects of range and level of vocabulary, use of syntactic variations within sentences, and facility in use of verbs. Their sentences employ fewer clauses, infinitives, and verbs, but there is not too great a difference in structural patterns of sentences, other than the lack of linking verbs and the use of incomplete sentences (Spache 1975:28).

Crow et al (1966:118) sees the abstract vocabulary of the disadvantaged as being deficient and his language related knowledge such as number concepts, self-identity information, and understanding of the physical and geographical environment as extremely limited.

The foregoing implies that the language skills mastered by the children are inadequate for explaining anything very complex, for analysis, reasoning or dealing with anything hypothetical or beyond the present (Bereiter & Engemann 1966:114). The language ability of the child from his cultural background ensures that his membership in the

disadvantaged group is fixed since he cannot function at a high conceptual level which is a prerequisite for success in the didactic - pedagogical situation.

Edwards' (1979:37-38) record of the responses of middle-class and working-class children to story writing after looking at a series of four pictures in which three boys are playing football and a window is broken, is supported by Bereiter and Engelmann's view. The middle class version is as follows:

Three boys are playing football and one boy kicks the ball - and it goes through the window - and the boys are looking at it - and a man comes out - and shouts at them - because they've broken the window - so they run away - and then that lady looks out of her window - and she tells the boys off.

The working-class sample is recorded thus:

They're playing football - and he kicks it - and it goes through there - it breaks the window and they're looking at it - and he comes out - and shouts at them - because they've broken it - so they run away and then she looks out - and she tells them off.

Bernstein (Edwards 1979:37:38) comments on the responses. He considers the first version to take little for granted, the reader does not have to see the pictures in

order to understand the story. In the second version, the meaning is implicit and the reader must have access to the picture before being able to understand the paragraph.

This difference in responses highlights the linguistic deficit that the disadvantaged child experiences. Essen and Wedge (1982:122) record some other important areas of language deficits found among children living in disadvantaged surroundings:

- * poor interaction with parents
- * restricted listening
- * inadequate models to imitate
- * language limited to create situations rather than used conceptually
- * inability to follow the language used by the teacher
- * poor auditory discrimination
- * inability to correctly report school experiences to parents
- * restricted vocabulary
- * utilization of poor grammar
- * limited experiences to share with classmates
- * inability to adequately report experiences to classmates.

When reviewing the language system in chapter 2 (cf. 2.5.5.4) it becomes clear that some degree of language proficiency is necessary if success in reading is to be attained. From the research on the language patterns of the disadvantaged child it becomes clear that these children

will lag in social interaction because of poor communication skills as well as learning to read because of poor language skills and inadequate concept formation.

This section has traced the disadvantaging factors of children as causes of their academic retardation and failure to develop language skills.

3.5 SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed evidence on the effects of the different home circumstances on the scholastic attainment and the language performance of children.

It was shown that the level of skill or training acquired by the father determines his occupation, the family's socio-economic status, the type of accomodation they will have and the nature of their health and education provision. These factors impact on the educational attainment and language performance of children.

The study of the effects of those factors showed that children: from families where the wage-earner works at manual occupations (cf. 3.3.2.1); who are classified as poor (cf. 3.3.2.2); who do not have adequate health care provison (cf. 3.3.2.3); who live in substandard houses (cf. 3.3.2.4); and attend schools that are unresponsive to their needs (cf.3.3.4) achieve at a consistently lower level academically and linguistically than children from other groups.

These children come to school already lagging behind their non-disadvantaged peers and are, therefore, at risk of developing language and reading problems during the first years at school.

Therefore this chapter, by outlining the effects of disadvantage on the scholastic and linguistic performance of children, has highlighted the need for early intervention programmes to compensate for and combat educational and verbal deficits. The next chapter will outline the various forms of assistance which have been used in foreign practices. These programmes and methods will be evaluated with a view to choosing and adapting one or more to suit the needs of the disadvantaged in South Africa.

CHAPTER FOUR

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR DISADVANTAGED LEARNERS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter surveyed the effects of disadvantagement on the scholastic achievement and on the language development of children. The conclusion drawn from chapter three is that disadvantaged children come to school with deficits in the ability to learn and they are at a relatively low level of linguistic development. These deficiencies result in their not being able to begin learning by the same approach as is characteristic of children from favourable environments (Cox 1987:219) and, therefore, warrant special educational assistance.

This chapter will focus on various forms of assistance for the language problems of disadvantaged children. The first and most well known form of aid to disadvantaged children is compensatory education.

4.2 COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

4.2.1 The concept of compensatory education defined

There is no single explanation or description of compensatory education. It is an amalgam of many different programmes, practices and services (Carter 1984:5) designed to compensate the disadvantaged for deficits or shortcomings that hinder their academic progress.

4.2.2 The origin of compensatory education

Compensatory education originated in the United States of America as part of President Johnson's "War on Poverty". Two interrelated concepts were focused on namely, "cumulative deficit" and the "vicious cycle of poverty". These phrases refer to the belief that children who begin school performing behind their peers remain so and fall continuously further behind. These pupils are likely to exit from school at a point when they are ill-prepared to compete successfully in society. Compensatory education is designed to break this cycle by "compensating" for initial deficits (Stein et al 1989:149).

The new educational legislation, the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-10) established the Title I programmes. In 1981, with the passing of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, Title I programmes were transferred to Chapter I of the new legislation. According to Calfee and Drum (1979:2) and Archambault (1989:221) the Act of 1966 stipulated that Congress was to provide financial

assistance to local educational agencies that catered for children from low-income families in order to improve the education programmes.

This Act has resulted in considerable amount of money, time and energy being spent on this form of education. The children are selected on the basis of:

- * poor academic achievements;**
- * parent's low income ; and**
- * a home language other than English.**

The children are mostly from poor families, their parents are unschooled labourers and ethnic minority groups are highly represented in programmes.

4.2.3 The theoretical premises of compensatory education

Oakland (1970:26) is of the opinion that most compensatory programmes share underlying assumptions concerning the etiology and remediation of the disabilities. These are, for example:

- * that the environment in which the disadvantaged grow up, does not provide the experiences necessary for proper neurological and psychological development. Therefore the right type of stimulation in early childhood has a cumulative effect on**

childhood development (Murphy 1986:499). Early enrichment programmes therefore promote intellectual growth whereas early deprivation can limit it;

* that in order for an intervention programme to be effective, it should begin early in the child's life (Madden et al 1991:594; Slavin et al 1993:15), since both the potential for intellectual development and flexibility of intellectual ability decrease as a person grows older;

* that through rearranging aspects of the child's home and school environment and peer and adult relationships, the child's behaviour and performance can be altered positively.

The purpose of compensatory education is therefore to give children the right type of additional stimulation as early as possible so that they can realise their cognitive potential optimally. It is therefore aimed at supplementing but not replacing ordinary education.

4.2.4 The organisation of compensatory education

Compensatory education can be delivered within the regular classroom, outside the regular classroom, or partially inside and partially outside the regular classroom. The programmes are presented according to any one of the following models or combinations thereof:

*** Pull-out model**

This is a popular model and is used widely. Children are removed or pulled out of their classroom and sent to another location, usually within the same school building. Instruction is provided by a specialist teacher (Archambault 1989:223).

The pull-out programmes fall into three broad categories:

(1) diagnostic-prescriptive programmes

Pupils identified as being in need of remedial services are assessed and the appropriate instruction suited to their needs is given by a teacher in a classroom separate from the regular classroom. Instruction is given to individuals or small groups of pupils.

(2) tutoring programmes

Tutors (teachers, paraprofessionals or volunteers) work one-on-one with identified tutees.

(3) computer-assisted instruction

In this programme, pupils work on computers for at least part of their remedial reading or mathematics time.

Of the above programmes, the tutoring and computer-assisted programmes were more successful. These programmes, according to Madden and Slavin (1989:70-71) adapt instruction to student's unique needs and provide much direct instruction

appropriate to student's levels of readiness. The diagnostic prescriptive programmes have generally been less successful for the following reasons:

- * teachers often work with individuals leaving others in the group to spend much time working on worksheets, which may be of relatively little value; and
- * teachers may present lessons to heterogeneous groups of students that are poorly adapted to their individual needs and may be poorly integrated with instruction being provided in the regular class.

Much early research suggested that the use of pull-out models was detrimental to instruction. Glass and Smith (1977:5) argued that "research does not support the wisdom of instruction under conditions like those that prevail in pull-out programmes". Rowan and Guthrie (1989:201) record that pull-outs disrupted ongoing lessons in regular instructions and the implementation of pull-out designs can result in a lack of co-ordination between compensatory and regular instructional programmes and that this can adversely affect student success in regular classroom lessons.

Slavin and Madden (1989:23) cite research that indicates that the more time students spent in pull-out programmes the less they learned. Pull-out programmes have been criticised on the basis that instruction in the pull-out programme is rarely well integrated with that provided by the regular classroom teacher.

Also much time is lost in transitions between regular and pull-out settings and pull-outs rarely increase the total instruction provided to students.

* **In-class model or main-streamed instruction**

One approach to mainstreaming is for the regular teacher to instruct Chapter I students while Chapter I personnel provide supplementary assistance. Another approach is for the Chapter I staff to instruct Chapter I students while the regular teacher works with the other students in the class (Archambault 1989:224). This model is viewed positively for many reasons:

- . there is increased communication, co-operation and communication among regular classroom and compensatory education instructors;
- . the possibility of increased interaction and planning for instruction;
- . better opportunities for individualisation, small-group instruction and a better flow of information on student progress; and
- . more continuity in instruction and fewer disruptions.

However, Slavin and Madden (1989:23) state that having the remedial education teacher work in a corner of the regular classroom in the in-class model provides no guarantee that co-ordination with the regular programme will be enhanced. Archambault (1989:235) recorded some problems with this model:

- . inadequate joint planning time - led to lack of teacher interaction;
- . insufficient materials; and
- . teachers were unsure of their roles and team teaching was difficult.

* **Add-on model**

Additional lessons are offered after school, during week-ends and school holidays which provide an extension of the school year. In some areas after-school centres are operational where libraries, counselling rooms and rooms for pupils to do homework are to be found. Some centres are open seven days a week, three hundred and sixty five days a year (Gordon 1966:86-89).

* **Replacement model**

Children requiring compensatory education are taught in separate classes (Archambault 1989:224).

In comparing the various models described above, research indicated that any of the models can be effective given the appropriate circumstances. No confident conclusion can be reached about the effectiveness of any one model in particular. The type and quality of instruction delivered within an instructional setting are therefore, more important than the setting itself (Archambault 1989:232).

4.2.5 The results of compensatory education

Many researchers have conducted studies to determine the effect of compensatory education on children's progress. The following are some positive results recorded.

The investigation conducted by Stickney and Plunkett (1983:289-290) on the long term effects of compensatory education programmes revealed:

- * The 1978 final report to the Education Commission for Longitudinal Studies concluded that "early education programmes significantly reduced the number of children retained in grade and significantly increased children's scores on fourth-grade mathematics achievement tests, with a suggestive trend towards increased scores on fourth-grade reading tests.

