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Establishing of a Community of Inquiry: A Case Study of an Instructional Leadership Intervention by a Principal

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Research Report submitted for the partial fulfilment of the degree:
Master of Education
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Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own work, which is submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master in Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

The sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Abstract

The principal and teachers of a small independent South African school noticed a significant gap in the implementation of an effective Intermediate Phase (IP) reading curriculum. The principal decided to establish a Community of Inquiry (CoI) at the school to focus on this problem, and to research the process. The main purpose of this research was to investigate the affordances and constraints of the establishment of a CoI for the professional development of teachers as an instructional leadership intervention by the principal. The sub-questions that emerged from the main research question were: what would be the affordances and constraints of the principal establishing, facilitating and researching the CoI; what would be to the benefit of the teachers (and their learners) of establishing such a community for professional development and reading instruction in the IP; and, what processes are entailed in establishing an in-school CoI? To what degree, if any, would the CoI be a generating space to answer the research questions and aims? The literature review for the study explored the means of professional development available to educators and principals, especially Professional Learning Communities and their more focused interventions – Communities of Inquiry, and that professional development needs to target four levels – the *teacher*, their *teaching*, the *community* and collegiality at the school, and the *principal* as a developmental leader, in order for there to be an improvement in students' learning. The concerning South African context with regard to reading in the IP was outlined, as well as that in the school. The South African curriculum IP learning outcomes and assessment standards for reading were critically explored against the backdrop of international curricula. The process of learning to read was traced. Hindrances to effective reading were also explored. The qualitative research design was an applied case study. Grounded Theory methods were used to reduce the data from the transcripts of CoI sessions. The findings of the research were that there are many affordances to establishing an in-school CoI, and that these benefits far outweigh the constraints. The CoI provided a germinating locus in which participants could begin to address the problems related to reading and reading instruction in the IP. It enabled the principal to develop as an instructional leader, and the teachers to develop as professionals and reading instructors. In hindsight, this project was a vital one, but considerably ambitious, difficult to implement, and perhaps even constrained in the sense of the principal establishing, facilitating and researching this process herself. However, without the principal driving, facilitating and researching the CoI, the question emerges whether such an intervention would have been established. Sometimes external insistences from authority can provide valuable impetus for change at schools, as long as these are sensitively handled and one has the support and trust of participants. The actual acceleration in learning that the participants experienced was extensive, and, sometimes it is only the principal that can play this role – especially in newly established communities. Much more research and support for principals in becoming instructional leaders and in establishing CoIs at their schools is required in the South African context.

Keywords
Community of Inquiry, Instructional, Leadership, Professional Development, Reading Instruction, Professional Learning Community, RNCS, Qualitative Research, Applied Case Study, Grounded Theory.

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To the Creator – of all children, of wisdom and the pursuit of knowledge, of life itself – you are the highest and most beautiful preoccupation of all. Thank you.

This is dedicated to my beloved mother,
Jane Dickinson Tinniswood,
who gave me life,
loved passionately,
taught me to read,
and gave to us unceasingly.
She worked with me through the long nights,
constantly encouraging.
Sadly, she passed away a month
before this degree was granted.
I miss you and love you very much.

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

Inherent in any curriculum is the fact that there is always a gap between its intentions and reality (Carr, 1993; Lovett & Smith, 1995). There is always a gap between our ideas and aspirations and our endeavours to implement them (Stenhouse, 1983). As will be shown in Chapter 3, reading practice and instruction in the Intermediate Phase (IP) in South Africa is experiencing considerable difficulties. This seems to be caused by a range of factors – from theoretical tensions about the most effective reading instruction methodology, to gaps inherent in curriculum statements, to what seems to be the lack of training of teachers in IP reading instruction, and a further array of contextual challenges, that all compound to hinder the effectuation of sound IP reading practices and instruction.

In South Africa, the Intermediate Phase consists of Grades 4 to 6, and may also be seen as the 'middle school' period of formal school education: the period between Foundation Phase and High School, when children (approximately age 9 – 13) ideally make the critical transition from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn' (Hart, 2007); from learning how to accurately decode text, to having fluent and expert reading comprehension (Wolf, 2007). This requires specific reading instruction by teachers, and the practice of reading skills by learners, particularly important as this is the basis for effective learning in higher grades.

The IP teachers at the school, and myself as principal (and researcher of this study), were aware that their learners were not exempt from these reading problems. The question was how to go about implementing strategies that would effectively assist teachers to improve their reading instruction and support children in their reading practices. One method available was the possibility of establishing a Community of Inquiry (CoI) into reading by the IP teachers and me as principal. This study focuses on the affordances and constraints of the establishment of the CoI into reading at the school by the principal as an instructional leader, with six IP teachers, who participated on a voluntary basis.

It has been argued that the establishment of CoIs for teachers in schools is a valuable means of staff development and instructional leadership (Brodie, 2012; Curry, 2008; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). CoIs may be useful for exploring teachers' constructs, improving their reflective pedagogy and the performance of learners, and can provide the principal with a powerful tool for insight into their school (Stoll, et al., 2006; Curry, 2008; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2006; Scheerens, et al., 2010). However, as was also the case with this study, this process is not without its difficulties (Curry, 2008; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Morrissey, 2000).

1.2 Brief Background to the Study

The teachers and I involved in the IP at the school, prior to the establishment of the CoI, noted in staff meetings from their routine observations and learners' classroom and formal assessments that the children experienced difficulties in applying basic reading skills. The teachers were concerned that children struggled with areas such as reading fluency, reading aloud and word recognition. In staff meetings, teachers noted that children found it hard to visualise written descriptions, to use their imagination, or to pick up on implied meaning and messages in text. When faced with choosing their own reading materials, learners tended to select texts that were easy to read and below their reading level. While there were some readers who were able to read fluently, they were yet unable to comprehend what they had just read. Learners struggled to find and distinguish details in text. Children especially seemed to struggle with silent reading comprehension and following written instructions. This was a cross-curricular complaint from other IP teachers, especially after formal assessments, such as exams, that negatively accrued to affect learners' results. Children especially lacked the vocabulary and skills to independently put information into their own words – the vital skill of paraphrasing – after they had read text (Yoder, 1973). Of concern was that the teachers themselves reported that they felt they had not received enough formal training in how to teach children the reading skills required by the IP curriculum, and that they thought the South African Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS C2005) had vague learning outcomes and assessment standards for IP reading.

These problems are not endemic to the school. National and international assessments of reading literacy levels of Intermediate Phase learners in South Africa over the past twelve years have also publicized learners' poor results. Probably the most significant of these, the South African ANA (Annual National Assessments) of 2011, in which six million Grade 3 and 6 learners took part, indicated that the national literacy rate for Grade 6s had dropped from 37% to 30% (as measured in 2007). The Progress in the International Reading Literacy Study's (PIRLS) results (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy& Foy, 2007) released in November 2007, indicated that South African Grade 4 readers were ranked the lowest in 45 international education systems, despite the fact that this cohort was the oldest average age of children tested (11.9 years). The report of the 2011 PIRLS study is due in September 2012, but South African children's reading performance may continue to be weak. It seems fair to say that these results indicate a national crisis in literacy levels.

On 18 March 2008, the South African Minister of Education officially launched the three year *Foundations for Learning Campaign* and the *National Reading Strategy*, with a national protocol for reading assessment. Its focal point was Grade R to 3, but called for consolidation in the IP. Along with a number of strategies, teacher education was one of the pillars of the campaign, including the provision of in-service training in reading instruction. School principals were expected to spearhead this

campaign and provide motivation and inspiration in their schools for teachers and learners to achieve better reading results (*National Reading Strategy*, 2008). Teachers were expected to work together within their schools and with teachers from other schools in collaborative peer groups (*National Reading Strategy*, 2008).

The focus of the *National Reading Strategy* (2008) has been on early reading instruction in the Foundation Phase – that is on 'teaching children to read'. It is a concern of this study that there has apparently been little support available to assist teachers in the Intermediate Phase to foster more sophisticated reading practices of their learners – that is on 'reading to learn' (Hart, 2007). Although it is acknowledged that early reading is an obvious and urgent national priority, it is a concern of this study that the IP cannot be reduced to a place where emergent reading skills are reinforced and difficulties remediated. As will be outlined in Chapter 3, the IP has its own sophisticated, cross-curricular, high levels of expected reading skills, which demand specialised teaching, with significant implications for success in the future grades of a child's life.

As the principal of a school, and more specifically in my role as instructional leader there, I began to explore ways in which these difficulties could be addressed. I thought that establishing a Community of Inquiry as a means of professional development and as a vehicle to begin to address these problems with regards to IP reading, was a possibility. I would also try to research this establishment process.

I invited teachers to join and participate in a CoI into reading in the IP at the school. Mindful of ethical considerations, I explained that there would be no negative consequences if they chose not to join and that participants could also leave, without prejudice, at any stage of the study if they wished. This was especially important because I had a complex, multi-faceted role – that of authority figure, the facilitator of the CoI, and participant researcher. I had to be especially mindful and protective of the rights, interests, and well-being of the participants as I had authority over their positions and those who would be affected by the study. I was aware of the need to be particularly reflexive and sensitive about the possible effects that my role of authority could have on the teachers as participants.

An initial group was founded in July 2010. The English language teachers for Grade 4, 5 and 6 joined the group, as well as the other Grade 4 educator. Due to the onset of contextual upheavals at the school, the establishment of the CoI was interrupted in October 2010, and only resumed again in May 2011, this time with six educators and myself. Four new IP teachers voluntarily joined the CoI – the Art and Mathematics educators – as well as two new English educators. (The previous Grade 5 English educator had to leave the group due to ill health and the Grade 6 English educator emigrated.)

The establishment of the CoI was regarded as an instructional leadership intervention and a means of professional development of the staff (Hallinger, 2003; Hord, 1997; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). These concepts will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 2 of this report. The literature review investigated instructional leadership and other models of headship, as well as the methods of professional development available for educators – particularly those of Professional Learning Communities (DuFour, 2004), Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and Communities of Inquiry (Stoll, et al., 2006). An overview of literature concerned itself with the professional development of teachers, which provided a further backdrop to contextualise the concept of a Professional Learning Community of teachers' inquiring into their practice. An argument was developed from the literature that on-going professional development for teachers is essential to target improved student learning, but also to target four other reciprocal dynamics - the betterment of teachers' *being* and *doing*, their *community* (collegiality), and the principal's effective management of the school.

The literature review also investigated Intermediate Phase reading – the current South African IP reading context, the IP RNCS learning outcomes and assessment standards for reading (Appendix B), the process of 'learning to read', the skills involved in 'reading to learn', reading theories, methods and approaches, as well as reading difficulties and their remediation. This is outlined in Chapter 3.

1.3 Brief Introduction to the Research: Research Questions and Aims

Research design and methodology for the study focused on the concepts of qualitative research, participant researcher and Grounded Theory (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; LeCompte & Priessle, 1993; Henning, Gravett & Van Rensberg, 2002). The research design and methodology will be further explored in Chapter 4 of this study. The research was qualitative, inductive and descriptive in nature (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A participant researcher is one who immerses themselves into the context of a community and establishes a close familiarity with the participants and practices of that community (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). The aim of the research design was to understand the situation from the participants' perspectives and the meanings they ascribed to the problem (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The research design was applied in the sense that it aimed to begin producing knowledge to provide solutions to a problem in practice (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The research was also evaluative in the sense that it would assess the merits of establishing a CoI and if, and how, professionals began to change or benefit as a result of this establishment (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The proposed research design envisioned the use of action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), but the constraints of establishing the CoI meant that measuring the impact of the CoI on classroom practice was not possible. The research units of analysis were therefore limited to the recorded and transcribed units of exchange (episodes of utterances around a theme) of the participants as expressed in eleven of fifteen CoI meetings (Curry, 2008). Grounded

Theory data analysis methods were applied to the transcripts from the CoI meetings and were used to obtain a deeper understanding, write a thicker narrative descriptive analysis of what was discussed in the establishing meetings of the CoI, and attempt to answer the research questions and aims (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

At this point, it is important to state the salient aspects of the research: its main questions and aims.

1.3.1 Main Research Question

The main research question was as follows:

> *What are the affordances and constraints of the establishment of a Community of Inquiry for the professional development of teachers as an instructional leadership intervention by the principal?*

1.3.2 Sub-Questions of the Research

The sub-questions that emerge from the main research question are:

- What would be the affordances and constraints of the principal establishing, facilitating and researching such a community as an instructional leadership intervention?
- What would be to the benefit of the teachers (and their learners) of establishing such a community for professional development and reading instruction in the Intermediate Phase?
- What processes are entailed in establishing a Community of Inquiry of teachers?

1.3.3 Aims of the Research

The overall empirical aims of the research that emerged from these questions were to explore to what extent, and how, a Community of Inquiry enables professional development at a school:

- For the principal as an instructional leader, and the facilitator and researcher of such a community;
- For the teachers in terms of their professional development and improvement of reading instruction in the Intermediate Phase;
- For the building of a community of reading teachers at the school which could have implications for the improvement of the reading of the IP learners.

A theoretical aim of the study was to contribute to the growing body of research about establishing Communities of Inquiry in South African schools.

1.3.3.1 Guiding Considerations

Guiding considerations regarding the above aims were whether or not the CoI was a generative space for exploring/unearthing:

- What aspects of the CoI contribute to improving teachers' challenges and learners' difficulties with regard to reading in the Intermediate Phase;
- Teachers' opinions, experiences and challenges of working with the curriculum – particularly the IP reading curriculum;
- Means to begin to refine and narrow the gap between the intended and the actual implemented IP reading curriculum;
- Current IP reading instruction constructs and methods of the teachers;
- Where participant teachers can learn and improve on their IP reading instruction constructs and practices;
- Pre-service and prior experiential knowledge of teachers about reading and reading instruction in the IP;
- Teachers' sharing and learning about reading and especially reading resources;
- Where IP reading difficulties and remedial interventions can be explored;
- Where teachers can make suggestions about how to improve reading instruction practice and share effective changes in their practice.

1.4 The Structure of this Report

Part One of this report comprises this introduction and two chapters, which serve as the literature review and exploration of concepts for this study.
In Chapter 2, as stated above, a literature review of professional development in schools is presented.
Chapter 3 explores Intermediate Phase reading and related concepts.

Part Two of this report comprises five chapters, which detail the research component of this study.
Chapter 4 positions the research design and methodology of the study.
Chapter 5 explains the Grounded Theory process of data reduction and coding.
Chapter 6 presents a narrative description with analysis of the data.
Chapter 7 presents overall findings of the study.
Chapter 8 presents a brief conclusion for the study, touching on its implications, limitations, reflections and recommendations.

Part One: Literature Review

Chapter Two: Professional Development in Schools

'The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.' - Alvin Toffler

2.1. Introduction to Chapter 2

This chapter aims to provide a broad overview of professional development (hereafter referred to as PD) in schools. It aims to highlight the *why* (the purpose) and the *how* (the processes) of PD in schools. This overview will begin with a basic definition of what is meant by PD. The argument is developed that on-going PD is essential for the better learning of students, and occurs dynamically between four other reciprocating levels - the betterment of teachers' *being* and *doing*, their *community* (collegiality), and the principal's effective management of the school, particularly as an *instructional leader*. Teachers and principals develop specific knowledge related to the confluence of their content knowledge, general and specialised pedagogical knowledge, and their knowledge of the teaching context. PD aims to enhance and integrate this knowledge. Techniques, approaches, methods, and processes of PD are outlined in this chapter. Inductive and in-service PD of teachers occurs within the school context and is influenced by the principal's leadership (DuFour, 2004). For the purposes of this study, it was important for me – as the researcher and the principal seeking to find a developmental model of leadership – to be familiar with transformational/instructional/contingency leadership models (Hallinger, 2003; Mitchell & Castle, 2005; Fink & Resnick, 2001), and the other means of professional development of staff, particularly various models concerning the cultivating of a Professional Learning Community (PLC), Community of Practice (CoP), and a more focused group of these – the Community of Inquiry (CoI) (Hord, 1997). Hindrances of PD in schools are also explored in this chapter.

2.1.1 A Working Definition of 'Professional Development' in Schools

A working definition for PD is necessary at this point, which will become more detailed as the literature is discussed. An educator who is involved in PD undergoes a process of participation in a range of intentional learning activities, either self-guided or facilitated, of various learning intensities (from informal dialogues, to workshops, to formal degrees), aimed at improving: 1) what they bring to their teaching; 2) their teaching actions in the classroom; 3) their professional flourishing in an efficient, collegial learning environment both inside and outside of the school; 4) the developmental management of the school by the principal; and 5) the improvement in the learning of students. PD includes processes such as enhancing teacher confidence, reflection on learner progress, subject matter expertise, flexibility of pedagogical methods and approaches, understanding of the teaching context, career enhancement and advancement, exposure to new technologies, and continual critical, reflective practice (Schön, 1983).

2.2 Why Professional Development?

2.2.1 Professional Development Impacts on Five Reciprocal Interpersonal Dynamics

PD is ultimately about school improvement (Steiner, 2004; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). A school can be improved through meeting its material and administrative needs, but, more importantly, through positively advancing its relational dynamics. PD is about the learning and development of the *people* in the school context. As stated in the introduction, the argument of this review is that PD targets five reciprocal, interpersonal dynamics: improving the *teacher*, improving the *teaching*, improving the community – *collegiality*, and improving the effectiveness of the *instructional management* of the school by the principal. These then affect the overall fifth dynamic: by impacting on the students' *learning* (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Research points to the potency of these dynamics as being that of positively transforming what the teacher brings to the learning situation (such as their inherent qualities, philosophies and abilities) (Scheerens, et al., 2010). The dynamic which emerges from this – improving their teaching – is about elevating teachers' pedagogical activity. Following this is the dynamic of fostering and building a Professional Learning Community – improving collegiality. Overarching all of these is the dynamic that PD of teachers directs principals in confidently developing learning environments. I have represented this in Figure 2.1 below.

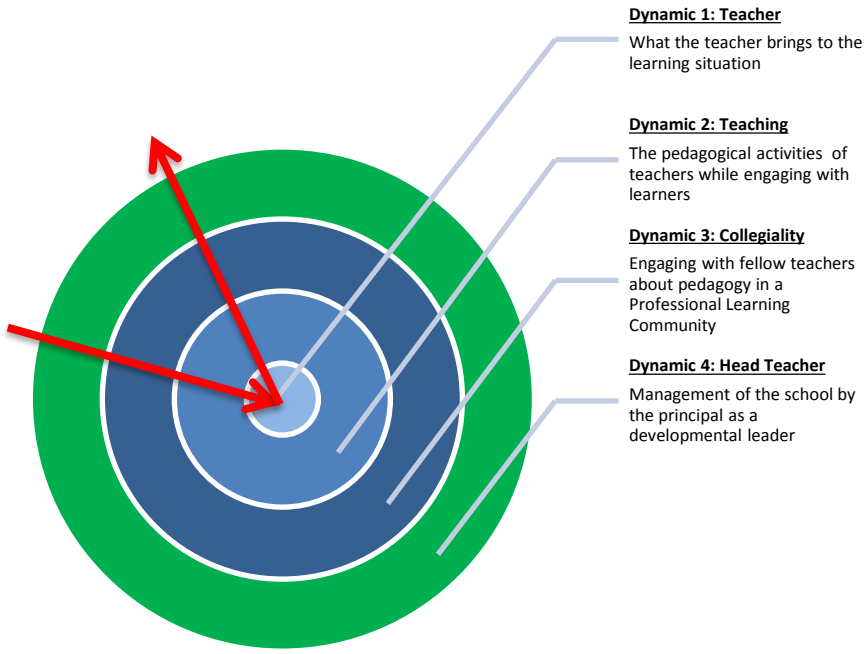


Figure 2.1: Reciprocal Dynamics in Professional Development

2.2.2 Dynamic 4: The Principal as Head Teacher/Lead Learner

It is an argument of this review that PD should begin at the level of the principal (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Hord, 1997; Fink & Resnick, 2001). Concerning this overarching layer, PD's effects for principals on managing a flourishing school cannot be underestimated. If principals want to improve their schools, the place to begin may not be to fulfil contextual or

administrative needs, such as acquiring more funds, purchasing more equipment, finding more efficient administrative techniques, or implementing a better discipline system, although these are all vital. School improvement seems cardinally dependent on the principal motivating and supporting PD to enhance learning at their school through the quality of teachers, their teaching, and collegiality (Scheerens, et al., 2010; DuFour, 2004; Stoll, et al., 2006; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Hord, 1997; Fink & Resnick, 2001). Thus, PD of teachers is paramount in the work of principals.

Principals who themselves develop professionally in their own roles, from being administrative leaders to becoming experts in developmental leadership (that is enthusiastic about their students' and teachers' learning and professional flourishing in the school), make the transformational leap in advancing their schools (Hallinger, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Fink & Resnick, 2001). Research has indicated that principals are key figures in demonstrating and developing relational trust in schools (Stoll, et al., 2006). This particular role of the principal in some countries is described as *Head Teacher* – a mentor of teachers, a 'lead learner' (DuFour, 2004) and expert in instructional practices and effective learning. Among the organisational conditions that influence learning of staff, the role of school leaders is a key factor, especially when it is inspired by the concept of transformational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Hallinger, 2003). Research findings on transformational leadership in educational settings identified three core dimensions: vision building, providing individual support and intellectual stimulation (Scheerens, et al., 2010; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Principals can have at least two facets to their leadership. One is an administrative leadership style and the other is an instructional management style:

> "An instructional management style is characterised by explicit management of the goals of curriculum of the school, actions to improve teachers' instruction, and direct supervision of teachers' instructional learning outcomes. An administrative leadership style focuses on managing, on accountability to stakeholders, and on the monitoring of bureaucratic procedures" (Scheerens, et al., 2010:80; Hallinger, 2003).

Stoll, et al., (2006) further elaborates on this distinction:

> "Professional development in OECD countries was accepted as being central to the way principals managed schools, in at least two respects; first, as instructional leaders, principals may be expected to coordinate professional progression of their staff; second, they need to manage the learning community as a whole, using development as part of school change" (Stoll, et al., 2006: 238).

Different leadership models for principals have been developed over the last twenty-five years. Initially, researchers investigating effective schools discovered incidentally that one of the key factors in successful schools was particularly related to their being led by effective Heads (Goodlad, 1984). One focus of this study highlights the 'instructional' leadership role of the principal: instructional leadership centres on the role of the Head in coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and

instruction in the school (Hallinger, 2003). There may be some cautions with the model of principals as instructional leaders, particularly related with them perhaps being too principal-centred, difficult to implement in larger schools, and dominated by top-down goals and directives, which may be removed from the reality of individuals in the school (Hallinger, 2003; DuFour, 2004). Parallel to this, the model of the principal as a 'transformational' leader has also developed over the last thirty years (Hallinger, 2003; Hord, 1997). This particular model envisions that the principal alone will not provide the leadership that creates the conditions for school improvement; that improvement stems from understanding the needs of individual staff members, and building from the bottom-up shared goals to reach a negotiated desired outcome (Hallinger, 2003). This model can also be termed 'distributive leadership' (Spillane, 2004). A downside of the transformational model is that sometimes teachers do not want to take responsibility for change or leadership in schools (Hallinger, 2003; Scheerens, et al., 2010) and rather want it to be the responsibility of authority figures.

Current research acknowledges that effective leadership of schools by principals may require both instructional and transformational leadership into an 'integrated leadership model' (Hallinger, 2003). A related model can be seen as the 'contingency leadership model', where the Head: creates a shared sense of purpose in the school; focuses on developing a climate of high expectations and a school culture focused on the improvement of teaching and learning; shapes the reward structure of the school to reflect the goals set for staff and students; organises and provides a wide range of activities aimed at intellectual stimulation and development for staff; and is a visible presence in the school, modelling the values that are being fostered therein (Hallinger, 2003). Hallinger goes on to emphasise the point that no singular style of leadership seems appropriate for all schools; that principals need to search for the styles and structures most suited to their contexts and to make a close study of research about effective schools. He advances that certain principal behaviours have different effects in different institutions. "Such findings confirm the contingency approach to organizational effectiveness found in current leadership theories" (Hallinger; 2003:17).

Hallinger (2003) also highlights another aspect of the contingency model that to study principal leadership without reference to its school context provides little meaning. In the contingency model of leadership, headship is conceptualised as a process of mutual influence where all participants in the school community influence each other. Leadership then becomes a developmental process. An element of the instructional and transformational leadership models then is the implementation of a collaborative process inherent to the inquiry approach to school improvement, where teachers work together in groups to set goals, implement plans for change and measure their impact (Stoll, et al., 2006). Forms of such groups are Professional Learning Communities (DuFour, 2004), Communities of

Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and Communities of Inquiry (Stoll, et al., 2006; Shields, 2003) (which will be explored in Section 2.2.5 below). Mitchell & Castle (2005), state:

> "… researchers … argue that the educational role of the principal is more appropriately configured as the facilitator of such processes as collaborative inquiry, problem solving and school development … what matters instead is their capacity to lead teachers in a process of critical inquiry, collective reflection, and problem solving" (Mitchell & Castle, 2005:413).

They go on to explain that this view of instructional leadership aligns with the argument that "the primary strategy for principals' instructional leadership is to promote professional dialogue among the instructional staff" (Mitchell & Castle, 2005:367). Mitchell & Castle (2005) explain that in a study by Blase and Blase (1999), teachers highlighted the ways in which principals could encourage such dialogue: " … making suggestions, giving feedback, modelling, using inquiry and soliciting advice and opinions from teachers, and giving praise" (Mitchell & Castle, 2005:367). They explain that Grimmett (1996) distinguished the functions that educational leaders should fulfil in collaborative inquiry: " … accepting tension and dealing with conflict, modelling collegiality and experimentation, focusing teacher talk on action, helping teachers to frame their inquiry, and connecting action with student learning" (Mitchell & Castle, 2005,412). They conclude that instructional leadership arises rather " … from a culture of professional inquiry among the teaching cadre" and " … does not depend on direct intervention by school principals" (Mitchell & Castle, 2005:412).

2.2.3 Dynamic 1: What the Teacher Brings to the Learning Situation

An important target of PD is to address the dynamic of what the teacher brings to the learning situation. The elements of this dynamic relate more to the psychological/personal aspects of teachers (Scheerens, et al., 2010; Clarke & Petersen, 1984). Personal aspects of teachers include things such as their identity, self-concept, physical well-being, emotional intelligence, temperament, expression of personality, preferences, strength of character, biographical history, home life, resources, habits, creativity, skills and talents, pedagogical philosophy, and management of information. Research indicates that personal aspects – such as psychology, cognition, motivation, individual capacity to learn and actively reconstruct and apply knowledge, career motivation, self-concept, self-efficacy, teacher autonomy and perceived control, and teachers' sense making – are strong factors in determining teacher effectiveness in class, but also in the teacher's own learning (Scheerens, et al., 2010). Some of these personal characteristics are relatively fixed, but can be improved upon through the teacher submitting themselves to a critically self-reflective process (Schön, 1983). Other personal aspects of the teacher are learnable competencies and need external support; competencies which may also be identified, enhanced and sustained by mentors and other experts through the process of PD. Thus, a task of PD, which targets at the level of the teacher, needs to be about helping teachers deepen their understanding of themselves *as teachers* (Dynamic 1) (Zembylas, 2003; Walkington, 2003; Henning, Gravett & Petersen, 2009).

2.2.4 Dynamic 2: Teaching – the Teacher's Pedagogical Activities with Learners

The activity of teaching – what teachers *do* in the classroom (Dynamic 2) – cannot be divided from the personal aspects that the teacher brings to the learning situation (Dynamic 1) (Clarke & Petersen, 1984; Brophy, 1984). Teaching success is related to the interplay of how the teacher perceives him or herself (Dynamic 1) and how competent he or she feels in their pedagogy (Dynamic 2) (Scheerens, et al., 2010). Scheerens, et al, (2010) states in the TALIS Report (*International Teaching and Learning Survey*) that research indicates that " … teachers' beliefs about their own level of competence and their sense of self-efficacy affect their practice and students' performance" (Scheerens, et al., 2010:28). Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy are more creative in their work, goal directed, and intensify their efforts when these are not met, and tend to persevere more tenaciously (Hord, 1997). "Teachers' [perception of their self-]efficacy therefore seems to be a rather strong predictor of how teachers shape their teaching practices in order to encourage student's motivation and performance" (Scheerens, et al., 2010:28). Even if students are challenging or apathetic, the teacher's sense of efficacy can influence the learning and motivation of students:

> "Teachers with a strong sense of efficacy tend to exhibit greater levels of planning and organisation, are more open to new ideas and more willing to experiment with new methods, work longer with students who are struggling, and exhibit greater enthusiasm for teaching " (Scheerens, et al., 2010:28).

The specific professional knowledge a teacher develops about their teaching activities is extensive (Shulman, 1987; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). The pedagogical experience – teaching and learning – is a dynamic, complex synergy of the construction of knowledge, the application of skills, all transmitted through language, interwoven with complex emotions, social relationships, socio-economic factors, past and present contexts, and future expectations. PD which aims to enhance the teacher's pedagogical knowledge, needs to be *transformational*; in other words, it needs to assist the teacher to move through experiences that help them integrate in a powerful way the three aspects of teaching; subject matter expertise, pedagogical knowledge, and insight into the teaching context. Said another way, these three seem to share their own *tri-directionality* (Shulman, 1987).

This may also be specifically related to teachers developing what Lee Shulman (1987) captures in his concept of *pedagogical content knowledge*. Pedagogical content knowledge is developed through theoretical exposure, but primarily through practical experience (experiential learning), particularly in a specific context, knowledge domain and/or with an age group of learners. The passage below provides a detailed description of the concept as an integration of the teacher's mastery of context sensitivity, subject matter (content) and pedagogical knowledge (instructional knowledge) as:

> "… 'subject matter knowledge for teaching'. Pedagogical content knowledge is about selection of topics, useful forms of presentation, analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations and

demonstrations. Pedagogical content knowledge also includes the understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult, including knowledge about conceptions and misconceptions that students bring to the subject. The assumption is that 'deep knowledge' about the content and structure of a subject matter area is the crucial precondition for teachers' reliance on pedagogical content knowledge in their teaching. Additional components sometimes included in the concept are knowledge of the appropriate use of teaching materials and media, as well as strategic knowledge on the application of teaching strategies" (Scheerens, et al., 2010:23).

Table 2.1 below outlines the activities of teaching (informally workshopped and tabled by two staff members and me). Teachers engage in activities before, during and after the teaching event. These activities range from the planning of lessons, management of learner behaviour, dialogical and communicative skills, management of knowledge, physicality, technical competence, and finally, reflectivity.

BEFORE TEACHING	**PLANNING**	Creation of Activities to Develop Learner Potential and Achievement	Clarity of Organising Lesson Progression and Allocation of Time for Lessons and Activities	Sourcing and Preparation of Resources, Notes, Worksheets	Preparation of Lesson Assessment, Rubrics			
DURING TEACHING	**MANAGEMENT OF LEARNER BEHAVIOUR**	Directing of Pupils	Management of Discipline, Noise, Interruptions	Management of Classroom Routines	Differentiating and Grouping Pupils, Supporting Special Needs Learners	Demanding Concentration	Eliciting Participation from all Learners	Observing
	COMMUNICATION SKILLS	Explaining	Paraphrasing	Clarity of Stating Goals and Personal Expectations	Writing of Notes, Ideas on Board/Screen			
	DIALOGICAL SKILLS	Management of Queries and Questions	Regulating and Refocusing Discussions	Articulation of Encouragement and Praise				
	MANAGEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE	Sequencing of Ideas	Highlighting and Explaining Relevance of Content	Differentiating between Main and Supporting Ideas in Knowledge	Summarising	Contextualising	Picking up, Highlighting, Correcting Misconceptions and Mistakes	Ability to Explain Patterns and Connections in Knowledge
	PHYSICALITY	Mobility in the Classroom	Proximity to Learners					
	TECHNICAL COMPETENCE	Use of Educational Equipment	Use of ICT Equipment					
AFTER TEACHING	**REFLECTIVITY**	Reflecting on Lesson Successes/Pitfalls	Marking and Grading Learners' Work	Counselling, Follow-Up and Pastoral Care for Learners in Need				

Table 2.1 Teaching Behaviours

Teachers who underwent the *International Teaching and Learning Survey* (TALIS) in 2006 indicated that their chief PD needs were related to instructional issues in Dynamic 2. These were instructional areas such as teaching special needs students, ICT teaching skills (information and computer technology), student discipline and behavioural problems, instructional practices, subject knowledge, student counselling, content and assessment standards, student assessment practices, teaching in a multi-cultural setting, classroom management, school management and administration (Scheerens, et al., 2010). Existing data shows that teachers do not feel fully prepared to deal with these challenges, which may also be true for the South African context (Henning, Gravett & Petersen, 2009). In addition, the characteristics of what needs to be improved at school affect teachers' motivation to participate in PD (Scheerens, et al., 2010). Stated differently, the instructional needs of teachers is often what dictates what they find most important for their PD.

The mentorship of novice teachers under an experienced teacher/principal also needs emphasis here (Barrett, et al. 2002; Talbert & McLaughlin, 2002). It is a loss that much of early teaching experience of novices may not be observed, witnessed, or shared by or with colleagues. There may be a culture in teaching where the novice teacher is often left to find his or her own way, or 'given a hard time' before they are considered to have a 'voice' among their colleagues (Talbert & McLaughlin, 2002; Barrett, et al., 2002). The rich professional knowledge that is being formed by the novice teacher may be neglected. PD processes are vital in that they may be able to assist the novice teacher articulate and reflect on their developing pedagogical content knowledge (Schön, 1983).

The first kind of knowledge developed by the novice teachers may be more obvious: valuable, basic, on-the-ground experiential learning – the professional learning experience that is accelerated and dominant in the first years of their teaching. Here novice teachers' prior core teaching concepts about pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge are tested, refined, and transformed by what they perceive and experience as positive or negative teaching practice (Barrett, et al., 2002). There is a broad spectrum of classroom organisational and teaching skills that must be mastered. Much of early experiential teacher learning is self-directed and steered by experimentation, trial and error, and personal reflections. The second kind of knowledge may be more subtle: learning how to work within the milieu of a school – its atmosphere, culture, and educational approach. Learning the school's interaction patterns and boundaries with regard to colleagues, superiors, parents and learners is also highly formative in the early years of teaching experience. Terms such as 'active learning', 'situated cognition', and 'cognitive apprenticeship' can be used to describe this learning (Scheerens, et al. 2010).