- * The longitudinal data gathered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have shown important achievement growth for the deprived population. In the period between 1970 and 1980 reading skills of nine year old children increased by 3.9 percent. However, children who were on the compensatory education programme scored 9.9 percent higher - the largest gains ever detected by NAEP.

Ornstein and Levine (1981:1) also gave evidence of the success of compensatory education programmes:

- * Several big cities reported that student achievement in some low-income schools equalled or exceeded the national average through the second or third grades, indicating that preschool programmes such as Head Start and Follow-Through as well as other early childhood compensatory education efforts have succeeded.**
- * A 1976 national study of compensatory reading programmes in grades two, four and six identified schools in which programmes were successful and then identified some of the characteristics of the successful schools as follows : emphasis on reading or improving reading resources and outstanding administrative leadership for the reading programme's careful attention to basic skills.**
- * Many studies of outstanding early childhood education programmes have shown that such efforts can have long lasting effects if they are well conceived and effectively implemented. For example, when retested ten years later, children who participated in a special preschool programme in New York scored nine points higher on IQ tests and three months higher in reading than did the control group (Ornstein & Levine 1981:7).**

* Similarly, David Weikart's 18 year longitudinal study of 123 black children who were enrolled in preschool at ages 3 and 4 showed that these children scored a full grade higher in reading and mathematics than those who did not attend preschool (Ornstein & Levine 1981:7).

Wright (1983:336-340) using a Canadian approach to compensatory education reported cognitive competence of the control group to have improved significantly and that they continued to improve their achievements, especially in the area of language.

In the areas of initiative and creative thinking, Krown (1974:222-223) stated that disadvantaged children in her compensatory programme reached or came very close to the level of privileged children. They sometimes used language for "delightful bits of humour and imaginative expressions".

The Learning to Learn compensatory programme was conducted with black American boys who were reported to demonstrate special motivation and achievement problems. It proved to be more effective than Head Start as shown by higher reading grades at fourth grade level. The pass rate for Learning to Learn students in the middle elementary grades was outstanding. This programme clearly demonstrated effectiveness with the boys and helped to alter the high drop out rate for boys attending high school (Sprigle & Schaefer 1985:706).

Schweinhart and Weikart's (1986:66) and Stanley's (1973:196) conclusion provide a resume of the positive results of compensatory education. They found that:

- * the academic achievements of children in the junior primary phase improved over a short term;**
- * when compared with children who did not receive compensatory education, these children display fewer behavioural problems and fewer of them leave school early; and**
- * children who received compensatory education are less likely to change jobs, once in employment.**

Other interesting findings showed that:

- * The success of the assistance depended not so much on the methods used but on the personality of the teacher. Bempechat (1989:20) states that teachers are very influential in fostering adaptive or maladaptive achievement cognitions. Wells (1989:31) recorded that pupils are less likely to leave school when they work with teachers who are flexible, positive, creative and person-centred rather than rule oriented. Other findings showed that the success of compensatory education programmes is due to the unusual skill or devotion of a set of individual principals and teachers rather than to any particular set of practices (Slavin & Madden 1989:24).**

- * Programmes which involved parents and in which conscious efforts were made to motivate the joint child-parent-teacher team as regards learning tasks, produced far better results than those in which only the child was involved. Widlake (1986:14) affirms that parental involvement and encouragement augments children's performance at school.

Although many positive gains were recorded over a short term, in the long term children did not benefit as much academically as was originally hoped. Jensen (1985:554-555) argues that compensatory education has made its least impressive impact on just those variables that it was originally intended to improve the most: IQ and scholastic achievement. Compensatory education has not resulted in appreciable, durable gains in these areas. A study on the reading level of ninth grade pupils at inner city schools showed many pupils to be still at sixth grade level. These pupils had been on compensatory education programmes in elementary school. This result means that more than 50 percent of these pupils will be unable to read well enough to succeed in schools or rewarding jobs later in life (Ornstein & Levine 1981:9).

These criticisms have led to two questions which are currently being asked in American literature:

- * Why are the long term advantages of compensatory education so limited?
- * Why do these children not learn higher order cognitive skills?

The suggestions by Means et al (1991:3-4) provide answers to these questions:

- * the compensatory education curriculum consisting of basic skills is not challenging enough; and**
- * the methods used do not provide sufficient opportunities for children to practice problem-solving strategies.**

Ornstein and Levine (1981:9) see the reason for failure of compensatory education pupils in middle grades as having inadequate conceptual development in primary grades. One of the many indicators of failure in schools, considered by Waxman (1991:1) is the failure of students to do well on higher-level applications, complex reasoning and problem solving.

Moreover, implementing compensatory education is expensive since it employs specially trained staff and uses a wide range of models that cost the State a lot of money.

In recent years there has developed a growing dissatisfaction with the educational services provided to pupils who are at risk for developing learning problems or school failure. This dissatisfaction has led to research into alternative classroom programmes to cater for the needs of the disadvantaged in the heterogeneous classes (Slavin & Madden 1989 : 24).

The following section will review alternative classroom organisation models to meet the needs of low-achieving or heterogeneous classes by restructuring the regular classroom as opposed to adding on services outside the regular classroom.

4.3 ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMMES FOR DISADVANTAGED LEARNERS

4.3.1 Introduction

A person's ability to learn is the underlying philosophy of modern aid programmes. Current views on intelligence reveal a flexible approach in that they consider intelligence to be influenced by a variety of factors and is subject to change even at a late stage of one's life. This flexible approach to intelligence provides a far more positive basis for aid to the disadvantaged. The focus is on pupils' strengths and on changes that can be made to education to help pupils do better rather than focussing on their weaknesses. This section will review some alternative aid programmes designed for pre-primary and junior primary pupils. Since the focus of this study is language, programmes devised for reading and language will be reviewed.

4.3.2 Preschool programmes

More recently educators, researchers and policy makers have been shifting emphasis from intervention to prevention. They have become increasingly convinced that it is better to prevent

learning difficulties than to attempt to rectify them later on. Learning difficulties that are already established are difficult to correct because they may become part of the child's learning style. Pupils who have experienced failure are likely to be unmotivated, to have poor self-concepts as learners and may even regard school as punishing or demeaning, making remediation even more difficult (Madden et al 1991:594).

Hence, if children receive early learning experience from the most influential adults in their lives at home (cf.2.5.2.4 (1); 3.3.3.3) or at preschool, they will enter junior primary school, as ready to cope with instruction as their non-disadvantaged peers. According to Bloom (Karweit 1989:78) in terms of intelligence measured at age 17, about 50 percent of the development takes place between conception and age 4, 30 percent between 4 and 8 and 20 percent between 8 and 17. These findings suggest that marked changes in environment in the early years can produce greater changes in intelligence than will equally marked changes in the environment at later periods of development.

Many early intervention programmes exist and while their main objective is to provide the necessary experiences that disadvantaged children lack, they differ from each other in some respects in that they are categorised according to :

- * the age grouping - some programmes are designed for children from 0 to 3 years, and others from 3 to 6 years;
- * venue of presentation - programmes may be conducted at home or specially designated places;

- * duration of programme - the number of hours per week that the programme occupies;
- * the focus of the programme - some programmes focus on the child and others on the parents or family; and
- * distribution of programmes - these may be on a national scale or local.

A discussion of the Talk programme, HIPPY programme and High Scope programme will follow.

* **Talk**

This programme was designed in the USA for children from kindergarten to grade 3 and its main objective is to improve expressive and receptive language skills in children. A variety of structured activities were conducted in the class twice a week for half an hour over a six month period. When the effectiveness of this programme was tested, using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and Wechsler Intelligence Scale, it was found that considering the few hours that the programmes occupied, it was effective. When comparing the effectiveness for all the grades from kindergarten to grade 3, it was found to be more effective for kindergarten pupils than for others (Karweit 1989:137).

* **Home Instruction Programme for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY).**

HIPPY is a home-based enrichment programme, developed in Israel and funded by the Ministry of Education. It is administered in the home by the mother with her children

from 4 to 6 years (Lombard 1981:11). Mothers are trained how to use the instructional materials with their children. Everything the mother had to do for each activity was specifically stated. According to Davis and Kugelmas (Lombard 1981:19) HIPPIY mothers learned to look at their children in new, different terms as a result of the project experience.

The three broad cognitive areas included in the HIPPIY programme are language, discrimination skills and problem solving.

Language

Books are considered to be the basic subject matter of language development in young children. Reading a book, in this programme not only benefitted the child but also the mother as this would provide new bases for her own use of language (Lombard 1981:21). Various skills associated with reading were included in the programme. These were listening, answering questions, talking from the text, picture reading, story creation and vocabulary. Mothers were encouraged to elicit verbal feedback from the children as a necessary component of the programme.

Sensory and perceptual discrimination skills

The aspects of sensory and perceptual discrimination skills included in the programme were based on the need in this present age for children to learn to sort, classify and discriminate the sights, sounds and sensations in order to enable further learning.

Lynn and Piaget (Lombard 1981:25) are of the view that through repeated interactions with the stimuli around them that children sharpen their perception of the world. One third of HIPPY materials concentrate on providing practice and learning in the field of perceptual and sensory discrimination skills.

Problem solving

Problem solving activities in the HIPPY programme was based on the ability to think rapidly of several characteristics of a given object which includes the ability to list the attributes of objects or ideas as well as to identify similarities and differences between them; the ability to classify objects or ideas which requires skill in pairing or grouping given objects and ideas. Thus all activities relating to discrimination skills, appropriate labelling and matching and grouping also fall into the category of problem-solving skills.

Tests showed that children on the HIPPY programme were in a clear lead as compared with other programmes. Preschool teachers reported that

generally HIPPY children were different from groups of children they had previously taught. They were more alert and responsive, more adept at using didactic play materials. In general, the HIPPY children were reported to be superior in their grasp and execution of tasks that required use of didactic materials, equalling the five year old children in their grasp of problems involved in puzzles and learning games (Lombard 1981:46-47).

* High Scope

There are many kinds of early childhood curriculum models based on principles of child development, particularly the notion that children learn actively from their surroundings. The High Scope Research Foundation has developed its own version of the child development curriculum. The fundamental premise of the High Scope curriculum is that children are active learners who learn best from activities that they plan and carry out themselves (Schweinhart & Weikart 1986:54). The teachers arrange interest areas in the classroom for children to plan and carry out their own activities. During these activities teachers ask children questions that encourage them to think. The teachers encourage various key experiences that help children learn to place things in categories, rank them in order, predict consequences and generally engage in thinking at their own levels of development. Teachers

need to continuously provide settings in which children learn actively and construct their own knowledge. Schweinhart and Weikart (1986:55) are of the view that the children's knowledge comes from personal interaction with the world, from direct experience with real objects and from the application of logical thinking to this experience. The teacher's role is to supply experiences with real objects and to help children think about them logically. In a sense children are expected to learn by the scientific method of observation and inference at their own level of understanding, something that even very young children can do.

Child progress in the curriculum is reviewed around a set of key experiences that include active learning, using language, representing experiences and ideas, classification, seriation, number concepts, spatial relations and time. These categories help teachers organise their interaction with children, just as children organise their activities through the daily routine of the plan-do-review sequence. They provide a way of thinking about curriculum that frees the teacher from schedules of teacher-imposed activities, as well as promoting the growth of rational thought in children.

Schweinhart and Weikart (1986:66) reflected on the results of High Scope programmes: Hundreds of teachers throughout the USA and around the world have been trained in the High Scope model and use it in their programmes. Results show that these programmes have accounted, to some extent, for dramatic long-term findings of greater school success, reduced delinquency and employment difficulties and a highly favourable financial return on investment.

The reviews of preschool programmes show that long-term results are evident. However, the role of the preschool in promoting the long-term school success of disadvantaged children is debatable. According to Natriello et al (1990:69) the gains provided by some preschool programmes tend to diminish within the first few years at school. The most common reason for this, according to researchers is that primary schools do not capitalise on these gains. Slavin et al (1993:13) aptly declare that "Clearly, attendance at a high-quality preschool programme has long term benefits for children, but it is equally clear that preschool experience is not enough to prevent early school failure".

4.3.3 Reading programmes

Reading attainment is generally equated to achievement in school and children who fare poorly in reading, often fare poorly in all areas of the curriculum because reading and language form the basis for all school subjects. Therefore in recent years, a new

trend, focusing on reading, has emerged. A commonly held belief is that if children are to be successful, they should learn to read adequately during their first years at school. This section will discuss the Distar reading programme, Reading Recovery programme, Success for All and Cumulative Mastery Reading programme, that have been successful with disadvantaged children.

*** Distar**

Distar programme developed at the University of Oregon. Slavin and Madden (1989:31) are of the view that Distar is an unusual programme that provides teachers with very specific scripts to use in teaching reading and mathematics using specific methods. Becker and Carnine (Slavin & Madden 1989:31) note that sequential, hierarchical curriculum design, direct instruction and rapid pace and high frequency of pupil responses are emphasised in this programme. Pupils are taught in small groups that are homogeneous in skill level, are assessed frequently on their progress through a well-defined skill hierarchy, and are regrouped if necessary according to the results of these assessments.

The data supporting the effectiveness of Distar for increasing student performance in certain skills is strong. Research conducted on the nine major programmes evaluated Distar to have consistently positive effects on the achievement of disadvantaged children (Slavin & Madden 1989:31). Similarly, Stein and Goldman (Larrivee

1989:307) provided supporting evidence in favour of appreciable gains in reading achievement of primary age learning disabled children on the Distar reading programme. Despite many positive effects of Distar, Calfee (Slavin & Madden 1989:34) notes that Distar has been criticised for its use of scripted lessons and a focus on rote skills rather than higher-order, learning to learn skills, and for emphasising highly organised, teacher-centred classroom organisation that many teachers find offensive.

* **Reading Recovery**

The Reading Recovery programme was developed in New Zealand by Marie Clay and is widely used in New Zealand, Australia, England and USA. It is an early intervention programme for teaching at-risk first graders to learn to read. It aims to provide these children with a good start and to prevent later failure (Allington & Johnston 1989:343).

Children in first grade are grouped according to their reading abilities (good, middle and poor readers). Only 20 percent with the lowest reading ability are chosen for the Reading Recovery programme. The programme is individual - diagnostic in nature. Programmes are developed according to the needs of particular children. The programme consists of a 30 minute a day one-to-one tutoring for each child over a period of 12 to 20 weeks. When children reach the same level of those in the middle group, the one-to-one tutoring is discontinued. If after 20

weeks, no progress is made, children are released from the programme and may be referred for specialised help (Clay 1979:67).

Teachers administering the programme have to be specially trained over a period of about one year to administer the programme. The training consists of weekly seminars during which they receive training in the reading philosophy of Marie Clay and in observational, diagnostic and assessment techniques. It also includes the observing and discussion of actual demonstration lessons presented behind a one-way mirror. After a year, follow-up training is also required.

Although many positive effects were achieved with regard to reading progress within this individual, intensive, consistent tuition, Madden et al (1991:598) record that the gains made in first grade are maintained but do not grow over time.

*** Success for All**

Success for All is a school-wide programme. According to Means et al (1991:205) school-wide programmes are characterised by "school-site authority and decision making, redefinition and combination of staff roles, redesign of curriculum and instruction to promote higher-order thinking, and thoughtful assessment of student achievement".

Success for All emphasises prevention and early, intensive intervention. It aims to use all knowledge and resources about effective instruction for disadvantaged or pupils at risk so that the goal of preventing academic deficits from occurring can be achieved. It also focuses on reorganising and intensively intervening with any deficits that do appear and to provide students with a rich and full curriculum to enable them to build on their firm foundation of basic skills (Madden et al 1991:594).

The programme uses the one to one tutoring instructional method which is conducted by reading tutors. The reading programme is designed such that pupils in grades 1 through 3 are assigned to heterogeneous age - grouped classes of about 25 pupils. During the 90 minute reading period they are regrouped into reading classes of 15 to 20 pupils, all at the same level of reading performance. A second grade, first semester reading class, for example, may contain first, second and third grade students all reading at the same level. Regrouping allows teachers to teach the whole reading class without having to break into class reading groups. This system allows more time for direct instruction.

Evaluation of the programme showed that on the average pupils in the Success for All programme are far out performing matched control pupils on individually administered tests on reading. In grade-equivalent terms, the difference between pupils in the Success for All schools

and those in control schools rises from three months in the first grade to five months in the second grade and eight months in the third grade. The findings of the assessment of Success for All show that focusing on prevention and early intervention can significantly increase the reading performance of disadvantaged pupils as well as reducing retention and special education placements (Madden et al 1991:597).

*** Cumulative Mastery Reading**

One of the most important aims of the cumulative mastery reading programme is to make children competent at reading. Wallach and Wallach (1976:77) are of the view that reading involves the mastery of component subskills such as establishing competence in the recognition and manipulation of sounds, in use of the alphabetic code, and in blending, and then the effective application of these competencies in reading printed materials. This programme employs the one-to-one tutoring system.

The programme consists of a series of tasks for the child to progress through and these are designed to deliver the subskills. Each task is to be mastered before the child goes on to the next, with the first tasks being simple and later tasks building on the mastery of earlier ones. This makes continual progress possible. The whole programme emphasises on the child doing tasks correctly by being given opportunities to practice doing these tasks correctly.

The entire programme is made up of three parts. The first part deals with the child recognising shapes of letters and learning to connect these letter shapes with the sounds; the second part allows the child to gain skill in recognising and manipulating the sounds in any position in a word, including their blending and part three utilises the child's regular reading materials. The child learns to read whatever words are not known already by a process that carefully builds upon the child's knowledge of letter-sound relationships. When the child is able to read the text, he discusses it to ensure that he comprehends what he reads.

This type of programme was especially designed for beginning school children who are unlikely to learn to read during the first grade year and second graders who did not learn to read in first grade as well as kindergartners for whom academic readiness seems low (Wallach & Wallach 1976:215;219). It is designed in such a manner that it can be implemented by parents, community workers or paraprofessionals and if used appropriately should result in drastic reduction in the number of young children failing to achieve basic reading competence.

Some types of reading programmes designed to cater for pupils with reading problems have been reviewed. While all of them have a record of success, of importance are those programmes with long lasting effects. It becomes clear that "what is needed is a strategy of preventing learning problems from appearing in the first place and then of improving classroom instruction

throughout the grades to fan the flame of learning ignited in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade" (Madden et al 1991:598).

4.4 TEACHING STRATEGIES DESIGNED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF DISADVANTAGED LEARNERS.

4.4.1 Introduction

The reading programmes reviewed in 4.3.3 employ different instructional methods. This section will describe some strategies, namely, direct instruction, peer tutoring and co-operative learning that have been used to address the needs of the disadvantaged.

4.4.2 Direct instruction

Direct instruction refers to a set of procedures derived from teacher effectiveness literature and is characterised by highly structured teacher education training (Stein et al 1989:178). Rosenshine and Stevens (Larrivee 1989:307), concluded that "low-achieving pupils show greater academic achievement when their teachers follow a consistent pattern of demonstration, guided practice and feedback, irrespective of curriculum".

This strategy is viewed as a comprehensive system of instruction encompassing classroom organisation and management, quality of teacher-pupil interaction and design of curriculum materials. Teaching involves explicit instruction on each step in the

sequence. The components of direct instruction include mastery learning, carefully designed sequential instruction, flexible skill level grouping, adequate opportunity for practice and periodic review of previously learned concepts. Research reveals many positive gains obtained through direct instruction in comprehensive skills, mathematics and reading achievement. The Distar reading programme (cf 4.3.3) implements the direct instruction strategy.

4.4.3 Peer-tutoring

Findings from sixty five school tutoring programmes in the USA showed that peer tutoring has positive effects on academic performance and attitudes of those tutored (Larrivee 1989:310). Lloyd et al (1988:47) see peers serving as instructional agents for their classmates. Peer-mediated interventions are considered to have benefits practically and in effectiveness. Peers may serve as intervention agents for their handicapped classmates in the following ways:

- . Peers share reinforcement with target child. Peers may participate in classroom interventions through the use of group reinforcement procedures.

- . Peers manage the non-academic behaviours of the target child. This level of mediation involves teaching a peer to prompt non-academic behaviours of a target child and

deliver consequences for them. These techniques have been used to build higher rates of social interactions by a socially withdrawn child.

Peers tutor the academic responses of a target child. The peer tutor provides instructions, consequences, and feedback contingent on academic behaviour, for example, saying and writing spelling words, solving mathematics problems, or reading sentences for the target child.

Peers model selected behaviours for the target child. This form of mediation involves using a peer to demonstrate selected responses to the target child. Peck, Cooke and Apollini (Lloyd et al 1988:45) noted that peer modelling is an effective intervention component for both handicapped and non-handicapped children.

While many positive features of peer tutoring have been noted, several pressing questions remain unanswered. For example:

- (1) What benefits accrue to peers who participate in the instruction of their classmates?
- (2) How peer-mediated procedures can and do function over extended time periods such as an entire school year?
- (3) Whether certain types of skills or behaviours are more or less effectively taught by peers?
- (4) What are the real cost and time savings to regular teachers who employ peer-mediation strategies?

According to Lloyd et al (1988:49) until suitable answers are arrived at for these questions it would be premature to strongly advocate this method to meet the needs of the educationally handicapped pupils.

4.4.4 Co-operative learning

Co-operative learning originated in the USA with the objectives of encouraging desirable interracial contacts and fostering improved social acceptance among students (Lloyd et al 1988:43). Co-operative learning is viewed as an alternative to the traditional compensatory approaches to assisting disadvantaged children.

Co-operative learning refers to a whole selection of teaching strategies that emphasise pupils working together in a group situation. Children learn to be responsible not only for the amount that they learn individually, but also for the amount that every other member of the group learns. There are a large number of co-operative learning methods that vary according to the different subjects, pupils' level of development and teaching objectives to be achieved.