At the other extreme, in some cases, pedagogical knowledge may tend to calcify over time as teachers resist change to their practice. If this is allowed to continue, and teachers also become entrenched in their isolation, teachers may become defensive, protective, and territorial – attitudes which are ironically directly contrary to learning (Talbert & McLaughlin, 2002). These 'settled tendencies of practice' (Scheerens, et al., 2010) and indurated pedagogical knowledge can also be reenergised through PD. (The last sub-section in this chapter will continue to examine other hindrances to PD in Dynamic 2.)

2.2.5 Dynamic 3: Community and Collegiality - Pedagogical Activities with Fellow-Teachers

PD needs to have an impact on the ways in which teachers professionally engage with each other about pedagogy. It seems teachers do not learn in isolation, but also *from* colleagues and *with* colleagues (Hord, 1997; Scheerens, et al., 2010; Talbert & McLaughlin, 2002). PD also needs to be a process of fostering Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that enable all kinds of teacher learning (Hord, 1997; Talbert & McLaughlin, 2002). This trend of collaborative communities of teachers learning together (Hord, 1997), either within or across schools, seems to run parallel with research into the

changes in developmental headship of schools in the late 1980s and early 1990s (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Ciurysek, 2012).

A PLC is a cooperative group of individuals who usually have similar professions or roles. They have common interests and can have the goal to gain deep understanding and solve shared problems and questions through reflective dialogical processes and collaborative investigation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Hord, 1997; Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000). PLCs have particular hallmarks such as shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional dialogical inquiry, and collaborative activity, which enhance individual and group learning (Stoll, et al., 2006). This collaborative institutional learning in communities developed in the business world, particularly in the 1980s, predominantly through the work of Peter Senge, and the concept of a 'learning organisation' (Hord, 1997). Stoll, et al., (2006) defines a Professional Learning Community as " … a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an on-going, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way; … operating as a collective enterprise" (Stoll, et al., 2006:222,223). Hargreaves and Giles, cited in Stoll, et al., (2006) describe strong PLCs as " … a social process for turning information into knowledge" (Stoll, et al., 2006:242). In 1993, Astuto, cited in Hord (1997), proposed three types of learning communities: a professional community of teachers, learning communities of teachers and students within and outside the classroom; and the wider community of stakeholders involved in some way in the school. It seems that in-school teaching communities are the most effective for making particular and indispensable contributions (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Talbert and McLaughlin (2002) call these 'teacher learning communities', where " … teachers work together collaboratively to reflect on their practice, examine evidence about the relationship between practice and student outcomes, and make changes to teaching and learning for the particular students in their classes" (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006:4).

Hord (1997) focused on "… the professional community of learners, in which the teachers in a school and its administrators continuously seek and share learning, and act on their learning" (Hord, 1997:6). The aim of this community is to raise their professionalism for the students' benefit and "… thus, this arrangement may also be termed *communities of continuous inquiry and improvement*" (Hord, 1997:6). It could be seen that the Community of Inquiry is a further development of a 'Community of Practice' or 'Professional Learning Community' (Crook, 1994; Wenger, 1998; Lave, 1993; Stoll, et al., 2006) – in that a group of practitioners seeks to deliberately undergo a process to solve a problem: "Inquiry, in other words, helps principals and teachers become a community of learners" (Hord, 1997:18; Stoll, et al., 2006). Community of Inquiry conversations are purposeful – that is, they centre on exploring, debating, proposing, defending, challenging and resolving different questions, views and issues (Seigrist, 2001). Communities of Inquiry share collective responsibility for solving problems,

improving student results and teaching practice (Stoll, et. al, 2006). Shields (2003), defines a Community of Inquiry as follows, stating it is not a method but an organising principle: "Common to all communities of inquiry is a focus on a problematic situation … [it] is a catalyst that helps or causes the community to form and it provides a reason to undertake inquiry [investigation and action]. … The three key ideas: problematic situation, scientific attitude and participatory democracy, reinforce each other" (Shields, 2003:6). Those within the inquiry bring a scientific approach to the problem – an eagerness to solve it using working hypotheses that guide the collection and interpretation of data. The members of the community use the principles of a participatory democracy, respectful of "… values/ideals such as freedom, equality and efficiency as it considers goals and objectives" (Shields, 2003:6).

'Communities of Practice' is a concept well developed in the work of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, and the theory areas underpinning communities of inquiry are those of socio-cultural models (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Laurillard, 2002). However, the CoI concept was also developed by the classical pragmatists – with John Dewey, William James, Jane Addams and Charles Sanders Peirce being prominent advocates (Shields, 2003). Communities of Inquiry have deep roots in the work of Dewey:

> "Recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in what Dewey (1970) imagined years ago – a laboratory model for schools where teachers engage in collective inquiry in order to weigh their practices and innovations against empirical evidence and critical dialogue. Built on his broad conception of science and empirical data, Dewey's approach included systematic observations and analyses, conducted by teachers, of learning and teaching in classrooms. The process, he argued, ought to include focused professional conversations among colleagues, which in turn stimulate innovation and further inquiry. This spiralling process would culminate in on-going construction of knowledge from practice. Schaefer (1967) conjured a similar vision with his 'schools as centres of inquiry' where pedagogical knowledge, tailored to a particular context and population, would be continually developed by teachers. Building on contemporary management theory, Senge and his colleagues (2000) echo Dewey and Schaefer and paint vivid scenes of teachers intellectually invigorated by shared goals and collective inquiry. Increasingly, literature abounds recommending collegial communities of teachers who learn together for the sake of improving student learning (Calderwood, 2000; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; McDonald, 2003). These arguments offer a vision of teachers not only as users of pedagogical knowledge, but also as creators of it." (Wood, 2007:282).

Establishing CoIs in schools is not an easy process (Joyce, 2004) and takes time – sometimes years (Ciurysek, et al., 2012). Ciurysek, et al., (2012) in an overview of literature, highlights a number of components of CoIs: they require much groundwork and assessment of school readiness for their establishment; participants need to share vision, mission and goals; leadership and collaboration are vital; there should be an orientation to action; they are also characterised by collective inquiry for continuous improvement of the activities of the school; there is also a focus on learning, implementing and reflecting on best instructional practices; following this is the meaningful assessment of teaching and learning – by teachers and learners; and finally a celebration of excellence and success. Morrissey (2000) concludes that there are five essentials to the establishment of successful CoIs at schools: the

dynamic role of the principal, a culture of collaboration, a commitment from all staff, the presence of a catalyst, and the use of a critical friend/change facilitator. Louis and Kruse (1995) identified the following physical factors that support learning communities: " … time to meet and talk, small size of the school and physical proximity of the staff to one another, teaching roles that are interdependent, communication structures, school autonomy, and teacher empowerment" (Hord, 1997:20). McLaughlin & Talbert (2006) also state that it may be easier to establish CoIs in environments that are more affluent. Hord (1997), also states that for a CoI to be successfully established, certain factors need to be in place: a principal who shares leadership, a shared vision and commitment of all staff for students' learning; collective learning to address student needs; visitation, review, feedback and assistance of teachers' classroom behaviour by peers; and physical conditions and human capacities that foster such development. Some of those human capacities include not just how teachers behave cooperatively in the CoI with one another, but how open they are to peer assessments of their classroom practices and feedback about this in the CoI, which can be quite an intimidating process (Hord, 1997; Louis & Kruse, 1995). The teachers' private domain is moved into a public space (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). CoIs are therefore not just about what teachers share about their practice, but about peer observations of their classroom practices too (Hord, 1997; Louis & Kruse, 1995) and the examination of children's work and results. For this reason CoIs seem to be particularly suited to in-school interventions, as opposed to Communities of Practice and Professional Learning Communities which may be more suited to building communities of educators across schools.

Although Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) focus on online CoIs, their maintenance that there are three essential elements to a Community of Inquiry is helpful: social presence; cognitive presence; and a teaching presence. 'Social presence' ('the human capacities' in Hord, (1997)) refers to the ability of community members to be 'real people' in the group – free emotional expression and open communication which fosters essential group cohesion and mutually supportive relationships (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000; Stoll, et al., 2006; Hord, 1997; Ciurysek, et al., 2012). Participation should be voluntary and all sharing should be open, unforced, respected and personally fulfilling (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000; Stoll, et al., 2006, Hord, 1997). Participants should benefit and want to remain part of the community (Stoll et al., 2006; Seigrist, 2001; Hord, 1997). CoIs can decrease teachers' sense of isolation in their profession (Stoll et al., 2006; Kaplan, 2008). "[P]eople are engaged in a search for place … companionship … identity and belonging … In her extensive review of school improvement literature, Beck (1999) notes that community in schools is frequently equated with the intimacy of a family or a small village. The CoI model is thus called upon both to benefit collective work and shared responsibility, yet also, in powerful ways, to meet relationship needs" (Servage, 2008:64; Morrissey, 2000). However, beginning to work in collaborative groups after relative 'isolation' can be very stressful and conflicts can arise due to different approaches to teaching, diverse

values, and various personalities (Lujan & Day, 2010; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). CoIs (and principals) must therefore establish shared norms and outcomes which are especially important for overcoming the 'roadblock' of divergent views (Lujan & Day, 2010). "Teachers are unlikely to participate in classroom observation and feedback, mentoring partnerships, discussion about pedagogical issues, curriculum innovation, unless they feel safe" (Stoll, et al., 2006:239). CoIs must also therefore be about "… nourishing and taking care of people" (Hargreaves, 2004, cited in Stoll, et al., 2006).

The second element is 'cognitive presence', which refers to the shared construction of knowledge and meaning through collaboration (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000). It is hoped that teachers will positively gain pedagogical content knowledge from their participation in a Community of Inquiry – that they will gain knowledge *for* practice (best practices) and knowledge *of* practice (student outcomes) (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). As stated earlier, it seems teacher learning is enhanced in these communities (Hord, 1997). It is anticipated that their process of collaborative problem solving will lead to a higher sense of professional confidence and self/collaboratively-constructed pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987; Ciurysek, et al., 2012). There may also be a degree to which CoIs contribute to teachers developing a shared language of practice, vision and standard practice for student outcomes (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). When working in CoIs " … [t]here [is] evidence that teacher scholars [gain] confidence in their own professional judgement and be[come] more knowledgeable and informed in their discussion of classroom practices due to greater use of reading and systematic collection of evidence" (Stoll, et al., 2006:233). CoIs should be a place where participants can express their ideas, assumptions and beliefs and have these respectfully challenged, such as reflecting back the logic of arguments, or outlining the consequences of thinking (Seigrist, 2001; Stoll, et al., 2006). The CoI should be a safe place where members can self-regulate, self-correct and restructure their thinking, or even take risks in expressing alternative suggestions or disagreements (Seigrist, 2001; Stoll, et al., 2006). A Community of Inquiry enables individuals and institutions to reflect on problems before hurriedly attempting to solve them (Seigrist, 2001). School-based CoIs are also spaced between the macro-level of policy and the micro-level of the classroom and thus can also help schools to contextualise curriculum and other policies (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). They have the potential to allow individuals to explore different approaches to solving problems and to synthesise varying ideas (Seigrist, 2001; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000). The CoI also has the potential to be the 'germinating locus' for new ideas and innovations (Seigrist, 2001). It also provides a forum for reflecting on, and monitoring, the implementations of co-created plans and solutions (Seigrist, 2001; Stoll, et al., 2006). Communities of Inquiry have the advantage of creating an environment in which members construct their own meaning and knowledge. There are some indications that this 'epistemic authority' accelerates and improves learning (Seigrist, 2001). Having roots in socio-cultural theory, it

supports the ideas of Vygotsky (1978) (particularly those of the zone of proximal development) in that people are more capable of solving problems in a group than when they work alone (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000; Stoll, et. al, 2006). "Learning … involves active deconstruction of knowledge through reflection and analysis, and its reconstruction through action in a particular context" (Mitchell & Castle, Castle & Sackney, 2000, cited Stoll, et al., 2006:223).

The 'teaching presence' is essential to the success of a CoI (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000). Within a Community of Inquiry, the 'teaching presence' can be established by more than one member of the community, and indeed this 'distributed leadership' is an espoused outcome of the creation of a CoI (Stoll, et al., 2006). It is envisioned that the teachers will be open to perform this role in the CoI, but it is assumed that the principal, will also be responsible for this element. "It is difficult to see how a PLC could develop in a school without the active support of leadership at all levels. Leadership is therefore an important resource for PLCs, in terms of head teacher/principal commitment and shared leadership" (Stoll, et al., 2006:235; Spillane, 2004). As part of the activity of the community, it is envisioned that the teachers and principal will collaboratively design educational experiences and contribute valuable information to the group. The principal's role may be that of facilitator: enabling quieter members to move from the periphery to fuller participation, acknowledging contributions, guiding, focusing and summarising discussions; supporting and enhancing the social and cognitive presence in the CoI; guarding its academic integrity; helping the group reach consensus; presenting content; to question proactively; confirming understanding; providing feedback; reflecting on and diagnosing misconceptions; and, importantly, to present content and inject knowledge into the group from publications (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000; Hollins, et al., 2004). PD in Dynamic 3 should aim to foster a culture of co-accountability where a sense of belonging to that community is based on collegial respect for each other as competent teachers, rather than a more traditional line-of-authority accountability system, where teachers work in isolation and primarily to impress superiors (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). As stated before, the role of principals in supporting the development of Communities of Inquiry is of primary importance (Hord, 1997). The reason for this is that it changes the climate of the school from being authority-dominated to being practice-dominated where teachers share and build meaning. Furthermore, research has shown that teachers' participation in decision-making, which supports an organic form of school organisation, has positive effects on teachers' motivation and commitment to change (Scheerens, et al., 2010).

Hord (1997), citing the significant early contributors of literature about professional learning communities in schools – the work of Rozenholtz in 1989, Fullan in 1990, McLaughlin & Talbert in 1993, and Darling-Hammond in 1996, states that the concepts of teachers' improved self-efficacy, redesigning the workplace for teacher collaboration, and shared decision making, all contributed to

better schools focusing not just on education, but on ensuring that learning happened in the school. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) state that researchers call this a 'collective mindfulness' – an on-going watchfulness about what students are doing. Interestingly, although more research is still needed to confirm this (Scheerens, et al., 2010; Hord, 1997), there seems to be a direct correlation between student success and a) teachers who are well qualified, b) teachers who participate in reflective PD, and c) the *collective efficacy* of staff (Hord, 1997; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006), (i.e. " … the perceptions of teachers in a school is that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students" (Scheerens, et al., 2010:28). Some PD experiences are deliberately facilitated to enhance the *collective capacity* of staff. Collective capacity means the cumulative impact that a cooperative staff has on the overall learning atmosphere at a school. According to Stoll, et al., (2006), because of an increasingly complex world, " … (l)earning cannot be left to individuals. To be successful in a changing and increasingly complex world, it is suggested that whole school communities need to work and learn together to take charge of change, finding the best ways to enhance young people's learning" (Stoll, et al., 2006:222). In fact, this joint sense of responsibility for student learning, problems and results, can have positive effects on previously isolated teachers who may have felt overwhelmed by this – individual capacity becomes community capacity (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Hord (1997) cites evidence that teachers' work in Professional Learning Communities does lead to improvements for students: increase in results – particularly in the traditional learning areas, less absenteeism and dropout rates, and closer attainment in results by students from diverse backgrounds (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

2.3 The 'How' of PD: An Overview of Methods of PD

What is available to principals to support their own learning and that of their teachers and through this, their students? Once qualified and teaching, what is available to educators to help them develop their efficacy - their professional knowledge? What is available for working teachers to transform their subject mastery and contextual insight into ever-deepening pedagogical content knowledge?

Methods available for principals and teachers to encourage PD range on a continuum from informal, individual, self-directed methods to highly formalised, externally-directed approaches (Scheerens, et al., 2010.) Scheerens, et al., (2010) mentions courses and workshops; education conferences and seminars; qualification programmes; observation visits to other schools; professional development networks; individual and collaborative research; mentoring and peer observation; reading professional literature; informal dialogue to improve teaching. However, in my experience as principal and the teachers of this study, there are many others.

At the minimum, to foster PD, the principal (with the teachers) would have to maintain a well-organised and well-regulated environment, which ensures minimal interruption of teaching and learning (Hord, 1997). The principal's approachability and accessibility is important for professional development – staff need to feel that they can ask questions or approach the Head with their difficulties and suggestions (Louis & Kruse, 1995). Principals can create opportunities for informal dialogues between staff members, such as creating spaces for discussion and the presentation of ideas during meetings. Focused data analysis of students' results and well-being can also enhance teacher awareness and boost professional development to improve instruction and learning (Hord, 1997; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Ciurysek, et al., 2012). This would include the provision of basic to advanced teaching aids and resources. Principals can provide support to staff for parent liaison and use these encounters as learning opportunities. Teachers and principals can, at the very least, access and share academic and informal education publications, policies, websites for teaching resources and multimedia materials (Morrissey, 2000). At the school itself, the staff and principal can build up a school-based body of teaching resources with updated subscriptions to publications and access to the internet. Teachers can also be encouraged to develop personally a variety of educational materials for free-sharing, publication or sale. Teachers and principals can register themselves with professional organisations (such as educator councils or unions). Teachers, either individually or in groups, can be sent on workshops, in-service training, courses, seminars, and to conferences. Staff can be encouraged to keep reflective journals about their teaching and share insights and impressions (Schön, 1983). The principal can conduct informal and formal classroom observations, providing basic and detailed feedback to teachers of the impressions of their teaching and the learning of students (DuFour, 2004). At an advanced stage, this would involve drawing up, writing, setting out, or formalising individualised professional plans for staff and holding them accountable to these, as well as staff participation in formal performance appraisal systems (which may or may not be linked to salary increases and promotions). The principal can also find or create roles or positions where teachers can increase experience in a specialised area (such as teaching children with learning difficulties, inclusion, final year students, literacy or numeracy skills, counselling, gifted or talented individuals, foundation phase learning, second language teaching, technical specialisation, leading cultural and/or sporting activities). The principal can also find opportunities for staff promotion and create incentives for recognising and promoting stronger teachers to positions of management, mentoring, subject co-ordination, counselling, and the like. The principal can also implement more formal collegial support and mentoring systems. Principals interested in PD need to be especially aware of novice teachers and the accelerated professional learning that occurs in this phase, and implement specific reflective tools for novices to articulate their experiential learning about the practice (Barrett, et al., 2002). They also need to be particularly sensitive that, after teaching for a number of years, teachers may become set in their ways and resistant to change and must also be led through reflective practices in order to remain fresh in their approach to teaching. Staff can be

supported to take sabbaticals. Further to this is to provide information and financial support to teachers so that they can improve or advance their formal qualifications. Formal opportunities of dialogue between colleagues would include establishing PLCs, Communities of Inquiry for investigation and/ or action research, formalising collaborative learning processes, implementing peer observations with formal feedback, nominating teachers to take part in online professional learning discussion groups, ensuring staff participate in interschool cluster groups or subject teacher meetings, or even wider professional communities. As a means of providing direction for PD, the principal and staff can implement a self-generated or externally designed school improvement plan that makes staff directly accountable for its success. The principal can also ensure that the school participates in school improvement programmes – such as quality assurance processes of the school by outside organisations (in independent schools in South Africa these are conducted through either the Independent Quality Assurance Association or the government's Umalusi intervention). The Head can allow teachers individually, or collegially, to conduct formal research procedures into their practice, and even to conduct their own formal research of phenomena at the school themselves. Principals can support or organise exchange programmes for teachers, as well as observation visits to other schools. Another means of PD is to ensure that teachers participate in formal out-of-school cluster meetings, subject meetings, marking and assessment activities, curriculum development initiatives, or education policy development. If this has taken place, it is important to create opportunities for, or at least a space for feedback from, teacher and principal interaction with specialist associations or people of different professions. Principals can also find out about and provide opportunities for training for teachers in advanced educational technology and equipment. Another means is to make the school available for research or pilot projects by external organisations. Adopting a school-in-need and/or implementing a twinning programme with another school locally or internationally can also enhance PD.

2.4 Factors that hinder PD at Schools

Research shows (Scheerens, et al., 2010) that there are a number of factors that converge to hinder the professional development teachers and principals. These impact on the overall effectiveness of PD at schools. There are areas from which difficulties can stem that also relate to the dynamic reciprocal levels outlined above: contextual hindrances and limitations, limitations at the level of the teacher, at the level of their teaching, of community and collegiality, and at the level of the principal.

PD interventions can suffer from a dissonance between the content offered and the actual situational needs of staff. The PD content and process may be badly designed, irrelevant, unrelated to the school context as well as ineffective in building collegiality. This is a common problem with short courses offered either inside or outside of the school as teachers tend not to learn in short-courses unrelated to their practice – 'drive-by' or 'flavour-of-the-month' or 'microwave oven' PD (Scheerens, et al., 2010;

Curry, 2008; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Hord, 1997). The disappointment staff feel, after building up expectations and then attending PD events that are ineffective, can be high. This can lead to resistance to attend or organise other PD interventions. PD courses may also be too expensive. There can be excessive entrance or assessment requirements, which automatically disqualify staff attendance. Staff may not have the prerequisites to attend and there can be a lack of recognition of prior or experiential learning.

The negative emotions staff feel about PD is also a factor that needs to be taken into consideration. Staff can also be resistant to change and especially to changing their own practices. They may feel resistant about the introduction of new teaching materials, methods, ideas, and processes. Staff may also feel anxious at the possibility of change. They may feel tension and a lack of safety because performance during PD could be linked to the regulation of teacher behaviour, especially when PD is linked to promotion, salary increases, and/or the analysis of student and teacher performance.

Staff may be resistant to go on courses or unable to because of personal issues – home-life demands, personal crises, lack of personal time and no means to self-fund PD. A significant hindrance is teachers who have too much paperwork or administrative work to see to and/or excessive student assessment requirements and marking. Staff can also feel that PD offers no advancement in salary or promotion so that there seems little personal motivation to participate. In addition, in some countries, PD is not an obligation but rather a voluntary matter. Staff may therefore place it lower down on their list of priorities. The TALIS 2006 survey indicated that male staff were less prepared to attend PD initiatives, as well as teachers under thirty as well as those with lower qualifications (Scheerens, et al., 2010).

Poor collegiality can be a problem, especially when introducing PD on a corporate level. There can be a discrepancy in uniformity regarding qualifications, expertise and experience of staff – they may have trained at different institutions, have different levels of qualifications, have different levels of ability and skills. Some staff may have qualifications that are out-of-date. Teachers can also have a conflict of teaching philosophy and style, discipline approaches, methodologies and general maturity, personality and temperament, which can be a source of dispute when wanting to establish teamwork between them. They can also teach different disciplines and feel that their methodologies and subjects are unrelated to others. There may exist political alliances between teachers, which exclude others, or more domineering individuals who threaten others. Staff may also have had negative experiences with colleagues and be resistant to working with them. This may have led to a decline in mutual trust, respect, or support (Morrissey, 2000). At schools, there can be a high staff turnover – general staff dissatisfaction about their working conditions – lack of vision, communication, organisation, teacher empowerment, research or focus on student improvement (Morrissey, 2000). Teachers can also suffer

from an ‘isolation’ mentality which they prefer, not particularly caring about colleagues or their practices (Kaplan, 2008). There may be exclusion of novice or older staff. There may be no support for novice staff – no orientation into the school culture, or weak or no mentorship. There may also be difficulties in overcoming cultural, racial and gender difficulties between staff.

Principals themselves hinder PD. When Heads are too authoritarian and refuse to distribute leadership, or exhibit controlling behaviours towards staff, this can impede PD (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Hord, 1997; Spillane, 2004). Favouritism towards some staff by the Head is also problematic. Heads can also feel that PD is not important and staff can feel a lack of employer support. The principal can also have an uncoordinated approach to PD, be unaware of the methods available, be too administratively driven rather than interested in the development of learning at their school (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Hord, 1997; Morrissey, 2000). Furthermore, sometimes an “ … ‘omnicompetence’ has been internalized by principals and reinforced by others in the school, making it difficult for principals to admit to any need for professional development themselves or to recognize the dynamic potential of staff contributions to decision making” (Hord, 1997:14).

Overall contextual hindrances also impede PD. The most significant issue is the lack of time during school hours for PD to occur (Hord, 1997; Morrissey, 2000). Staff may have conflicting work schedules, timetables, or activities and duties, so that coordinating collegial PD may be very difficult. Schools may suffer from severe shortages of funds and resources, so development is difficult; they may not have the money, access to information or technology, or expertise that can foster PD. There may not be a place where teachers can meet and engage in PD without interruption. There also can exist issues in schools that shift focus from PD to mere survival – management changes, change in government policy and curriculum, severely disruptive discipline issues of students and teachers, strikes, and local and national crises/disasters. Sometimes difficulties in the school’s history can lead to it developing a poor reputation and, in these cases, staff morale and motivation can decline. Sheer school size is also a contributing factor to difficulties in PD – especially collegiality. Classes may be very large and this places greater demands on staff. In large schools, it is difficult to coordinate interaction and staff can remain isolated or limited to departmental interaction. The school itself may also present difficulties in terms of the mix of pupils, its diversity and culture, and location. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) state that Communities of Practice are particularly difficult to establish and maintain, and state that lack of time, trust and talent are major contributors to this. These kinds of communities can also not be “ … commanded into existence” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006:11) and take time and intentional dedicated effort to establish (Morrissey, 2000; Ciurysek, et al. 2012).

To elaborate on the 'stale teacher' issues, it is possible for school leaders to struggle with staff who were qualified years before and have done little to enhance their PD, who resist changes in management styles and educational approaches. At times, such staff members find themselves in conflict with colleagues because of the rigidity of their attitudes. They may be patronising of novices or colleagues who have a 'different' or more 'flexible' approach. Amongst other things, they may tend to prefer to work in isolation and resist peers or senior managers' observations of lessons, or sharing the materials they have generated, the moderation of their papers, requests to change their teaching materials, or the suggestions that they attend courses or improve their qualifications (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Such teachers open themselves to criticism for outdated teaching practices and perhaps even poor results. Teachers who do not reflect on their practice may be of the opinion that failure is the learner's fault, or bad parenting, or inferior previous teachers, and has nothing to do with their teaching. Some teachers prefer their favoured 'chalk-and-talk' approach, the straight desks, the lists of constant class test marks, or their 'shut-up-and-learn' approach.

The fact that children have been taught by, or teachers have worked with these 'territorial fossils' with 'calcified' ideas, is a sad anathema in the teaching profession. Yet, such teachers existed and, in places, still do. Why do such teachers exist? They are the products of a culture of isolation that has tended to prevail in the teaching profession, where teachers are seen as the vessels of knowledge, above contradiction, and knowledge is a fixed commodity that must be memorised by learners (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Kaplan, 2008). Such schools tend to have office-bound administrative heads, classroom-bound teachers, mostly working in isolation from their colleagues, lonely teaching novices pushing ahead alone, taking a so-called 'shot-in-the-dark' approach – using trial by error and hoping for the best. The culture of deliberate process-driven reflective practice and collegial monitoring and assessment is a relatively new phenomenon in education – and even in other professions. With increasing client awareness of good practice in the age of information, they are more able to criticise bad practice, which leads to a certain standard being demanded from professionals. By default, teachers have had to become more aware of what is good practice in their profession. There is also, in education, towards the end of the twentieth century, a marked increase in research and understanding that knowledge is socially constructed by the learner (Vygotsky, 1978), and this demands an on-going reflective practice of teachers. Changing practice can cause anxiety. By nature, teachers want to be right, and the idea of admitting that their practices or approaches may be anything less, may be unnerving. Teachers who have been teaching for many years may find difficulties in the process of having to articulate their tacit knowledge and embedded practices of their profession, particularly without mentorship or a 'safe space' in which to do so. They may feel that their preferred style is the right approach. They may fail to understand that on-going PD is directly linked to learner performance and school improvement. Teachers themselves have not been exposed to the research and advantages of reflective practice

because of a lack of in-service training. School leaders may have traditionally also been result-driven rather than process-driven, not deliberately conscious in supporting the PD of their teachers, and are rather administrative experts than transformational leaders.

Enthusiastic teachers may face many obstacles in their desire to progress. In European research (Scheerens, et al., 2010), teachers list as hindrances to their progress: family demands, lack of funds (both personal and within the school), lack of time due to excessive assessment and paperwork to complete, inflexible timetables, uncooperative colleagues or apathetic school leaders, a lack of space to share newly acquired professional awareness, and irrelevant courses and workshops.

Pre-service teacher training is also limited by nature: realistically and practically, in a few years, it introduces prospective teachers to theories and trends in education and academic research regarding pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge. It provides them opportunities to deepen their subject matter knowledge. It gives novice teachers a brief practical taste of teaching experience. It is a sad but true reality however, that once qualified, research indicates that few novice teachers receive the induction training (Scheerens, et al., 2010; Barrett, 2002) – the mentorship and support they require – to continue enriching their pedagogical knowledge. Over time, habits of teaching practice may become entrenched and even 'automatic'. What novice teachers find unfamiliar, experienced teachers may find second-hand, and their awareness of such practices are no longer reflected upon as they have become commonplace and routine. Novices 'talk themselves' through processes until they become automatic, but the reflective practice about such routines does not always happen. Novice teachers may observe experienced teachers' practices and mimic those practices without reflecting whether these are appropriate to their own teaching situations. Novice teachers may not question standard practices, or even be allowed to, and may feel that in order to achieve social and professional acceptance, they need to mimic their colleagues – a form of 'professional peer pressure'.

2.5 Conclusion to Chapter 2

To conclude, this section has attempted to outline the PD of teachers and principals in order to give insight into the establishment of a Community of Inquiry at the school as a means of professional development initiated by myself as principal as a 'lead learner' and instructional leader at the school. It has looked at the targets of PD and why and how this needs to occur at those levels – the level of the teacher, teaching, community and collegial interaction, and the principal – so that this will have the ultimate effect on the performance of learners. It outlined different leadership models of principals that have developed over the past twenty-five years, as well as the development in using Professional Learning Communities and Communities of Inquiry to enhance professional development of staff. Methods of PD were discussed. Hindrances to PD were also outlined. It is hoped that this will provide

a backdrop and insight into the study. The main focus of the Community of Inquiry at the school was related to targeting Intermediate Phase reading problems and it is to this that Chapter 3 now turns.

Chapter Three: Reading in the Intermediate Phase

> *"Everyone involved in the education of the young – parents, teachers, scholars, policy makers – needs to ensure that each component of the reading process is sensibly, carefully, explicitly prepared for or taught from birth until full adulthood. … We must teach our children to be 'bitextual', or 'multitextual', able to read and analyse texts flexibly in different ways, with more deliberate instruction at every stage of development on the inferential, demanding aspects of any text. Teaching children to uncover the invisible world that resides in written words needs to be both explicit and part of a dialogue between learner and teacher, if we are to promote the processes that lead to fully formed expert reading and citizenry" (Proust and the Squid, Wolf, 2007:225- 226).*

3.1 Introduction to Chapter 3

This section aims to give an overview of Intermediate Phase reading in the national and the immediate context of the school of this study. It then outlines reading in the Intermediate Phase as it is intended in the South African curriculum (C2005), as well as in relation to other international curricula for children of roughly the same age. The chapter goes on to expound the intended outcomes – the ideal Grade 6 reader – as envisioned by this curriculum. It examines what is needed to implement the curriculum along those lines: what is meant by children who have successfully mastered the basics of learning to read; what an Intermediate Phase teacher will have to know and understand about reading theory, methods, approaches, practices and resources to take the child on to the next phase of 'reading to learn'; and the contextual provisions that support a high degree of literacy. Further to this, an examination of hindrances – or what can be called gaps in the implementation of the reading curriculum – of good reading instruction in the Intermediate Phase, will be outlined.

3.2 Intermediate Phase Reading in the National and School Context

3.2.1 The South African Context

International and national assessments of reading literacy levels of Intermediate Phase learners (Grade 4-6) in South Africa over the past twelve years have publicized results indicating their poor performance. At the outset of this decade, UNESCO's Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) Project of 1999 showed that South Africa's Grade 4 readers were 7th in a group of twelve Southern African countries – some of those less developed than South Africa. The Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) of 14 countries assessed learners in Grade 6 at various times between 2000 and 2010. South Africa was ranked 8th in reading in the 2007 SACMEQ III assessment. The Progress in the International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) results (Mullis, et al., 2007) released in November 2007, indicated that South African Grade 4 readers were ranked the lowest in 45 international education systems, despite the fact that this cohort was the oldest average age of children tested (11.9 years). In 2011, South Africa participated, with Botswana and Columbia, in the first prePIRLS assessment. The report of this study is due in September 2012, but our readers' performance may continue to be weak.

South African government evaluations of reading literacy in this decade have also been concerning. In 2001, 2004 and 2007, the Department of Education tested over 50 000 Grade 3 and 6 learners in a national systemic evaluation. Published results indicated that 63% of Grade 6 learners were not yet able to read at their expected age level. Grade 6s achieved an average result of 37% for language (Grade 6 Intermediate Phase Systemic Evaluation Report, December 2005; *National Reading Strategy*, 2008). In 2009, the South African government announced targets for a 60% attainment rate in literacy by 2014.

In 2011, the South African ANA (Annual National Assessments) were again conducted, but this time on a far wider scale than earlier in the decade. It is the largest ever government initiative into education in South Africa of its kind. Six million learners took part, and a new dimension was introduced where their teachers were given guidance on how to assess the tests. These marked tests were then submitted so that both the children's performance and the teachers' assessment skills could be reviewed. The structure of the tests was such that one-fifth of the test was easy, three fifths of moderate difficulty, and the remaining fifth of considerable difficulty to challenge top learners. The results again indicated that reading levels for basic education are far below what they should be and do not demonstrate the upward turn towards the desired 60% literacy targets for 2014. In fact, disconcertingly, the national literacy rate for Grade 6s has dropped from 37% to 30%. Only 3% of our *learners* achieved an *outstanding* ranking (above 75%), 12% *achieved* (between 50 and 75%), only 15% *partially achieved* (between 35 and 50%). This means, in effect, that 70% of our Grade 6 learners achieved below 35% for their tests, with the majority of these being below 20%. (Figure 3.1 ANA (2011:23), included as Appendix A at the end of this report, shows the distribution of Grade 6 language scores as per the South African provinces.)

Despite there being considerable investment and inputs into national education, as well as 40% of Foundation Phase and 25% of Intermediate Phase time dedicated to language instruction (OCED, 2008), these results indicate a national crisis in literacy levels. "These learner achievements, or rather, the lack thereof, indicate that, while a very large number of children have access to basic education in South Africa, a significant proportion of these learners do not achieve at a level sufficient to acquire basic skills necessary for the next phase of schooling" (OCED; 2008:55). As the *National Reading Strategy* states: "If *reading* competence is poor, then learners' *writing* competence will be poor, and their *comprehension* (understanding) levels will equally be poor" (*National Reading Strategy*, 2008:8). A lack of foundation skills will have a devastating impact on learner attainment levels in higher grades.