The development and implementation of co-operative learning groups in the classroom require changes in both the role of the teacher and the role of the pupil (Kruger 1990:166). Teachers are required to delegate some responsibility for instruction and become a facilitator or

monitor of effective group interaction, and pupils take on the role of helpers within the group. Helping behaviours are built into co-operative structures through task specialisation in which each member of the group is responsible for mastery of one aspect of the task and for teaching the other members that aspect. Another strategy involves assigning specific roles to each group member and reinforcing pupils for demonstrating effective group functioning. According to Bempechat (1989:5) and Kruger (1990:163) co-operative learning is most beneficial under two conditions:

- (1) when members of the group are working towards a common goal; and
- (2) when each individual is accountable for his or her performance.

Through co-operative interaction, students receive group rewards for completing group tasks, thus emphasising the importance of the individual's responsibility not only to himself but also to the group.

Research findings have consistently revealed that handicapped and racial minority members of heterogeneous groups of students who work co-operatively with each other, have more frequent cross-racial and cross handicap friendship choices and increased self-esteem and liking of school (Kruger 1990:164). Slavin and Oikle (Platt et al 1991:44) found co-operative learning to be particularly

useful with students of African American backgrounds. Ascher (Platt et al 1991:44) sees these gains as being due to the high importance that African Americans place on co-operation and peer groups. These findings also relate to their cultural characteristics of avoiding individual recognition and emphasising the accomplishments of the family or group.

4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter described and evaluated aid programmes and strategies used in other countries. The most well known of these being compensatory education. Compensatory education was funded by the US government and its main objective was to help improve the academic and linguistic performance of children from poor socio-economic backgrounds and those whose mother tongue language was other than English. Since the long term advantages of compensatory education were limited and pupils who were on compensatory education programmes failed to acquire higher order thinking skills, researchers became dissatisfied and research into alternative programmes resulted.

The preschool programmes such as Talk, HIPPY and High Scope were reviewed. While Talk and High Scope programmes are implemented at schools by teachers, HIPPY is a home-based programme administered in the home by the mother. All three programmes used well-conceptualised, highly integrated and very structured approaches to preschool education and reported high success rates. The Talk programme was effective in

improving the expressive and receptive language skills and these skills form the basis for reading and writing in the first years of school (cf. 2.5.5.4). The focus of HIPPY and High Scope is on language development, discriminating and problem-solving skills. Results of both these programmes revealed that the pupils were more alert, were able to make independent judgements and achieved greater school success.

The reading programmes reviewed are used to accelerate the reading of pupils at-risk. The programmes are highly structured using the small group teaching method or the one-to-one tutoring method. The results of these reading programmes are cumulative and permanent. The programmes have resulted in a significant drop in failure rates.

Some teaching strategies designed specifically to improve the learning of disadvantaged pupils and to promote reasoning skills have also been reviewed. They showed that improving the academic performance of disadvantaged pupils involves creating a conducive environment for learning and using instructional materials and strategies to empower pupils to become efficient learners.

The programmes and strategies have been described with a view to selecting ones for disadvantaged learners in South Africa. The next chapter will discuss guidelines relating to reorganising the educational system and choosing appropriate programmes and strategies to make education more relevant to the needs of the disadvantaged.

CHAPTER FIVE

GUIDELINES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN ASSISTING DISADVANTAGED LEARNERS IN THE JUNIOR PRIMARY PHASE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter described and evaluated some aid programmes for disadvantaged learners which are being implemented in foreign countries. It was indicated that all these aid programmes have been effective in that they have achieved varying degrees of success among disadvantaged learners.

In this chapter an attempt to give guidelines for language teachers of disadvantaged children will be made, bearing in mind the nature of language development (Chapter 2); the specific situation of the disadvantaged (Chapter 3) and the types of programmes that are being administered in other countries (Chapter 4). The guidelines given will be classified as general guidelines and specific guidelines. The general guidelines may be regarded as principles which should be taken into account when catering for the disadvantaged in the school and the specific guidelines which are more of a practical nature will deal with the language arts and reading programme which teachers may consider when planning their programme. However, in formulating such guidelines, certain factors need to be borne in mind.

5.2 FACTORS TO BE BORNE IN MIND WHEN CHOOSING AID PROGRAMMES FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION

5.2.1 Suitability for large numbers of pupils

When reviewing the situation in South Africa, it becomes clear that the situation differs from that in other countries as far as the nature and extent of the problem are concerned. The number of learners who can be considered disadvantaged is higher than usual (cf. 1.3.1; 3.3.2.2) and in some cases could include the entire pupil population of a particular region. Therefore, instructional materials and programmes that have positive effects on both high achievers and low achievers and those with good language skills and limited language skills (cf. 2.5.2.4 (3)) could be justified for serving the needs of the disadvantaged pupils in South Africa, since teachers have to deal with both the disadvantaged and the non-disadvantaged in their charge simultaneously.

5.2.2 Affordability of aid programmes

Linked to the large numbers of pupils needing aid, is the economic situation in South Africa. Economic indicators have shown a decline in the economy. This means a reduced amount of money will be available for education. The limited funds available for education should be spent as effectively as possible. Therefore, the cost involved in implementing aid programmes is an important issue to be taken into account, since it is unlikely

that the disadvantaged will be able to contribute financially to aid programmes. Government financing of aid programmes will become necessary. Therefore aid programmes chosen should be within the range of the education budget.

5.2.3 Adaptability of aid programmes

Disadvantaged learners are not confined to a particular geographical area or cultural group but are located in both urban and rural areas and are representative of different cultural groups. Therefore, in choosing aid programmes for the disadvantaged in South Africa, cognizance must be taken of their different environmental situations, for example, some schools are located in areas where they do not have electricity (cf. 1.3). Therefore programmes should not be dependent on highly technological devices that can only be used in a limited number of areas. Programmes should also be suited to the culture of the learners (cf. 3.3.4.2). Instructional materials should be adaptable so that there is scope for including pictures, illustrations and stories suitable to the culture of the children.

5.2.4 Programmes should be easy to execute

The limited finance available for education in South Africa (cf.5.2.2) does not warrant the provision of highly specialised or highly qualified personnel to administer aid programmes for the disadvantaged. All classroom practitioners should be able to administer aid and be able to implement the chosen programmes.

Therefore, programmes chosen should be easy for all teachers to implement. Explicit instructions and options for use in the classrooms should be available.

5.3 GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTING DISADVANTAGED LEARNERS

5.3.1 Introduction

The following guidelines are suggested for assisting disadvantaged learners. These guidelines were carefully chosen from a study of the phenomenon of normal language development, disadvantage and its effects on scholastic performance and language development of the child and the alternative forms of aid available to assist disadvantaged learners. They can, therefore, be regarded as scientifically acceptable. These guidelines will be viewed against the background of education of the disadvantaged in South Africa and more specifically, the junior primary teachers' problem of catering for the needs of these children. The guidelines which will be given will be classified as general guidelines and specific guidelines. The general guidelines may be regarded as principles which should be taken into account when catering for the disadvantaged in the school and the specific guidelines which are more of a practical nature deal with the language arts and reading programme which teachers may take into account when planning their programmes.

5.3.2 General guidelines

5.3.2.1 Apply large scale prevention strategies

Given the large number of disadvantaged pupils in the schools at present, intensive preventive measures should be applied in order to prevent the disadvantaged children from falling behind at school. Intensive preventive measures are easier to administer in the sense that pupils are prevented from establishing learning difficulties that can become entrenched if neglected and lead to problems relating to the self-concept and motivation for learning which can impede academic progress of pupils (cf. 4.3.2). Intensive preventive measures can be expensive but in the long run these are actually cheaper.

In debating about when additional costs should be incurred with regard to educational programmes to prevent learning set-backs, researchers have come to the conclusion that "by every standard of evidence, logic and compassion, dollars used preventively make more sense than the same dollars used remedially" (Slavin et al 1993:17).

5.3.2.2 Restructure educational policy

In many ways education in South Africa will have to be restructured to become relevant and adequately meet the needs of the disadvantaged. The reason for large numbers of children who have become disadvantaged can be traced

back to an unsuitable education system which did not cater for the needs of the masses (cf.1.3.1). Discrimination in terms of the quality of educational opportunities, allocation of resources and per capita expenditure (cf. 1.3.1) have resulted in the majority of pupils not being able to actualise their learning potential.

To change the situation for the disadvantaged, a total reconstruction of education will be required. The first steps to reconstruction have been taken by the White Paper on Education and Training of February 1995.

Reconstruction on a macro level will include the provision of training for the vast number of underqualified or unqualified teachers, the equalizing of resources and financial aid, inter alia, need to be addressed (cf. 1.3).

On a microlevel, that is, within the school itself, committed efforts need to be employed in making changes to the formally organised system so that a more flexibly organised system will be employed to equip the disadvantaged to take their places eventually as adult contributors to the well-being of the South African nation (cf.3.3.4). As Cohen (Natriello et al 1990:177) rightly states that the primary rationale for restructuring schools lies in the need to improve the productivity of the educational system in general, and, in particular, pupil acquisition of higher order thinking skills.

5.3.2.3 Provide appropriate preschool programmes

It has been noted that young children who receive adequate early learning experiences of the right kind, enter junior primary school on the same level as their non-disadvantaged peers (cf. 4.3.2) because language and problem solving skills are taught during these years and therefore, provide a firm foundation for later learning, especially in reading and mathematics. It is therefore, of utmost importance that all children of preschool age attend preschool. However, because of financial constraints (cf.5.2.2) it may not be possible to implement programmes such as High Scope and HIPPY (cf. 4.3.2) since these programmes call for specially trained staff and as in the case of HIPPY deals with only small groups of children. Considering the number of children of preschool age who are not attending preschool (cf.1.3.1) it will become necessary for Non Governmental Organisations to become involved in assessing needs for the establishment of preschools in communities, training community members to staff the preschools and implement programmes.

5.3.2.4 Allocate time for teachers to plan

It is essential that the school provides time for the staff to reflect, plan and discuss teaching innovations and problems with their colleagues. One of the problems encountered in the pull-out programmes (cf. 4.2.4) was lack of time for teachers to meet for planning and discussion on pupil

needs. In the South African context, dealing with disadvantaged pupils is a new challenge for many teachers. Their teacher training programmes have not equipped them to plan, prepare or implement programmes for the disadvantaged pupils (cf. 1.3.5). Hence creating time blocks for collaboration among staff where strategies are assessed, pupil problems are discussed and ideas shared is vital if teachers are to succeed in catering for the needs of their pupils.

5.3.2.5 Provide a differentiated hierarchy

Many disadvantaged pupils hail from homes where they experience one or more of the following problems : poor health or parents with poor health; unemployed or manually employed parents that work long hours; poor housing; poverty (cf. 3.3.2). Learners from such backgrounds present various problems. Therefore, the suggestion that the school needs a more differentiated hierarchy in which individuals at different levels are equipped to deal with different kinds of exceptions (Natriello et al 1990:171), becomes vital.

Individuals, volunteering to assist the management staff could be equipped with specialized knowledge of various pupils' problems (learning disabilities, educational resources, techniques of writing instructions, peer counselling etc). Problems referred to them could receive timely and expert treatment rather than waiting on the

advice and counselling of the management which would necessitate having to wait for long periods since management is often overloaded with pressing issues (cf. 3.3.4).