There may be a number of reasons as to why national reading levels are low in the Intermediate Phase. The first may be that children come from homes where parents may not be readers themselves and may not spend time on reading activities – either alone or with their children. Such cases may be partially due to the pressures of low socio-economic conditions of living. Many parents are also English second

language speakers, who may have poor levels of reading and literacy themselves, and who were educated in the inadequate system of apartheid (Bertram, cited in Fleisch, 2007; Harley & Wedekind, 2004).

These problems also may apply to many South African teachers. South Africa has experienced a significant decline in educators specifically trained for the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, and teachers may lack the specialised pedagogic knowledge necessary for these phases (OECD, 2008). Teachers who teach poorer school children can tend to have *lower* expectations of what learners can achieve (Fleisch, 2007). This is sometimes linked to teachers seeing learners requiring a high degree of communicative skills (as required by C2005) and casting them in a deficit mould because their communication skills are not yet developed (Harley & Wedekind, 2004). "We also know that these teachers tend to interpret the official curriculum to support their lower expectations. … the typical learner is unlikely to be exposed to a curriculum linked to high expectations" (Fleisch, 2007). In other cases, such as in the Western Cape's 2003 Comprehensive Grade Six Evaluation, it was found that teachers over-rated their students at either a proficient or advanced level of achievement while their *actual* scores were much lower. This can be linked to a misinterpretation of the content demands of the curriculum (Vinjevold, in Fleisch, 2007) and poor understanding of assessment standards of the curriculum. It can also be linked to the fact that when teachers' own subject knowledge is incomplete, teaching to the weakest learners may be a way of coping (Fleisch, 2007). Teachers do not seem to set work that is sufficiently cognitively demanding and they may teach to the slowest or weakest children in their class, misunderstanding 'learner-centeredness' to mean this (Fleisch, 2007; Harley & Wedekind, 2004). The work of Kühne (cited in Fleisch, 2007) also shows that teachers tend to have limited understanding of the developmental stages and needs of children and limited knowledge of pedagogical methodology (i.e. how children actually learn concepts), especially the more complex developmental stages. Kühne found that they are not able to suggest alternative methods of teaching beyond that of moving from the concrete to the abstract. Teachers also seem to the lack reflective skills to understand their own practice, with disparities between what teachers actually *did* in terms of classroom practices and what they *claimed* to know, and what they *said* they did in their classrooms (Reeves & Muller, 2005; Harley & Wedekind, 2004, also citing Taylor & Vinjevold). There is also a poor quality of reading instruction in the Foundation Phase, which further affects children's academic progress in the Intermediate Phase. Teachers are inadequately trained to teach reading and may assume that reading will occur automatically once they have facilitated children's exposure to text (*National Reading Strategy*, 2008). It seems that once children have been taught to read in the Foundation Phase, sustained reading instruction in the Intermediate Phase in more sophisticated reading practices is insufficiently implemented.

Furthermore, in the majority of primary schools in the country there are few resources available to teach reading, such as basal readers, books and textbooks, as well as poor and crowded environments. Only 7% of schools have adequate libraries (OCED, 2008). Almost half of Grade 6s indicated that they did not have a library at school (or even access to one near their home) (*National Reading Strategy*, 2008).

There have been concerns expressed that the Intermediate Phase curriculum is overloaded and does not provide a smooth transition from the Foundation Phase (OCED, 2008). In the Foundation Phase, learners have three learning areas; in the Intermediate Phase they jump to nine sophisticated learning areas with a challenging array of assessment standards. (On Tuesday 6 July 2011, the Education Department officially announced, partly as an acknowledgement of this, that the number of Intermediate Phase learning areas would be reduced to six in the new 2013 Curriculum and Policy Assessment Statements – CAPS.)

Government responses to this crisis emerged with a national reading initiative under the Molteno Project entitled 'Breakthrough to Literacy', as well as the Early Grade Reading Assessment Programme (EGRA) (OCED, 2008). Literacy and numeracy strategies were already in place in Gauteng province with the assistance of the READ Educational Trust (*National Reading Strategy*, 2008). On 18 March 2008, the Minister of Education officially launched the three year '*Foundations for Learning Campaign*' and the '*National Reading Strategy*' with a national protocol for reading assessment. Its focal point is Grade R to 3, but calls for consolidation in the Intermediate Phase. This stated that thirty minutes per day of reading time should be deliberately added to the Grade R to 6s timetable requirements. Learner reading assessment is expected to happen on a regular basis using government documents. Toolkits for early reading assessment for Grade R and 1 were distributed to schools. A drive to improve libraries and children's access to books formed part of the Strategy. Teacher education was one of the pillars of the campaign, including the provision of in-service training in reading instruction. School principals were expected to spearhead this campaign and provide motivation and inspiration in their schools for teachers and learners to achieve better results (*National Reading Strategy*, 2008). Teachers were expected to work together within their schools and with teachers from other schools in collaborative peer groups (*National Reading Strategy*, 2008).

The focus of the National Reading Strategy has been on early reading instruction in the Foundation Phase – that is on *teaching children to read*. It is a concern of this study that there has seemed to be little available to assist teachers in the Intermediate Phase to support sustained reading practices of their learners – that is on *reading to learn* (Hart, 2007). Although it is acknowledged that early reading is an obvious and urgent national priority, it is a concern of this study that that the Intermediate Phase cannot afford to be reduced to a place where early reading skills are merely reinforced and difficulties

remediated. As will be outlined in Section 3.3, the Intermediate Phase has its own sophisticated, cross-curricular high levels of expected reading skills, which demand specialised teaching, with significant implications for success in the future grades of a child's life.

In 2011, the South African Department of Education released the new 2013 CAPS statement for Grades R to 12. The Intermediate Phase First and Second Languages document is now significantly far more comprehensive and clearer, and this bodes well for the guidance of teaching reading in the next phase of South Africa's educational development. This study, however, will document how difficult it has been for teachers to foster and teach reading for the past decade and the future is still uncertain as to whether teachers will be able to implement the new CAPS for reading as it is intended. It may take years to recover and improve on national reading levels before South Africa can compete fairly with other developing countries.

3.2.2 The Immediate Context of this Study

The Community of Inquiry for this study focused on Intermediate Phase reading. Although the school is independent, it has adhered to the requirements of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (C2005) since 1998. The school is in a relatively affluent position. The average classroom/pupil/teacher ratio is 1:18 (according to SACMEQ III, the national urban average is 1:33). There are two classes per grade. The medium of instruction is English. Three teachers give direct English language instruction (from English as a Home Language perspective) – one for Grade Four, Five and Six respectively, while seven others give instruction in the other learning areas. The timetable made provision for up to six hours exposure per week to English instruction, which included up to 60 minutes for visiting the library. All pupils have access to a computer and the internet at school (although the internet connection is unreliable at times). Every learner purchases their own textbooks, which includes a comprehensive age-appropriate English textbook as well as setwork literature. There are also supplementary fiction and non-fiction books available in the classroom and library. Children in this phase have daily 'reading cards' – daily report cards which are signed by their parents, and are set daily reading homework (between 5 and 10 pages) – which is especially enforced in Grade 4.

Despite these conditions, which compare far more favourably than the majority of schools in South Africa, the general reading achievements and effectiveness of Intermediate Phase learners in the school seems to remain inadequate according to feedback from the teachers in all learning areas. The question as to why this is so needs to be answered.

In this school, the subject of English is taught in line with the home language guidelines in the National Curriculum Statement. However, records in this school show that of the approximately 100 children in

this Phase, almost 60% have the strong presence of another language in their home – either an African language, or Afrikaans, Portuguese, French, Italian, German, Polish, Bulgarian, Spanish, or Mandarin, and are children of second language English speakers themselves. Almost 10% of children cannot speak the African language of their parents or heritage and only know how to speak English, as English may be seen by parents as the language for social and economic mobility (OCED, 2008). The environment is therefore highly multi-lingual and needs to take into account the second language needs of children.

As stated in the introduction, the teachers and I, as principal, involved in the Intermediate Phase in the school, noted in staff meetings prior to the establishment of the CoI, from their routine observations, classroom assessment and formal assessments, that the children experienced a range of difficulties in their basic reading skills. The teachers themselves also all studied at different higher institutions across South Africa at different times. As such, they are products of their specific learning contexts and speak the language learning theories of their time (Davis, 2004). They reported in these staff meetings that they felt they had received little formal training in how to teach children the reading skills required by the Intermediate Phase curriculum, which will now be examined in detail.

3.3 C2005 Curricular Expectations – The Ideal Grade Six Reader

There is always a gap between the proposed and implemented in any curriculum (Stenhouse, 1983). Curriculum statements in themselves need to be idealistic because they are providing a projection – an ideal – that educators should aim for. When looking at the Intermediate Phase Curriculum that teachers have worked with over the past decade or so, it seems simply stated, but it is ambitious. However, one cannot be too harsh about what the curriculum envisages as, when it is seen in its context – against the backdrop of international trends in reading for children – it is expressing the aspirations of where we ideate 'new South African' children to be by the end of their Grade 6 year. With the mammoth shift in the many systems emerging from apartheid in the new South Africa, there was much idealism; aspirations to undo the damage of the past and to make good the impoverishing effects of apartheid – especially with regard to education (Chisholm, et al., 2000; Chisholm, 2005a & b; Jansen, 1999; Reeves & Muller, 2005; Harley & Wedekind, 2004). Although we are on the brink of the introduction of another more detailed curriculum (the CAPS for 2013), teachers have worked over the past decade with C2005 and its forerunners, and that path has been difficult: the gap between the intended and the actual curriculum is considerable (Fleisch, 2007; Reeves & Muller, 2005; Harley & Wedekind, 2004; Hoadley, 2007) and perhaps, at the juncture of literacy in the Intermediate Phase, it is at its widest.

The Intermediate Phase curriculum (C2005) has a cross-curricular emphasis, as it is axiomatic that reading is a skill that will be practised across a wide range of learning areas. That being said, a section

of the curriculum which deals with language instruction also covers a specific learning outcome called Reading and Viewing (LO3) as one of the six components of this learning area (included as Appendix B at the end of this report). In the majority of schools in South Africa, the English language is used as the medium of instruction, despite there being a large majority of learners for whom English is their second language. In this focused language area of the curriculum, we find underlying assumptions about reading, approaches to reading teaching, and an understanding of the importance of reading across the curriculum. It is in this part of the curriculum that we find guidelines as to what is expected of a learner with regard to their engagement with texts, whatever those texts may be. Although the IP reading outcomes and assessment standards (in Appendix B) appear to be stated in simple terms, the actual implications of these statements are highly complex.

A comparative analysis of government curricula from the United Kingdom, Australia, and the USA with regards to 'middle-school' reading (Year/Grade 5/6, Key Stage 2) show that they pose similar expectations to ours. The intended South African curriculum has internationally comparable standards, aims to be globally competitive, and is sensitive to the rapidly changing world of communication of the 21st century and the manner in which learners are prepared for this world (preface to the RNCS, 2005).

According to our own and international curricula, what would the average twelve-year-old be required to demonstrate when teachers assess their ability to read our multi-textual world? This child is about to embark on the latter phase of their education. In South Africa, they are moving into what is called the Senior Phase – the General Education and Training and the Further Education and Training Phases of their secondary schooling. These later phases of education require an advanced level of reading capability in order for students to cope with further educational demands.

Firstly, C2005 Learning Outcome 3 for Reading speaks about a Grade 6 child who can:

- *read*
  (that is process words, symbols or actions to derive and/or construct meaning; which includes interpreting, critically analysing and reflecting upon the meaning of a wide range of written and visual, print and non-print texts);
- *a wide variety of texts*
  (these are the means of communication; the forms and conventions that have developed to help us communicate effectively with a variety of audiences for a range of purposes).

To elaborate: the Grade 6 child needs to begin to show reading competencies related to aspects which will be outlined below, which presents an integrated overview of the requirements of the South African, UK, Australian and USA (New York State) government curricula.

3.3.1 Operating in a Mutely-Textual World

This point acknowledges that we live in a ***multi-textual world*** and those texts range from printed to audio-visual media (or multi-modal texts). The content of those texts also ranges across genres, from pure fiction to technical descriptions of reality that may even affect health and safety, such as package inserts in medicine or instructions. In other words, a child's reading skills have to apply in a multitude of ways and they must be able, from the outset, to *operate* in a multi-textual realm. Said differently, this means the child must be able to understand and compare the purposes and functions of various texts; to identity the distinguishing features, differences and similarities between texts in order to have insight into which genre each text falls.

3.3.2 Independent Reading (Receptive Reading)

In the curriculum, there is also the idea that the child is able to operate in this multi-textual realm ***relatively independently*** throughout the Intermediate Phase and from there onwards. The actual importance of this concept cannot be underestimated because it projects an important perception about the expected Grade 6 reader. This independent reading expectation hinges largely on the psychological processes of reading (Wolf, 2007; Gibson & Levin, 1975; Adams, 1994; Chall, 1967; Ehrich, 2006). Independent reading means that the child has mastered the basic components of language, a significant working vocabulary, a silent reading voice (sub-vocalisation), the discipline of concentration, abstract thought, techniques to look up unfamiliar words, the ability to guess at meaning through inferential methods and reading accuracy, fluency and speed (according to Abadzi (2006) this is around 150 words per minute for Grade 6 learners). It refers to the child's ability to access the texts and information they are looking for, e.g. how to use a library or how to search the internet. It also speaks to the motivation of the child to select texts of their own preference and to read for itself, and to the affective aspect that is intrinsic to reading. It speaks of the child's desire to self-motivate their reading for either enjoyment or finding information. It also implies that the child will be able to decide on the significance of information and form his or her own opinion about the text.

3.3.3 Comprehension Strategies for Intra-Personal Understanding (Receptive Reading)

The ideal Grade 6 reader will have mastered a number of text processing strategies/reading strategies to transform written text into ***intra-personal understanding***. In other words, this means the mastery of a variety of ***comprehension strategies***. This refers to strategies such as skimming for general ideas, scanning for specific details, and understanding the scaffolding of texts through their structure (explained further below). It means the comprehension of the sequencing of information – either chronological, logical, or hierarchal. It also refers to the child's ability to predict meaning, or to use contextual clues to find hidden or implied meaning.

3.3.4 Products of Reading: Inter-Personal Responses to Reading (Expressive Reading)

The competent Grade 6 reader will have mastered a number of reading strategies to transform printed text into ***shared understanding; i.e. to create products from their reading***. This involves reading aloud for others with expression, as well as being able to converse with others about what they have read through informal conversation, formal discussions, developing and supporting oral arguments, debates and in the delivery of formal speeches. It also involves producing written responses to texts. The latter is one of the predominant means by which the child's abilities will be tested for the rest of their school career: answering short and long questions, producing paragraphs and essays, paraphrasing, summarising, explaining, describing, comparing and synthesising information, and writing reviews (Yoder, 1973). It may also include writing an affective response to texts. A shared understanding of texts also means the child should be able to select evidence from a text to substantiate their ideas; to justify in writing their own views, and supporting them with evidence from the text. This also means the ability to acknowledge sources – to be able to reference where their concepts come from and to give credit to authors' ideas.

3.3.5 Identifying the Author's 'Voice': The Purposes of Texts

Another aspect of reading that Grade 6 readers need to have been exposed to is that texts can be used for different purposes, read from different perspectives and on different levels. It is that gradual move from literal interpretations of text to ***understanding that texts have deeper meaning***, embedded meaning, and contextual meaning. Children need to be enlightened on ***how to hear the 'voice' of the author***. They need to make connections between their own experiences and those of characters in texts that come from different historical, social and historical contexts. The child's ability to empathise and appreciate different points of view, to embrace multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary perspectives, must be practiced. Texts also have moral and ethical meaning that children need to be able to appreciate and articulate, weigh and apply to their lives. The identification of meaning in idioms, proverbs and other expressions is part of this appreciation. There are emotive components related to the author's intention. Sometimes there is also unintentional meaning in texts. The child needs to start developing an awareness of how their emotions are being appealed to when reading a text – especially when they are exposed to advertising. They need to be able to distinguish between fact and opinion; how and why the author uses statistics, quotations and examples to persuade; to examine and weigh the logic of arguments by testing the evidence that is given to substantiate claims; to hone their the ability to pick up on persuasive and emotive language, bias, subjectivity, propaganda in its different forms; and sweeping generalities. The child also needs to be able to appreciate different types of humour in texts. The competent reader will be able to identify why the writer uses the techniques of rhetorical questions, repetition, understatement and hyperbole, as well as when the author employs irony, euphemism, innuendo, analogy, antithesis and contrast to enhance the text's effectiveness.

3.3.6 Reading Fiction

With regard to ***fiction***, the ideal Grade 6 reader will be able to appreciate the art of narration and description – to be able to identify the narrative voice (first, third person), how authors set the scene through description, establish flat and round characters, construct and sequence a plot, and develop themes and motifs in their writing. A vital aspect is also the ability to identify different genres of poetry and prose. It also involves the ability to explain imagery, symbolism, and other figurative language devices (simile, metaphor, personification), and how these can help to create the mood and atmosphere of the story.

3.3.7 Reading Non-Fiction

With regard to ***non-fiction,*** the competent Grade 6 reader is able to identify the structures used to organize texts: headings and sub-headings, bold and italicised text, parenthesis, paragraphing techniques, main ideas and sub-ideas, key words and sentences, introductions, developing paragraphs and conclusions. The child must be able to know how to read a title, contents and index pages, understand how a glossary and alphabetisation works, the different techniques for listing information (numbering, bullets, colons and semi-colons). Further to this, is understanding the formal layout of all types of non-fiction texts: policies, encyclopaedias, package inserts, instructions, newspapers, and others. Most importantly, as related to the other facets of reading competencies outlined above, the child needs to be able to sift for relevant and irrelevant information and to be able to categorise and connect information.

3.3.8 Engaging with Language

The competent Grade 6 reader requires a good grasp of basic grammar – the technical aspects of language – in order to increase their comprehension skills. They need to be familiar with spelling and punctuation rules. Familiarity with spelling rules can help with the pronunciation of words and decoding unfamiliar words when reading. A familiarity with punctuation is important in comprehension and fluency because the markers of punctuation indicate *how* texts should be read – i.e. emphasis, pause, the completion of an idea, speech marks indicating dialogue. Young readers should also have a technical understanding of the fundamental functions of words in sentences, which can also aid decoding and comprehension, such as conjunctions, adverbs, adjectives, nouns, verbs (including correct tenses) and basic interrogatives. Sentence structures such as active and passive voice, phrases and clauses, subjects, objects and predicates, are also introduced at this stage, as well as types of sentences (statements, commands, requests, questions). An awareness of how the choice of words and sentence length creates different effects is also useful. A deeper interest in aspects of vocabulary should be fostered at this stage: synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, homophones, connotation, denotation, etymology, base words, suffixes, and prefixes. The poetic aspects of language are also important for the

sound pattern effects they create which enhance the 'voice' of the text – rhythm, metre, rhyme, onomatopoeia, alliteration, and assonance. The effect of the choice of language is also important – the formality or informality of the voice – register, diction, tone, style and colloquial language.

3.3.9 Multi-Modal Texts

A large proportion of whatever is applicable to the child's comprehension of printed texts as outlined above also applies to multi-modal texts, particularly those of an audio-visual nature. Most of the competencies outlined above also need to be applied when the child attempts to engage with and comprehend multi-modal texts. However, other components also need to be added to this, such as understanding how to extract information from visual/audio-visual texts such as figures, tables, diagrams, maps, graphs, adverts, posters, comics, drawings, charts, mind-maps, cartoons, adverts, films, documentaries, television shows, news reports, and so on. It includes some awareness of lighting and filming techniques, make-up and special effects.

3.3.10 The Ideal Grade 6 Reader: Implications for this Study

Questions may arise as to whether teachers truly understand the detail of the requirements as expected by the IP reading curriculum as outlined above, especially in the light of the lack of specifications of the RNCS reading outcomes (as can be viewed in Appendix B). Further to this, would they feel confident that they have been trained to teach for these expectations? Are they able to source materials, design lessons, or compose assessment tasks that will measure learners' actual levels as well as their skills after pedagogical interventions? Part of the discussions in the Community of Inquiry established for this study aimed to investigate (at least in part), some of these questions.

3.4 The Process of Learning to Read – Reading Foundations Required Before Grade 4

How does the Grade 6 reader become one who is able to employ effectively the myriad of skills outlined in Section 3.3 above? This begins with having the foundation skills of reading in place by the time the child enters Grade 4.

By the time a child reaches Grade 4, if they are going to be a competent reader, they will have needed to master a number of highly sophisticated processes (Wolf, 2007). Ideally, they will have moved through at least three phases: the *emerging pre-reader*, the *novice reader*, and the *decoding reader*. The fourth phase, *fluent comprehending reader*, is the ideal for Grade 4. The fifth, *expert reader*, is rare for Grade 4, but where teachers would like all Grade 6 readers to be. Each phase builds on the other and is an essential component to reading literacy.

3.4.1 The Emerging Pre-Reader

The emerging pre-reader is the infant and pre-school child who is 'initiated' into reading through their relationships with loving parent/s (or other care-giver/s) (Wolf, 2007; Chall, 1967; Adams, 1994; Ehrich, 2006). The parent is physically close to them (sits or lays beside them or holds them on a lap), reads aloud to them, points to pictures, expresses emotions about what they are reading – gives life and 'voice' to the text through intonation. Through this process, the child bonds with adults and other members of the social group, but also experiences that reading and texts are an integral part of their social world. In this stage the child 'pretends' to read – engages in pseudo-reading activities.

3.4.2 The Novice Reader

Following this phase is initial reading and decoding by the novice reader. The child is at that magical moment of realisation that scribbles and shapes on a page stand for something (Chomsky, 1972); in other words, they are at the brink of the mastery of the 'alphabetical principle' – understanding the grapheme/phoneme correspondence of a language (Wolf, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). The alphabetic principle is the concept that speech can be turned into print, print can be turned into speech, and letters represent sounds in the language (www.sil.org). The novice reader is particularly concerned with synthesising three aspects of language: orthographic acquisition, the blending of these written phonemes into words, and semantics (the attribution of meaning to text/an expanding written vocabulary) (Wolf, 2007). Children will learn about 88000 written words during their school years, but at least 9000 of these need to be familiar by the end of Grade 3 (Wolf, 2007). The novice reader phase usually involves a significant amount of reading aloud, which can be hesitant and staccato as the child learns to decode. This phase is also a particularly complex phase as it involves the decoding of the orthographic aspects of language. The skill of decoding is based on learning the sounds of a language – phonemes – and linking these sounds to the letters of the alphabet that represent them. Some of these sounds (phonemes) and the letters representing them are blended together in different ways to represent more complex sounds (digraphs and trigraphs). Sounds are blended together to form morphemes (the smallest units of meaning in language) and even further agglutinated into words. This symbol-sound relationship forms the spelling system (orthography) of the language. English has a comparatively deep orthographic structure with different spelling conventions operating on letter/sound correspondence, syllables and morphemes (Wolf, 2007). One reason for the English language's complex orthography is because it is an eclectic blend of languages providing a wide etymological history – particularly Latin, Old English, German and French. Orthographic irregularities are often termed sight-words because the child needs to learn these words as composite wholes (as pictorial representations) rather than breaking them down into their phonetic parts (Wolf, 2007). From a neurological point of view, " … the novice reader's brain will have already made millions of new connections by integrating, with increasing speed, areas of the brain devoted to vision, motor, and multiple aspects of language" (Wolf, 2007:217).

3.4.3 The Decoding Reader

The next phase of reading acquisition is the decoding reader (as described in Wolf, 2007; Chall, 1967; Adams, 1994). This is the child who reads with a smoother and more confident tone and who is on the verge on becoming fluent. These readers still read aloud, but with expression and comprehension. In this phase, decoding readers will rapidly add at least 3000 words to their vocabulary (Woolf, 2007). What occurs at this stage is that children become better at syllabification, competent at chunking words (breaking them up into their composite parts), and also better at automatically and fluidly reading same letter patterns with different pronunciations, such as 'dear' and 'bear'. This skill comes from being able to understanding the word in context. This fluidly decoding reader eventually stands at the brink of the fourth and fifth stages of reading: becoming fluent and later, expert, readers. This portal some authors have described as 'the dangerous moment' or the moment the child is able to enter the 'parallel universe' of a story (Wolf, 2007). This is the world of comprehension, silent reading, the zone of empathy, the self-immersion of the child into a story. Perhaps it can be said that fluent and expert reading is a sophisticated form of vocalising and 'listening' to the voice of the writer (Ehrich, 2006).

3.4.4 Two Other Perspectives on Learning to Read

In short, to give an overview of what occurs in the first three phases as outlined above: "The development of reading, therefore, has two parts. First, the ideal acquisition of reading is based on the development of amazing panoply of phonological, semantic, syntactic, morphological, pragmatic, conceptual, social, affective, articulatory, and motor systems, and the ability of these systems to become integrated and synchronise into increasingly fluid comprehension" (Wolf, 2007:222). Clay and Cazden (in Moll, 1990), describe learning to read as: the weaving of the semiotic codes of oral language and English orthography, and world knowledge, into the intricate operations of reading and writing. They also point to the child increasingly monitoring and integrating information from multiple sources until this becomes automatic. Readers simultaneously use and crosscheck themselves with four cues: 1) Does it make *sense*? (semantic meaning); 2) How can we best *say* it? (syntactic/ sentence structure clues); 3) Does that *look* right? (visual clues: graphemes, orthography, format, layout); and 4) Does that *sound* right? (phonological/sound clues). Clay and Cazden (in Moll, 1990) maintain that the end-point of early transformational reading has been reached when children have developed their own internal automatic self-correcting system that integrates these four cues.

At this point, it may be also helpful to introduce a Vygotskian perspective with regards to the acquisition of reading (Ehrich, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). To Vygotsky, every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level (Vygotsky, 1978). The development of higher thought is a process of internalisation through language. There is an internal reconstruction through language of external cultural signs. The internalisation

process transforms the mind on three levels. The first is the process of reconstruction of external activities. The second involves internalising interpersonal interactions to intrapersonal interactions. This would mean the internalisation of language where interpersonal, social speech becomes the inner speech of the individual. "Inner speech arises in a developmental fashion: first there is social speech, then comes the egocentric speech of children and finally inner speech is formed" (Vygotsky, 1978). This is about the development of the internal voice of the child: when the child is able to sub-vocalise (Ehrich, 2006). That internal voice will help to take the child through the processes of automatizing routines, practices, and activities for further self-regulation. This is the third process where automatic inner functions follow their own systemic rules. Language is the psychological tool which will mediate higher mental functions, such as voluntary attention, logical memory, concept formation, and, in our case, reading. Learning, for Vygotsky, is synonymous with development, and it happens in relationships. The relationship will create a zone of potential meaning. When the relationship involves mediation by a more able individual, assisting a less able individual, a zone of proximal development will be created through this relationship (Vygotsky, 1978). In terms of reading, this means the child will be exposed to texts as cultural artefacts by those who care for it; they will mediate the meaning of the text through language to the child, (social speech). The child will be drawn into activities where they will begin to decode the signs and symbols of their culture. They will externalise, through speech, their learning, in this case reading aloud. Eventually the child will subvocalize (use a shortened from of language, spoken softly to themselves), automatize and self-regulate this process, and develop an inner reading voice which will mark the transition from decoding readers working for accuracy, to fluent readers working for comprehension (Clay & Cazden, in Moll, 1990; Ehrich, 2006).

3.4.5 The Crossover Point: From Accurate Decoding to Fluent Comprehension

What does the South African curriculum say about the crossover point – from accurate decoding to fluent comprehension? Is there anywhere in its requirements an emphasis on this progression? The answer is yes. According to C2005, by the end of Grade 3, the most important skill the reader should demonstrate is that of already being able to read age-appropriate texts independently and to use a variety of comprehension strategies to make meaning. Fluency when reading aloud or silently is very important, as well as demonstrating the ability to read aloud with expression, appropriate emphasis, pausing, and intonation. The average reading speed for a child of age 9/10 is aimed at approximately 90 – 100 words per minute. When confronted with unfamiliar texts, the Grade 3 readers should demonstrate that they have mastered the skills of automatically monitoring and self-correcting to decode such text – this implies efficient word attack skills, phonic awareness, using contextual clues, predicting meaning, re-reading, reading ahead, pausing and rehearsing words before saying them aloud. They should demonstrate by this stage that they have consolidated most of their phonic knowledge and the possible exceptions to these rules. The Grade 3 reader's receptive vocabulary (for reading and listening) as well as their productive vocabulary (for speaking and writing) should be well-developed. As a

minimum, if they have correctly mastered the first 200 words on the *Dolch* word list, they should be able to read 75% of words that most frequently appear in English texts. They should be able to read a wide variety of fairly complex texts from fiction to non-fiction. They should be able to pick up details about the main ideas, characters, sequences of events, settings, cultural events, cause and effect relations, conclusions, and moral messages in written texts. They should have also mastered basic skills of finding information: understanding alphabetisation; using the dictionary; using contents and index tables and page numbers; finding key-words in texts; using headings and captions; using the library or internet search engines. This young reader should have some visual literacy skills – the ability to draw key details from and gauge the effectiveness of visual texts. They should be able to say whether they enjoyed the text or not, to give reasons why, and be able to relate it to their real life interests and needs (RNCS, 2005).

It seems expected in national and international curricular that at around the cusp of the Grade3/Grade 4 level (age 10 in South Africa), children will move from being accurate decoding readers to fluently comprehending readers – reading to learn. The ideal Grade 4 reader will have moved from the phase of fluent decoding to strategic comprehension. Comprehension is based on the integration of the readers' prior knowledge, information presented in the text, and the use of context to assist recognition of words and meaning. At the start point of accurate decoding, it can seem that children are fluent readers and that they understand all the words they are reading, although this appearance of comprehension may be deceptive. This can be another 'danger zone' of reading. Wolf (2007), citing Richard Vacca, describes this shift as, " … readers who know how to activate prior knowledge before, during, and after reading, to decide what's important in a text, to synthesize information, to draw inferences during and after reading, to ask questions, and to self-monitor and repair faulty comprehension. … Key to this transition is explicit instruction by a child's teacher in major content areas and the child's own desire to read" (Wolf, 2007:139). This latter idea reinforces the argument that dedicated reading instruction is vital to encourage critical comprehension skills by learners and to inspire in learners a love for independent, self-directed reading. These are the sophisticated reading practices discussed above that must be taught in the Intermediate Phase: practices such as questioning meaning, summarising and paraphrasing, identifying key issues, and inferring meaning. It is interesting to note that at this stage, neurological images of the brain show the activation of the limbic system of the child: the location of emotion where content will be assigned value. Further, when the brain spends less time on decoding, it means it has more time to attribute meaning to text until there is " … the almost instantaneous fusion of cognitive, linguistic, and affective processes; multiple brain regions; and billions of neurons that are the sum of all that goes into [expert] reading" (Wolf, 2007:145). Said another way, this "... is the dynamic relationship between the brain's contribution to reading, and reading's contribution to the brain's cognitive capacities" (Wolf, 2007:223 - 224). It is the dynamic relationship between learning to read and reading to learn.

3.5 Difficulties Experienced in Reading by Intermediate Phase Readers and Teachers

The path of learning to read is not always smooth. Although it is expected by the curriculum that the Grade 4 reader will have attained the level of a fluent reader, it must be acknowledged that the complex skills required to support reading will need daily practice, transformational reinforcement and, in some cases, remediation throughout the rest of the child's education. New Grade 4 learners can experience a wide range of difficulties that develop at the various stages of learning to read, which continue to impact on the further development of their reading skills in the Intermediate Phase. As stated earlier, competent readers check themselves against a number of cues (Clay and Cazden, in Moll, 1990). If they encounter a difficulty, these competent readers have internalised processes which will help them slow down their reading, check their comprehension, and even self-correct. Readers who struggle tend to have fewer strategies to correct themselves and this leads to faulty decoding and comprehension (Clay & Cazden, in Moll, 1990). Difficulties readers have in the Intermediate Phase fall into three main categories: underlying difficulties within the child, contextual challenges and instructional difficulties and/or neglect.

3.5.1 Difficulties within the Child

Primary difficulties within the child are numerous and with regard to reading include visual difficulties, auditory difficulties, phonetic difficulties, concentration issues, speech disorders or neurological difficulties in processing language, socio-affective disorders, as well as other physical conditions, which can hinder the development of reading (Wolf, 2007; Adams, 1994; Chall, 1967). (These are explained in more detail in Appendix C).

3.5.2 Contextual Challenges

Children may grow up in home environments that are not conducive to the development of literacy. Children may experience a lack of supportive parenting – parents may be physically or emotionally absent, neglect the vital task of reading to their children or even communicating in a way that will increase vocabulary. Parents may have poor literacy levels themselves, or reading difficulties that were never remediated. They may struggle/neglect to provide an environment of rich, stimulating texts for the child. In these environments, English may be a second language; the speaking of English may be with strong accents that will affect pronunciation. A poor socio-economic status could also contribute to factors such as poor nourishment, emotional or physical trauma. Keith Stanovich (in Wolf, 2007) used the term ‘The Matthew Effect’ to describe the differences between children exposed to rich early reading environments and those whose learning to read is delayed for some reason. Early success in learning to read usually leads to later success in reading, but those who lag behind fall further and further behind while their peers move increasingly ahead. The ‘rich’ get richer and the ‘poor’ become poorer. The problem is exacerbated when children begin to read to learn – those fluent in reading know to read for information and their worlds expand exponentially. The world for the poor reader remains

limited. Wolf (2007) speaks of the stark contrast that exists between children of five years old who emerge from literate versus impoverished reading environments. The bleak reality is that some children from poor-literacy environments have been exposed to 32 million fewer words than those peers who grow up in literate environments (Wolf, 2007). These children also use less than half the number of words at age 3 than their more advantaged peers. In addition, the average low-income US family had no children's books at home. The average middle-income US family had three books, whereas the high-income community had up to 200 books per home. Also important here is the exponentially increasing gap that eventually accumulates to leave Grade 6 learners who emerge from a poorly-literate environment, three years behind their peers. The gap in word exposure can also be illustrated by a table referred to in Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988) which illustrates the out-of-school reading done by American Grade 5 learners (attached as Appendix D).