5.3.2.6 Review system of grade retention

The general belief is that grade retention will improve student achievement. However, the methods and materials that proved to be unsuccessful initially are the ones that are still being used. For example, when dealing with pupils from non-western backgrounds, the competitive and individualistic oriented methods used cause emotional disruptions as these pupils are accustomed to co-operation and group oriented tasks (cf. 3.3.4.2.).

According to Grisson and Shephard (1989:60) retention eventually results in student drop-out. Therefore, the system of grade retention should be reviewed seriously. Instead of retaining pupils, innovative methods should be employed to ensure that pupil interest in school and success are achieved.

5.3.2.7 Reform the curriculum

It is logical that when large numbers of pupils cannot fare satisfactorily, it is necessary to revise the existing curriculum so that it becomes more pupil-relevant. Pupil relevance suggests that teaching content should be suited

to the context of the children's culture and life experiences in order to be meaningful to them. Children who come from different cultural, ethnic or language backgrounds feel a sense of welcome and acceptance when stories from their lives are a part of the classroom curriculum and these provide opportunities for other children to gain insight into another's worldview (Zabel 1991:34). The curriculum in South Africa has been hitherto based on a western world view (cf. 3.3.4.2). A holistic approach which reflects a non-western world view should now be considered. This approach should include intuition, spiritual values, interpersonal communication, spontaneity, movement, rhythm and music in cognitive learning experiences. These may help pupils to maintain interest in academic activities and ensure that the needs of every pupil are adequately met (Holdstock 1987:203-248).

5.3.2.8 Develop the self-concept of the child

Since achievement is often equated to personal worth and school provides the first opportunity outside the home for the child to test his abilities and gain respect and admiration, it is essential that the development of a positive self-concept on the part of each child is considered in the education programme (Brunner 1967:153) and procedures designed to enhance the self-esteem of pupils should be developed.

When reviewing the self concept of disadvantaged children (cf 3.4.3.1) it becomes evident that these children come to school with noticeable deficiencies which increases their difficulty to achieve academically and socially and the teacher's task is to help build the self-concept so that the whole child can be affected positively.

The following guidelines relate to developing the self-esteem of pupils.

* Teacher-pupil interaction

According to Gearheart et al (1988:99) the teacher's manner of interaction can either impede or facilitate pupils' success. One of the major causes of poor school performance and early school leaving cited by Natriello et al (1990:12) is a lack of positive teacher-pupil relationships. If a child interacts with a teacher who establishes a positive teacher-pupil interactive process, the child will learn more and this will boost his self-esteem (Battle 1982:17). The relationship established between pupil and teacher should not be informal but one in which children feel psychologically and emotionally comfortable.

* Teacher expectations

The type of interaction that exists between teacher and pupil relate to the teacher's expectations of pupils (Gearheart et al 1988:99). Teachers convey their expectations of pupils by the amount of time they spend teaching pupils, especially low achievers, the methods they employ, the kind of tasks they set and their personal enthusiasm they display when teaching pupils. The disadvantaged child needs tasks that promote success and according to Frostig and Maslow (1973:32) there is no positive reinforcement more effective than success. High success rates is one way to increase pupil perserverance. Having an "open classroom" that meets the needs of the child rather than the child having to meet the needs of the classroom will encourage the child to preservere towards success. When teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance, pupils endeavour to strive to succeed.

Helping children build good self-images is the single most important thing a teacher can do in terms of the total development of children. Healthy self-images develop in a caring, supportive, non threathening environment. Every classroom has the potential to establish a good social climate that engenders feelings of "wellness" among pupils.

Encourage parental involvement

Parents are the primary educators of children. Their beliefs, attributions and attitudes serve to guide the behaviour of their children. The survival of all children depends on how well parents and educators unite in support of each other. This section will offer some guidelines to elicit positive involvement of parents in the education of their children.

*** Attending parent-enrichment courses**

Parents should attend parent-enrichment courses that will expose them to parenting styles that will promote cognitive and language abilities of children (Murphy 1986:500). Since the disadvantaged have a meagre environmental basis for developing cognitive skills which manifests in unpreparedness to cope with formal intellectual and learning demands at school (cf. 3.4), attendance at parent education programmes will help parents offset pupil unpreparedness for intellectual activities.

*** Teaching problem-solving skills**

Many disadvantaged children traditionally are not taught critical thinking skills such as problem solving (cf. 3.4.3.2). Teachers traditionally focus on basic skills when pupils enter school. In order to increase motivation and

achievement, equal focus should also be placed on teaching problem solving or critical thinking skills. Chapter 1 (cf. 1.3.2) showed that this technological age demands people with critical thinking skills to manage vast amounts of knowledge and make judgements and decisions all the time. These skills should be taught and nurtured from a young age. Parents can be very influential in promoting these skills among their children. Research has shown that social interaction between the influential adult and child is a "critical mediating force in the development of communication and thinking skills in children (Schuler & Perez 1987:2). Some practical ways of teaching children problem-solving skills include :

- parents should be encouraged to solve problems such as repairing machines, plumbing etc. by thinking out aloud while solving the problem so that children can model the thought processes involved. This method of describing a task orally when performing the task will encourage pupils to think through problems logically and according to Jones (1992:223) this will help impulsive pupils decrease impulsivity, develop self control and become more actively involved in the learning process.

- parents should not simply provide correct answers to homework but explain why the answer is correct and the thinking processes that were employed to arrive at the correct answer.

* **Placing a high importance on learning**

The section on poverty (cf. 3.3.2.2) drew attention to the stress that it causes for both parents and child. This prevents parents from putting the education of their children first on their priority list. Children are not positively reinforced about the importance of learning. In order to offset this legacy of negative behaviours parents need to be encouraged to :

- make every attempt to find answers to their children's academic questions. If they are not sure of the answers they should consult relevant resources or visit the local library to find the answers that they are not sure about. This behaviour will reinforce the idea that learning is important and worth pursuing. Bempechat (1989:7) confirms that parents' beliefs are a causal influence on their children's development of achievement attitudes and behaviours.

question pupils about work done at school, supervise homework and attend parent-teacher meetings. This type of involvement can bring stability to the academic lives of pupils and help to place a high importance on learning. Parents are "overseers" of their children's education (Prentice Baptiste Jr 1991:14) and as such they need to become highly visible in meaningful activities of their children.

* **Encourage good social skills**

Teachers often note that disadvantaged children in the class bring poor social skills from home that hinder teaching and learning (cf. 3.4.3.1). These poor social skills include using physical force to get their own way rather than using the linguistic mode. This is so because many parents do not adequately teach children to cope with the problems in a rational manner. Parents should be informed about the need for every home to have rules, to explain reasons for rules and decisions. When children accept and understand rules they will internalise them. Children must also see adults complying with these rules.

When rules are effective at home, pupils will be comfortable with rules in the classroom. Parents and teachers are partners in education and should

complement each others' norms consistently and this will result in children feeling secure. Politeness and good manners should also be practised by parents who function as positive role models for their children.

* **Developing good listening skills**

Listening to children is a vital parenting skill. When children initiate a conversation, they should be allowed to complete their discussion without adult interruptions. This politeness should be demonstrated between adults as well. This positive influence will be transferred to the classroom and facilitate learning without interruptions. Not only does listening to children teach children to be good listeners it also helps to build the child's emotional self (Yawkey 1980:141-142) and responsiveness of parents to children results in better parent-child relationships which enable pupils to perform better at school (cf. 3.3.2.3).

Parental involvement of this nature would make a genuine difference to the delivery of an educational service to disadvantaged pupils and should be viewed as a "participatory model" (Widlake 1986:16).

5.3.2.10 Facilitate community involvement

Pupils at school, their parents, families and friends make up the community of a defined geographical area. Community development in education will help to promote the personal and social development of all children and adults. Community education reflects the view of education that is:

- (1) life long;**
- (2) in which the participants should be actively and influentially involved; and**
- (3) in which the needs of the participants determine the nature and timing of provision (Widlake 1986:48).**

If this view is to be viable in the disadvantaged community, every segment of society, the family, schools, business and government have to co-operate to ensure effective education is administered. Business should co-operate to meet the objectives of the school by devoting time, money and energy to developing programmes that will assist disadvantaged pupils to stay on at school and gain some success in their learning careers (Prentice Baptiste Jr. 1991:15). Government needs to set up the infrastructure and provide the necessary resources for educational programmes. Chapter 3 (cf.3.4.2) gave evidence of the disadvantage caused by the unequal allocation of resources in many schools. Concerted efforts will be necessary to even out the inequities.

More specifically, adults from disadvantaged communities should be given the opportunity to use their talents in the classroom. They could volunteer their services as classroom assistants or tutors used to assist pupils with one or more subjects such as reading, mathematics, science or a second language. This measure could be successful in reducing the failure statistics of young children. If adults have talents in story telling, drama or music they could use these to enrich the experience of the children. Community members could also participate in decision making by joining parent-teacher associations.

5.3.2.11 Use effective teaching strategies

When reviewing the situation in South Africa, it becomes clear that many of the aid programmes and teaching strategies used in other countries cannot be employed in the South African context. In order to be effective, any programme or strategy recommended for use in South Africa will have to meet certain requirements (cf. 5.2).

All the programmes and strategies discussed in Chapter 4 have been successful but many of them are highly structured, requiring highly trained personnel to administer the programme (Compensatory Education; HIPPY; Reading Recovery) or they employ the one-to-one tutoring system (Success For All; Cumulative Mastery Reading). The financial situation in South Africa, does not permit the use

of strategies that require personnel with additional specialised qualifications to administer aid programmes nor can it afford one-to-one tutoring systems. What is needed is a model that will be able to meet the diverse needs of pupils rather than providing paralleled instructional programmes which create new problems in terms of financial implications, integration with classroom programmes as well as pupil self-esteem and labelling (cf. 4.2). Considering its premise, the co-operative learning method has proved to provide the appropriate level of instruction to pupils according to their needs, ensuring that all pupils attain an acceptable level of achievement.

The acquisition of higher level thinking and problem solving skills is vital for proper survival in almost every chosen sphere of life and since the vast majority of the South African population is disadvantaged and fall into the unskilled or under-employed group (cf. 1.3.2), it is imperative that aid programmes chosen, enable all pupils to develop basic and higher level thinking skills that will ensure that they cope with the demands that will be made of them in their various vocations, and more importantly, uplift themselves from the threat of continued disadvantage through poverty.

In South Africa, the majority of the disadvantaged are African. Therefore, methods of instruction that suit the world view of the African should be incorporated into the educational system. Anderson (1988:6), when comparing

the Western worldview with that of the non-Western worldview found that group co-operation, group achievement and a socially oriented existence characterised the worldview of the non Western. Hence employing the co-operative learning method that encompasses collective or co-operative participation in learning is relevant in the South African context. Furthermore with the envisaged increase in the pupil-teacher ratio in government schools in South Africa, small group and large group interaction will be the norm. By adopting mixed ability and homogeneous groupings such as those within the co-operative learning strategy, teachers will be able to achieve the goals of individual teaching.