3.5.3 Pedagogical Deficiencies

Inadequacies in formal schooling with regard to reading also have an adverse impact on learning to read and reading to learn. These include children who have poor first language instruction. This means that the foundations of their first language are not soundly in place. There is evidence that if a child's first language is not adequately embedded, and the child is not able to read fluently and with meaning in their first language, this will be very difficult to accomplish in a second language (which is the case for a large proportion of South African learners (Chisholm, 2001)). As indicated in Section 3.2.1 of this chapter, South African schools also suffer from the poor provision of a text-rich environment for children (OECD, 2008). Further to this, we may add the challenges of a history of poor teacher training in South Africa (Chisholm, 2001). It may be that teachers have had little formal instruction themselves in what the components are of learning to read and reading to learn. In other words, teachers have often not had adequate training in terms of reading instruction, in both decoding phases and comprehension phases of reading. Teacher training in South Africa has also had a fragmented and complex history. Teachers who trained during the apartheid years were educated in a number of different teacher training institutions for eighteen different education departments. Even in the present context, there is a varying range of teacher training in reading at universities (Moll, 2007). Teacher training colleges have been disbanded. Generally, reading instruction training for teachers in the Intermediate Phase seems limited. It also seems that teachers in the Intermediate Phase may assume that reading has become automatic, that readers are fluent, and that comprehension is a matter of increasing the learner's exposure to text (*National Reading Strategy*, 2008).

What may also be confusing to Foundation and Intermediate Phase teachers is what can be termed the 'reading wars' - the myriad conflicting reading instruction theories, practices, models and approaches (Smith, 2004; Chall, 1967; Adams, 1994; Flesch, 1955 and 1981). This is the conflict that exists in

reading instruction approaches between bottom-up, top-down, integrated and eclectic approaches. The pendulum swing between these two poles has been in place for more than a century (www.sil.org). Bottom-up approaches involve the learner acquiring first their phonetic aspects of reading and moving to comprehension that is more fluid. Top-down approaches focus on the context of the child and comprehension first and that the rules, grammatical structures, orthography of a language will be somehow automatically internalised through meaningful exposure. Current reading instruction training and approaches do tend to call for an integrated approach to teaching reading (Adams, 1994). This is a blend of using both bottom-up and top-down approaches. Related to this would be the eclectic approach, which would involve assessing the reader and the context and selecting from a wide range of strategies and methods in order to reach the current context of the reader. Arguably, the 'Great Debate', or what some have more appropriately dubbed the 'reading wars', has been one of the most destructive forces in reading education (Chall, 1967; Adams, 1994). The battles have grown from ideological differences to personal, politically charged attacks on character (Smith, 2004; Flesch, 1981). Teachers, and more importantly children, have been caught in the crossfire.

3.6 Conclusion to Chapter Three

This section has attempted to give an overview of reading in the Intermediate Phase. It has looked at the expectations of what Grade 6 readers should be able to accomplish at the end of this phase. It has also examined the process of learning to read and what should be in place by the time a child enters Grade 4. Issues that may cause hindrances to children's reading have also been outlined. The hindrances to successful Grade 6 reading are immense.

It is hoped that this background will provide insight into the data as gathered for this study. It is to this section that this report now turns.

Chapter Four: Research Design and Method

4.1 Introduction to Chapter 4

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the research design and methods for the empirical component of the study. It revises the research purpose and aims. It then discusses the study's qualitative research design. Elements of the research setting are described. Ethical considerations are outlined, particularly with regards to me as principal being the authority figure, CoI facilitator and researcher. Initiation procedures for the CoI are described, as well as the ethical issues related to this. The participants of the study are introduced, as well as the data collection methods and sources.

4.2 The Research Question and Aims Reviewed

As stated in the introduction, the teachers and I noticed a significant gap at the school in the implementation of an effective Intermediate Phase (IP) reading curriculum. I decided to establish and research a Community of Inquiry at the school to focus on this problem. The main purpose of this research was to investigate the affordances and constraints of the establishment of a Community of Inquiry for the professional development of teachers as an instructional leadership intervention by myself as principal. The sub-questions that emerged from the main research question were: what would be the affordances and constraints of the principal establishing, facilitating and researching such a community as an instructional leadership intervention; what would be to the benefit of the teachers (and their learners) of establishing such a community for professional development and reading instruction in the IP; and, what processes are entailed in establishing a Community of Inquiry of teachers? The overall aims of the study were to explore to what extent and how the Community of Inquiry enables professional development for the principal as an instructional leader, for the teachers as professional and Intermediate Phase reading instructors, and for the building of professional community at the school. Some guiding considerations were to evaluate whether the Community of Inquiry at the school was a generative space for exploring/unearthing what contributes to teachers' challenges and learners' difficulties with regard to reading in the Intermediate Phase; teachers' pre-service and prior experiential knowledge regarding reading in the IP; teachers' current Intermediate Phase reading instruction constructs and methods; teachers' opinions, experiences and challenges of working with the curriculum; a means to begin to refine and narrow the gap between the intended and the actual implemented IP reading curriculum; where teachers can learn and improve on their IP reading instruction constructs and practices; teachers' sharing and learning about reading resources; where IP reading difficulties and remedial interventions can be explored and learned; where teachers can make suggestions about how to improve IP reading instruction practices and share effective changes in their practice.

4.3 Qualitative Issues Regarding the Research

These research questions and aims were about understanding the situation from the participants' perspectives and the meanings they ascribed to the problem. Therefore, the study falls within the domain of qualitative research as this is a primary concern of such research designs (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; LeCompte & Priessle, 1993). Research into Communities of Inquiry, such as this study, is interested in interpreting participant perspectives, the possibility of an expanding sense of participant identity, how participants develop knowledge and skills and attribute meaning to phenomena over time, qualitative changes in teachers, how the inter-personal dynamics of such groups work, and therefore, because of these reasons, falls within the qualitative research domain.

Qualitative research involves the immersion of the researcher into the participants' world – another name for this is fieldwork (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; LeCompte & Priessle, 1993). Aside from considering many socio-cultural phenomena, it particularly involves observing participants in their natural settings. For this reason, the researcher must be especially rigorous in reflexively examining his or her impact on the research context, and sensitive to the context of the participants – how their ascribing of meaning is bound by "… social, political, gender, racial, class and technological factors" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:322). Qualitative research also involves the collection of data that the researcher has gathered from detailed observations of participants, interviews with them, spending considerable time in their milieu (LeCompte & Priessle, 1993).

This data can be generally used to build and also test theory (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; LeCompte & Priessle, 1993) – in other words, it involves inductive rather than deductive reasoning (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; LeCompte & Priessle, 1993) by putting together 'the pieces' from the data obtained; allowing categories and patterns to emerge from the data rather than these being imposed on them prior to data collection. This is about using Grounded Theory in research practice (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1999; Henning, et al., (2002) (which will be explored further in Chapter Five). The data is also reconstructed from the participants' points of view – it is descriptive – with multiple layers of meaning from their perspective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; LeCompte & Priessle, 1993).

The research design is emergent. This means that the researcher has an idea of how the data will be collected and how the study will proceed, but as they learn more about the situation, and collect data in the field, and move towards the close of data collection, " … a full account of the methods is done retrospectively" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:323).

This research can also be described as applied in the sense that it is a case study (one particular CoI in one particular school) that aims to investigate a particular intervention to produce qualitative changes in participant teachers of the CoI. Applied research is now predominant in education and "… produces knowledge relevant to providing solutions to … problems" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:13) in order to improve educational practices. The idea is that research findings will be able to be applied to different educational contexts, although because this is a case study, its particularities may limit generalisation to wider contexts. Also, because it is about providing solutions, and informing decisions, the impact of this applied research may be felt immediately (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A case study is an "in depth analysis of a single entity" or a unique "bounded system" in terms of pace, time and participant characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:344). This particular study is also an instrumental case study (a theme-based study) rather than an intrinsic case study (focused on an unusual case) (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The research was also evaluative in the sense that it would attempt to evaluate the merits of establishing a CoI and if, and how, professionals began to change/benefit as a result of this establishment (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). (The original research design also envisioned the use of action research (Hord, 1997), but the constraints of establishing the CoI meant that measuring the impact of the CoI on classroom practice was not possible.)

4.4 The Setting of the Research

Although the Community of Inquiry was a new configuration for staff to work together, the CoI sessions happened within the usual, natural setting of the teachers – the school where they taught. The school is a small, independent South African school, in a relatively affluent area, with pupils generally coming from favourable socio-economic backgrounds. This being said, the range in socio-economic and cultural diversity of learners is significant. The pupil population is between 100 and 110 learners, and almost twenty five percent of these children are boarders at the school. As principal, I oversaw various sections of the school, but particularly the Intermediate Phase. At the time of the study, there were fourteen educators and assistants (ten teachers and four teaching assistants) directly involved in this section of the school, working with other support staff who assisted with administration, sports and cultural aspects of the school. The research participants will be described in a section below. The school runs on a three term per year basis – January to April, May to August, and September to December, with breaks of over three weeks in between each term.

4.5 Ethics: The Principal as Participant Researcher and Facilitator of the CoI

As principal and researcher, I was already immersed in the world of the participants, albeit in an authority role. This could carry with it its own ethical complications. It is the goal of the participant

researcher to be as objective as possible (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; LeCompte & Priessle, 1993; Henning, et al., 2002). Participant researchers acknowledge that it is virtually impossible to remain completely objective as their own socio-cultural background and milieu is the lens through which they observe participants. This is made even more complex when the researcher is known by and/or has an authority role among the participants. Such conditions are not ideal for research because participants may react differently towards the principal than they would with other participant observers because of this positional authority as a means of self-preservation and as a result of general hierarchies of inter-personal relations. Van der Zalm (2010), who also conducted research in his role as a principal, explicitly pointed out: "That the principal was the researcher is a limitation of the study insofar as the researcher cannot be construed as objectively neutral and participants are quite likely to have been influenced by the presence of the school leader. The researcher-principal in this study is not a detached observer but a participant in the multiple realities presented by the interaction of participants" (Van Der Zalm, 2010:12). Therefore, as the principal, I had to be mindful of, and consciously protective of the rights, interests, and well-being of the teacher participants. Further to this, I needed to be particularly reflexive and sensitive about the possible effects of my role of authority at the school on the teacher participants.

Given that I was also the facilitator of the CoI – which also carried authority issues – and given that I aimed to foster a climate in which participants could engage collaboratively to begin solving reading difficulties in the IP, I had an open agenda to promote collaboration and knowledge of reading and teaching reading. I had to be very alert to the possible promotion of my own agenda over those of the participants. Therefore, I had to consciously ensure that I engaged in ongoing, rigorous self-reflection and self-regulation.

4.6 Initiating the CoI and Further Ethical Considerations in this Process

Written permission from the Board of Governors and the Executive Head of the School was obtained to form the CoI and research its progress. Further to this, approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand was obtained to conduct this study.

It was important to establish beforehand ethical procedures to try counter possible pitfalls in the research process. At staff meetings and in personal conversations, I extended an invitation to all my staff to join the CoI with the aforementioned assurances that no staff would be penalised if they elected not to join and that they could with draw at any time. Through these dialogues, participants were made aware that I intended to establish the community to benefit them – not for it to be a source of finding means to criticise or find fault. It would be established to help find answers to the reading difficulties of children, as a means for participants' professional development, and my instructional leadership. They were

assured verbally and in writing that their protection was paramount: that their involvement was completely voluntary; that they were under no obligation whatsoever to participate; if they chose to participate, or not, there would be no negative consequences for them in their present or future standing in the school. They were also free to withdraw at any time from the CoI without adverse consequences. This was essential because I had to be as careful as possible that my role would not coerce participation. Further to this, I assured them that their participant identities would be as protected as possible and that all participants would be given a pseudonym, the name of the school would not be mentioned, and any data collected during the research process and afterwards would be stored away safely and privately.

With respect to running the CoI, I also had to ensure that the structure of the CoI and norms of practice were established and made clear so that all the CoI participants would understand the rules of conduct for me and for them. The CoI was established to constructively focus on and inquire into reading and the teaching of reading at the school, and participants committed to remaining on the topic, without veering off in different directions to discuss other difficulties or issues in the school. It was also agreed that the school's code of conduct for teachers would have effect in the group – particularly regarding the respect and upholding of confidentiality of learners. It was agreed that every meeting would have a 'workshop' character – a brief intensive engagement for a small group; emphasizing problem solving and discussion around a particular topic agreed upon by all participants. It was made clear that my role was not to dominate or impose – rather it was to facilitate learning – teachers would be welcome to disagree with, or interrupt me, should they feel the need, with no negative consequences.

With respect to writing this research report, I acknowledge that in any situation where people write about their own practices, readers may be able to guess at the identity of participants. This, coupled with small size of the teaching staff, could have implications for the anonymity of the participants. I therefore have had to make very careful decisions as to how much detail about the participants could be revealed in the reported study. Therefore, although it would have been interesting to include as many details as possible about the participants, I decided to keep these to the minimum possible. (Furthermore, this research report is not for publication and the final research report will be housed in an academic repository).

4.7 The Sample: CoI Participants

In June 2010, four teachers elected to participate (25% of the teaching staff) in the CoI. I assured them verbally and formally in writing that their participation was voluntary, their identities would be kept confidential, and if they chose to, they could leave the CoI without adverse consequences. These teachers signed consent forms to participate and to be audio-recorded as part of the process. The four

teachers who elected to participate were the three English language teachers for Grade 4, 5 and 6, and the other Grade 4 educator.

Four meetings were conducted between July and September of 2010. The themes of these meetings explored approaches to researching practice (action research was initially considered as a research design for the study), the teachers' pre-service training in reading instruction, their constructs about reading, and some exploration from the teachers' perspectives into the reading difficulties children were displaying in the Intermediate Phase.

This fledgling CoI experienced considerable constraints and only served as a pilot phase to the study. Due to the onset of significant contextual upheavals at the school, the challenges of establishing a CoI, and my personal difficulties, this initial CoI unfortunately had to be aborted early in October 2010. Further to this, the Grade 6 educator then emigrated and the Grade 5 educator fell ill and asked to be excused from the group.

When the situation at the school had settled somewhat by April 2011, I again followed the procedures outlined above in inviting all my staff to join a CoI into IP reading, assuring the safety of participants, and obtaining their written consent and that of the authorities of the school and the University. At this stage, in May 2011 six participants indicated that they wished to be part of the CoI (60% of the teaching staff). An added benefit was that on this occasion, the English language educators chose to participate and this included the two new English language teachers for Grade 5 and 6, along with three participants who taught other learning areas – Natural Science, Arts and Culture and Mathematics. This allowed for a greater cross-curricular focus on reading in the Intermediate Phase. The reader will learn more about these participants and their individual qualities and contributions to the CoI in future chapters.

Table 4.1 presents the CoI participant details.

CoI Members and Attendance	Transcript Name/ Pseudonym	Qualification	Experience	Age Range	Attendance
Participants who left the group after the pilot phase					
Grade 5 Educator	Chloe	Junior Primary Teaching Diploma	Over 30 years' teaching experience in Junior and Intermediate Phases	55 – 60	4/15 Sessions (an original member of the CoI pilot who left due to illness)
Grade 6 Educator	Kim	Degrees and Intermediate Phase Teaching Diploma	2 years' teaching experience in the Intermediate Phase	25-30	4/15 Sessions (an original member of the CoI pilot who left as she emigrated)
Participants who joined the group during the study phase					
Grade 5 Educator	Lorraine	UK degrees and teacher training (Foundation Phase)	3 years in the UK teaching reception age children	25-30	11/15 Sessions (joined the School in early May 2011)
Grade 6 Educator	Tamika	Degree and post-graduate Intermediate Phase Teaching Diploma	2 years' High School teaching experience in South Africa, 5 years teaching EEL in an Asian country	25-30	10/15 Sessions (joined the School in late May 2011)
Grade 4-6 Educator	Mel	Degree and post-graduate Intermediate Phase Teaching Diploma	3 years' experience (1 Senior Phase, 2 Intermediate Phase)	25-30	9/15 Sessions (joined the CoI in early May 2011 and missed Sessions Nine and Eleven)
Grade 4-6 Educator	Violet	Junior Primary Teaching Diploma	25 years' teaching experience in Foundation and Intermediate Phase	50-55	11/15 Sessions (joined the CoI in early May 2011)
Participants during the pilot and study phases					
Principal	Bridget	Degrees and post-graduate High School Teaching Diploma	16 years' teaching experience in Intermediate and Senior Phases, Grade 12, and 2 years university teaching, 5 years as Primary Head	35-40	14/15 Sessions and an original member of the CoI (was ill for Session Eight)
Grade 4 Educator	Maxine	Degrees and post-graduate Intermediate Phase Teaching Diploma	2½ years' teaching experience in Intermediate Phase and 1 year teaching ESL in an Asian country	25-30	14/15 Sessions and an original member of the CoI (was ill for Session Five)
Grade 4- 6 Educator	Sunni	Junior Primary Teaching Diploma	9 years' teaching experience in Foundation and Intermediate Phase	30-35	15/15 Sessions and an original member of the CoI

Table 4.1 CoI Participant Details

Other guests of the CoI (as presented in Table 4.2 below) were the Head of the Junior School, two experts from the *Reading Fundamentals Programme* and one Foundation Phase reading specialist educator. These guests were invited to present Sessions 5 to 8 as a means of providing input for the CoI and initiating further discussions. The teachers and I had suggested exploring such themes in the CoI and I approached the guests to present at these sessions. They were specifically tasked with providing information for staff around the themes, but asked to conduct their presentations in an informal, workshop-like manner so as to allow participant teachers to take part in discussions.

CoI Guests and Attendance	**Transcript Name/ Pseudonym**	**Qualification**	**Experience**	**Age Range**	**Attendance**
Junior Primary Head	Sybil	Junior Primary Teaching Diploma	Over 30 years' Junior, Intermediate Phase and remedial teaching experience and thirteen in Primary Headship	50-55	3/15 Sessions (Presented Sessions Five and Six, and facilitated Session Eight)
Reading Fundamentals Programme Experts	Alison and Harriet	Unknown	Unknown – but considerable experience as remediators of reading difficulties in children	40-45 50-55	Presented Session Seven
Specialist Junior Reading Educator	Margaret	Junior Primary Teaching Diploma	Over 40 years' experience in Junior Phase	65-70	Presented Session Eight

Table 4.2 CoI Guests

4.8 Data Collection

The CoI sessions were audio-recorded and participants had consented prior to the meetings that they were comfortable with being recorded for research purposes. The audio equipment was unobtrusive and reliable (although cell phone interference and occasional bumping of the microphones was sometimes a problem in the recordings). The research did not use any of the audio-recordings of the pilot 2010 CoI. The study made use of the transcripts from the re-instated CoI's eleven meetings of more than an hour each, which took place over two school terms – from May to November 2011. Over the course of Term 2 (May to August 2011) there were seven meetings. In Term 3 (September to December 2011), a two-day intensive workshop was arranged which consisted of four sessions. These were slightly longer and the teachers specifically began to create their own documents rather than discuss content. The meetings ran in this manner because of timetabling changes: during the second term, it was possible to alter the timetable so that sessions were available for participant teachers to attend weekly. This was not possible in the third term due to operational requirements of the school. Therefore, during the final November exams, when other teachers were available to invigilate, participant teachers were able to conduct a two-day workshop of four sessions to focus on the work of the CoI.

We had intended for there to be more sessions, but this proved difficult. The CoI meetings were always under external pressure. It proved impossible to find slots for after-school sessions as most teachers were engaged in a variety of extra-mural activities and later meetings/weekend meetings were out of the question as some of the participants had young children to see to. Even during the time-tabled CoI period, events such as parents' evenings, setting exam papers, marking and other assessments, school events and senior management meetings, impinged on the teachers' and my time and that of the CoI. Some of the participants (including me) were unwell for one or two of the sessions. The management changes and contextual upheavals at the school, which affected the stability of the initial CoI, also continued to limit my time as principal.

Table 4.3 on the next page presents details about the CoI meetings.

	DATE	MEETING THEME	MEETING TYPE	DURATION
Pilot Phase				
Session One	July 2010	Introduction to the CoI, general discussion of aims	Workshop type meeting facilitated by the Principal, Bridget	1 hour, 12 minutes
Session Two	July 2010	Pre-service training of teachers and an initial exploration of their constructs about reading	Workshop type meeting facilitated by the Principal, Bridget	1 hour, 20 minutes
Session Three	August 2010	Introduction to Action Research	Workshop type meeting facilitated by the Principal, Bridget	57 minutes
Session Four	September 2010	General Discussion about IP reading difficulties	Workshop type meeting facilitated by the Principal, Bridget	1 hour, 33 minutes
Study Phase				
Session Five	May 2011	Identifying Reading Difficulties in the Intermediate Phase and their Remediation (Part One)	Workshop by the Junior Head, Sybil (also a remedial specialist)	58 minutes
Session Six	May 2011	Identifying Reading Difficulties in the Intermediate Phase and their Remediation (Part Two)	Workshop by the Junior Head, Sybil (also a remedial specialist)	1 hour, 2 minutes
Session Seven	May 2011	Identifying Reading Difficulties in the Intermediate Phase and their Remediation: Diagnostic Tests	Workshop with two experts from the *Reading Fundamentals Programme*	58 minutes
Session Eight	June 2011	Grade 4 Reading Skills – Having Sound Junior Foundations, Reading Strategies	Workshop by highly experienced (over 40 years) Foundation Phase Reading Specialist Educator	1 hour, 6 minutes
Session Nine	June 2011	Negotiation/Revision of IP Curriculum Expectations with regard to Reading	Workshop by teacher participants themselves, facilitated by Bridget	42 minutes
Session Ten	June 2011	Reworking the Specific Focus of the CoI to that point	Workshop by teacher participants themselves, facilitated by Bridget	1 hour, 1 minute
Session Eleven	July 2011	Reflections back on the CoIs initial impact	Workshop by teacher participants themselves, facilitated by Bridget	1 hour, 6 minutes
Session Twelve	November 2011	The Redesign of the Outcomes and Assessment Standards of Intermediate Phase Reading Curriculum: Reflections	Workshop by teacher participants themselves, facilitated by Bridget	1 hour, 19 minutes
Session Thirteen	November 2011	The Redesign of the Outcomes and Assessment Standards of Intermediate Phase Reading Curriculum: Discussions	Workshop by teacher participants themselves, facilitated by Bridget	1 hour, 27 minutes
Session Fourteen	November 2011	Sixteen Habits of Effective Reading Skills for the Intermediate Phase Reader: Poster Design	Workshop by teacher participants themselves, facilitated by Bridget	1 hour, 36 minutes
Session Fifteen	November 2011	Sixteen Habits of Effective Reading Skills for the Intermediate Phase Reader	Workshop by teacher participants themselves, facilitated by Bridget	1 hour, 16 minutes

Table 4.3 Details of the CoI Meetings

4.9 Conclusion to Chapter 4

The aim of this chapter was to introduce the research design and methods for the study, revise the research purpose and aims, and discuss core elements related to qualitative research design. Elements of the research setting were described as well as ethical considerations, particularly concerning me being the authority figure, CoI facilitator and researcher. Initiation procedures for the CoI were described, as well as the ethical issues related to this. The participants of the study were introduced, as well as the data collection methods and sources. The CoI sessions provided a considerable amount of recorded data. The next chapter describes the process of working with that data.

Chapter Five: Data Reduction and Coding

5.1 Introduction to Chapter 5

To revisit the aims of this study, the research intended to assess whether development took place in the CoI or not, and to what extent, if any, did it benefit the teachers in their professional development, the principal as an instructional leader, and in building a Community of Inquiry at the school with a focus on improving IP reading instruction and practice. The audio recordings from the last seven months of the CoI constituted twelve hours and thirty-one minutes. These audio recordings were transcribed and eventually produced over 300 pages of rich data. Data reduction methods would have to be applied to begin to make sense, draw patterns out of, and bring the data into a relationship, to begin to fulfil the aims of the research. This chapter describes the methods used to reduce the data using Grounded Theory methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1987; Henning, et al., 2002; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A short overview of Grounded Theory methods is described. It is then explained how Grounded Theory methods were applied in this study. The process entailed two phases of coding – one broad and the other more refined. These processes are explained and detailed in coding matrix tables and examples of how these were applied to vignettes are shown.

5.2 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory's intent is to generate theory (that is to generate and illustrate concepts) from a close analysis of the field data. In a way, it is the reverse of traditional research, which generally tries to fit theory to data. Grounded Theory avoids using preconceived hypotheses that fall outside of the field data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Grounded theory follows a set of steps. Everything collected in the field is considered data. It begins with 'open coding', which is the interpretation of the research data that is made inductively and deductively (abductive reasoning) with constant reading, re-reading and reference back and forth to the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1987; Henning, et al., 2002; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). 'Open coding' is when every line of the transcript is given a label, and the researcher constantly asks: "What is this about?" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1987; Henning, et al., 2002). This labelling yields many codes. The codes are then analysed, related and merged into concepts. The process thereafter is axial coding which is a way of putting the fragmented data back together by making connections between concepts to form categories. The next phases involve 'memo-ing' – free writing about and finding relations between the codes, further sorting of the codes in their categories, and the final writing up, which entails an attempt to generate theory from the data.

There are three types of Grounded Theory designs: systematic, emerging, and constructivist (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), although the first and last were particularly used in this case. Systematic Grounded Theory design "… involves the methodical use of a rigorous set of procedures and techniques in which there is careful coding of the data. The coding is 'open' in the sense that the data drive the categories that are used, rather than using pre-existing categories" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:347). The constructivist approach focuses on perspectives, feelings and beliefs of participants and emphasises how they may have changed their perceptions and insights. The inductive and deductive analysis tries to discover the participants' main concerns and how they try to resolve them (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

5.3 Grounded Theory Application to the Data of this Study

All audio-recordings were listened to after each session and the researcher made notes about sessions. The transcripts were also read and re-read repeatedly. Although possible emergent codes did feature at these stages, only once all of the transcriptions had been completed and compiled, were they all read through again to obtain a global perspective and to avoid imposing predetermined ideas onto the data. The next step was to begin the open coding. Every line of the transcripts was read through and the researcher asked of every line: "What is happening here?/What is this about?" The researcher then began to obtain a detailed perspective of what was emerging from the data. In the first phase of open coding, fifteen broad codes began to emerge, as is summarised in Tables 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3 below.

However, an even more detailed coding process was necessary to allow for a finer grained sifting of the data; a much more nuanced set of distinctions and relations, (which will be outlined in Section 5.4) in order to bring into a relationship and trace the unfolding processes of the three focal areas of the study: the professional development of the teachers, my development as an instructional leader, and the building of a Community of Inquiry focusing on reading instruction in the IP.

FOCAL AREA 1	CODE	SPECIFIC DETAILS RELATED TO THE CODE	REASON
The Principal	The Principal as an Instructional Leader	* Actions/Emotions of the principal * When principal facilitated in a manner that may have enhanced CoI discussions * When principal acted in a manner that may have constrained CoI discussions * When principal's authority role may have affected the group/where the principal overtly disagreed with participants/asserted authority * Comments about research requirements/personal stresses * When the principal provided 'input' for the CoI,/led discussions/gave guidance/provided vision * Expressions of own opinions, stories/anecdotes * Provision of and arrangements for resources for CoI sessions * Encouragement of participants to share resources * Offers of verbal support/encouragement to participants * Encouragement and sharing of humour * Enabling of participants to share challenges, pre-service and prior experiential learning, anecdotes * Facilitating and encouraging participation of teachers * Resolution of conflict * Re-voicing of participants' utterances * Verifications of personal understanding/listening * Instances of self-correction * Re-focusing of discussions * References to other discussions * Over-riding of principal's suggestions * Where she took action about CoI discussion points * Failure to listen to participants/interruption of participants * Moments that may have caused inner conflict in the principal * Overt exasperation towards participants * Defensiveness * Asking leading questions to obtain information from participants	To track the facilitating behaviours of the principal: did she enable or limit the progress of the CoI? To evaluate the effectiveness and degree of her input as an instructional leader To critically reflect on the areas where she may have been a hindrance to the CoI To critically reflect on her roles as principal/facilitator/ researcher

Table 5.3.1 Focal Area 1: Code Relating to the Principal as an Instructional Leader in the CoI

FOCAL AREA 2	CODE	SPECIFIC DETAILS RELATED TO THE CODE	REASON
The Teachers	Teacher Challenges	* Emotional responses – raised voice, despair, defeat * Exasperation about lack of parental support * Irritation about the curriculum * Exasperation about children's difficulties with reading * Annoyance about Grade 3 to Grade 4 transitions	What were the predominant issues that led to the greatest levels of frustrations of teachers with regard to reading instruction in the Intermediate Phase? How did they say they felt about these issues? What could the principal gain from reflecting on these issues? Where could the principal begin to address most pressing urgencies? What issues were not raised and why?
	Resources	* Used in pre-service training * Reading approaches and programmes * Assessments and diagnostics * Setwork books and readers * Used in classroom * Everyday resources as texts for teaching * Availability of resources * Quality of resources * People as resources	How available are resources to staff in the school? Are they able to engage critically with reading programmes and other resources? What is the extent of their knowledge about resources? Did the discussions around resources assist to inform other members of the CoI? What kinds of resourceful experiences have they had and have these helped their teaching?
	Pre-Service Training and Experience	* Place of training * Comments about quality/depth of training * Prior experiential learning	What kinds of pre-service training did staff have? How did they use or reflect their pre-service training? How did they learn to teach reading? How does their prior learning impact on their knowledge about reading instruction?
	Personal Experiences/ Anecdotes/ Examples and Illustrations as CoI Resources	* Whenever the teachers shared personal stories about practice, teaching experiences, ideas, even personal stories	Why – for what purposes – did teachers tell their stories? Did the telling of their stories hinder or enhance the progress of the CoI? Have participants had experiences that they felt were of value to the rest of the CoI

			group?
	New Suggestions for future practice/Changes in Practice	* Comments that start with "Why don't we ...?"/"Maybe we can/should …"/"I think we can try …", etc. * The utterances of novices and experts and critically examine if they perceived personal development * When new ideas began to focus the CoI settings and practice * When teachers began to set goals for their own practice based on the CoI * When teachers expressed what they had learned in CoI meetings/or if they had started to apply these in practice	In what ways if any did the CoI begin to change teachers' constructs, suggestions for practice, implementation in practice, expressions, knowledge, expertise, change, because of the CoI? How did novices/experts behave and develop in the CoI?

Table 5.3.2 Focal Area 2: Codes Relating to the Teachers in the CoI

FOCAL AREA 3	CODE	SPECIFIC DETAILS RELATED TO THE CODE	REASON
The Community of Inquiry	Group Dynamics	* Tracking the conduct – actions and emotions of the participants * What about their conduct enabled or hindered discussions * Whenever there were points of contact that generated laughter * Talking all at once/too quickly * Misunderstandings – failing to listen/understand each other/losing focus * When participants expressed empathy, cared for one another * Sought common agreement about CoI discussions and production * Where participants re-voiced what the other said/finished others' sentences * Dominant themes/focus of particular members * Where change was difficult/resisted * Shared leadership expressions * Displays of leadership/initiative * Where time constraints affected the CoI * Outside interruptions of CoI discussions	How did the group interact? What moved discussions? What hindered discussions? What were the affordances of such conduct? What were the constraints that operated on this CoI?
	Curricular Discussions	* Discussions around RNCS specifications * Discussions around other curricula (alternative, international) * Cross-curricular needs and discussions * Specific concerns related to the RNCS * Novices and new teachers expressing difficulties with curricular issues	What are teachers' understandings and concepts about reading instruction expectations in the Intermediate Phase? Do they understand clearly what they are required to do? Does the curriculum help them? What are their predominant thoughts, concerns and frustrations around the curriculum? Have they had experience with other curricula?
	Methodological Discussions	* When teachers discussed the 'how to' of approaches, strategies for practice in class	What reading instruction approaches are staff aware of? What methods do they use? How did they 'teach'/demonstrate methods to each other? Are the methods appropriate to the Intermediate Phase?
	Bottom-up/Foundation Phase Reading	* 'Learning to Read' approaches and strategies * Emergent literacy * Phonic approaches * Bottom-up approaches to learning to read * Transition from Grade 3 to 4 * Transition from fluency to	Why are these such dominant methods, even in the Intermediate Phase? How do these methods help Intermediate Phase reading? What are teachers' constructs

		comprehension * Transition from Foundation to Intermediate Phase * Start age for learning to read * Start age for formal schooling	about moving from learning to read to reading to learn?
	Top-Down Reading Approaches	* When specific methodologies were mentioned which have a specific whole word/whole language/comprehension approach to language learning	How conversant are staff with these methods? Have they had experience/exposure to any of these methods?
	Integrated Approaches	* When specific methodologies were discussed that fall into the Integrated approaches to reading (which is required in the Intermediate Phase)	How conversant are staff with these methods? Have they had experience/exposure to any of these methods?
	Intermediate Phase Reading Skills	* When teachers expressed their understandings and concepts that are specifically related to the skills required in Intermediate Phase reading practice – 'Reading to Learn' strategies – comprehension, skimming, scanning, paraphrasing, finding keywords, main ideas, topic sentences, etc.	What are teachers' constructs about reading to learn? Do they understand the components of reading to learn? Do they understand the sub-skills of reading to learn? How did they express and begin to discuss or formulate ideas as to how better to teach Intermediate Phase reading?
	Reading Difficulties and Problems	* Discussions or specifications of reading problems, difficulties, processing problems, perceptual difficulties, tracking problems – any difficulties children experience in their reading	Do teachers know what the predominant reading difficulties in children are? Do teachers know how to identify these in children? How to they currently identify these? What are their feelings about children with reading difficulties?
	Remedial Approaches	* Suggestions/Ideas/Practical Examples of how to assist children with difficulties	Do teachers know how to remediate reading difficulties in the Intermediate Phase? What techniques are they using? What techniques would they like to know more about?

Table 5.3.3 Focal Area 3: Codes Related to the Community of Inquiry

The research intended to investigate whether development took place in the CoI or not, and if so, to what extent did it benefit the teachers in their professional development, and also the principal as an instructional leader. In coding the transcripts, the initial emergent codes were aimed at capturing possible areas where these took place. The codes therefore examined my conduct as principal and where and how this may have affected the group, pre-occupations of the teachers (their challenges, the resources they used, their training and experiences, stories and anecdotes they shared, where they mentioned changing practice), and lastly, themes related to the interaction in the community (group dynamics, discussions about the curriculum, methodology, reading approaches IP reading skills, reading difficulties and remediations).

5.4 Further Reduction of the Data

Once the codes had been distinguished, as stated at the end of Section 5.3, a much more elaborate coding process was necessary to allow for a finer-grained sifting of the data; a much more nuanced set of distinctions and relations, in order to begin to bring into relationship and trace the unfolding processes over time within the three focal areas of the study: the professional development of the teachers, my development as an instructional leader, and the building of a Community of Inquiry focusing on reading instruction.