Friendship and peer relations make valuable contributions to a child's social, linguistic and emotional development. One of the most important social accomplishments of the school years is becoming a valued member of one's peer group (cf.1.1). In South Africa, multicultural classes is a reality and intercultural harmony needs to be promoted among all children from an early age. The mixed ability team approach to learning and practising skills in the co-operative learning method facilitates social interaction of all children and is in keeping with the non-Western world view of socially orientated existence. Children learn to co-operate with others (of different cultures and abilities) to achieve team goals by making their individual contributions that are incorporated into the determination of the group reward.

From the foregoing it becomes clear that the co-operative learning method could be adopted in South African schools as it promises to cater for the large numbers of pupils who need to experience success in school; it promotes basic skills as well as higher order thinking skills; it is cost effective (can be implemented without teacher assistants and does not require other paralleled instruction programmes); characterizes the non-Western worldview and has had positive effects on social relations of all kinds, specifically on relationships between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged.

Chapter 5 (cf.5.3.3) will offer guidelines on the implementation of the co-operative learning strategy for reading and language arts in the junior primary phase.

5.3.3 Specific guidelines

The guidelines given in this section relate specifically to the most common learning problems encountered by disadvantaged pupils with regard to receptive and expressive language skills. They deal with various ways in which the needs of the disadvantaged pupils can be met while at the same time maintaining a structured, positive environment for all pupils in the classroom.

When reviewing expressive and receptive skills in Chapter Two (cf. 2.5.5.4) it becomes evident that a close relationship between these skills exists.

Hence the skilful teacher when planning the language programme for the disadvantaged child needs to give careful thought to providing a balanced programme that will meet the language needs of the child. A balanced programme ensures equal importance of oral and written expression and reading skills.

For the purpose of this study, some guidelines will be given on the components of the expressive and receptive language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing but teachers need to bear in mind that some strategies may overlap because of the close interrelationship of these skills and a holistic approach which deals with teaching reading and writing in combination with speaking and listening is a recommended practice (cf. 2.5.5.4).

5.3.3.1 Listening

Given the listening problems that the disadvantaged learners have (cf. 3.3.2.5), teachers need to provide many kinds of listening experiences that will teach skills, build interest in learning to listen and foster good listening habits.

The following guidelines will assist teachers in planning listening activities for the disadvantaged learner.

The teacher should:

* **Be a good listener**

The teacher must be aware of her own manner of listening to the children. She should show that she values listening by attending and showing courtesy to the speaker and by practising what she advocates the children should do. Adequate listening may be prevented if the teacher does not practise what she teaches. This good listening to the children by the teacher, further boosts the child's self-concept and establishes a climate where the child feels important (Ogden & Germinario 1988:6).

* **Eliminate distractions and competing sounds**

Items such as books, pens, pencils and rulers that may be knocked to the floor during the listening exercise should be put away. Other competing sounds such as talking and movement in the class should also be curbed and those children who follow these directions should be positively reinforced (McCarney 1991:62).

* **Issue clear and brief instructions**

Irrelevant, long winded talk may cause confusion as many of the disadvantaged pupils are accustomed to marginal listening (Polloway et al 1989:196; Frostig & Maslow 1973:204).

* **Include listening activities in daily classroom curriculum**

Listening activities should be planned for and not left to incidental learning. Some basic activities that promote listening are:

- . recognising environmental and speech sounds
- . listening for specific sounds or words
- . repeating rhythms
- . following verbal directions
- . verbally describing the likenesses and differences between sounds
- . repeating sentences of increasing length and complexity
- . answering questions that require yes or no responses.

* **Begin with awareness of sounds in the environment**

Children need to realise that many sounds in the environment are pleasurable (Frostig & Maslow 1973:204). Several sounds such as the leaves rustling, birds chirping, wind blowing can be recorded and played to the class. Sound films too, can provide auditory experiences eg. sound of water flowing or rushing waterfall, the noise of rain and animal sounds. The everyday noises can also be heightened.

* **Note the principles of planning listening activities**

- . Activities should emphasise the development of skills through specific situations rather than on "paying attention".
- . Activities should be flexible because listening abilities of children vary and different types of listening are relevant for different occasions.
- . Thorough preparation for listening experiences will increase the learning gained from listening. The teacher and pupil should discuss the purpose of the listening activity and prepare for the type of listening required.
- . Listening may be used for relaxation, pleasure as well as for getting information (Petty & Jensen 1980:190).

* **Evaluate children's listening skills**

Periodic evaluations of pupils' listening skills will help teachers assess the effectiveness of their teaching strategies and plan wisely. The following criteria may be used to test listening skills:

- . Can the pupils identify and recall details?
- . Can the pupils identify the main idea in a story?
- . Can the pupils use facts to make inferences?
- . Can the pupils distinguish relevant from irrelevant details?

Finally all efforts to provide listening experiences in the classroom should centre around the four aspects that ensure good listening and these are hearing sounds, words and sentences; understanding these sounds, words and sentences; evaluating the meaning and responding by accepting or rejecting what we hear by commenting, speaking or writing our thoughts.

5.3.3.2 Speaking

The definition of "speech" in chapter 2 (cf. 2.2.3) revealed that speech and language have a common goal of communication and they cannot function as goals in themselves. For the disadvantaged, opportunities for using language have been so circumscribed that they have less language than other children. Chapter 3 (cf. 3.4.4) described in detail the restricted nature of the language of the disadvantaged at both structural and functional levels. On the basis of their restricted language, many activities to foster children's use and understanding of language should be provided.

The following are guidelines regarding the development of speaking skills:

* Integrate language teaching

Learning a language means, inter-alia, learning to use a language to socialize, to query, to learn, to make believe and to wonder (Early 1990:568). However,

the disadvantaged learners, because of their poor language are limited in their ability to think as well as understand (cf.3.4.3.2) and this also inhibits social interaction.

Activities that promote speech, language and concept formation in an integrated manner in a group context are beneficial to the disadvantaged learners and should be provided. The content instruction method stresses the teaching of language and the teaching of subject matter knowledge, stressing interesting content and meaning which both empowers pupils and fosters a positive attitude towards their own abilities and to language. In this way language, cognitive and academic progress can develop in an integrated manner.

Chapter 3 (cf. 3.4.3.2) showed that the environment devoid of stimuli retards cognitive growth of pupils. Successful cognitive and language development of children depends on exposure to environmental stimuli as well as the quantity and quality of mediation by an adult. Teachers are therefore urged to participate in mediation which includes directing the child's attention to important stimuli and helping the child to perceive, interpret and organize new knowledge meaningfully. Each pupil should be allowed to contribute to discussions at his own level of speech, language and experience. Teachers, should be

prepared to adjust instruction to accommodate the different levels of language proficiency and different learning rates and styles of pupils.

A variety of visual media based on pupil's experiences can be incorporated into the programme which could assist pupils in the following ways:

- . promote language generation related to content (pupils can talk about pictures, diagrams etc. they are presented with); and
- . increase content understanding (visuals depicting specific characteristics of objects can be shown).

* **Encourage the use of illustrations to extend linguistic expression**

The interrelationship between graphic and linguistic realisation of meaning can be exploited to make communication clearer and gradually offset language barriers. Drawing of pictures can be used by pupils to explain their understanding of concepts.

Finally the underlying principle for any intervention programme to be successful is aptly stated by Shafer et al (1983:30-31) "Children need to feel good about themselves and about being in school...". Only as these good feelings are fostered will children be likely to express themselves freely in talk and desire to engage in group activities which facilitate this talk".

5.3.3.3 Reading and writing

Teachers have long been aware of the importance of a child's readiness for reading at the time instruction begins. However, with the disadvantaged child, readiness for learning in the environment presented by the classroom must precede the development of readiness for reading. The biggest single impairment these children have academically is lack of facility with language as evidence showed in Chapter 3 (cf. 3.4.4). All of them meet the chronological age requirements for admission to class i but have not had any exposure to preschool learning experiences, limited exposure to books and personal experiences which would promote and sustain intellectual curiosity. Therefore, it becomes necessary for the class teacher to choose methods of instruction that will incorporate exposure to experiences that these children have lacked. In this section, guidelines for the whole language method and co-operative learning method of teaching reading and writing will be offered.

* Whole language method

Since effective learning depends on how well new experiences relate to what is already known (cf. 1.3.5) the school's initial contact with the disadvantaged child will, therefore necessitate the use of teaching methods that capitalise on the pre-existing

experiences of the learner. One such method that bases learning upon a sense of personal relevance is the whole language approach.

The basic philosophy of the whole language method is that children learn to read and write in the same way they learn to talk (Platt et al 1991:44). The learner is taught to read material that he has produced through an experience he has shared. The reading material reflects the lived experience of the pupils comprising real life themes with which they can identify. Newman and Church (Platt et al 1991:44) are of the view that learning to read and write begins with engaging reading and writing experiences that have strong personal and shared meaning, ones that stress pupil ownership rather than instruction in isolated skills and fragmented drills.

This philosophy stresses that : learning is social (non Western world view) and requires constructing meaning and relating new information to prior knowledge; learning occurs when learners are actively involved; and when they make choices, they share in decision-making. Other content subjects are integrated and ensures that continuity is created (Platt et al 1991:45). The emphasis is on reading and writing for meaning. The pupil is able to develop his reading and language art skills without being hampered by his level of language proficiency.

Once pupils are confident in expressing themselves verbally after being stimulated by the various concrete experiences provided by the teacher (cf. 5.2.3.1/5.2.3.2) and have acquired vocabulary enabling them to write and read their personal experiences using these skills, the teacher should proceed to extend the child's reading, writing, spelling and comprehension skills by adopting the co-operative learning strategy (using basal reading activities) which is used to teach both prescribed skills and to develop higher-level thinking skills.

* The co-operative learning reading programme
(adapted from Slavin et al 1990:22-26)

Chapter 5 (cf. 5.3.2.11) concluded that there are many advantages in adopting the co-operative learning method in the South African schools. This section will focus on using this method in the reading programme in junior primary classes.

The main features of the co-operative learning reading programme includes three elements : basal related activities, direct instruction in reading and comprehension and integrated language arts and writing. In all these activities pupils work in heterogeneous learning teams. The following is a suggested method of implementing the co-operative learning strategy in reading and writing.

form reading groups

Pupils are allocated to three or four reading groups (10-15 pupils per group) according to their reading level, as determined by the teacher.

establish teams

Pupils are then allocated to pairs or triads within their reading groups. The pairs are then assigned to teams composed of partnerships from the different reading groups. For example, a team might be composed of two pupils from the top reading group and two from the low group. Many activities within the teams are done in pairs, while others involve the whole team. During pair activities, however, the other pair is available for assistance and encouragement. Most of the time, the teams work independently of the teacher, while the teacher either teaches reading groups drawn from the various teams or works with individuals. Pupils' scores on all activities contribute to the team score. Tangible rewards in the form of certificates are presented to teams according to their efforts.

basal related activities

Basal readers that are currently being used in the classroom can be used as texts. Stories are introduced and discussed by the teacher. During these sessions, teachers set a purpose for reading, introduce new vocabulary, review old vocabulary and discuss the story after pupils have read it. Presentation methods for each segment of the lesson should be structured. For example, vocabulary presentation procedure should demonstrate the understanding of word meaning by each individual. Story discussions are structured to emphasise such skills as making and supporting predictions about the story and understanding major structural components of the story (such as problem and solution in a narrative). After the stories are introduced, the learners are given a series of activities to do in their teams. The following is a sequence of activities.