I worked more closely with the data related to me (Bridget) as principal. Here I looked critically at the roles I played in the CoI, I looked at the agendas (intentions) that played out in my activities in the CoI, and I looked at my specific utterances – their tone, their mood, and their functions. This was applied to the data to begin to trace more closely where I as principal enabled the CoI in a positive way, and where I may have constrained its development.

In the CoI, I identified that I played the roles of Facilitator, Instructional Leader, Colleague, Supporter, Participant, Authority Figure, Mediator, Administrator and Researcher. Within each of these roles, there were specific agendas that I brought to the CoI. These agendas are outlined in the Table 5.4.1 Each of those agendas were expressed through my utterances, and those utterances had functions – emotions, tones, moods, which are also outlined in Table 5.4.1.

ROLES (Position)	FACILITATOR	INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER	COLLEAGUE	SUPPORTER OF COMMUNITY/ "FRIEND"	PARTICIPANT	AUTHORITY FIGURE	MEDIATOR	RESEARCHER
AGENDAS (Intentions)	F1 Encourage sharing, quieter members to participate, to discuss ideas	IL1 Provide input from self – news, important information, resources, knowledge, demonstrate methodology, expertise	C1 Share own prior knowledge/training	S1 Affirmation, praise	P1 To learn with teachers, admit own needs/mistakes	AF1 Making decisive decision	M1 Resolve disputes inside and outside CoI	R1 Explore teacher's constructs
	F2 Build community through encouragement of participants, positive statements	IL2 Encourage input from Teachers/unearth their challenges	C2 Share general personal teaching experiences	S2 Reassure	P2 Share personal issues with the curriculum	AF2 To defend and protect teachers	M2 Diffuse/neutralise tensions and conflict inside and outside CoI	R2 To ask question related to research
	F3 Communicate on behalf of the group	IL3 Provide input from experts	C3 Reflect on personal experience in IP	S3 Keep light-hearted	P3 Find out more about IP reading skills	AF3 Support best interests of children	M3 Provide alternative point of view	R3 To involve teachers in research process
	F4 Allow teachers to teach each other	IL4 Seek further learning opportunities for teachers	C4 To affirm the experiences/opinions/requests of teachers		P4 Model learning	AF4 Assert authority as the principal		R4 Inform teachers about research
	F5 Facilitate outside presenters' teaching	IL5 Looks for ways to expand CoI				AF5 Protect Confidentiality		R5 Discover teachers' problems/challenges
	F6 Focus CoI discussions, co-ordinate discussion	IL6 Provide alternatives				AF6 Promote own agendas/control		R6 Discover how teachers work in class
	F7 Re-iterate important points made before, Highlight/draw attention to important issues	IL7 Input about children's reading difficulties						R7 Verify teachers' understanding
	F8 Summarise/Re-voicing/Paraphrasing	IL8 Input about remediation of reading difficulties						
	F9 Listen to participants	IL9 Find points of contact with teachers outside of CoI						
	F10 Keep to time	IL10 Keep focus on IP – play down Junior dominance, keep focus on IP classroom practice						
	F11 Ensure CoI sessions are productive	IL11 Encourage focus on the curriculum – encourage refinement, solve curricular problems, find solutions to the FP/IP gap						
	F12 Organising/making arrangements for meetings	IL12 Focus on IP Reading – provide the 'bigger picture', keep discussions focused on IP reading, redesign IP reading curriculum, emphasize cross curricular IP reading skills						
		IL13 Seek specific help for language teachers						
		1L14 Increasing resources – encourage sharing, find out about and obtain new						
		IL15 Stipulate phases for CoI focus						

Table 5.4.1 Coding Matrix for the Principal

FUNCTIONS (Acts and Utterances – Tone/Mood)	TM1 Nurturing/Affirming Encouraging/Supporting Inclusive Trusting Sympathetic/Empathetic Concerned Protective	TM5 Pleased Proud Satisfied Impressed Grateful/Thankful Relieved Touched/Moved	TM9 Cautious Anxious Tense Worried Stressed Rushed	TM12 Domineering Aggressive
	TM2 Enthusiastic Energetic Excited	TM6 Soothing Calming Reassuring	TM10 Guilty Uncomfortable Embarrassed Shocked	TM13 Cynical Pessimistic Sceptical Critical
	TM3 Positive Optimistic Hopeful Cheerful	TM7 Amused Mischievous	TM11 Dismayed Disillusioned Depressed Disappointed Frustrated Discontent	TM14 Provocative Argumentative Rebellious
	TM4 Emphatic Didactic Confident Determined	TM8 Curious		TM15 Irritated Annoyed

Table 5.4.1 Coding Matrix for the Principal (continued)

To illustrate, I will present vignettes, which show how I worked closely with the data to track my behaviours. (Please note the vignettes are cited according to the transcripts and not the recordings, i.e. that is to show which session they came from, upon which page they appear, and their position in terms of the entire session: e.g. 5:5/23 – i.e. Session 5, page 5 of 23.)

> **Vignette #1 (from 5:5/23)**
> **Bridget:** Look, I think listening to ...
> **Sybil:** And you'll find two out of thirty will get it right.
> **Bridget:** … *[indistinguishable]* is obviously integrated. We're going to tackle reading now, and the next time we start something, we'll tackle the learning outcomes and assessment standards of reading. So we'll tackle ... we'll identify an area that the children are struggling with, and there're many, and basically work on that for a couple of weeks to educate ourselves, but then also to refine what we know so that we are a lot more like … aware of what we actually need to do in our classrooms, you know?
> **Sunni:** But from last week, I think it's important that the Grade 4 teachers meet with the Grade 3 teachers and carry on, especially in the first term, what you still do ...
> **Sybil:** ... what you're revising, what they ending with.
> **Sunni:** Ja. The phonics and the vowels and how they do it, and how they still do it ...
> **Bridget:** Ja. Well, maybe once we've decided what it should look like in Grade 4, you then invite the Grade 3 teachers and you then you will present to them what you expect in Grade 4, and you know ... help them to also lead us through the process of what they do in Grade 3, and then we'll try and blend things together.

In Vignette #1, I play the roles of Instructional Leader, Facilitator, Authority Figure, Mediator and Participant. As an instructional leader, I highlight the fact that the group would try to gain information about children's reading difficulties (IL7). I emphasize the focus on the Intermediate Phase, playing down Junior School dominance (IP10) and then call for a focus on curriculum issues to encourage the refinement of the curriculum, the attempt by the CoI to solve curriculum problems, and to find solutions to the Foundation Phase/Intermediate Phase gap (IL11). I call for a focus on the Intermediate Phase reading curriculum and its redesign by the CoI (IL12). I then explain possible phases through which the CoI could move as they worked on the curriculum (IL15). As a Facilitator, in this vignette, I speak in the plural to communicate and use inclusive language (F3). I explain that as part of the process that teachers would teach each other across the Foundation and Intermediate Phases (F4). I focus and co-ordinate discussions (F6) by calling the group back to attention at the start of the vignette. I also re-iterate a point that was made before, and draw attention to important issues (F7). As an Authority Figure, I make a decisive decision (AF1) about sequencing. In doing this, I prioritise the work of the teachers of the Intermediate Phase (AF2). I support what would be in the best interests of children (AF3). In my actions and utterances, I am assertive, didactic, confident and determined in these utterances (TM4), although these expressions were usually associated with my role as an Authority Figure.

Given my insider knowledge, I realise that to a degree, I was promoting my own agenda concerning my aim that the CoI would redesign the Intermediate Phase reading curriculum (AF6) and playing the role of a Mediator by trying to resolve a dispute between Grade 3 and Grade 4 teachers (M1). I also aimed to neutralise/diffuse tensions and conflict outside the CoI between these parties (M2). I also hoped to provide an alternative point of view by finding where there could be common ground between Grade 3

and Grade 4 teachers (M3). As a Participant, I wanted to convey that I also wished to learn along with the teachers (P1). I also expressed a range of moods and tones with my utterances that may have been both helpful and dominant in the CoI. I was inclusive of all participants, and supportive of their suggestions, and showed concern for them, trusted that they could solve problems, and felt protective over my staff (TM1). I was also hopeful and optimistic that a resolution could be reached (TM3).

At times, I could have been negatively perceived as dominant. I also tried to be reassuring by finding a solution (TM6). I did feel uncomfortable about the dominance of the Junior Phase and tried to prevent this influence (TM10). I did feel frustrated because I wanted the CoI participants to have space for themselves to work out what they wanted before they were dictated to by other teachers (TM11). At this point, it is also evident that I was subject to feelings of irritation and annoyance (TM15).

Vignette #2 (from 14:27, 29/38)

Sunni: But that's where ... I don't know if it's not just the Intermediate Phase that's lacking that, but if I look at the High School, I think they're given a lot more guidance on what's expected ...
Bridget: They are. When we went to that meeting with *[the IEB representative]* and she was supposed to discuss CAT, okay... not CAT, she was supposed to discuss the CAPS *[the new South African 2013 curriculum statement]*, okay? We went to this meeting... all the primary school heads from IEB were there, and she waffled on for an hour and a half, nothing to do with CAPS, and all of us ... at the end … I stood up and said, "I'm sorry, but I'm speaking for everybody here ... we actually came to hear about curriculum in the Prep School. There's nothing available in the Intermediate Phase apart from random textbooks, which again is a preferential thing ... you like this textbook, you like this textbook ..."
Lorraine: Yeah.
Bridget: There is nothing like that available in the Intermediate Phase which is detailed and has subtlety to it and has depth in terms of assessment.
[She continues later]
Mel: That's what I'm saying. Our assessment should be sent from the IEB and that's the level which we should ...
Bridget: And that you know that when you're in Grade 6, you're going to write Grade 6 exams.
[Indistinguishable talking for a short while]
Sunni: But is there no way we can get hold of somebody in the IEB and say to them ...?
Bridget: But no ... what I'm trying to say ... at that meeting *[the representative]* acknowledged then that IEB has neglected primary schools. There is no such thing. IEB has been controlled by high school teachers, and so there's a new forum that's just being developed to develop the primary school curriculum. It's a curriculum development project. But ...
Sunni: But that's not worth it because that's when we get questioned. Meanwhile, your Grade 6s go to Grade 7 in the College, and then the College is like how we question the Junior teachers ... "Why hasn't this ...?" and now they come back to us ... "Well, they should know this and this ..."
Tamika: But how do we know they should know that? You know, that's what we need ...
Bridget: I hear what you're saying, I hear exactly what you're saying.
Violet: That's something very interesting you know with the Art ... um ... I've, I've gone and found out what they should know from the College Art teachers and we had meetings ... and I found out what they should know. Then I went to the ... uh, cluster meeting ... nobody does the theory. They all just paint pictures. Nobody does the theory that I do. For hardly any of them, none of them do exams that I do. I'm telling you … the schools ... I spoke to all of these teachers and they were amazed.
Bridget: There was an initial assessment ... the Grade 7 Shared Assessment. It started with Maths, it started with English, okay? And all the private schools in Jo'burg got together and said, "Listen, we've got to do something about curriculum development." And then we started entering the Shared Assessment things, okay? The process was fraught also with difficulties because you had your ... a lot of the time it was the elite schools that ran those curriculum development things, and then you'd end up writing the tests ... We wrote the tests ... but our kids always did so badly, and even though they said the results were private, you knew that *[our school]* ... because you'd go and you'd mark the tests together and ... you'd end up coming home and thinking, "It's bad".

In Vignette #2 above, I share two related stories with the group about my frustrations in working with the IEB as a principal and as a teacher. The roles that I play are those of Instructional Leader, Colleague, Participant, Authority Figure, Supporter and Facilitator. As an Instructional Leader, I

provide input to the CoI from myself in terms of sharing news and information about the IEB meeting, the curriculum development project, Grade 7 Shared Assessment and information about the IEB in general (IL1). I share my expertise and knowledge in this (IL1). In my discussions, my emphasis as an instructional leader in the Intermediate Phase is apparent (IL11). I also call attention to the predominance of text-book dependence as resources in the Intermediate Phase to guide teaching (IL14). My main agenda here was to encourage the focus on the Intermediate Phase curriculum and its refinement, and attempts to solve its difficulties (IL11). As a Colleague of the participants, I wanted to share about my general personal teaching experiences (C2), and to reflect on my personal Intermediate Phase teaching experience as an English educator. I also wanted to agree with, and affirm, the teachers' experiences as a colleague (C4). As a Participant, my main agenda here was to share my personal issues and stories about working with the curriculum (P2). By correcting my mistake about CAT/CAPS, I also show that I was also susceptible to making mistakes (P1). As a supporter of participants, I strongly affirm what Tamika contributed (S1). As an Authority Figure, by relating a story where I asserted my authority, I show my protectiveness of Intermediate Phase staff and principals who struggle with the Intermediate Phase curriculum (AF2), as well as assert my authority as a principal (AF4). I also show protectiveness towards the children who struggled in the Shared Assessments (AF3). By focusing strongly here in this discussion on my agenda of the lack of definition of in the Intermediate Phase curriculum, I asserted my own agenda as a principal (AF6). In this vignette as a facilitator, I also co-ordinate the discussion around IEB curricular issues (IF6). I also draw attention to a particular issue (F7). In this segment, I also showed that I had listened to participants (F9). Again, there was a range of emotions displayed by me in this vignette, which had particular functions. I was affirming of participants (TM1). I also displayed my assertiveness, was didactic in my tone, and my determination as a principal to find answers (TM4). I showed my anxiety, tension, worry, and stress related to being a principal trying to find answers and hoping to find them through the IEB, as well as about the Intermediate Phase curriculum (TM9). I also conveyed my embarrassment and shock at the poor results of the school's learners in the IEB Grade 7 Shared Assessments (TM10). Many of my utterances in this vignette portray my feelings of dismay, disillusionment, depression, disappointment, frustration and discontent as a principal and as a teacher working with the curriculum in various ways (TM11). I also showed that I was cynical, pessimistic, and sceptical of the confidentiality of the assessment results (TM13). In this story, I convey my personal irritations and annoyances with the IEB (IM15).

The vignettes related to me as principal all had to be measured according to a specific question: does my conduct enable or constrain the CoI? My frustrations and feelings of powerlessness may have evoked in the participants similar feelings and alarm. I do provide them with information that makes it clear that there are no easy solutions to the problem and looking to the IEB for answers is not necessarily, from my experience, going to provided answers. Participants may also have felt justified and supported that

their principal felt the same as they did, shared their experience, and understood where they were coming from. In fact, the vignettes convey that there is a tension between my conduct being both enabling (even when I am negative), as well as possibly constraining the group.

In a similar vein, as researcher, I also had to find a way of reducing the data related to the CoI teachers in order to explore their roles, agendas, utterances and whether their conduct enabled or constrained the CoI. Table 5.4.2 presents the coding matrix for the teachers.

ROLES	EDUCATORS	PARTICIPANTS	EXPER0 TS	NOVICES/ NEW TEACHERS	'AGGRIEVED' – (Venting about Challenges)	COLLEAGUE
	TE1 Curriculum Designers - Working with the curriculum – planning, revising, assessing	TP1 To confront issues	TEX1 Sharing about experience with alternative curricula/at other schools	TN1 Sharing about dissonance, uncertainty, fears	TAG1 Venting where wronged by parents – share negative experiences of dismissive, apathetic, attacking, questioning parents	TC1 Empathize/sympathize with colleagues
	TE2 Try to find solutions for the FP/IP gap	TP2 Share and create new resources	TEX2 Share knowledge about teaching, learning, content – share what works	TN2 Share experiences of new teaching context	TAG2 Venting about poor curriculum - lack of specifications, too many tests, government lack of support, IEB lack of support,	TC2 Find and explain ways of working with colleagues in CoI and at school
	TE3 Be Child-Centred - work with children, identify and solve their problems, making sure they are at the correct level they need to be, remediating and providing extra support, making sure they experience success, creative fun at school	TP3 Find out about and obtain more resources for teachers and children	TEX3 Share detailed reading instruction skills/methodology	TN3 Sharing about where they would like to know more/lack of skills/knowledge/training	TAG3 Venting about lack of Resources – not available, too expensive, inappropriate content, too text-book dominant, poor textbooks, sceptical of publishers, school library not adequate, too great a variety of reading schemes and methods, lack of reading scheme in IP	TC3 Find and make cross-subject connections with colleagues
	TE4 Work with Resources – textbooks, everyday texts, alternative curricula guidelines/policies	TP4 Make suggestions for new practice, improvements to school	TEX4 Emphasise knowledge of the cross-curricular nature of reading	TN4 Where they are making mistakes/finding faults in own practice	TAG4 Venting about lack of pre-service and in-service training/where they do not know what to do as teachers	TC4 Find and make inter-departmental connections/ connections with teachers in higher and lower grades
	TE5 Work with Parents – providing support, information, 'teaching' them	TP5 Find out how to assess reading difficulties and support children with reading problems, Grade 4 learners	TEX5 Emphasizing knowledge of detailed Foundation skills (and rich background) of children – learning to read	TN5 Seeking verification/mentorship	TAG5 Venting about lack of Foundation skills being instilled in learners by FP	TC5 Sharing stories to support/illustrate colleagues' points
AGENDAS (Intentions)	TE6 Work with therapists and other educational support systems	TP6 Find out more about the FP and IP curriculum	TE6 Providing mentorship to novices		TAG6 Venting about the wide gap between Grade 3 and Grade 4	TC6 Affirm, praise colleagues
	TE7 Use technology in practice	TP6 Find out more about Intermediate Phase Reading Skills – teach it in English, support it in other learner areas	TEX7 Share detailed knowledge of IP Reading Skills – reading to learn – comprehension, fluency, using contextual clues, skimming, scanning, paraphrasing, vocabulary, etc.		TAG7 Venting about where children's difficulties have not been remediated in Foundation Phase	TC7 Reassure colleagues
	TE8 Aspirations/Seek job satisfaction – creative, empowered, authoritative	TP7 Share stories about children's difficulties, needs	TEX8 Making detailed and insightful mention of problems in children and parents/cultural/socio-economic deficiencies/differences		TAG8 Venting and indignant for children who have been 'let down' by the system	TC8 Be light-hearted
	TE9 Try to teach skills and habits effectively	TP8 Share stories about how they practice – methodology	TEX9 Independent integrator and creator of resources		TAG 9 Vent about added pressures on Grade 4 teachers	TC9 Express support for colleagues, agree with colleagues
	TE10 Try to provide specialised support to Grade 4 learners	TP9 Share stories about working with parents	TEX10 Subject specialist expertise – language or non-language		TAG10 Express shock at level of problems in IP learners	TC10 Build alliances
	TE11 Aim to reinforcing Foundation skills	TP10 Share stories/information about pre-service training/prior experiential knowledge				TC11 Build friendships
		TP11 Share stories/information about in-service training				TC12 Be helpful

		TP12 Find out how to instil/inspire in children a love for reading				TC13 Be resourceful
		TP13 To teach each other – share news, information, demonstrate methodology				TC14 Help/support the principal – through participation, caution, alert, information, suggest changes in administration, suggest more resources
		TP14 To give other views/express different opinions				
		TP15 Contextualise curricular and other South African problems				
		TP16 Develop as professionals - explain/share growth/change in practice/new successes				
		TP17 Facilitate discussions				
		TP18 Become more empowered/authoritative				
		TP19 Find out how to work with parents				
FUNCTIONS (Acts and Utterances – Tone/Mood)	TTM1 Nurturing/Friendly Affirming/Encouraging Inclusive Supportive Trusting Sympathetic/Empathetic Concerned Protective	TTM5 Pleased Proud Accomplished Satisfied Impressed Grateful/Thankful Relieved Touched/Moved	TTM8 Nervous Anxious Tense Worried Stressed Rushed Insecure	TTM12 Irritated Annoyed Indignant		
	TTM2 Enthusiastic Energetic Excited Rejuvenated	TTM6 Amused Mischievous	TTM9 Dismayed Disillusioned Depressed Disappointed Frustrated Discontent Tired	TTM13 Intimidated Overwhelmed Powerless Inadequate Abandoned Ignored		
	TTM3 Positive Optimistic Hopeful Cheerful	TTM7 Curious	TTM10 Ashamed Uncomfortable Embarrassed	TTM14 Humiliated Judged Condemned		
	TTM4 Assertive Didactic Confident Determined Forthright Certain		TTM11 Cynical Pessimistic Sceptical Critical	TTM15 Anger Disgust Shock		

Table 5.4.2 Coding Matrix for the Teachers

I will now present two vignettes to illustrate how I used the coding matrix for the CoI participants as outlined in Table 5.4.2. Please note that these vignettes are rather lengthy, but they do convey the intense dynamic between participants and the ways in which they expressed their roles, agendas, and functions. In Vignette #3, Margaret, a Foundation Phase teacher at the school, with over 40 years teaching experience in teaching children to read, had been asked to present to the CoI teachers how to do paired reading, shared reading and guided reading. Sybil, the Junior Head was facilitating the workshop, as I had unexpectedly taken ill.

Vignette #3 (from 8:5,6/15)

Sunni: *[Speaking of wanting to read aloud to the children]* But there's no time! *[In the Intermediate Phase curriculum]*
Maxine: But last year, when I used to read to the Grade 4s, I got complaints from more than one parent: "Why are you reading to the Grade 4s?" *[Indistinguishable talking]*
Lorraine: You know, I'm used to having a text every week, but there are texts here ... I haven't got any in my classroom! And I'm used to planning, like this, week by week ...
Sybil: But Lorraine, that's why it's more important that you stay in this Phase for more than a year or so ... just to help Margaret ... to use your expertise in guiding ... *[The Grade 4 teachers]*
Lorraine: Yeah, but I feel like I don't know what I'm doing, because I've gone from them just 'learning to read' to missing a chunk! *[Referring to her own jump from teaching Reception in the UK to Grade 5 in South Africa]*
Sybil: Yes.
Lorraine: So I haven't got those skills!
Mel: 1, 2, and 3, ja. *[Meaning the Grades Lorraine skipped teaching]*
Sybil: Yes, the middle bit, hmm.
Lorraine: Maybe with a bit more time, but I don't feel that I've got ... I've gone from 5 to Grade 5!
Sybil: Yes. From age 5 to Grade 5.
Lorraine: From 5 to 11! And I'm trying to work out ...
Margaret: I will say that we feel ... the Foundation Phase feels ... that Grade 4 lets our weak ones slip through the ... and it's not only here. It's not only at this school. Please don't think it's just ... it's just the Grade 4 teachers ...
Mel: It's just such a big jump, that's why!
Margaret: And half the teachers don't have the skills ... I understand it! I understand it! I understand it!
Maxine: And half the thing ... the pressure ... the pressure on the Grade 4 teachers! It's like ridiculous! When they *[the children]* come to first term, they don't have any of the skills to cope with Grade 4.
Sybil: But that's why we need to close this gap.
Sunni: But something's also slipping through because we've picked up, in Grade 4, problems that should've been corrected already ... early.
Margaret: But you must tell us! Because, I mean, they do group reading, and they... I mean they *[the Foundation teachers]* are worried about the bottom fifth *[the weaker readers]*.
Maxine: Like, I got attacked by a parent because I said to them that their child has a reading difficulty. And they said, "How is that possible? My child has been at *[this school]* since pre-school!"
Margaret: You see we don't make it ... um ... we don't advertise the group *[the level the child is in]*. Like I change my markers ... last week you were in the red group, now this week, when the marker's worn out, you go in the blue group. Nobody knows ...
Maxine: Ja, but in Grade 4 ...
Margaret: Ja, but they *[the Grade 3 teachers]* will send it up to you.
Maxine: … in Grade 4, it's very important that they have those skills, and if they don't, we need to be informed that they don't! But I get kids, and – for all my knowledge – they can read, and then the ... the ... and then what Grade 4 demands of them, reading wise, in all subjects, they can't cope! And then I have to break the news to the parent that their child's not coping …
Margaret: Ja, but another thing we did …
Maxine: ... and I get attacked by the parents! *[Margaret and Sybil continue to talk for a while about what teachers do in the Foundation Phase]*
Lorraine: But, what you're saying is that I've never made a child aware of what their ability is, but surely you should be telling those Grade 3 parents that they're not at a level …?
Margaret: I think that parents ... I'm not certain what to … they do here, but I do know that, um ...
Sybil: They are tested. All our parents *[means children]* are tested in the Junior Phase. They know exactly what age-level they're on.
Margaret: They are.
Mel: I mean that will show in their report?
Maxine: That information never gets relayed to us! So how do their parents know?
[There is a lot of concurrent talking here about how the parents don't hear about the children's reading age]
Tamika: Well, one of my students told me her reading age is 6. My Grade 6s! She said, "I'm at a 6 year old" ... uh!
Sybil: Ja, but it might have been somebody I tested ... *[Sybil also provides remedial support]*

Maxine: But for me it's vitally important that the parents are aware that their child is not coping!
Sybil: But then what I was saying to Sunni is that what we need to do, maybe, is that we need to meet very soon with the Grade 3 teachers and the Grade 4 teachers. We need to make Term 1 of Grade 4 a bridging term. We limit the subjects. We don't need to do all of them. We introduce an extra one or two and adapt our timetable for the first term to make it a bridging term. From Term 2, go into a regular timetable, which has given you a term to prepare a bit.
Maxine: I think also Grade 3 also needs to be …!
Sybil: Ja, but that's why we need to work with the Grade 3s ... it was to make the final term of 3 a bridging, where we start maybe introducing some of those subjects on an informal basis.
Mel: So the half-term of the first term *[of Grade 4]* maybe ... you can ...?
Sybil: Ja.
Margaret: I was going to say that your first term ...
Sybil: You adapt your timetable.
Margaret: ... should be a revision of the whole of the last year. That's basically... *[Indistinguishable concurrent talking with lots of frustrations expressed about the Intermediate Phase curriculum requirements]* ... But then you've got to cut it down! *[The Grade 4 curriculum]* You've got to cut it down because, you know what? You're not proving anything by giving the children what's above them because they can't do it! So they've got to cut you down! Because you can't pile on work if we can't understand it!
Maxine: But we always start with the easiest section first!
Margaret: Well, that's good.
Maxine: But we have to do that! I can't! It is almost impossible to recap the whole of Grade 3 and not start Grade 4 work!
Sybil: No, no, no! It's the skills you need to keep going, because they want your skills, not information!
Margaret: And we can't teach everything! *[Foundation Phase teachers]* We can't teach them!
[The situation is now somewhat tense so Margaret changes the subject and moves on to the next part of her presentation]

In Vignette #3 above, the participants play the roles of Educator, Participant, Colleague, Expert, and 'Aggrieved'. The latter pertains to when the teachers particularly vent their frustrations around specific challenges that they face and where they feel that they are victimised or let down in some way. As educators, they share how they have independently tried to find solutions to the significant gap between Grade 3 and Grade 4 (TE2). They also share how they have worked with parents and stress the importance of working as educators with parents (TE5). As a participant, Mel particularly makes suggestions about making changes to practice (TP4). As Experts they assert their knowledge – Lorraine in particular shares about her experience with the UK curriculum (TEX1). They emphasize that Foundation skills in children are required before their commencing with the Intermediate Phase (TEX5). They are also able to share expertly about the IP curriculum and what is required therein (TEX2), and the cross-curricular importance of reading (TEX4) in the Intermediate Phase. They are also show expertise with regard to the details of IP reading skills (TEX7). In this vignette, the participant teachers also conduct themselves in a manner as 'Aggrieved' persons. They express many frustrations about the challenges that leave them feeling a range of negative emotions. Such challenges are when parents have been particularly difficult to work with (TAG1). They also vent about aspects of the poor curriculum (TAG2). They also express dismay that they do not have enough resources to work with in the classroom (TAG3). They also express a sense of dismay that they do not have the required pre-service and in-service training in order to know how what to do as teachers (TAG4). They express concern that Foundation skills are not properly reinforced in learners before they get to Grade 4 (TAG5). They also express frustration about the wide gap that exists between Grade 3 and 4 – particularly in the communication between teachers of those phases (TAG6). They are angry that Foundation Phase teachers have not remediated children's difficulties or reported them sufficiently so that these could be

seen to earlier (TAG7). This places undue pressure on Grade 4 teachers (TAG9). Tamika particularly expresses her shock at the poor level of reading skills in IP learners (TAG10). In the face of all these difficulties, the teachers try to support one another and behave as Colleagues. In this vignette in particular, they express their support for colleagues and agree with them (TC9) by adding their own ideas. Each of these utterances was expressed with a particular tone or mood, which had a particular function. The moods and tones of the participants expressed in this vignette were varied, and because they were expressing their frustrations, most of the tone and mood was negative. When they were being collegial, they did so with tones and moods that were supportive and sympathetic (TTM1). There were times when they were assertive, didactic, and forthright (TTM4). They were particularly nervous, anxious, tense, worried, stressed, rushed and insecure (TTM8). They were also often dismayed, disillusioned, disappointed, frustrated, and discontent (TTM9). They even expressed stronger emotions of being ashamed, uncomfortable, and embarrassed – particularly when having to work with difficult parents (TTM10). They were also critical (TTM11). They were certainly irritated, annoyed and indignant (TTM12). They did feel intimidated, overwhelmed, powerless, and inadequate (TTM13). They felt particularly humiliated, judged and condemned by difficult parents (TTM14). They also expressed anger and shock – the latter particularly by Tamika about her Grade 6 learner's lack of reading skills (TTM15).

The vignettes related to the teachers also all had to be measured according to a specific question: did their conduct enable or constrain the CoI? Despite the fact that they expressed many negative emotions, in actual fact their conduct and sharing was a very powerful tool for me in my role and provided much insight into where the participants were. It also allowed for them to feel as if they were free and able to speak their minds in the hopes that problems would begin to be addressed. Further to this, in their support of one another, there was a sense of shared identity, shared meaning, and collegiality, which assisted in building the community aspects of the CoI.

Vignette #4 has been selected to show the reader how the coding matrix for teachers was applied to an episode where participants were working together constructively to design their own Intermediate Phase '*Habits of Effective Reading*' posters.

Vignette #4 (from 15:9/44)
Mel: You know what I mean? It's for the kids.
Maxine: Ja but...
Mel: It's not for us to know what they're going to have to know in Grade 6.
Maxine: Ja, but it's for us to point out to the kids ... this is what you're learning. So in Grade 6 they're going to be learning ... um ... they've already learnt this. They're going to be learning how to use the text to identify the topic instead of using the topic to understand the text.
Tamika: So instead of Maxine saying in Grade 4, "Right, today our topic is ... we can see it says 'Dogs'", and then going through each paragraph with them ... by the time they get to Grade 6, we should be able to say, '"Okay, let's look at paragraph one and find common words,'" and they should be saying it without ...
Maxine: 'Cause if this poster's up in the classroom and Tamika says, "Today we're learning about topic'", this is too simple for a Grade 6. We need one thing that extends the Grade 6.
Lorraine: I ... I don't like it. I think it's too general. I think it should be more ...
Maxine: That's why I'm saying it needs to be more specific, surely.

Lorraine: Like you've got your stories, and then you'd build on everything that you would use to deal with learning about stories. You'd deal with ...
Mel: What I understood it is that you're trying to get the kids ... you've taught the kids about 'Topic' ... how to find it, all of that. This isn't to help you teach them, this is for when the kid is doing work by themselves and they forget about topic, where they look up at the poster and they say to themselves, '"Oh yes! I need to do this this and this."
Bridget: Exactly.
Mel: So if you write what we said about Grade 6s need to use the text to find the topic, it's not going to help them in any way. Like ...
Bridget: This is just a visual reminder up in our classroom ...
Tamika: Right.
Bridget: ... that if a child is stuck and they think, "How do I skim? ... Oh, okay, that's how I skim. I first do that, then I … dah, dah. How do I find the main topic? Oh, okay, that's what I do."
Mel: It's not skills that we are going to teach them. It's how they're going to remember ...
Tamika: Well, this is to remind themselves.
Mel: Yes, remind them.

In this vignette, participants' roles were Educator, Participant, Expert and Colleague. As educators, they emphasise the need to be child-centred (TE3). They also discuss how they would work with the curriculum in terms of sequencing (TE1). They also show how they would work with resources in their classrooms (TE4). They show a consciousness about effectively teaching habits and skills (TE9). They are also aware as educators that they needed to provide special support to Grade 4 learners (as well as Grade 6s) (TE10). As CoI participants, they are very active. They are involved in creating a new resource for the classroom (TP2). They are actively making suggestions for new practice (TP4). They also want to teach/demonstrate to each other particular ways of working with the posters (TP13). They are particularly involved in giving alternative points of view (TP14). They show that they had become more empowered and authoritative as educators (TP18). As Experts, they confidently share their knowledge about teaching in the Intermediate Phase (TEX2). They share more detailed knowledge of IP reading skills (TEX7). In their role as Colleagues, the teachers are particularly supportive of one another's ideas (TC9) and try to find points of agreement (TC9) and build alliances between each other (TC10). They are trying to be helpful towards one another (TC12), as well as resourceful (TC13). The moods and tones of the participants conveyed the functions of their utterances were to be affirming and supportive (TTM1), positive (TTM3), assertive, forthright, didactic, and determined (TTM4).

In this vignette, in particular we see how the CoI participants learned to work together, to share meaning, and to be confident about their knowledge of Intermediate Phase reading. Their conduct in this episode certainly provided positive impetus to the CoI.

5.5 Conclusion to Chapter 5

This chapter revisited the aims of this study: the research intended to assess whether development took place in the CoI or not, and to what extent, if any, did it benefit the teachers in their professional development, the principal as an instructional leader, and in building Community of Inquiry at the school with a focus on improving reading instruction and practice. Extensive data emerged from the CoI sessions. Data reduction methods were applied to make sense, draw patterns out of, and bring the

data into a relationship, to begin to fulfil the aims of the research. This chapter described the methods used to reduce the data using Grounded Theory methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1987; Henning, et al., 2002; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A short overview of Grounded Theory methods was described. It was then explained how Grounded Theory methods were applied to the data. The process entailed two phases of coding – one broad and the other more refined. These processes were explained and detailed in coding matrix tables and examples of how these were applied to vignettes were shown. The codes that emerged were specifically centred around measuring how the conduct and content of the CoI either enabled or constrained the development of the teachers and myself as principal.

Chapter 6 of this report will present a narrative analysis based on the coded data as a means to reintegrate this data to show the development of the community over time.

Chapter Six: Narrative Description and Analysis of the Process of the CoI

6.1 Introduction to Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of this report will present a narrative description and analysis based on the coded data as a means to reconstitute this data to show the development of the CoI over time. It will be organised according to four main themes that try to capture the unfolding process of the CoI. The first is to introduce and illustrate the evidence of what the participants brought to the CoI in its establishment phase, as well as the particular challenges that substantiated the formation of the CoI. Secondly, an overall picture needs to be drawn together of the evidence that illustrates the affordances that the community created. Thirdly, evidences of the constraints that impinged the CoI need to be investigated, and finally, the CoI needs to be measured in terms of whether there was development therein over time or not. The research question was to assess whether development took place in the CoI, and to what extent, if any, did it benefit the teachers in their professional development, the principal as an instructional leader, and in building a Community of Inquiry at the school with a focus on improving reading instruction and practice in the IP.

6.2 Establishing the CoI: Participants' Challenges and Resources

This section aims to describe the particular challenges that substantiated the formation of the CoI. It also will outline the resources that were utilized and discussed in these establishment meetings. In other words: how does the evidence show why the CoI was established and what did the teachers have to solve their problems?

6.2.1 Participants' Challenges

Why start at this point? The reason for this is that these challenges are the touch-points – the windows into the participants' dominant preoccupations as expressed in the CoI, the issues with which they experienced the most difficulties or frustrations, and the reasons for which the CoI was established (the 'Aggrieved' data from TAG 1-10, Table 5.4.2). From these extensive sketches, as researcher, I could obtain a sense of the characters of each participant and the dynamic, interactive nature of the community as it inquired into its practice. The data revolved around exchanges between participants (using exchanges as units of analysis rather than individuals (Curry, 2008)), which gave insight into the preoccupations of the CoI individuals and how they negotiated meaning around that theme.

Vignette #3, as presented in the previous chapter, is one such example. In it, we see many challenges of teachers compounding at once. These challenges – and others – appeared fairly regularly in the CoI sessions: the difficulties of working with parents; the inappropriateness or lack of reading resources for the Intermediate Phase; the immense gap between the Grade 3 and 4 curriculum and, most intensely, in

communication and continuity between the teachers of those Grades (the lack of understanding by the teachers of those phases of the expectations inherent in Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase); the poor remediation and lack of informing parents of children with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase; the intense pressure Grade 4 teachers experience when trying to match children, who are ill-prepared, to meet a very demanding Grade 4 curriculum; the sense of frustration teachers feel at not being adequately prepared to teach in the Intermediate Phase (some of them actually being Junior trained themselves); the vagueness of the curriculum's specifications; the frustrations at not having enough time to reinforce skills or to go slower and experience a sense of enjoyment in the Intermediate Phase because of its fullness. Ten days later, in Session 9, when the teachers reported back to me what had happened in Vignette #3, they were still smarting from the previous session. Sunni said the group felt a "bit offended" that Margaret had assumed, and implied on behalf of the other Foundation Phase teachers, that they were letting the Grade 4s " … fall through the gaps – the ones that aren't coping. …" (9:1/25). There was some frustration again at the suggestion that the first term of Grade 4 be a revision of Grade 3, particularly in the light of the demands of the Grade 4 curriculum, as expressed by Maxine: "Ja, … and I don't see why we should be working backwards. … We do revise …" (9:3/25). The teachers felt that they were trying to put systems in place to deal with weaker children in Grade 4. However, they were concerned that children's reading difficulties had not been identified and remediated earlier while they were still in the Foundation Phase, and that parents had not been informed about their children's difficulties. They expressed despair about the vulnerable position this put them in when trying to give feedback to parents when they picked up difficulties in Grade 4. Maxine stated: "I said that's not fair, because when they get to Grade 4, all of a sudden it's a surprise that their child isn't going to cope" (9:3/25). They were disheartened that Margaret had challenged them about the choice of setwork reader in Grade 4 (*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl). They felt that Margaret was a brilliant Foundation Phase educator, but that " … she hasn't looked at the broader picture of where we actually are and what we need … where we … where we need to be in Grade 4" (9:2/25). Sunni further stated: "And we said it's not our job in Grade 4 to be teaching these children how to read" (9:2/25). Maxine added:

> **Maxine:** Ja, … we've got all these other learning areas … that we don't do literacy and numeracy all day … English is one part of the syllabus … so … in English … we … we um, teach them how to use their skills that they've really … really developed in Foundation Phase. We teach them how to use them so that in their other learning areas they can cope. And they can do all the things they're supposed to do in their other learning areas. But if they don't have the … foundationary [sic] skills … it makes our job even harder because I cannot sit with someone who can't read the whole of English … um … and then … try with them in HSS *[Human and Social Sciences]* and then Sunni is … try with them in NS *[Natural Science]*.

The mention of challenges of working with children with reading difficulties, as well as working with parents, to improve reading practices in the Intermediate Phase, occurred throughout the CoI sessions. Maxine, the Grade 4 language teacher told many stories of the children who struggled to read in her class. This was also true of Tamika, the Grade 6 English educator, but it also spread to the other learning areas and emphasised how important this skill was across the board for all learning in the

Intermediate Phase. Children – even bright children – struggling to read questions correctly, or to follow written instructions, especially when it came to critical assessment points such as exams, was a source of anxiety for the teachers. It also meant spending valuable teaching time continuously repeating things until children could follow. The lack in children of ingrained, foundational literacy skills concurrent to reading, and which also support the learning process, such as listening, was also a problem for teachers.

> **Vignette #5 (from 6:1/23)**
> **Mel:** I mean, just now, like I had Maths now, and we're reading timetables and stuff and that and calendars, and it says: "Write how many, what the day is, and the date". And they'll say, "Do I have to write the day and date?" *[Lorraine sighs loudly]* And I'm like ... *[said with exasperation]* "READ the question carefully!" and then they read and they're like, "Oh, ja!"

> **Vignette #6 (from 6:16/23)**
> **Maxine:** *[To Sunni]* Remember what we did for one of our exams? We gave them the list of instructions on how to make a tuna mayonnaise sandwich, all jumbled up, and they had to put them in the correct order. Some people were cutting the bread *[She demonstrates cutting the completed sandwich]* before they put the tuna on it! Or they were putting the mayonnaise ... um ... *[Sybil talks for a while]* And I gave them a recipe 'cause we're doing food. I gave them a recipe as a comprehension … it was a recipe and I asked like, like, I asked: "What was … What is the first step in the recipe?" And the variation in answers was ridiculous! *[Some conversation ensues]* … and then, in the question it says: "What did you have to do first?" I get like this whole thing *[demonstrates the children writing]* "Cut the cookies"! *[Everyone laughs]* So I was like, "No!" I say, "You have to make the cookies before you can cut them!"

Maxine shared anecdotes about how some children could read fluently, but had no comprehension of the texts they were reading.

> **Vignette #7 (from 9:5/25)**
> **Maxine:** Well, you must see this one child read. She reads with such expression, but all in the wrong places. Like, you can see she's trying her hardest to make ... make herself sound fluent and everything ... She might be the most expressive reader in Grade 4, but she's talking about the guy died next to the road, and she's like *[in a happy, lilting voice]*: "The guy DIED ... NEXT TO ... the ROAD!"

> **Vignette #8 (from 11:3/17)**
> **Maxine:** She doesn't follow punctuation at all and she does not understand one word she's reading.
> **Bridget:** Shame.
> **Maxine:** Not one word, because you know the other day when I did unprepared reading with them, with Tamika's rubric, I asked them ... then I closed the book and said, "Quickly, tell me five things that happened!" And the child, … only read that much, hey? Like 5 lines ... 6 lines. Very detailed though ... like it was about ... um ... James sitting on the hill chopping wood, thinking about all the other children who are on the beach playing while he's doing hard labour, you know? "Okay, what did you read about?" And there's even a picture on the page, so even if you used ... *[contextual clues]* she could have used that ... Closed the book ... "What did you read about?" And she just said, "Oh, I can't remember." That's what she said!
> **Bridget:** Oh shame.
> **Maxine:** "I can't remember"! Five lines!

At times, when teachers described problems and challenges of learners, they imitated the way in which some of the children behaved, which caused some laughter. This was done without identifying or belittling specific children, as this was neither permitted by the school's code of conduct for teachers, nor by the shared ethics of the group. It was my impression that perhaps the teachers' addition of humour into the relaying of their anecdotes and illustrations could have been a means to seek collegial empathy, lighten the mood and relieve their stress about learners' difficulties. The following vignette is a good example:

> **Vignette #9 (from 6:9,10/23)**
> **Maxine:** Ja. So I read the story with them, and then I ask them – and they've got the passage in front of them – "What do you think this idiom means? … By using the contextual present …?" And they struggle! Even then,

when I try and explain to them what it means, they're like, “Ohhh ...” they'll say …. *[Puts on a teacher voice]* “Okay ... now here's a few more idioms in context. You write what you … in normal English … what that means. So, if I say ‘It's raining cats and dogs’, tell me in your own words what that means.” … And it was like a joke! *[Exasperated]* They struggled so much! Even when I told them, “Okay, it means it's raining very hard outside ... now you write it,” … and they're like ... one kid wrote that cats and dogs were falling out the sky! *[Exasperated]* … I'm like, “Does that make any sense? Any sense!” *[now quite upset]*
Sybil: Ja, well, you know, it's raining cats and dogs because they've just stepped into a poodle! *[There is laughter at this]* You see, it's so out of their ...
Maxine: But even like ... there are such huge contextual clues! And they were like no clue. And I was like, “You have no clue? Absolutely no clue?” They're like, “But we've never heard it before.” I'm like, “I know, but we have context here to help us understand it!”
Sybil: Are you all only knitting with one needle? *[There is laughter at this]* … not the brightest *Smartie* in the box ... The lights are on but no one’s home … *[Much laughter and banter]*
Violet: It all has to do with imagination.
Maxine: Exactly.
Violet: They have to … *[Very difficult to hear what Violet says here, but she speaks about having creative games outside as younger children and their poor language skills]*
Maxine: Ja. We're also doing food, so we're doing lots of food idioms ... so then like, I've gone through all of these examples and then I get kids saying, “Most of them have pie in them.“ *[There is much laughter at Maxine’s expression]* They really struggled!

Working with parents to foster good literacy practices – especially strong reading skills – in their children was another source of challenge for the CoI teachers. Concern in anecdotes ranged from describing over-prescriptive, to absent or indifferent parents. Teachers were equally concerned for children who had no parents with whom to read at home – especially the boarders at the school. Violet expressed great concern at how important it was to get the children to love reading so that they would become life-long readers; in the vignette below, teachers express their impressions of indifferent parents:

Vignette #10 (from 12:12,13/29)
Bridget: Our first Parent's Evening I think is going to be that first Thursday night, that first Thursday night of term. And let's focus on reading then that night. We'll orientate the parents to Grade 4, 5, and 6, and the calendar and whatever, but then we'll teach them how to do reading with their children.
Tamika: And emphasize ... I mean, because when the one parent came and: “Oh, am I supposed to be reading this with my child?” And you know, *[mimics parent absolving themself]* “Can't she come to you to read for half an hour after school?” I was like, “For goodness sake, lady!”
Maxine: But it's obvious that the parents don't know ... And like even ... you’re hassled with the one child's parents when I tried to explain to them that a child ... their child can't read, but that's it ... *[The father says]* “I listen to her every night. She *[the child]* waffles on.” That's because yes, he's busy doing his own thing while she's busy going mahlalalah! And he assumes she's reading fluently ... he signs her reading card ... she's done her reading for the day! *[Bridget speaks briefly]*
Lorraine: But also, part of your gap is when they... when they're young ... all my *[UK]* books have things to do in the back to help you. It says, ‘*For You and Your Parents*’. Read this. Stop on page 2. Find this word. What do you think's going to happen? You come here *[to South Africa]* and you've got none of that support. So almost like if you could educate parents almost with the resource to go with it, then you'd get lots more.

Vignette #11 (14:8/38)
Tamika: I mean, I just like... it makes me so sad how so many parents just do not like get involved with that side of things. And I mean I can remember sitting with my parents reading everyday kind of thing, and like, you know ... it was things ... *Richard Scary* ... I don't know if you know what ... and there'd be little pictures of the worm, and my dad would say, “Find the *Smarties* on the page,” and there's a robot with a ‘bloop, bloop, bloop’. And, you know, just that interaction with books and stuff ... and like I just wish we could slap it into some of these parents *[said with frustration]* ... so that ...
Bridget: The most incredible quote I read last year was that a child who reads with a parent doesn't learn to read, the child learns that it's loved. And I was like, “Wow!”
Tamika: Well, exactly ... because mom and dad are taking the time out to do something ... ja.

Maxine, Lorraine and Violet reported in Session 9 and 11 of a particularly distressing experience Maxine had had with parents who were angry with her for referring their child for a reading assessment early in Grade 4. Primarily due to this experience, Maxine’s confidence had been impeded, and she expressed nervousness about having to confront parents – something very daunting for a novice teacher:

"And the thing is, like I just don't do well with the parents at parent's evening" (6:22/23). The child's reading was also fluent, but strikingly without comprehension. Maxine and Lorraine were appalled that this had not been picked up and remediated in the child's Foundation Phase years, but more so that this problem had not been communicated to the child's parents. After Session 8, the teachers had gone to verify this with the Grade 3 teachers who acknowledged that they did not give parents the reading marks of their children, and that they were aware that the child had comprehension difficulties. The referred parents were absolutely adamant that Maxine was wrong, that their child was a fluent reader and she a bad teacher. The parents did eventually take their child for assessments with a recommended reading programme, as well as the school's educational psychologist. Both therapists relayed to Maxine that they had picked up a problem, but could not let her see the reports without parental consent. After Maxine repeatedly asked for feedback, the parents admitted that the assessments had picked up a difficulty, but refused to allow Maxine access to the feedback reports and stated that they did not feel they agreed with them. Maxine stated that, because of this, she felt her hands were tied as she hoped the reports would help her understand how to help the child with reading in class. No report was ever forthcoming. On other occasions, teachers mentioned other such cases of parents whose children displayed reading difficulties and were informed, but then avoided or refused to co-operate with Intermediate Phase teachers (Violet said this was also the case in her Foundation Phase experience too.)

An issue that caused further frustrations was that teachers felt ill-prepared in their pre-service training to teach in the Intermediate Phase. This ranged from a general feeling that they could not cope at all with class teaching and preferred subject teaching. For the purposes of this study, it was concerning that teachers felt at a loss specifically to teach reading in the Intermediate Phase.

> **Vignette #12 (from 6:21,22/23)**
> **Maxine:** And I think the biggest gap comes with the reading section 'cause the reading section's the only section that an Intermediate Phase teacher's not really trained in.
> **Sybil:** Ja. Reading and spelling.
> **Maxine:** We're trained in the writing, in the thinking and reasoning ... in the um ...
> **Bridget:** Even in listening we're trained in.
> **Sybil:** Ja. That's the reason, so that's the reason why we need to …
> **Maxine:** Ja. We're trained in everything except reading! Like for me, it is so difficult when I come across a child who is battling with their reading! I don't know what to do with them because I don't have the ... the skills ...
> **Sybil:** Ja, okay.
> **Maxine:** … to identify the problem. I know there's a problem. It's clear there's a problem. I cannot pinpoint it and, even if I can, I've got no clue about how to go about fixing it!

At times, throughout the course of the sessions, teachers expressed frustrations about the lack and inappropriateness of reading resources for the Intermediate Phase. Lorraine stated: "But you're also incredibly restricted by your resources in this country! Like in England, I've got a school of resources …" (14:36/38). Inappropriateness of the foci of cluster meetings, and attending workshops that promised much but delivered little, caused a sense of disillusionment (10:11/25; 12:1/29). Mistrust of the motives of textbook developers and the marketing hype associated with the promotion of new reading methods and approaches, was also negatively perceived by the participants. Violet said: "I think

a big problem with all of these methods is that it becomes a whole marketing thing of the materials for the methods, and then it takes away that it's actually just another tool …" (5:3/20). Participants also lamented what they perceived as being a decline in the standard of textbooks with the transition to the new South African education department. Lorraine again emphasised the tendency in the South African system to be over-dependent on textbooks:

> **Vignette #13 (from 14:29/38)**
> **Lorraine:** But that's ... but that's what you've done here though. Because you haven't got the guidance here, you've replaced it with textbooks.
> **Bridget:** Mm.
> **Lorraine:** I've never used a textbook in my life, and I think...
> **Mel:** *[As if addressing a newly qualified teacher]* Here's your results ... this is your textbook ... use it!
> **Bridget:** I would like to get to the end of next year, and in our curriculum design, say, "We're not ordering textbooks next year parents!"

Lorraine and Maxine were most particularly dismayed at the lack of classroom reading resources, and the expenses and difficulties of getting these into the classroom. Lorraine spoke of the fact that the Foundation Phase had a continuous reading series and that there was a lack of this in Grade 4, which prevented continuity. She expressed that she did not have reading books to start guided reading (5:19/20). Obtaining appropriate books from parents or the library was another issue. Margaret spoke of parents encouraging children to read books that were of a high level, but that the content was not age-appropriate at all (8:14/15). Mel indicated that she had observed that children were not given the " … right books for their level. Even maybe the libe … librarian should have a list there that there's weak/strong reading. …" (12:11/29).

Issues relating to the RNCS and the Intermediate Phase reading curriculum (as well as the Foundation Phase) caused a great deal of frustration for teachers. Lorraine expressed: "You see, the guided reading's the thing that I think we're not … we're not doing in the Prep School. And we don't have the time to hear children reading individually …" (10:2/25). She also felt the Intermediate Phase assessment with too many tests puts pressure on children who then become fixated on their marks (7:8/27; 8:15/15 "… This obsession with marks!"). The lack of time in a full curriculum was again mentioned in 11:7/17 by Sunni and 13:30/38 by Tamika. Sunni expressed a longing to break out a little in her teaching and not be bound by the demands of a content-dominated curriculum: "… and then it just kind of goes by the wayside because there's so much work you have to get through, … you just forget about the little things" (14:7/38), and: "… but I also think that it comes down to pressure on us to finish a certain amount, so we've also kind of lost our own creativity" (14:37/38).

The vagueness of the learning outcomes and assessment standards of the RNCS was an issue. (This even stretched down to the Foundation Phase curriculum, which Sunni was specifically tasked to investigate (10:9, 10/25).) As Lorraine expressed about the Intermediate Phase reading outcomes assessment standards: "You get something like this: '*Relate text to their social, cultural and historical*

tradition' … How wide is that!" (14:27/38). In Session 10, frustrations with the lack of specifications in the curriculum (as well as the lack of teacher training, time constraints, Intermediate Phase cross-curricular demands and the implications for poor schools) came well to the fore:

Vignette #14 (from 10:15, 16/25)
Bridget: But Lorraine, it's difficult for you, because everything's basically ...
Lorraine: Yeah.
Bridget: ... new and different, because ...
Lorraine: Yeah, I don't know if I'm covering, because I think ... the curriculum's no help to me whatsoever. Because I'm used to ... I don't know if I'm covering everything or not. I'm just finding my feet really. But this *[the CoI]* has made me do ... at least made me do the whole class reading out loud now. I'm much more of the ... much more comprehension in the ... targeting a whole variety of things, rather than just ...
Bridget: Okay. Okay. So you're finding it *[the CoI]* useful?
Lorraine: Ja.
Maxine: Because even Lorraine and I were talking about it the other day, like how difficult it is, with all the other millions of things you have to cover, to fit in all the reading you want to do. Like even someone like Lorraine … *[considered an expert by the CoI participants]*
Bridget: Exactly.
Maxine: … who's used to incorporating that, said the other day that she's like not finding time for it. And I'm like, "Well, if someone who knows how to find time for reading can't find time for reading, I'm ... how am I supposed to find time?" *[General laughter at this]*
Maxine: It's the last thing on my mind. I had to tell myself today we are doing reading.
Lorraine: But I don't know how you prepare to teach something when you've got no thorough *[guidelines]* ... I can't do it. You know, when I'm going to teach 'Instructions' ... *[in the UK]*
Bridget: You've got that … thorough guidelines?
Lorraine: ... I look up the objectives that there have to be so I know what I have to teach. And I have that for everything! I won't just be able to go and teach about fables without having ...
Bridget: Let's say next year we work with teachers from a more disadvantaged background. It would be very interesting to teach them ... to share with them ... you know ...
Tamika: They'll teach us a lot!
Sunni: Well, I'm going to be honest. When I came to Grade 4 ... how I found my feet was I collected books from other schools. *[General agreement at this]*
Tamika: Their actual pupil books?
Sunni: Ja. I had *[a relative's]* books from a government school. I collected *[some]* books from *[another school]*. I'd ask a few people, "What are your Grade 4s doing?" 'Cause that's what I had to go on.
Maxine: Like Lorraine and I were even talking about it the other day ... like she couldn't believe like how I could just do 'Instructions', but it doesn't tell what you need to teach. So the teacher has to be really on the ball, and identify all the features themselves in order to teach it. But what happens if like those teachers in a township ... a lot of them don't have proper ...
Bridget: They don't even have readers.
Maxine: … but a lot of those teachers don't even have the proper education, so how do they identify the things they need to, to teach the children. So how are those children ...
Bridget: ... going to read. Exactly!
Maxine: We can't even identify ...!
Lorraine: But I wouldn't have even known what an 'imperative verb' is or a 'time collective', but I have *[in the UK]* a dictionary of all the key terms, so it will explain to me what a 'tag collective' is, and then it will say to me what 'Instructions' you must teach ... 'time collectives' such as …. you know. I wouldn't have been able to cope with teaching 'Instructions' ...
Bridget: You know there are just thousands and thousands of eccentric systems totally dependent on the expertise of the teacher, and if that teacher has not got expertise, those poor children are never going to learn to read properly.
Lorraine: But I haven't ... when I come to teach something, I look it up, and you don't have that here, so even with the best rule, I don't know how you'd list things.
Mel: I thank God for my textbook, because that's how I learn ... *[indistinguishable talking and agreement about this]* ... if it wasn't for my textbook!
Maxine: In EMS *[Economics and Management Science]* last year, every single chapter I had to teach them, I had to like teach myself first, find out all the information about that, because I didn't know that person or that person or that person, and then like had to teach it to the kids. I spent so much time having to prep, decide this is what's important, this is what's not important, okay teach them this, this, this. Actually, it was a joke!

The lack of specifications in the RNCS had further implications in terms of fully covering important outcomes, allowing for the consolidation of vital skills associated with literacy, and the continuity from grade to grade. The lack of continuity between Grade 3 and 4 was expressed by Lorraine: "… the biggest gap I've seen from your Prep School is that you don't build guided reading … it doesn't

continue" (12:23/29). "I know in the Junior years … you have like your … your high frequency words that they have to be able to read … tricky words that they have to be able to read … but it stops when they get to Grade 4" (13:3/38).

There was also frustration with the dominance of bottom-up reading approaches in the Intermediate Phase. This was further explained when disappointment was expressed about the *Thrass* system used in the Foundation Phase. Maxine said she did not want to continue using a *Thrass* chart in Grade 4 – it was fine for learning to read, but did not advance Intermediate Phase readers (13:10/38). She stated that the chart only showed the phonetic sounds in one example and that she felt it was more important for children to have a chart of high frequency words. Tamika said that the *Thrass* system did not teach children how to spell as it offered limited, isolated examples. Sunni agreed with this. When Violet said that she had understood that Maxine wanted a phonics card for Grade 4s, Maxine adamantly refuted this: "No, I don't! No, I don't! I never said that. I don't want a phonics card! I don't want to do phonics with them …" (13:10/38).

Despite feeling that the RNCS was too vague, Lorraine, Tamika and Maxine also expressed frustration at working in a curriculum system that was too rigidly specified or government-imposed, as had been their experience with the UK and the Asian curricula.

6.2.2 Establishing the CoI: Resources and Documents Discussed in the CoI

The CoI allowed for rich discussions around reading resources in the Intermediate Phase, which was insightful for participants and me as principal. Discussions around reading resources and documents allowed teachers to build knowledge for practice (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). These also allowed for private knowledge to become public knowledge (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

The discussions did touch on texts that had been used in pre-service training – Sunni brought in a reading text-book she had used in College, but her lecturer's focus had been particularly on incidental reading and using flash cards (top-down methods). Sunni also mentioned that she still had her English methodology file from the days of her training and had sometimes referred to it. She also referred to a pack of advert cards that they had had to make for children to use in class. Violet also made mention of flash cards and a flash card box that she had made herself and used in her Foundation Phase teaching experience. Mel mentioned a handout from her UNISA studies that gave definitions for keywords used in questions.

It was not of minor significance to the CoI that Sunni, Violet, Lorraine and presenters Sybil and Margaret were all Junior Primary trained. In the initial phases of the CoI, as a result of this, discussions

centred on Foundation Phase bottom-up approaches, methods and programmes. *Letterland*, *Jolly Phonics*, *Look and Say*, *Read Writing*, *Thrass* and *Phonographics* were all discussed. Only one such formalised, expensive American programme for Intermediate Phase reading, popular in South African schools in the 1970s and 1980s, was discussed by Violet and me ('older' participants of the CoI) – *Reading Laboratory* – which uses the SQR3 (survey, question, read, recite, and review) method.

Finding articles and websites on the internet which were helpful for reading was also included in discussions – such as *internet4classrooms.com*, www.*eduhelper.com*, and using American comprehension and reading articles (by both Sunni and Violet). *Wikipedia* was also mentioned, but teachers said that they had been discouraged to use it in their pre-service training and did not like it either when children used it, as they tended to cut and paste and not put information in their own words. Diagnostic tests such as the *Dibels*, word speed tests, and nonsense word fluency tests, were also mentioned as accessible on the internet. Other lists were mentioned as important – such as the *Dolch Word List*, the *Schonell Spelling List*, the *Dale-Chall Word List*, and other high frequency or sight word lists available on the internet. (Interactive whiteboards were present in some participants' classes and these were briefly mentioned as resources when teaching reading.)

The teachers began looking out for reading instruction resources. Persons with extensive teaching experience were referred to as resources – a Junior School remedial therapist, Lorraine, Sybil, the librarian (who was once the Junior Head and had retired), and Margaret. The handouts these presenters gave to participants were used by them after the sessions – Sybil presented two – a list of main reading problems, how to identify them and what to do about them, and provided examples of comprehensions. Margaret prepared one about shared reading, paired reading and guided reading methods. Harriet and Alison provided one about reading difficulties and psychometric diagnostic interventions available to assist children with reading difficulties. Parents who also brought in resources and had useful contacts outside of the school were regarded as resources. Assessment reports and interventions of therapists (educational and remedial) and medical professionals (especially neurologists and opticians) – were regarded as vital to helping children, as were educational support interventions such as *Kumon*, *Reading Fundamentals*, *Cellfield*, and *Tina Cowley*. The teachers also drew on their own and each other's personal experience – what had worked and what had not – as a rich resource for their learning. Conferences, presentations, workshops and meetings (particularly cluster meetings) were mentioned as resources, but on the whole were not experienced as useful by the participants unless these were specifically directed to meet their immediate contextual needs – such as the presentations by Sybil, Harriet and Alison, and Margaret (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

National curricula and other government documents – RNCS, UK, Cambridge, the American School, Asian, the new CAPS curricula , the UK dictionary of key terms, UK Reading Aide and Spelling Aide, UK Rose Report – were discussed. These were contrasted – particularly the detailed specifications of the UK as opposed to the widely framed/specified RNCS. Across-school, national and international exams were mentioned – the IEB Grade 7 Shared Assessment, the national Grade 6 Core Skills test, the UK Value Added test – as well as other entrance exams and benchmark tests available to teachers. Sunni mentioned using the workbooks of children in other schools to assist her in planning.

Participants were particularly keen to design their own entrance, benchmark and diagnostic tests, and mention was made of a few of these as used by psychometrists. Teachers often designed and shared assessment rubrics – such as the one for unprepared reading created by Tamika. They were particularly keen to create detailed reading records that could be kept and handed on from Grade to Grade.

The teachers turned some attention to how they worked with parents. They suggested improving the reading cards that parents had to sign, and creating reading homework packs that were parent/child friendly for guided reading at home. Homework class, assigned after-school reading teachers and 'buddies' were mentioned as resources to assist children who did not have parental support. They also spoke of redesigning the homework reading report card.

Mention was also made of starting small reading clubs for children. Children could also write their own books and stories, as well as keep personal dictionaries. Mention was made of the need for children to be more involved in imaginative play, drama, role-play and creative games. The use of word puzzles – word searches, crosswords, riddles – were also mentioned as useful in supporting reading skills.

Teachers acknowledged that children's reading in the Intermediate Phase needed to be advanced as they began to access information through their textbooks – Maths, Natural Science, Social Science and Economics. English textbooks teachers preferred were *English for Success* and its additional reading supplement, and *Comprehensive English Practice* because these all seemed more detailed and more thoroughly supported IP reading skills. They did not favour the use of grammar textbooks – these were seen to isolate skills from real, meaningful text. The use of everyday texts for the practice of sophisticated reading skills was deemed vital – magazine and newspaper articles, adverts, catalogues, brochures, menus, packaging, recipes, instructions, guides and timetables, and visual texts, such as maps, tables, graphs, diagrams, pictures, cartoons, and posters, were all mentioned. In fact, teachers favoured the creation of their own teaching texts from these everyday items – such as self-designed worksheets, workbooks (Maxine found a complete one for *Charlotte's Web*), and comprehensions.

The use of the library was given a critical appraisal – while the teachers welcomed the activities and tasks the librarian used to reinforce children's reading skills, they were frustrated about the inappropriate level of books to which the children had access. The library needed many new and updated resources – modern fiction and new non-fiction publications that were age-appropriate to the Intermediate Phase. As principal, I could use this information, with the librarian, to justify a further school spend of R40 000 on new library books (something that had not been deemed an urgent priority by previous management). Dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopaedias and other reference books were seen as vital for reading in the Intermediate Phase to improve skills such as using contents and index pages, becoming more familiar with structured text, as well as increasing vocabulary.

As a result of the CoI, an entire new reading series – the extension of the *Oxford Reading Tree* – was purchased for Intermediate Phase classroom use. Teachers also established good contact with the sales representative from a book distribution company, from whom many supplementary readers were also purchased by Sybil and me. Sybil also shared her high-interest, low-level reading books with Maxine to use with weaker learners. New resource books were purchased for the Science lab and Sunni could start a reading corner, and Violet also started one in her Art classroom. Roving booksellers to the school were particularly valuable in that the Lorraine and Tamika found helpful books of photocopy-able reading worksheets for comprehension and spelling, as well as other reading books the children could use in class for extra reading.

Old Classics (preferred by the previous management of the school) were not particularly appreciated by the CoI participants and deemed too Eurocentric and inaccessible to learners – such as Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, Greek god stories, and Rudyard Kipling's *Just So* stories. Old favourites for Intermediate Phase children were still valued however – Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Danny the Champion of the World*, *The Twits*, *Matilda;* C.S. Lewis' *Narnia* series; E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*; Lynne Reid Bank's *The Indian in the Cupboard;* Ian Serrallier's *The Silver Sword.* Margaret did not approve of any Enid Blyton books for very young readers. Tamika spoke with nostalgia about the *Richard Scary* activity books for young children. *Dr Seuss* books were also warmly welcomed as readers for children to consolidate rhyming and important phonetic skills. Teachers were a little more ambivalent about modern children's literature (and this perhaps testifies to how long it takes for books to settle as children's classics): the nuances of Michael Morpurgo's *The Butterfly Lion* were a little difficult to understand; the *Horrid Henry* series by Francesca Simon was helpful in getting struggling learners into reading. Other South African literature was briefly mentioned, such as using short stories, folk tales, African fables, poetry, and cultural and religious texts, more appropriate to the South African learner. Nursery rhymes, idioms, proverbs, and other European and

American cultural texts were sometimes outside of the South African child's experience and caused comprehension difficulties.

Finally, the resources created in the CoI meetings were valuable to the group. I typed notes for two sessions, as did Maxine, and the document teachers created in Session 9 where they outlined for themselves the learning outcomes for reading in the Intermediate Phase, was important. The notes for and the posters the teachers created in the last sessions of the CoI were particularly valued and participants showed a marked degree of ownership and pride in them.

6.2.3 Establishing the CoI: Pre-Service Training and Prior Experience as CoI Resources

As stated above, participants' pre-service training and prior experience impacted on the CoI discussions. They brought the CoI particular emphases, flavours and animation. In fact, participants often used the CoI sessions to share about their prior experiences, which is an important indication of the health and trust-level of the CoI that they felt comfortable in doing so. Although the content of their sharing may not have always been strictly related to reading, it provided participants and me with invaluable insights.

Mel was newly qualified in Intermediate Phase teaching through UNISA and had done her teaching practical at the school. She brought interesting information to the CoI about the things she had noticed as an Intermediate Phase Maths teacher regarding the reading difficulties of children in that learning area. She also spoke of her own young children and how the accent of her son's teacher affected his pronunciation. She was interested in the acquisition of reading skills. She also spoke of the cross-curricular activities she and Maxine had worked out for the Grade 4s in her Computers classes. Sunni spoke of a lovely experience she had had at school of winning a competition to design a chocolate, and how such creative achievements were important for Intermediate Phase children. She spoke of her Junior Primary teacher training – most particularly of the resources she had used and created herself. In her experience as a Grade 3 teacher, she spoke of a high degree of consultation with teachers in the lower grades to check what they were teaching and the progression of learners. She spoke particularly of activities she did with her Grade 3 learners – the silent reading they did first thing in the morning, the theme teaching she had used, the Grade 3 creative projects her children had produced from condensing large amounts of information that she had provided them. She spoke of how she had always kept parents informed of their children's reading difficulties when she taught in the Junior Phase. When moving into the Intermediate Phase, she shared how difficult it had been to work with the curriculum and that she had to use the workbooks of children from various schools to find her way. Of her Grade 4 teaching experience, she enjoyed class teaching, but appreciated concentrating on certain learning areas and not having the children all day, as this would have been too much for her. She spoke of her working closely with Maxine when they taught Grade 4 together – how they tried to have an integrated cross-

curricular approach and teach the same theme in Maths and English as they did in Natural and Social Sciences. Violet had years of experience as a Grade 1 teacher, but her passion for Art and Maths had led her to want to teach these in the higher grades. She had training in the Foundation Phase. Violet, as an art teacher, and as an experienced Junior specialist, was very focused on the development of perceptual skills – figure-ground, auditory, and visual. She emphasised the constant repetition of such skills – and especially reading practice. She brought to the group an appreciation of the underlying importance of phonics and perceptual skills and that if these were not in place, children would struggle. She shared some of her experience of Grade 1 teaching – flash cards, sight words, incidental reading, phonics, listening to individual reading, picture teaching, and early morning silent reading. She spoke of having to work with difficult parents who would not acknowledge that their children had difficulties. She spoke of her Art cluster meetings where she seemed to be the only teacher who emphasised art theory. Lorraine, also Junior trained in the UK, shared a great deal and the group benefitted richly from her input. She had experience in a highly specified, bottom-up approach to learning to read. Although it was difficult for Lorraine to move from this conceptual framework about reading to a more top-down Intermediate Phase approach, her knowledge about the 'learning to read' phase was important for the group. She shared many stories and methodological approaches and the group learned particularly about guided, paired and shared reading and many other methods through her. She spoke of how difficult it was to move from Junior teaching to higher grades, particularly without the security of a clear curriculum. As facilitator, I only shared four short experiences of my teaching in the Intermediate Phase. I shared about two meetings I had attended as a principal that had showed much promise but had not been helpful. I was trained for high school teaching and Intermediate and Senior Phase experienced, and thus had a far more top-down perspective than Sunni, Violet and Lorraine. Tamika, also high school trained, had a far more top-down approach. She had significant issues with phonics and bottom-up approaches because of her English Second Language teaching experience in Asia, and that it was very difficult for children with accents to learn English using a phonics-based approach. As a child, Tamika was a prolific reader and she spoke of the reading she had done with her father. Her Asian teaching experience was particularly interesting for the group. She had worked in a rigid system with very specific outcomes. She introduced to the group, from her Asian experience, one of its most important tools – what they called 'The Carrot' – a conical shaped diagram that showed the structure of texts as moving from the topic, to the main idea, to key details, and to minor ideas. She also used her experience to teach the rest of the group about skimming and scanning, and other important sophisticated reading skills. Maxine also had Asian teaching experience, which concurred with Tamika's. She also shared about how she had learned to do scaffolding during her PGCE year, and that most of her knowledge of phonics had stemmed from her linguistics classes. The school was also her first formal South African teaching experience, and she shared of the work she and Sunni had done together as Grade 4 educators. She shared that attending cluster meetings had been of no help to her.