*** partner reading**

Pupils read the story silently, then take turns reading the story aloud with their partner, alternating readers after each paragraph. As one partner reads the other listens and follows along the corrects any errors the reader makes.

* **story structure and story related writing**

Pupils are given questions related to each narrative that emphasise story grammar. Half way through the story, they are instructed to stop reading and to identify the character, the setting, and the problem in the story and to predict how the problem will be resolved. At the end of the story pupils respond to the story as a whole and write a few sentences on the topic related to the story (for example, they may be asked to write a different ending to the story).

* **words out aloud**

Pupils are given a list of new or difficult words used in the story, which they must be able to read correctly in any order without hesitating or stumbling. These words are presented by the teacher in the reading group and pupils practise their lists with their partners and other teammates until they can read them smoothly.

* **word meaning**

Pupils are given a list of story words that are new in their speaking vocabulary. Dictionaries should be made available for pupils to check meanings of words. Their written sentences should show that they understand the meanings of the words.

* **story retell**

After reading the story and discussing it in their reading groups, pupils summarize the main points of the story to their partners. The partners have a list of essential story elements, which they use to check on the completeness of the story summary.

* **spelling**

Pupils test one another on a list of spelling words each week, and then work over the course of the week to help one another master the list. Pupils use the "disappearing list" strategy in which they make new lists of missed words after each assessment until the list disappears and they can go back to the full list, repeating the process as many times as necessary.

Evaluation of activities

. **partner checking**

After pupils complete the activities discussed above, the partners initial their tasks sheets, indicating that they have completed. Pupils are given daily expectations as to the number of activities to be completed. If they complete earlier than expected , they go on to read independently.

. **tests**

At the end of the week pupils are given tests in the following areas:

- * comprehension**
- * writing of meaningful sentences using each vocabulary word**
- * read the word list aloud to the teacher**

Pupils are not permitted to help one another on these tests. The test scores and evaluation of the story related writing are major components of pupils' weekly team scores.

Direct instruction in reading comprehension

Once a week pupils receive direct instruction from the teacher in reading comprehension skills such as identifying main ideas, drawing conclusions and comparing and contrasting ideas. Worksheets or games based on the lesson are done in teams.

Independent reading

Pupils are asked to read one book of their choice every evening. Parents initial a special form indicating that pupils have read. Once a month pupils write a book report and they receive team points. If pupils complete basal-related activities early they may read their independent reading books.

The language arts and writing integrated

Pupils work in the same teams as in reading. Once a week pupils participate in writing at their own pace on topics of their choice. The teacher presents a 10 minute mini lesson at the beginning of the period on the writing process, style, or mechanics, for example, brainstorming for topics; conducting a peer revision conference; eliminating repetitive sentences etc. Pupils spend the rest of the time recording their experiences. Ten minutes before the end of the period, pupils share their writing with others. Two other periods are set aside for teacher directed lessons on specific aspects of writing, such as sequencing of events in a narrative; use of descriptive words; use of sensory words and ensuring noun-verb agreement and other grammar aspects. Pupils are then given the opportunity to refine their writings by practising these skills in their teams. Since the lack of language is the basic problem with the disadvantaged, it is logical for the school to reorganize its class time tables to give priority to the language arts and reading programme. The following is a suggested time table for junior primary classes which gives priority to the language arts and reading without neglecting other relevant subjects that are necessary for the total development of the child.

Figure 5.1
Junior Primary Class Timetable

Monday	Language Arts 60 Minutes	Maths 60 Minutes	Inter- val	Writing 30 Minutes	Reading 60 Minutes	PE 30 Minutes	L u n c h
Tuesday	Language Arts 60 Minutes	Maths 60 Minutes	Inter- val	Reading 60 Minutes	Health & Family Life 60 Minutes		L u n c h
Wednesday	Language Arts 60 Minutes	Maths 60 Minutes	Inter- val	Music 30 Minutes	Reading 60 Minutes	PE 30 Minutes	L u n c h
Thursday	Language Arts 60 Minutes	Maths 60 Minutes	Inter- val	Reading 60 Minutes	Art & Craft 60 Minutes		L u n c h
Friday	Language Arts 60 Minutes	Maths 60 Minutes	Inter- val	Writing 30 Minutes	Reading 60 Minutes	Music 30 Minutes	L u n c h

The following is the total time allocation for each subject:

Language Arts	:	5 hours	Handwriting	:	1 hour
Reading	:	5 hours	Physical Education	:	1 hour
Mathematics	:	5 hours	Art/Craft	:	1 hour
Health & Family Life	:	1 hour	Music	:	1 hour

Total : 20 hours

The co-operative learning reading programme is a new approach to junior primary teaching. Therefore a suggested plan is included to facilitate implementation of the programme. It is by no means a prescriptive plan and teachers are advised to adapt it to suit the peculiar needs of their pupils.

Figure 5.2

A suggested plan for the language arts

MON	Content related discussions based on theme studies, incorporating right living, drama, poetry, stories, experiments etc.
TUES	60 minutes

WED	First 30 minutes as for Monday and Tuesday second 30 minutes
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THURS	Direct instruction on narrative writing, paying detail to use of descriptive words etc.
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FRI	First 10 minutes - Teacher directed discussion on topics of pupils' choice drawing attention to correct use of grammar. Next 40 minutes - pupils write their own stories. Last 10 minutes - Pupils share their stories.
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(Adapted from Slavin et al 1990:22-26)

Figure 5.3

A suggested plan for reading and basal activities

MON	First 30 minutes Teacher introduces the story, reviews old vocabulary and introduces new word lists. Second 30 minutes Pupils do silent reading; reading to partners; work on word lists and spelling.
TUES	Pupils work on questions based on the narrative; prediction exercises, check meanings of words from word lists
WED	Pupils write sentences with new words and learn spelling NB: Teacher listens to reading in small groups or works with individuals while others are busy with basal activities
THUR	First 30 minutes Teacher does direct instruction on reading comprehension Second 30 minutes Pupils do exercise on comprehension and summarize main points of story
FRI	Teacher conducts tests on comprehension, sentence construction and oral test on words from vocabulary lists

(Adapted from Slavin et al 1990:22-26)

5.4 SUMMARY

This chapter provided general and specific guidelines for the development of language skills of the disadvantaged pupils. The general guidelines reviewed the current thinking relating to the provision of effective aid programmes in which the strengths of pupils are capitalised on and changes are made to the educational programme to ensure better pupil achievement; prevention of learning difficulties proved to be logical and cost-effective in comparison to remediation; restructuring of the school requires a basic rethinking about the way schools should operate because the needs of the disadvantaged pupils cannot be addressed within the structure of the typical school; the key figure in keeping children at school and enabling them to experience success is the teacher and ways in which the teacher can generate positive feelings of acceptance through interaction and pupil expectations were discussed. While the school and teachers can and will help the child in many ways, it is vitally important for parents and the community to become actively involved in the total development of pupils. Ways in which parents and the community can become involved were also outlined.

When reviewing the specific guidelines, the acquisition of basic skills that promote oracy and literacy were highlighted. Attention was given to ways in which teachers may be assisted, enabling them to teach the language arts effectively to disadvantaged pupils. It is incumbent on the junior primary school to provide experiences (that are normally taken for

granted) to enable these children to reach an acceptable level of achievement. The whole language method that caters for the development of concepts as well as oracy and literacy skills was viewed as an appropriate starting method. When the children have acquired facility with language and are confident in expressing themselves verbally, the transition to the basal activities using the co-operative learning method should be made. This method helps children work in teams and while pupils are able to establish good interpersonal skills, this method ensures that pupils acquire higher order thinking skills which are vital for survival in a technologically oriented world.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1.SUMMARY

South Africa is in the midst of social and political changes. These changes affect the entire fabric of society and will increasingly impact on all aspects of the educational system. Education, therefore, will have to be re-organised to meet the challenges of our changing society.

An investigation into education in South Africa revealed that there is disparity in the educational provision. The same advantages are not provided for everyone and it is clear that differentiation rests on the basis of race and colour (cf. 1.3.1). This provision of education does not adequately cater for every individual and will have to be organised from a system of status - giving and selectivity to one that develops each individual's potential to the maximum so that individuals can function effectively in society.

Far reaching changes in the system of government from the apartheid system to the system of democracy offer new challenges to education. More and more pupils from different cultural backgrounds are seeking admission at schools previously closed to them. Hence problems of different kinds are surfacing since the majority of these children come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Their early experiences in the home do not

transmit cultural patterns necessary for the types of learning characteristic of the schools and the large society. Many of them come from homes where the adults have a minimal level of education. A large percentage come from homes where poverty, large family size, broken homes and discrimination further complicate the picture. Simply stated, they are disadvantaged.

Research reveals the aspects of the home environment which seem to be most significant in affecting the level of measured intelligence of the child, as his school learning, are in most general terms, described as involving provisions for general learning models, and help in language development and parental stimulation (cf. 2.5.2.4).

These disadvantaged children, at the beginning of first grade, reveal differences in the amount and variety of experiences they have had in their perceptual development as compared with their non-disadvantaged peers.

Joined to this perceptual development of the child, is his linguistic development. As perception increases, the child is able to hold particular objects or events in his mind as he is given words or other symbols to refer to them. Many of them come from different language backgrounds and this further compounds the problem regarding instructions.

Since all later learning is likely to be influenced by the very basic learning which has taken place by the age of five or six, and adequate basic learning cannot be provided in the home, it is the

responsibility of the school to ensure that the disadvantaged child has as good a set of initial skills and intellectual development as a child from a non-disadvantaged background. The gaps can be bridged by special aid programmes that are designed to remedy social, cultural or academic details in the child's total experience and prevent further set backs.

However, the training programme of junior primary specialist teachers does not prepare them to cater for the needs of the disadvantaged, in terms of assessing and providing instructional activities for the disadvantaged. Hence guidelines for teachers assisting disadvantaged learners becomes necessary if teachers are to cope with the diverse needs of the disadvantaged.

In order to achieve this goal, a number of sub-problems had to be addressed. These are:

- * What is the phenomenon of language? What are the factors that affect the development of language? How does language develop in a "normal" child?
- * What are the language problems experienced by the disadvantaged? How does disadvantage affect the academic and linguistic performance of the child?
- * What types of alternative programmes are available for disadvantaged pupils? How can they be adapted to suit the needs of South African pupils?

- * Which general guidelines can be advocated for disadvantaged and what are the specific guidelines according to which the teacher could plan the language arts and reading programme for the disadvantaged?

6.2. CONCLUSIONS

An investigation of the above mentioned problems revealed the following:

6.2.1. Language development

Language is a powerful tool that enables people to express feelings and thoughts and to stimulate actions and reactions. The acquisition of this powerful tool is essential for the development of understanding, attitudes and ideals that are important to individuals, groups and society at large and, the level of proficiency of language and related skills are determining factors for establishing the quality of life in a highly technological world (cf. 1.3.2).