Maxine was a very animated member of the group and often her stories were told in a humorous manner – which the participants enjoyed. This one, about her pre-service training, highlights the difficulties new teachers face particularly when doing class teaching and working with a full curriculum:

Vignette #15 (from 14:22/38)
Maxine: But like when I did my teaching prac, I always assumed that I'd be a class teacher because that's how we were taught to be teachers ... is as a class teacher.
Bridget: And how did you feel about that?
Maxine: I thought, "Wow, it's a fantastic idea," ... like that's how I was taught to be a teacher is to integrate everything and ... um ... teach like that. That's how we were taught at university. Our lecturers were very pro class-teaching and integrating and not timetabling and ...
Lorraine: So strictly, yeah.
Maxine: But ... the minute I got into a classroom, I was like, "Holy crap!" because you don't get a second to like concentrate on one child because you do inevitably have your weak kids, and you ... when you ... like when I did my teaching prac, I had like about four very weak kids in my class, when I had to do class teaching for my teaching prac, and my whole time was spent trying to do this, do that because I had no assistant, and then I'd have to like split myself ... quickly help the strong kids do an extension activity while I had to come back to the weak kids ...
Violet: That's an idea for a comedy show. We must call it "Maxine and the Grade 1 Class". *[Laughter at this]*
Maxine: It made me think like, "How the hell do I be a teacher?" *[Some discussion]* … My first teaching prac, I thought to myself, "Oh, my God! I could never be a teacher! ... How could I teach?" because there is no time to fit everything in because the syllabus is so extensive, like ... "Stop! You're supposed to be teaching everybody!", and all I prayed for was, "Oh please, I wish I could have an assistant!" Like in my new school, on my second teaching prac, and I was put into subject teaching ninety percent of the time in the same class, but with specialised teachers for certain things, and I just felt like a relief because I could for ... *[Laughter]*
Bridget: ...you could focus.
Maxine: ... for that hour ...
Mel: ... you knew you were doing Maths, ja.
Maxine: ... I could focus on a subject, focus on the kids who needed help, and it wasn't the whole day sitting with the weak kids, and forcing myself to continuously extend the strong kids and sit with the weak kids all day. Like, I felt like this release, like ...

6.2.4 Establishing the CoI: Personal Stories/Illustrations/Examples from Current Experience as CoI Resources

There were many personal stories/illustrations/examples shared in the discussions, which became resources for the group. As researcher to reduce the data, I decided to examine the reasons for which they were told. There were four. The first was sharing an example to explain a method (EEM). Another was sharing an example to illustrate a particular reading problem (EIP). The third was a story told to affirm the one just prior to it (AP). The fourth was about a conversation that had occurred outside of the CoI meetings (CO). (A fifth was envisioned – a counter point (CP) story told to refute another – but this only occurred once in all the CoI meetings.) It is important to note that within CoIs such stories – EEMs and EIPs are about building *knowledge of practice* and *knowledge for best practice* (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

To illustrate, this vignette contains an EEM from Maxine explaining a fresh decision of how to work with the new readers, and an AP from Lorraine to support her point:

Vignette #16 (from 10:8/25)
Maxine: And so for guided reading, we said the best solution would then be to like photocopy a chapter for that week's guided reading, and the weak group will get that chapter, and the middle group will get Chapter 1 from the middle series, and the strong group will get Chapter 1 from the higher series, and then they can all read together, and then we'll use the guided reading questions and assessment to work with them, because that's what we're lacking. We don't have the guided reading resources, because we've got our setworks, but those don't work for guided reading because they're one level. So if you have weak children, it's not the right level for them, and if you have strong children, it's not the right level for them. That's the average level. So like where

Lorraine's talking about ABC, that would be like the B level, so with guided reading you need to get some C levels and some A levels. So that's the solution we came up with for the new books to ... so we can push guided reading, because at the moment we can't do guided reading. Um. So ja, that was the solution we came up with to push guided reading.
Bridget: Okay.
Maxine: And um ...
Lorraine: The beauty is you'll know exactly where every child is, and then when it comes to class, you'll be able to support those children ... and they'll be achieving because the book that every child is reading will be a level they can manage. Or, you know, in a guided way. You should pitch guided just slightly above their level so they can work on decoding a difficult word, but for children who're just beginning to read, it should be very accessible. It should be what they can manage because ... and of course, you're hearing every child read each week then, because say we're in a group, they all read together, but I want you to say, "I want you to read out loud for a minute", and it's in a small group, and you, "Just a little bit", and then you'll say, "I want you to read the next page" and ...
Maxine: And then like we were discussing that we would sit with let's say the strong readers Group A, and while we're with them, Group B and C will either ... maybe Group B is answering questions ... like an accessible activity that they can do independently with the chapter and Group C will be doing like handwriting. And then we'll swap and Group A will do the activity and Group C will now do the guided reading, for example. And we'll rotate. We said we'll try and do that once ...

Of the 138 short stories/illustrations/examples shared, 61 were examples to illustrate a methodology (44%), 53 were examples to illustrate a problem (38%), 15 were agreement points (11%) – 9 told to support EEMs and 6 told as supporting examples to illustrate a reading difficulty. There were nine stories told of conversations outside of the CoI (0.06%) that had to do with reading instruction and the work of the group. Although not a high figure, most of these conversations were reported in the later sessions, which implied that teachers had begun to work more closely together – particularly the language teachers – Tamika, Maxine and Lorraine. What these stories illustrate is that the participants were strongly engaged in discussions in the CoI sessions about reading methodology and attempting to find ways to relate this to their teaching world. Likewise, they were keen to come to terms with, and resolve issues related to, reading difficulties in children – and that these experiences were numerous and diverse. Also, the EIPs were fairly distributed across the sessions, which could indicate that this was not a case of teachers coming into sessions in the beginning and using them to offload about their difficulties. Rather, examples of difficulties were shared when these were really relevant and told for a specific reason as part of a constructive discussion.

6.2.5 Conclusion to Section 6.2: Participants' Challenges and Resources

In this section as researcher I offered two narratives: one to outline why the CoI was established based on the challenges it wanted to address; and, two to explore what resources the teachers had to solve their problems – these included physical texts and documents, prior and experiential knowledge and stories/illustrations/examples from practice. The next section turns its attention to the affordances that the CoI created for participants. In fact, looking back, the opportunities that the CoI created for teachers to voice their frustrations was an affordance in itself, as well as the gathering, creation and sharing of resources in the CoI.

6.3 The Affordances of the Establishment of the CoI

6.3.1 The Affordances of the CoI: Group Dynamics

This area examined the dynamics of how the participants interacted with one another in the CoI sessions. In many ways, I was fortunate as a principal and researcher, to be working with a group of individuals who were already highly committed persons, who worked together with great collegiality and camaraderie. Their willingness and enthusiasm to be voluntarily part of a CoI, over and above their daily commitments, is testimony to their professionalism and their desire to grow and learn as teachers. Two individuals, Sunni and Maxine, were part of the founding CoI group, remained committed, and re-joined the researched CoI when it picked up again in May 2011. They inspired Mel, the Maths educator, to participate. They also very quickly embraced the new teachers, Tamika and Lorraine, and encouraged them to join. Where they had not had much point of contact before, they became inclusive and welcoming of Violet, who had worked in another building of the school, and was in a different age group to the younger participants. The networking between participants grew and continued outside of the CoI meetings. This was also possible due to the small size of the school, the proximity of their classrooms, and that they were teachers in a phase of education that lends itself to more cross-curricular interaction (Louis & Kruse, 1995).

The CoI members, as illustrated above, created a sociable atmosphere through their humorous remarks, light-hearted teasing and fair sense of turn-taking. Although this did occur, they did not often interrupt each other or ignore each other's questions. In fact, the opposite was usually the case – and something that made the transcribing difficult – participants were so quick to agree with one another, or to share ideas – that on a significant number of instances they spoke simultaneously and over each other. They were quick to support other participants' sharing with stories and illustrations of their own. In the first few sessions (the researcher assumes because it was a means to establish themselves), participants were not as quick to listen to one another, but rather seemed to want to establish themselves in the group and find a voice. They tended to speak randomly with their points not closely relating to what previous participants had said (as can be seen in Vignette #3). However, as the CoI developed, and with it the purposes of the sessions, participants were good at listening to one another and building on what the others had said. In fact, on numerous occasions, participants finished one another's sentences. They paraphrased what they had heard, or asked for verification of how they had understood the others by using examples with precursors such as: 'Do you mean …, like I had one child with the same thing …?'; 'I had a similar thing happen …'?; or 'Is it like this …?'. They were skilled at brainstorming ideas and, once they had a direction in which they wanted to move, they did so rapidly and with skill. When they did disagree with each other, or give counter-points, these were not put across harshly and the group did not suppress the views of other participants. They showed great sympathy for each other when difficulties and frustrations were shared, and even outside CoI meetings attempted to help one

another with their challenges in constructive ways. There were times in the CoI sessions when participants taught each other and also took the lead in facilitating discussions and activities, such as in Session 15 where they were designing their posters. In fact, Tamika, who was reserved in the initial sessions as she was new to the school, eventually ended up in the final sessions sharing significant ideas and salient experience, insights, leading group discussions, as well as being a key designer with Maxine of the CoI posters for classroom use. Participants were often adamant that they had to be child-centred: they were preoccupied with helping children, doing activities in their classrooms that would best benefit the children, the bulk of their stories and anecdotes were about finding ways to help children in their care, and that the products they created in the CoI meetings had to be child-centred.

6.3.2 Affordances of the CoI in focusing on Reading Problems, Remediation and Reading Skills, Methods and Approaches in the Intermediate Phase

The foci of some of the sessions, and the CoI in general, meant that many reading difficulties in the Intermediate Phase could be described and teachers could learn about these and incorporate this knowledge into their expertise/pedagogical content knowledge. Seen globally, teachers' pedagogical content knowledge about IP reading – as expressed in CoI meetings – was actually extensive. Comprehension difficulties in the Intermediate Phase were deemed to be caused by a myriad of problems. Teachers raised issues of challenges pertaining to children's problems with basic decoding – poor vision; poor auditory, visual processing and sequencing skills; poor figure-ground skills; poor phonic foundations; difficulties in breaking up words; difficulties in hearing rhymes; difficulties in visual analysis skills; reversing letters and words (dyslexia and dyspraxia); letter by letter reading; overuse of phonic teaching methods; all contributed to causing a failure in comprehension. Inability to chunk words or syllabify them was also highlighted as problematic. Children's basic immaturity, poor self-confidence and a lack of experiential background was also mentioned, including having disinterested, busy or absent parents. The difficulties of EEL learners were also discussed – cultural differences, poorly literate parents, lack of experiential background, inability to speak English, lack of good first language foundation, pronounced accents, and lack of spontaneous language. Bad pronunciation of teachers or lack of good teaching was also deliberated. Poor fluency was explored, as well as poor phraseology, reading too fast, ignoring punctuation, and a slow reading pace. Insufficient sight words and vocabulary was a problem. Guessing at words, repeating words, as well as additions and substitutions was also discussed. Inadequate comprehension skills were also caused by reading that was too mechanical, the lack of ability to find meaning from contextual clues, following literal meanings, and the inability to follow instructions or directions or understand questions. Learning difficulties, anxiousness, impulsiveness, and ADD/ADHD were also factors that contributed to reading difficulties in the Intermediate Phase. Reading problems that were not remediated were highlighted in that they caused compounding delays that had disastrous effects for children's learning. The point that

children who experienced a six-month delay in Grade 1, would be at a twelve-month delay in Grade 2, eighteen months in Grade 3 and so on, was taken very seriously by participants. The range of these topics could indicate that the teachers did have extensive knowledge about reading and the discussions in the CoI may have helped them to articulate this.

The participants were also exposed to a solid body of information about remedial methods for reading. Remedial methods that were mentioned included differentiating in classrooms to ensure that weaker learners got the attention they needed. Making children with reading difficulties read in front of the class was expressly discouraged. Using appropriate reading methods that suited the child with difficulties was important. It was also important to make sure that weaker readers had experience of success in order for them to gain confidence and the love of reading. Shadow reading methods (as well as shared reading, group reading and guided reading) could be used, where adults read with children so that they could hear and see the passage being read, and then read it for themselves. Visual tracking exercises were also helpful, as well as perceptual exercises and puzzles, and various games to help children with listening and sequencing skills. Helping children use contextual clues to find meaning was important. Labelling items in classrooms – including new pictures related to the theme – was vital. Using a fluency graph to track reading speed had great success in helping children overcome their difficulties. Children practicing to read aloud was a vital strategy. Using diagnostic tests – such as *Dibels* – was mentioned to pinpoint specific problems. Children needed to be taught how to master silent and independent reading. Dramatization could also help children empathise and comprehend texts. Using comprehension techniques, such as reading the whole passage, then the questions that follow, then the passage again, and looking at other clues, such as pictures, was explained as a strategy for Intermediate Phase readers.

The teachers mentioned, and were exposed to, many different reading methods and approaches. It was notable how rarely top-down approaches were explicitly mentioned – they were quite evident in Session 5 when discussing remediating reading difficulties and were briefly mentioned in Session 12. However, although top-down approaches were not explicitly evident, some of the methodologies described by teachers fitted into this area. 'Reading to learn' makes increasing use of top-down and integrated approaches. It was notable that there was a predominance of bottom-up approaches in the earlier discussions of the CoI. Such discussions revolved around phonics teaching strategies and methods. The start age for reading (either age 5 or 7) was a lengthy discussion in the first session. Tamika and Maxine were able to see the flaws in phonics-based approaches and shared these in Session 12:

> **Vignette #17 (from 12:2,3/29)**
> **Tamika:** My issues with phonics is like ... the way you explained the eating ones ... you have the different like ... sound ... what, what ... like the age ... this sound, this sound, this sound, ... it doesn't help kids with spelling because unless you like learn the list of 50 words on how to spell them, and how to read them, you know what sound it's making, but if I have to try and now spell some word that I'd never heard in my life, how do I know which '*ay'* or which *'ur'* or which ...

Lorraine: They should make rules that go with them ...
Bridget: Ja, I mean ... there's programmes ...
Lorraine: ... there's loads of rules like '*shy-ay*' ... like *'train'* and *'pain*' ... the *'ay'* always goes in the middle. Obviously in England there are some exceptions, but generally ... and then you learn the other *'ay'* ... the opposite. There's loads of ...
Bridget: But again, as you're saying, the rule base is very important ... They do say that the problem is we've got to have it in context. And that's where we can move from there, but ... I still maintain ... I still maintain that Intermediate Phase reading is neglected. There's ... there's ... very little available to Intermediate Phase teachers on how to teach reading and sophisticated reading purposes. Uh ... in Grade 4, you can still reinforce a lot of phonics, which is great, but by Grade 6 ... by the time they actually need to get into high school, they don't ...
Tamika: But to have a Grade 6 pupil who can't read ... like I can't understand how that happened.
Lorraine: But that happens when they're too immature to construct the phonics at an early age, or learning disability, or ...
Maxine: But I also think like, when I did phonetics at varsity, one of the main things we discussed about phonetics is the fact that, especially in a multicultural country like South Africa, accents are a huge thing. And what a child, who first language is Zulu, for example, hears is not the same as what a first-language English child, so phonetics are very confusing for a child who is not familiar with the sound. So I could be saying to them, "This is the *'ay', 'ay', 'ay'* sound" and they are hearing something else. Someone, like the one child, who completely mispronounces *'ten'* ... for me it sounds like ... Ja, *'teen'* and '*tin'*. Exactly. So, like, for example, a black child might say she, instead of *'sha'*. The phonetical awareness is completely misinterpreted. It ... it ... it affects their reading, and it affects their spelling and comprehension because they hear me tell them, "Sheep means an animal that baahs in the field", but they read, "The ship is sailing across the sea." And *'the sheep'* is now sailing across ... the sea. And when I did my phonetics course at varsity, there was a big debate about whether in such a multicultural country, phonetics is the right approach, because there are so many different accents, and children are struggling with the ... coming into nursery school where they start being exposed to reading ...

Integrated Reading approaches were not explicitly mentioned – in fact the word only appeared in two sessions (5 and 12), and this can show that participants vacillated between top-down and bottom-up approaches. However, the discussions that participants eventually reached about sophisticated reading practices reflected an integrated approach to reading in the Intermediate Phase.

In Session 9, when I pushed the teachers to come up with their own understanding of the skills required in the Intermediate Phase, they were more than competent, and in their own terminology, to pinpoint IP reading skills. The teachers themselves made mention of the following concepts related to reading: decoding, phonics, reading for meaning, the ability to paraphrase, identify different genres of text, reading non-fiction, critical reading skills, independent reading, unprepared reading, reading aloud, predicting, deducting and inferring meaning, distinguishing between fact and opinion, identifying literary features of text (plot, setting, character), ability to tackle questions, sequencing information, grammar and punctuation, figurative language, identifying tone and style, identifying the structure of texts, finding key words, working with contents and index pages, headings, words in bold and underlined, themes, identifying the writers purpose, as well as work with multi-media texts such as e-reading and visual texts, such as adverts. Different methods to teach such skills were discussed in various sessions. The ability to read for information, find the main idea and lead sentences in texts and work with paragraphs was important. Teachers also mentioned that there was a specific procedure to do comprehensions with children. Learning how to skim and scan were also identified as important skills, as was automatisation of reading and increasing reading speed. The importance of children being able to express their own opinion was also stressed, as well as the development of lateral reading skills. By

Session 12, which was occurred almost five months later, teachers again highlighted these points, but with much more confidence and sophistication. The implications of this is that the teachers did have a significant amount of theoretical knowledge which, when its expression was facilitated and guided, indicated that they did have knowledge of important reading concepts, created a common language in the group, and may have contributed to their greater confidence in teaching IP reading skills.

The way in which many of these skills were discussed in the group was with one or more of the participants demonstrating a particular methodology related to them – such as Tamika in Session 15. The teachers learned how to implement such methodologies through these demonstrations:

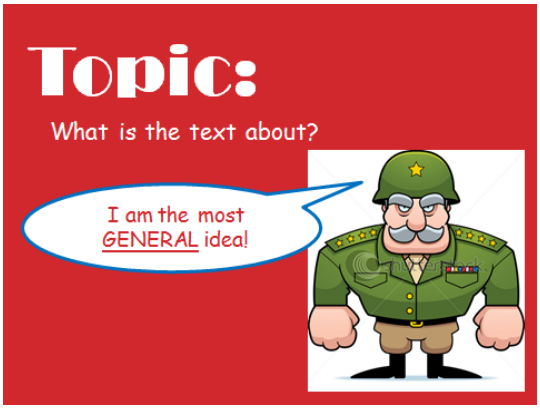
> **Vignette #18 (from 15:40/44)**
> **Tamika:** For skimming, I would tell them to read the first ... it's like a zee. So like ... to maybe look at the first sentence of each paragraph and write like a keyword. Like if you run your eyes down like this, you don't read every sentence.
> **Bridget:** Okay, you zigzag through the passage.
> **Maxine:** Mm.
> **Tamika:** And then you ... like you're reading your first ... you're reading your first line, and then looking at the rest of the paragraph, and then reading your next paragraph first line ... looking at the rest of the paragraph like that *[runs her finger in a Z shape down the paragraphs]*.
> **Bridget:** That is so awesome!
> **Sunni:** Do that again... sorry.
> **Tamika:** You read your first paragraph first line ... that will be where the major detail is usually. And then you run your eyes down the rest of it and then you'll gather that, '"Yes, okay, poodles are cute, poodles are fluffy", and then you get to your next paragraph, and then you read the first line and run your eyes down the ...
> **Sunni:** Wow!

6.3.3 Affordances of the CoI of Participants Sharing New Ideas/Suggestions for IP Reading

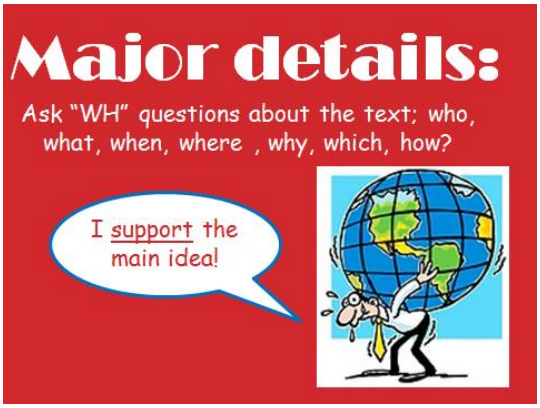
The CoI was a hotbed for ideas to improve Intermediate Phase reading at the school. They illustrated that teachers were eager to work together to solve the problems they faced with regard to reading in the Intermediate Phase. In Session 5, the suggestion emerged of the revision of the RNCS reading curriculum LOs and ASs. In Session 6, a meeting/workshop between Grade 3 and 4 educators was suggested by Sunni and Sybil, as a means to begin to close the gap. Violet suggested a new reading curriculum designed around exercises that would tackle difficulties on two levels: one for perception and one for comprehension. Maxine suggested that the Grade 4 teachers receive training in Grade 3 practices. There was a suggestion that the Intermediate Phase purchase the reading scheme that continued from the Foundation Phase (*The Oxford Reading Tree*). It was also suggested to meet with the representative from a book distribution company to obtain more books and reading resources for the school. To improve following instructions, children could be sent on errands, or have enjoyable experiences such as following instructions to make simple food items to share in class. It was also suggested that children make up the comprehension questions themselves. Sybil shared the idea of using high-interest, low-level resources with struggling readers. Violet suggested that the group design diagnostic reading tests. In Session 7, Mel suggested an improved practice of a continuous reading report that would follow the child from the Foundation Phase up. I reported that I had looked at the reading scheme and ordered it for the teachers. The teachers were keen to access reading-speed tests on

the internet. It was also suggested that the teachers design their own reading assessment test. In Session 8, Margaret suggested the re-introduction of the timetabled reading period. She also introduced the concepts of guided, shared and paired reading. She suggested the changing of the Grade 3 and 4 timetables to be more child-friendly so that the transition between these phases would be easier. Further to this, she suggested using only one setwork reader for Grade 4, instead of two. She suggested that stories be told with more dramatization by teachers. She also mooted the idea of Grade 4 class teaching. Sybil suggested that the Grade 4s still access books from the Junior Library. The new CAPS curriculum surfaced, and with it the idea that Grade 4 would be very different and involve class teaching. Sunni stated that she wished there could be no textbooks in Grade 4 as learners' skills were not developed enough to cope. Sybil also suggested using people as resources – Lorraine and Margaret – and using their rich experience to improve reading. In Session 9, it was suggested that a phonics support class for Grade 4s be started in the afternoons. Another suggestion was the development of a comprehensive list of Grade 4 expectations and giving these to the Grade 3 teachers to work up to. The teachers also wanted to revise the entrance exams for the school. They then discussed having more specific level descriptors for reading for Grade 4, 5 and 6. Violet suggested working with a grammar book that would help learners practice specific skills. In Session 10, I suggested that the time specified for English could be broken down into periods specifically for reading and comprehension. The possibility of changing the timetable to create more time for reading was mooted. It was also suggested that teaching assistants be used to particularly listen to reading. A workshop for parents around reading was discussed. It was also suggested that different levels of the *Reading Laboratory* be purchased. The teachers suggested that the CoI products be used to host an Inter-School's Intermediate Phase reading workshop. At the least, this could be a special cluster meeting to discuss the improvement of reading in the Intermediate Phase. It was also suggested that an independent source be used to administer basic reading assessments rather than one created by the teachers themselves. (No suggestions were forthcoming in Session 11, apart from the possibility of meeting in the holidays, which was not entirely manageable.) In Session 12, the idea of the parents' reading workshop was honed. Further to this, the creation of parent-friendly reading cards and guided reading homework packs was suggested. Sourcing reading-support teachers and reading 'buddies' for children without parental support was also proposed. It was also advised in this session to clearly break down the salient Intermediate Phase reading skills, teach all these explicitly in the first term and then reinforce these in the other two school terms. Maxine suggested that teachers be specific about teaching the structure of texts to learners. Tamika introduced 'The Carrot' – a conical illustration for the structure of a text. In Session 13, Maxine shared that she, Lorraine and Tamika were planning to conduct weekly departmental meetings. She told the group that she was planning to create a high frequency word list as a laminated desk chart for Grade 4 children, instead of the *Thrass* chart, which was phonics-based. She also explained at length how she wanted to work on a weekly basis the following year with well-structured reading lessons and comprehension lessons to practice sophisticated

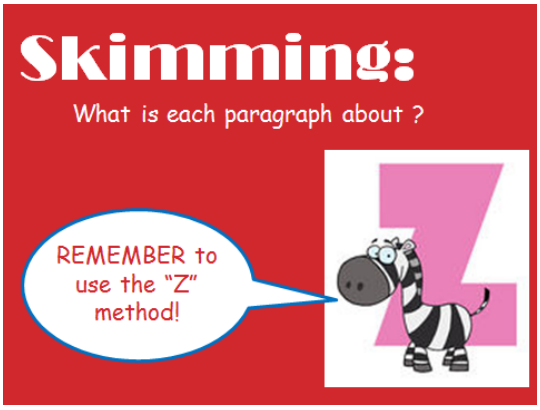
reading skills. Mel suggested a creative writing competition. Sunni suggested a new Intermediate Phase reading report card for parents. Sunni made an important analogy between a concept '*Habits of Mind*' (that I had shared with the staff on another occasion) and that the CoI's work was creating '*Habits of Reading*'. This sparked the idea for the '*Habits of Reading*' posters (see below) for all classrooms that the teachers designed themselves in the last sessions of the CoI.

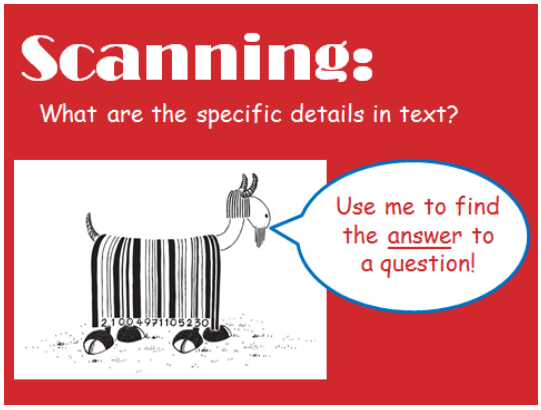


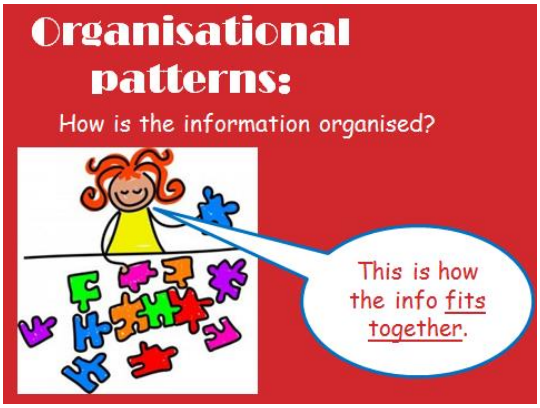


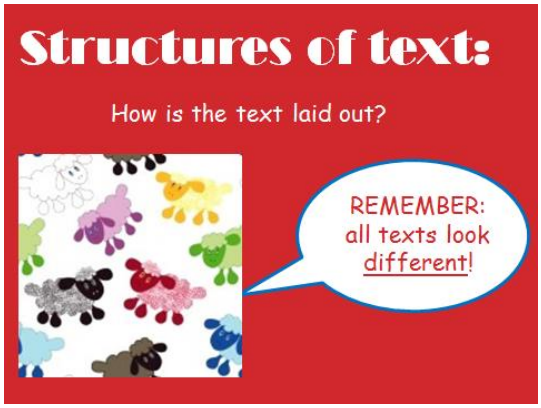


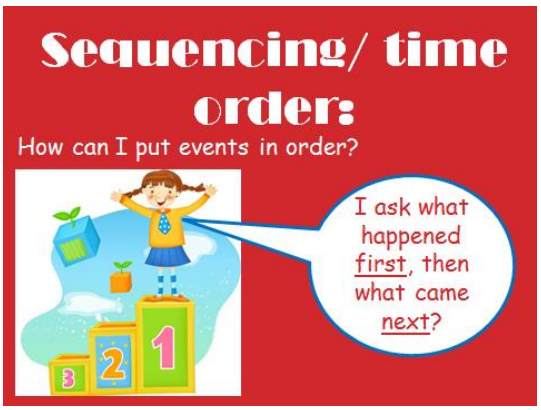




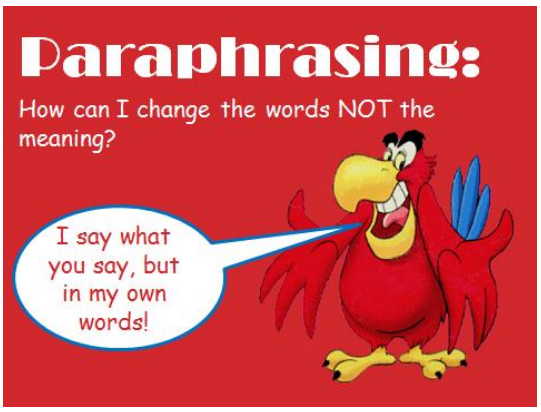


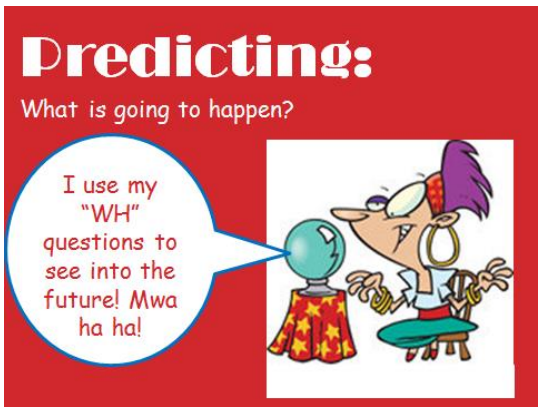


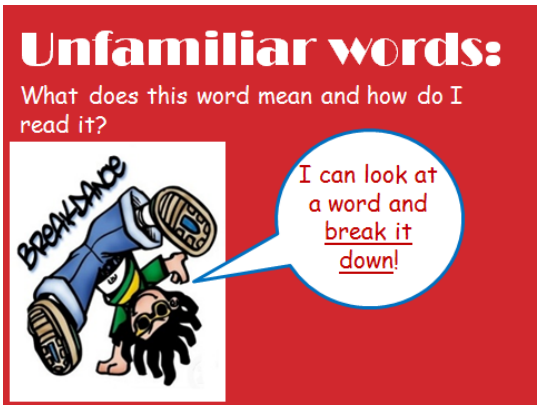


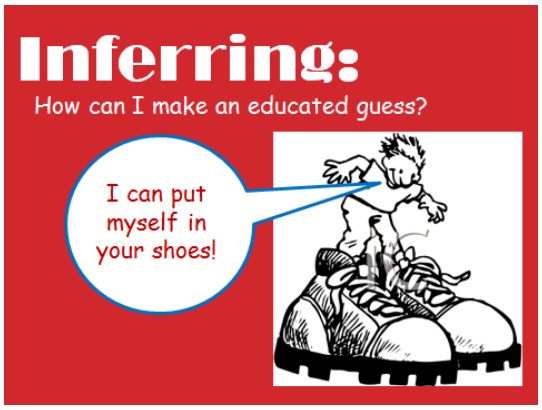


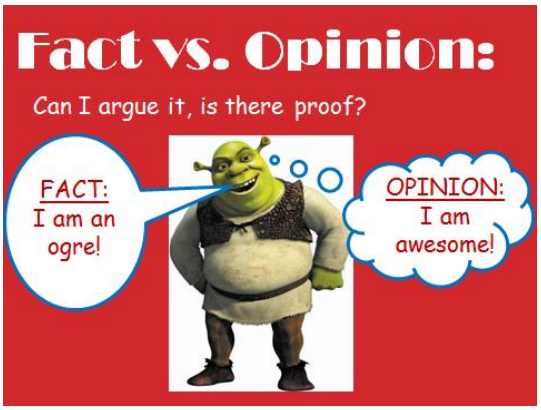


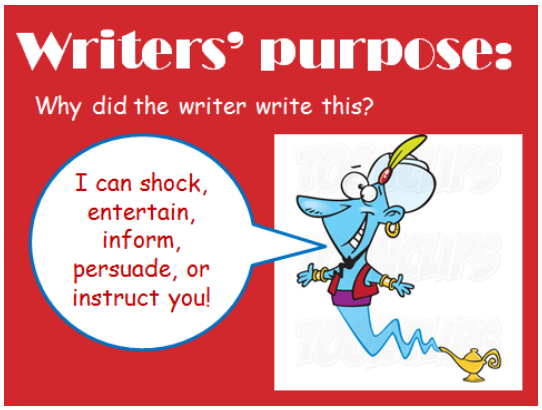












In Session 14, Mel suggested a book-reading competition for children with merit awards based on their book reviews. Violet suggested the children write their own books. Mel suggested that the Intermediate Phase needed more theme-based teaching. In Session 15, Mel suggested giving children more options in how to answer exam questions – particularly those that required summaries and comprehension.