Language is made up of many components, namely, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. These components were reviewed. Literature study showed that there are various theories on the acquisition of language. The theories referred to in this study are the Behaviorist, Innatist, Social Interactionist and Developmentalist (cf. 2.4).

A study of these theories revealed that no single theory could be completely correct in its elucidation. However, for the purpose of this study, various aspects of the above theories are elicited to form a theoretical basis of language development.

Language development is shaped by many factors. These factors being those that are within the child (physiological and genetic) and those from the environment (family and socio-economic). While the physiological and the genetic factors contribute to the child's acquisition of language, the multidimensional environments in which the child grows is of great significance to his language acquisition. The environment that the child is exposed to is dependent on the socio-economic status of the family and child concerned (cf. 2.5.2.4). Closely related to this is the effect of the family interaction on the language development of the child. A home where talk is promoted and experience enlarged by outdoor guided excursions etc. new insights are developed and this fosters language development.

In tracing the development of the child's language, it becomes evident that during the preschool period (cf. 2.5.4) children acquire many new words and gradually develop an understanding of the nature of words, sentences and their relationships. Children learn meaning from their mediated encounters with the physical and social world. The school age years are a creative period of language development (cf. 2.5.5) when the child learns to refine the language learnt in

preschool years to communicate effectively. The child also acquires metalinguistic skills that enables him to think and talk about language, read and write, and develop comprehension and spelling skills.

6.2.2. Disadvantagement

The disadvantaged, because of circumstances beyond their control, present many problems with regard to language and related skills that restrict normal progress at school. Factors related to poverty; poor health; poor housing; unemployment; lack of mediated experiences and inexperience to preschool learning experiences are some of the disadvantaging factors surveyed in chapter 3 (cf. 3.3.2) that have negative effects on children's progress at school.

The educational level of the father determines the occupational status he will have and this will affect the income that he would earn. His income will determine the type of accommodation and location he would choose for his family, the health provision and education they would have.

Most disadvantaged children, hail from homes where poverty is rife. Thus they are enmeshed in debilitating circumstances and cannot easily seek a way out. These circumstances result in language development being hampered and insufficient progress being made academically.

6.2.3. Educational assistance for disadvantaged learners

A review of disadvantage and its adverse effects on the scholastic achievement of the disadvantaged learners has highlighted the need for aid programmes for these pupils. There are various aid programmes available. The most well known being compensatory education. While this was used widely in the U.S.A, it was criticized for not being able, in the long term, to enable pupils to acquire higher order thinking skills. Other aid programmes such as the continuous progress programmes and programmes that have a strong focus on reading were evaluated. The results of some of these reading programmes were quite impressive as their effects are cumulative and permanent (cf. 4.3.3). The teaching strategies discussed ranged from one-to-one tutoring (direct instruction) to two or more pupils working together (peer-tutoring) to small or large group interaction (co-operative learning). While all the programmes and methods were successful, choosing suitable ones for South Africa will entail meeting certain criteria (cf. 5.2). When reviewing the situation in South Africa, it becomes clear that the nature and extent of the problem differs from that of other countries. Therefore aid programmes should be cost effective, and methods employed should include the life world view of the disadvantaged and should be applied successfully with large numbers of pupils. The co-operative learning strategy, given its objectives, promises to be a very likely method.

6.2.4. Guidelines for language teachers in assisting disadvantaged learners in the junior primary phase.

The following guidelines, based on the findings of the aforementioned investigations and therefore scientifically accountable, should be followed by educators of the disadvantaged. The first set of guidelines may be considered as basic principles which should be borne in mind regarding education of the disadvantaged. These should be taken into account when policies are decided on for the disadvantaged. The second set is more specific in nature and can assist the educator in planning language programmes for the disadvantaged.

6.2.4.1. General guidelines

GUIDELINE 1: Apply large scale prevention strategies

Prevention, in the long term, is more cost effective than remediation and measures to prevent learning difficulties should be adopted early in a child's experiences (cf. 5.3.2.1).

GUIDELINE 2: Restructure education policy

Educational policy should be restructured to address the imbalances in education with regard to the provisions of training for the vast number of underqualified or unqualified teachers and the equalizing of resources and financial aid.

GUIDELINE 3: Provide appropriate preschool programmes

Appropriate preschool programmes should be provided for all pupils of preschool going age, since early learning experiences are necessary for all later learning.

GUIDELINE 4: Allocate time for teachers to plan

The formally organized system at school should be reorganised so that time blocks are created in the time table to accomodate planning and discussions by teachers regarding the needs of pupils and strategies to cater for their needs.

GUIDELINE 5: Provide a differentiated hierarchy

The administrative ranks have long played a primary role in the organisation and management of schools. In the disadvantaged areas where the majority of pupils are disadvantaged, the administrative staff may become overloaded with referrals by teachers.

Therefore, schools need a more differentiated hierarchy in which individuals at different levels are equipped to deal with different kinds of exceptions. In this way the disadvantaged pupils will receive prompt attention to their many problems.

GUIDELINE 6: Review the system of grade retention

The system of grade retention eventually results in pupil dropout (cf. 5.2.2.). Instead of retaining pupils, innovative methods should be employed to ensure that pupil interest in school and success are achieved.

GUIDELINE 7: Reform the curriculum

The curriculum content should fit the children's culture and life experiences in order to be meaningful to them. Unfamiliarity with culture and life experiences engender fear and a "hands off" and teaching from a distance approach. In the South African situation, a holistic approach which reflects a non western world view should be considered. This approach will cater for the needs of the disadvantaged.

GUIDELINE 8: Develop the self-concept of the child

The disadvantaged learner has a poor self-concept (cf. 3.4.3.1) and it is the task of the teacher to help build the child's self-concept so that the whole child can be affected positively. The relationship between teacher and child should be one in which the child feels psychologically and emotionally comfortable. Teachers should have high expectations of their pupils' performance and this would encourage pupils to strive to succeed.

GUIDELINE 9: Encourage parental involvement

Parents are viewed as primary educators of their children. Therefore parents need to provide mediated experiences that will help children develop language and cognitive skills necessary for success at school. When children are enrolled at school, active involvement in the child's progress by supporting the schools' education programmes, in supervising homework, attending meetings and placing a high value on school work and learning are some ways in which parents can become involved in their child's education.

GUIDELINE 10: Facilitate community involvement

Community involvement in assisting the school in its objectives of providing quality education for the disadvantaged is necessary. The community may assist by volunteering services as classroom assistants or tutors used to assist pupils with one or more subjects such as reading, mathematics, science or a second language. This measure could be successful in reducing the failure statistics of young children.

Community members could also become part of the decision making by joining parent teacher associations.

GUIDELINE 11: Use effective teaching strategies

In order for teaching strategies to be effective, they need to satisfy the criteria regarding the situation in South Africa (cf. 5.2). Strategies should take into account the number of pupils needing aid and the limited finances in the country to train specialised teachers to implement special programmes. A model that seems workable in the South African situation is the co-operative learning method that caters for the needs of the disadvantaged and the non-disadvantaged simultaneously.

6.2.4.2. Specific guidelines

A. Provide listening experiences

Listening forms the basis of all learning. Teachers need to provide many kinds of listening experiences that will teach skills, build interest in learning to listen and foster good listening habits (cf. 5.2.3.1). Teachers need to consider the following guidelines with regard to providing listening experiences:

- * be a good listener;**
- * eliminate distractions and competing sounds;**
- * issue clear and brief instructions;**
- * include listening activities in daily classroom curriculum;**
- * begin with awareness of sounds in the environment;**
- * consider the principles of planning listening activities;**
and
- * evaluate children's listening skills.**

B. Develop speaking skills

On the basis of the disadvantaged learner's restricted language, many activities to foster children's use and understanding of language should be provided. Activities that promote speech, language and concept formation in an integrated manner in a group context are beneficial to the disadvantaged learner and should be provided. Pupils

should be exposed to environmental stimuli through adult mediation. In this way pupils could be helped to perceive, interpret and organise new knowledge meaningfully. A variety of visual media could be introduced to extend pupils understanding of concepts. Pupils could be encouraged to illustrate their understanding of concepts graphically.

C. Reading and writing

The whole language approach to teaching language arts and reading is viewed as a starting method that ensures that children learn language in a holistic manner. In addressing the need to develop higher order thinking skills, the co-operative learning method to teaching reading is viewed positively as it caters adequately for developing critical thinking skills as well as interpersonal relationships, social interdependence and stresses group co-operation for achievement. An adapted version of the co-operative learning method of teaching reading and the language arts and writing together with suggested plans for implementation are provided for junior primary teachers (cf. 5.3.3.3).

6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: Application of guidelines

The major problem currently being experienced by junior primary teachers in the classroom, is inexperience and lack of knowledge in coping with disadvantaged children. The guidelines provided

in this study offer practical ways of catering for the needs of disadvantaged children and teachers should apply these guidelines wherever possible to their teaching programmes.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Pre-service teacher training programme

Teacher training programmes should incorporate a detailed study of disadvantage; factors associated with disadvantage; the effect of disadvantage on the academic progress of children as well as methods to counteract learning difficulties as a result of disadvantage. Exposure to teaching disadvantaged pupils should be a necessary component of the practical teaching course as first hand experience will sharpen the teacher's knowledge and skills in teaching disadvantaged children.

RECOMMENDATION 3: In-service teacher training courses

In-service teacher training courses are vital for on-going professional development. All teachers need to attend courses relating to education of the disadvantaged so as to keep abreast of innovations in curriculum development and methods of instruction for disadvantaged children. Since implementation of new methods may necessitate changes that may affect staff and curriculum issues, principals too need to attend these courses.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Compulsory preschool education

National policy concerning the inclusion of compulsory preschool education as part of the education programme of all children should be made. This will entail government spending in the training of preschool teachers, providing the infrastructure and resources for equipping preschools. All preschool programmes should meet the following objectives:

- * stimulation of children to perceive aspects of the world about them and to fix these aspects by the use of language;
- * development of more extended and accurate language; and
- * development of thinking and reasoning and the ability to make new insights and discoveries for oneself.

These objectives, if successfully achieved will promote pupils' success in first grade.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Allocation of resources

Schools should be allocated resources and staff according to their needs. Schools serving disadvantaged populations may have greater need to provide additional services in the form of after school reading and homework centres and may even extend the school day. Provisions for these additional services should be made to help schools meet their objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Parent enrichment courses

Schools should provide on-going parent courses that expose parents to parenting styles that promote cognitive and linguistic development of children, inter alia. Skills that are taught at home can be reinforced in school and vice versa. This home-school link will provide motivation for pupils to improve academically and will also promote security and a positive self-concept in the child.

6.4. CONCLUSION

In the absence of professional support services for the disadvantaged learners at schools, the burden of catering for their needs falls on class teachers. However, class teachers are not sufficiently equipped to provide the necessary assessment and instruction for these learners as the class teachers' training programme did not equip them for this task. This poses a problem when planning language instruction programmes for the needs of pupils. The disadvantaged have many problems relating to their socio-economic and cultural background and these restrict their academic progress. Appropriate teaching programmes can only be planned effectively if teachers are provided with guidelines in this regard.

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