6.3.4 Affordances of the CoI: The Conduct of the Principal

The challenges as expressed in the CoI sessions and outlined above were not new to me. In fact, they were the reasons themselves for which I established the group as a means to try to address these issues. My role was a complex, fourfold one – that of principal, with the day to day administrative and managerial demands of running a school, the principal as an integrated instructional leader, that of facilitator of the CoI, and that of researcher.

As an instructional leader, or the 'lead learner' (DuFour, 2004) at my school, I needed to behave in accordance with a manner that would enhance the professional development of the participants of the CoI. I was aware from my on-going review of literature that my leadership directly influenced the relational trust and development of the school. I needed to demonstrate that I was aware that school improvement occurs through what the teacher brings to the learning context, the dynamic nature of the pedagogical activities of teachers while engaging with learners, the professional collegial relationships between staff, and my own integrated (that is transformational, instructional, developmental, contingency, distributed) leadership of the school. The three core dimensions of a transformational leader needed to come to the fore in my actions in the CoI: vision building, providing individual support and intellectual stimulation (Scheerens, et al., 2010). As an instructional leader in the CoI, I would need to explicitly manage the goals of the curriculum, take actions to improve teachers' instruction and directly supervise teachers' instructional outcomes (Scheerens, et al., 2010). My promotion of professional dialogue between staff of the CoI; the ways in which I made suggestions, gave feedback, modelled behaviours, used inquiry, solicited advice and opinions from teachers, and the way in which I gave them acknowledgement (Mitchell & Castle & Castle, 2005), was important, as was the manner in which I accepted tension, dealt with conflict, modelled collegiality and experimentation, focused teacher's talk into constructive action, and helped teachers frame their inquiry. I needed to show I had 'studied' my teachers so as to try to understand each of them. Part of the goal of the CoI was that it would help teachers deepen their understanding of themselves *as teachers*. I also needed to show insight into what each of my teachers brought to the learning situation as outlined in Table 2.1 (the teaching activities of educators). My conduct in the CoI needed to encourage teachers to enhance their own beliefs about their competence and sense of self-efficacy in their practice. I needed to help teachers integrate in a powerful way their pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). My actively supporting novice and new teachers, as well as challenging experienced staff who may have settled tendencies of practice (Scheerens, et al., 2010), was also important. I would need to display an awareness in the CoI sessions of the many tools and methods available to principals to foster the PD of their staff (as outlined in 2.3). I would need to begin to measure myself by gauging the presence and effectiveness of those things in the CoI meetings and in the school.

6.3.4.1 Where the Conduct of the Principal may have enhanced the CoI

In the transcripts there is evidence that I started and ended sessions with explanations of what had happened in previous sessions and the possibilities of where the new session could move. I also allowed participants to set their own goals for the CoI. I used encouraging language in every session, including terms of endearment when speaking to the participants. I thanked and praised them for their efforts, and looked for places where I could compliment them as teachers. I encouraged participants to share anecdotes and stories and this occurred frequently. In my mediation, there were times when I enabled a free-flow of discussions, and when participants were particularly engaged in debates or negotiating meaning, I stepped back and did not interrupt this flow (such as in Session 13:4-9/38). Alternatively, there were times when I actively framed discussions to assist the teachers in expressing their understanding and knowledge – such as when they honed their '*Habits of Effective Reading*' for the Intermediate Phase using their own framework (13:21-24/38). I allowed participants to share their own views and opinions. I encouraged a congenial atmosphere where laughter was frequently present, and laughed and contributed to the humour myself. There were times when I focused on individuals in the CoI, defending their statements, paraphrasing their comments when the group seemed to not understand (13:3/38), reminding the group of what participants had said earlier, and making note of special interest items that would particularly relate to each participant's context. There is evidence that I also prepared for sessions and thought about the engagement of each participant in the sessions – I noticed when Lorraine was stressed about finding her feet and allowed her to share this; I permitted Maxine as a novice to vent her fears about confronting parents and seek support; I noticed when Violet had become quiet and asked her if there was something worrying her; I also noticed that Tamika may have been resistant to working with too rigid a curriculum as she had had some negative experience with doing so in the past. When tensions did arise – frustrations about Margaret's session, or Maxine's irritation with Violet – I did take the reins and diffuse the irritations by actively listening, paraphrasing, presenting a different way of seeing things to neutralise polarities and tactfully defend participants without seeming taking sides (Session 9:1-7/25).

> **Vignette #19 (from 9:7/25**
> **Bridget:** But I think what we need to do, we need to be on top of Grade 4 before we even meet with Junior School or anything like that. And once we are on top of Grade 4, then we go to Grade 4 ... uh, Grade 3, and we bring the teachers on board ... um, maybe they can join our reading group, um … for a couple of weeks ... and, and ... just go through some of the process with us, and let's remain open to what they say, because I mean, I don't think we should be closed. We might be being defensive and they get defensive, and ... maybe it's not constructive ... um ... and let's just hear where they're coming from. But ... but I think that ... I think they think they're doing their best, and we think we're doing our best.

I asked probing questions so that participants would elaborate on what they had said, and checked whether I had understood them by reflecting back to them what I had heard. I checked my own understanding of concepts and issues related to reading. I showed sympathy for participants and learners when anecdotes were shared about their difficulties and encouraged confidentiality about sensitive issues. I showed protectiveness towards my staff in the face of criticism by parents or

colleagues. I showed compassion for, and accommodated the demands of their teaching load, break duties, extra duties, or illness. I was flexible and open to suggestions. I shared my own anecdotes about my life and teaching experience. I encouraged open discussion and reflection without too rigidly restricting or redirecting the discussions – this was especially true for the entirety of Sessions 10 and 14. I was aware of the time constraints on the CoI and that the session time had to be used productively (e.g. 5:7/20; 6:5,20/23) – so unnecessary chatter or discussions that detracted from the CoI purposes were steered back on course – although the staff were notably committed to the tasks of the CoI, so this happened infrequently. Before the sessions, I made sure that the venue in which the CoI meetings would take place was comfortable and conducive to discussions. I obtained permission to use the Board Room – a private venue away from noise, interruptions and disturbance, with a round table, which was more conducive to group discussions (Louis & Kruse, 1995). The fact that this was regarded by all staff at the school as the most important meeting room in the school, also may have elevated the importance of the CoI sessions (Louis & Kruse, 1995). (In fact in December 2010, I moved my own office from one that was further away from the IP classrooms, to a smaller one which was between the IP classrooms, so that teachers could have greater accessibility to me (Louis & Kruse, 1995).) I organised four presenters who provided valuable, tailored input into the group regarding identifying and remediating reading difficulties, different reading instruction methods, as well as diagnostic tests that assist in the identification of reading difficulties. One of those presenters was Sybil, the Foundation Phase Head, who observed: "I must try and join you in these. These are interesting. I like them" (6:22/23). As part of my role as an instructional leader, I kept both Sybil and the College Head (who also especially came into one of the sessions to greet the participants and take an interest in the CoI), informed about the developments of the CoI. I encouraged the critical reflection on different reading instruction methodologies, approaches and theories and encouraged group members to share how they went about doing things in their classes. I used the language of reading theory, 'taught' the group (14:5,8,31:38) and shared pertinent information where I could, and asked them to 'teach' me (11:15,16/17).

> **Vignette #20 (from 9:11/25)**
> **Bridget:** You see, it's very, very interesting. You're talking about the assessment of reading. Now sometimes the assessment of reading comes from listening to a child, observing a child, and them orally answering you, but sometimes the assessment of reading involves writing, so we've got to make sure that in our assessment of reading, we build in ... in ... because writing is part of reading, so we've got to build in those components ... being able to answer orally, verbally, read aloud, that kind of thing ... but also written assessment of reading. It's two different components of our assessment.

I regularly shared important curriculum news, education department policies and decisions, and assessment information. I constructively assisted the staff to express their own knowledge and then related it to the existing RNCS Intermediate Phase curriculum (9:8-18/25). I also tried at times to help staff in their efforts to relate what they were doing against the wider backdrop of the South African context (9:14/25). I tried to answer questions the staff had about reading and when they wanted to understand something about the theory or practice of reading instruction. I also encouraged teachers to

be part of the research process – I allowed teachers to talk to me and give their own ideas, allowed them access to the study and articles from the literature review, encouraged other members to study further (in a private discussion with Violet). Participants could read what I had written, and I also asked some group members to listen to some of my writing. I periodically summarised discussions and brought them back into focus for the participants.

> **Vignette #21 (from 13:11/38)**
> **Bridget:** Can I read so far, more or less, what we've said ... from what I've heard and summaries and stuff we've written. Okay, so we want, um ... a basic reading assessment ... one that we've done ourselves, and a more sophisticated one. That's the first thing we want. You want sight word assessment and, not just an assessment, but um ... a set of sight words for each grade ... coming from *Schonell, Dale, Dolch,* high frequency words ... you want to have a Spelling Bee based on them ... you want to have high frequency tricky words ... that kind of thing. So you want a set of sight words for each grade. Then you want a reading aloud assessment ... where you check for accents, you check for stumbling, you check for stuttering ... that kind of thing. Then you want a basic phonics test ... um ... and the ability to use more sophisticated phonics as we go up. Um ... how to use dictionaries, alphabetising, numbering, and looking up in encyclopaedias. Where to find information.
> **Tamika:** Contents pages and ...
> **Bridget:** Um ... ja. Then you want a basic comprehension assessment, which we need to explore a lot more. You want specific teaching on structures of text ... titles, index, headings, words ... how texts are formatted ... particularly in non-fiction in the first term. *[More discussion follows]* … Okay, then skimming and scanning. Specific teaching of skimming and scanning. Specific teaching of paraphrasing and summarising. Ah ... you want some kind of rubric which is measured on three or four levels ... some kind of assessment system, like ... three levels ... like ... for everything that you do. In other words, I'm hearing you saying you want to be able to put learners on three levels if you're doing ...
> **Mel:** Oh, for reading like ... like when you say good, bad ... reading.
> **Bridget:** Okay? Then you want to establish reading partnerships ... reading buddies ... having ... making sure that every child has a reading buddy. We want to do a January reading pack for parents ... ah ... we want to teach question words and how to answer them ... we want to do basic topic vocabulary words from other learning areas. What else? What have we not covered in our summaries? Have a look at these, Sunni ... you can ...

I typed notes for the participants in two sessions while they worked and distributed them after the sessions. I gave individuals of the CoI different tasks according to the interest they showed. I did not push them to do these, but if they seemed interested, I encouraged their further involvement – such as asking Lorraine to present the UK curriculum to the group (10:7/25), or Maxine to help her with documents for the CoI, or Sunni to investigate the Foundation Phase curriculum, or Tamika and Maxine the task of completing the posters, and invited Violet into further discussions about the research as she showed great interest in this process. I made reference in sessions to conversations I had shared with participants outside of the CoI sessions. I also asked for participants to bring in resources, and encouraged the discussed around those resources for reading, which occurred regularly. I also used these discussions as valuable information to purchase new resources for the teachers. I used the CoI at one point to obtain input from the teachers about their impressions of how the new time-table was running, as well as asking teachers for opinions in dealing with difficult parents (10:4/25). I also listened carefully to the teachers and used what they shared to implement other important steps in dealing with children and parents who were experiencing difficulties, using the products of the CoI to improve communication with parents (the products of the CoI were presented at a parents' evening workshop about reading in February 2012). I could also gauge from the teachers, the effectiveness of the teaching assistants in my section of the school and how these persons could be better deployed to assist with reading (10:6/25). I encouraged participants to speak at length about their teaching

experience with other curricula in other countries. I regularly asked the CoI participants about their views on the curriculum outcomes and how they applied the various aspect of that curriculum in class. I may have stressed the particular direction of the CoI at times, but it can also be argued that this is exactly what I should have been doing as an instructional leader. I needed to explore gaps in curriculum implementation, I needed to explicitly manage the goals of the curriculum and encourage teachers to work critically with it and begin to examine their practice reflexively. I wanted staff to design their own diagnostic test, but was also flexible in acceding to their fears and fact that they felt they did not have the time or expertise to do so. I was open to outside experts to come in and do the tests. I also organised in February 2012 for Sybil, as a remedial therapist, to take the language teachers through a reading diagnostic test which they could use in their classes to pinpoint reading difficulties and speed, use these to call in parents and refer their children for further reading support. I did call for agreement from the group before they proceeded with activities. Group members clearly did feel they could disagree with me and did so on occasion. I tried to find different ways for the group to work:

Vignette #22 (from 12:8/29)
Bridget: Okay, guys, so let's start brainstorming. Um ... and just put it down. What skills ... let's not even look at age groups. Let's just put down a list of skills that we expect our children to learn. And then, from there, we'll age-group it, or sophisticate it for about 3 age groups, and also, what we'll do, is supplement it, and from there we can work out ... because I remember I asked you to do from the top-down ... in other words: what were the main areas ... and that ... I don't know if that worked very well. That was hard to do, so maybe let's just brainstorm the skills, and then from there we can work out what the LOs are. *[General agreement at this]*

Positive support for my vision and the aims of the CoI was implicit in the commitment to, and consistent positive engagement by the participants in the CoI, in how they shared on many levels, in the sense of ownership they took for the CoI and the artefacts they produced, as can be seen in this vignette from Session 13:

Vignette #23 (from 13:14/38)
Maxine: So you want us to just be more explicit in our teaching.
Bridget: Just for one lesson a week. To identify those ten things. And for one lesson a week, expose those children to a more sophisticated reading practice that they can use ...
Tamika: And can we do it that like in HSS, I'll do it with my HSS.
Bridget: Perfect.
Tamika: I mean we should ... sorry ... we should ... not can we ... like in NS ....
Mel: That's why you need to let us know which skill you're using so we can do it in our lesson.
Tamika: We should be using like the same buzz word.
Mel: Yes. Here's a little memo for you today for this week. This is what we're saying.
Tamika: The company that I used to work ... so I don't know if they patented or copyrighted or whatever, but I mean, you know, as long as we're using the same buzz word for the same thing, then it's going to come into their brain ...
Mel: Yes. Yes.
Lorraine: You really home in on the skill then because you're introducing it, you're teaching it, you then maybe do one with the whole class that you do together ... you then maybe put them into groups and find the main ideas from the book that they've got ... they then share them orally ...
Bridget: You see, the thing is I'm not asking you to adapt your reading ... your English curriculum. I'm not doing that. All I'm asking for you is that ... it to please help us teach children these skills so that they can use them in a non ...
Sunni: But then we come back to the crux ... that they're reading to learn.
Tamika: That's the thing. We do teach them this, but we don't explicitly say to them, “This is what ...”
Mel: Yes, you need to make them aware of it.
Tamika: ... so that's why we need to come up with maybe buzzwords, things that we can drill into their little brains.
Maxine: What I'll maybe do ... what we maybe do ... ja, what we maybe do is like we make a laminated copy for each classroom.
Bridget: I love that!

Maxine: And what we do is ... this week we're doing ... "Topic". And I put a laminated word "Topic" on my pin board. But then the NS teacher also has it in her classroom ... "Topic". And the Zulu teacher has it in her classroom ... "Topic". And the Maths teacher has it in her classroom ... "Topic".
Bridget: So forget about "Habits of Mind" ... next year it's: "Habits of Reading"! *[General agreement]*

6.4 Conclusion to Section 6.3: Affordances of the CoI

In 6.3 narratives were presented illustrating the where data showed how the CoI was of benefit to the participants. Their challenges that led to the establishment of the CoI, and discussions around resources, prior learning and anecdotes of the participants' experience in practice were also beneficial to the group. Further to this, the group dynamics of the CoI, the focuses on reading (and various themes related to this), new ideas and suggestions for practice, and my conduct as principal were all affordances of the CoI that led to development. This development will be further explored in Section 6.6, but before this is done, an examination of possible constraints of the CoI will be explored.

6.5 Constraints of the CoI

In the next chapter, an overview of the findings concerning the constraints of the CoI will be presented. However, at this point in the presentation of data and analysis, it is necessary to illustrate the source of what could have been the strongest constraints on the CoI: finding a CoI focus and some of my conduct as principal.

6.5.1 Tensions in the CoI Focus

The CoI sessions' debate as to what would be its primary focus caused some tension for the group. The context of the CoI presented the participants with many challenges. Many suggestions were made throughout the CoI of how to improve classroom reading practice for the benefit of children, parents and teachers. Violet had suggested designing the diagnostic test in an earlier session. I was particularly keen to use the CoI as a means to possibly workshop and design a more thorough IP reading curriculum. It was difficult to challenge the teachers who resisted such suggestions. Lorraine asked if she could do this after the holidays, as she "… did not have the time for active …" (10:12/25). Later, Lorraine felt that a reading skills test could also not be designed without a proper framework of outcomes (10:13/25; 11:12/17). She also felt that it would be difficult to design a comprehensive diagnostic test that would cover all the outcomes. She then said later, "I'm also actually, seriously, … I don't know how … I think it is a massive project, and I'm worried about the time … Because I don't feel like I've got enough time to do my normal job, let alone … and I'm more keen for it to be improved, but I don't think this is small. This is massive, so I think you need to pinpoint some things" (10:21/25). Maxine agreed later: "So none of us know how to design a reading test. It's just a lot of work" (10:22/25). I challenged them further that they could at least as professionals have an idea of what they felt the salient reading outcomes were for the Intermediate Phase. (This occurred again in Session 12 (12:25/29).). Maxine said it was hard to generate outcomes "just out of your head without using …" (10:24/25).

Lorraine said, “I understand what you’re saying, but for me, six weeks into teaching *[she started in Term 2]* … I don’t know what they’re supposed to be at” (10:25/25). In Session 14, she stated: “You see it’s so massively comprehensive in England, I couldn’t imagine even beginning to do that” (14:27/38). In Session 12, Lorraine was reluctant to design a guided reading resource for parents: “It’s a lot of work”, and “You can’t. Not with a full book” (12:13/29). I was eager for the teachers, as part of their professional development, to move from an overt dependence on documents designed by others and to engage critically and pedagogically with their own personally generated reading guidelines: “ … we cannot sit back anymore, and it is an attitude also in teachers ... it's like, “Oh, give me what I need to teach”, because teachers don't generally like designing their own stuff. They'd rather use a curriculum or a book or a dah, dah, dah, dah. It is a confidence thing, I think, but also it's a cop-out” (12:6/29). In this last quote, my driving conduct, indicates an aspect of the CoI constraints that requires further exploration, as will be outlined below.

6.5.2 The Conduct of the Principal: Constraints on the CoI

Although the following issues do not surface directly in the session transcripts (apart from three brief occasions), details of the context in which I operated as principal, in an administrative and managerial role, had a direct and significant impact on the study. For the duration of the study (14 months), the school was subject to a series of contextual upheavals, most particularly triggered by the sudden retirement of the Rector of the school - its founder and firm leader for twenty years. This created an administrative vacuum and placed tremendous pressure on the three Heads – Sybil, the College Head, and myself, who prior to this event, only operated as educational managers of our sections of the school. It meant a reconstitution of the School Board, and the rearrangement of the senior management of the school, where we three Heads moved into higher accountability positions as top-level administrative managers of the school. Many strategic planning meetings were scheduled internally, and especially with the Board and other leaders involved in the school – including the Church and business leaders/patrons of the school – which took up much of our time. Staff who felt anxious about these changes had to be reassured (and there were significant staff concerns). Parents who were nervous about the changes had to be reassured, and the school had to be kept running as efficiently as possible in the competitive environment that is private schooling in South Africa.

Aside from these pressures, the day-to-day running of a school, in a cash-strapped economy, presented many challenges for me. Effective liaison with parents and teachers (those within and also those who did not choose to take part in the CoI), discipline and pastoring of children, liaison with therapists, organising and management of extra-curricular events, directing maintenance, ordering supplies, as well as staff and operational meetings, all still had to effectively be seen to. These pressures, when viewed synoptically with those of the challenges of the curriculum, as well as the instructional frustrations of

teachers as outlined above, were taxing at times. They also put some pressure on my health. There is evidence in the recordings of me being interrupted to deal with unexpected visitors, or to answer urgent messages, and I was ill for one session, and cancelled another due to having to attend another meeting. Towards the end of the second term, after the exams, I had to cancel two sessions because Sunni and I needed to meet with parents who had made urgent requests for assistance, and staff also asked if they could rather not meet as they had to set exam papers, and then had copious marking and preparations to make for parents' evening. I felt restricted about asking the participants to do further tasks for my research – such as keeping journals, being interviewed, and other research related items – when they were already extended in terms of their professional commitment to the smooth running of the school in the light of its contextual changes.

Despite this, and the risk of dissatisfaction from parents, I rearranged the timetable to create time for possible CoI sessions when there were no other very pressing issues for staff to deal with. This was only possible in Term 2. I felt divided between the everyday pressures of running the school in its transition period, wanting to alleviate the frustrations of the teachers to foster professional development and improve the instructional delivery in the school, fulfilling the demands of researching the CoI process, and also the possible criticism of parents for changing the timetable and their undervaluing of the CoI due to perceptions that in private schooling teachers 'should know what to do'.

Again, although this is not prominent in the CoI sessions, my role as principal probably had had a direct and indirect impact on the group. By virtue of my position, I was an authority figure, who had power over the participants' positions and could potentially make decisions that affected their professional standing. Participants can react differently in a group situation when an authority figure is present. This could restrict their sharing and participation, as they may have felt intimidated or suppressed by my presence. They could have also not honestly been able to express their difficulties or admit their faults for fear of being viewed as unprofessional or inadequate. Conversely, if they challenged or opposed me as principal in the sessions, this could have had negative effects on their positions outside the sessions if I had chosen to take exception to what they had said. Naturally emerging agendas of the teachers that may have arisen from their negotiations could have been hijacked by my own. I had to be consistently conscious and sensitive to this authority role and vigilantly counter its effects wherever possible.

There is evidence of a few occasions where I interrupted participants, but apologised for doing so and backed off (10:6/25). I also had a strong feeling of disillusionment about the inadequacies of the RNCS as informed by my own classroom experience, personal reading and observations of my staff, and expressed these quite openly on occasion (5:12,13/20; 14:28/38), which could have affected teachers' neutrality towards the curriculum. There is evidence however that the teachers felt the same way

towards the curriculum as me, but as I was the authority figure, teachers' impartiality cannot be completely assessed. Sometimes I asked questions that I wanted answers to – questions that would specifically answer my instructional leader needs, or my research needs. There were also a few occasions when I specifically allowed this research agenda to come to the fore.

> **Vignette #24 (from 11:1/17)**
> **Bridget:** One of the things which will be part of the study which I picked up in some of the readings is that it's virtually impossible to have a group like this after school, or if teachers don't have time. Time really is one of the major... so that's going to form part of the research, but that's just from my side. Um ... but just the pressure that teachers are under in terms of ... you know ... okay, so uh ... the last time that we got to was reviewing the LOs for reading for our own. Not the ASs, not the Assessment Standards, but the LOs. And then we kind of hit a bit of a brick wall where we got all busy with marks and parent's evenings and ... which is fine, because that is important, it's part of our work. I just wanted to bring some focus back into what we're doing in the next few weeks, and of course we are having holidays.

Although there is no direct evidence in any of the transcripts, and I tried to be as accommodating as possible, participants could have felt pressurised by my research requirements.

> **Vignette #25 (from 10:18/25)**
> **Bridget:** …and then you know, that kind of thing. I don't know if my research will be able to cover a change in your teaching practice. My research will maybe just cover conceptual changes in your learning, um ... because I need to know what I'm actually researching. Am I researching change in the classroom, 'cause if that is, then I've got to come into your classrooms and see how it's changed your practice, and I've got to give you diaries and journals, but I can't make a decision about my own research … about what I'm researching until what you guys have kind of decided, "This is what we're researching", because then I know how I'm going to research. …

On reading these transcripts, I noticed several sets of behaviours by myself that probably had significant implications for the group. Two prominent forms of conduct that had probably had significant impact on the group were steering the group's activities and driving some discussions. Although this did not happen frequently, and it can be argued that I also needed to express myself as a participant of the group and an instructional leader, when I pushed the group in a particular direction, this implied that I was moving the discussions ahead myself and this carried the risk that I was possibly steering the group in a direction I would like it to go – an issue that had implications for objective research and the freedom of the group. From the first session onwards, I was quite taken with the idea that the teachers of the CoI ought to work with the learning outcomes and assessment standards for Intermediate Phase reading and redesign them themselves. In my role as instructional leader, I persisted in pushing this focus in the sessions that followed, which again carried the risk of me over-steering the group in a direction in which I felt it should go. Although I did not pick up active opposition to this in the transcripts, there were times when participants felt overwhelmed by the size of such a project (See above Section 6.5.1 – Sessions 10:12/25; 10:13/25; 10:21/25; 10:22/25; 10:24/25; 10:25/25; 11:12/17; 12:13/29; 12:25/29; 14:27/38).

Interestingly, my instincts about my staff being more than able to design their own guidelines were actually accurate. This was demonstrated in Session 9 when the teachers outlined their own components of what they felt should be in the reading curriculum, which set the foundations for their work in the Third Term and for Session 12 to 15. In the last sessions of this study, when the teachers actually did

push themselves and begin to create their own clear outline of the Intermediate Phase reading focus, they were competent and confident. Their progress from the first sessions was marked. Conceptual change, change in confidence and practice, as shared over the course of the CoI Sessions is an area that will now be investigated.

6.6 The CoI and Professional Development: Evidence from Data

A pertinent question that needs an answer is: Did the establishment of CoI begin to impact on the practice of the teachers? Is there evidence in the CoI meetings where there may have been a change in the way they perceived their roles as educators, experts, and colleagues? Is there evidence that they felt that the establishment of the CoI began to address their needs?

From Session 6, staff began to mention changes in their approaches and practices with regard to reading. Mel made the connection, and noticed in her Maths classes that children were battling to understand questions because they were not reading them properly. All participants reported looking for resources about reading. In Session 7, Violet reported that she had begun to read academic articles about reading, and had found an interesting one. Sunni introduced a Science Vocabulary Box and Science spelling test once a week, as did Mel for Maths and Maxine for Social Science. Mel also noticed that children used very poor spelling in Maths. Violet began also to introduce a Maths vocabulary for children. In Session 9, Maxine and Lorraine had started their extra phonics lessons for weaker learners. Participants reported that they continued to look for relevant resources. Violet described that she had started a reading corner in her Art class and that children were reading in her classroom during breaks. One child took a book of Violet's and she had to beg to get it back as the child was enjoying it so much. In Session 10, all participants also began to generate their own Intermediate Phase reading curriculum. Tamika reported that she had found a helpful internet website about reading. I reported that the new reading books had arrived. Maxine had started with guided reading in her classes. Maxine and Lorraine explained in detail how they went about guided reading. Tamika explained that she had drawn up a new unprepared reading rubric. Mel reported very important changes in her Maths practice:

> **Vignette #26 (from 10:12/25)**
> **Mel:** For me, I know straight away for Maths ... when they ask a question, we must take their spelling into consideration, and now, with their tests, I mean Sunni ... we've been giving spelling words for them to learn, and if they get them wrong in the test, I know that I can deduct half a mark you know. So if there spelling is up-to-date ... and like ensuring that they read the questions carefully and thoroughly, you know? That they come to me, "Oh no! I didn't say that. If you'd read the question more carefully … ", and then they're like ... so they go back and read the question, and then they understand it, you know? So in that sense, I feel I have used it *[the CoI]*.
> **Bridget:** You find you're emphasising reading and comprehension a lot more.
> **Mel:** Yes, ja.

Maxine reported that in her English classes:

> **Vignette #27 (from 10:12/25)**
> **Maxine:** And like in English, I've been doing a lot of ... um ... predicting and um ... contextualising text, and ... which before they didn't do. They would just see the text and if they didn't understand something, they didn't understand it. Now I'm forcing them to look at the other information. If they don't understand a word: "Look at

the other information. For … what do you think it means? What do you think this chapter's about?" ... and we've done a lot of extra reading comprehensionee things that aren't all the same ... um ... um ... non-fiction stories ... lots of different formats, so we've done recipes, we've done cereal boxes, we've done competition things, we've done ... and that, like in the beginning, they really struggled because the answer is not there with them. It doesn't say, "It's sunny outside" and the question is, "What's the weather like outside?" The answer's not there, and in the beginning, they like really struggled because they couldn't infer that information like, and see, "Okay, what do you think that is?" but now they're like getting used to not being spoon fed and having the answer there, and they're getting more used to having to do it independently.
Bridget: So do you feel your own practice has changed a bit?
Maxine: Ja. Because last year, in English, I never did that. I used to do maybe ... we used to like one, two, different texts, but not a lot. And when I used to do even my reading in class, I used to ask questions about what had happened ... what ... like we'd read something and I'd ask them, "Okay, who remembers ...?"
Bridget: ... basic details ...
Maxine: ... basic details, but now, like, I'm taking more time to read through it more thoroughly ... like we've done idioms, so now they must pick out the idioms in that page ... look at the gender in that page because they've done gender ... a lot of predicting what they think's going to happen, instead of just looking at what has already ...

Sunni reported about change in her practice in Science:

Vignette #28 (from 10:13/25)
Sunni: In the Science, I'll give them the worksheet or whatever's up on the screen and ask them, "Tell me what you understand" instead of me saying, "Okay this is what you're going to do". "What do you think's going to happen?" And a lot of them have ... especially the Grade 6s, have been like thinking further than what they normally would just go like this. The Grade 4s are very sharp.
Bridget: Ja.
Sunni: They're like ... *[Sunni snaps her fingers]*.

Tamika reported that in her English classes:

Vignette #29 (from 10/14/25)
Tamika: And like sometimes I'll introduce the section to them and I'll explain it to them, "Okay, here's your textbook ... do this exercise." I won't go through this exercise. Now I've explained everything they need, but now I haven't explained the exact examples of what they don't understand. And I'll read it to them, and they're like, "Oh ja! That's what you said", and I'm like, "Yes, you just have to think now for yourselves." It's like they've got all the information that they need ... it's all even on the whiteboard, but when it comes to them actually looking at a different kind of format ... and doing it extensively, ja, …

In Session 11, Tamika reported that in her Social Science classes she was focusing more on the use of correct spelling, full sentences and other reading skills. I made a point of praising Maxine for her increased confident and maintained that this was quite pronounced in the way in which she was working and sharing. Maxine shared about the changes she had made to her class reading:

Vignette #30 (from 11:3/17)
Bridget: I've noticed in Maxine's ... in your ... in the way you're talking ... you're speaking a lot more confidently than in the beginning. You know, you're speaking about paired reading and guided reading ... you kind of know ...
Maxine: Ja, I've like ... if I compare how I used to teach last year ...
Bridget: Ja?
Maxine: ... compared to how I teach this year ... it's completely different.
Bridget: Really?
Maxine: Like ... I didn't think it would change so drastically, but now I'm like so much more aware of exposing the children to different genres of reading, and um ... interacting more with them while they read ... um, asking questions ... using context clues ... all that stuff that I never used to do, because I never really knew about it. So ... like ... when we were reading ... like ... we would do shared reading ... *[Bridget laughs]*
Bridget: Ja.
Maxine: ... like I used to read with them ... like our setwork, and they used to read out loud, and we used to do unprepared and prepared reading, but like I always thought, like ... it was quite pointless, that kind of reading, because it was just ... like ... monotonous, you know, but like now, when we do our setworks, it's much more in depth and we interact a lot more with what we're doing. And I feel more like I know what I'm supposed to be doing, whereas before I didn't really ... I just did what I thought I should do and then ... but now I know more of what is ... of what I should be doing to help the kids. I'm more aware of it.
Bridget: It's amazing ... those light bulbs going on.
Lorraine: But it feels not initially, but as soon as you've done it a few times, you realise how easy it is to ...

Maxine: Ja, 'cause it's all things I know how to do, I've just never done them, because you almost forget about them.
Bridget: Ja.
Maxine: You're very focused on ... like ... finishing the setwork or ...
Bridget: … or just reading.
Maxine: ... doing the reading because you feel you have to do reading now. But now ... oh, that's also the main thing is ... like before ... I use to ... like ... do reading because I knew I had to do reading and now we have to do reading, but now I incorporate reading into everything ... productive reading into everything.
Bridget: Okay.
Maxine: So even in HSS and Afrikaans, when they read ... I ask them questions about what they've read. Or I read something, and I expect them to be able to ... comprehend, you know, like ...

Sunni noticed a positive effect on the children in Science and attributed this to teachers being more focused on reading:

Vignette #31 (from 11:4/17)
Sunni: But all of that came through ... I can see it in Science ...
Bridget: Ja?
Sunni: … the Grade 4s don't just go "Neeya!'" like they don't know what to do. They're actually sitting going *[imitates the children thinking]* ... and they'll ask. They'll read it again and they'll ask if they're right ... give their opinion ...
Bridget: Okay!
Sunni: ... want to give their own ...
Bridget: So that was a change in the children?
Sunni: Ja.
Bridget: That's amazing!
Sunni: And the Grade 6s are like huge.
Bridget: Really?
Sunni: They're more ... like really, really focused and ...
Bridget: Well, that's fantastic! It's nice to hear that.

Violet noticed in her Maths classes that children were improving in their word sums. Lorraine noticed, on the other hand, that she seemed to be working much slower during reading periods as she was being very focused on what children were reading. Significantly, Maxine also shared that her confidence with parents had escalated, as well as her confidence in class:

Vignette #32 (from 11:5,6/17)
Maxine: And like I've seen ... I've seen a huge difference like in the Grade 4s, for example ... now, right at the end of the term ... like I've been explaining to a lot of the parents like, "Your child's English mark has dropped ... like ... quite a bit ... but purely because this term I've expected a lot from them with regards to new reading techniques that they've never used before, and hopefully next term, once they've mastered them more, their marks will go back up."
Bridget: Ja.
Maxine: I was saying that really, just praying that ... that ... *[Laughter at this]*.
Bridget: Ja.
Maxine: But now, this last week, I'm doing religion with the Grade 4s in HSS, but what I did with them was ... another teacher gave me those religion books – they're child friendly ...
Bridget: Oh, ja?
Maxine: ... and I divided them into groups, and I just gave them the book with the ... with the page ... it tells you ... it tells you what you have to find in the book ... so you have to find who they follow, what the symbol is, what religious book they use, what religious teachings they use, what traditions and stuff they have, and what country it's found from. And I explained to them that this is a purely reading activity that you have to find only the important relations ... the whole book that is interesting that you can sit down for hours and read through ... but you've got 30 minutes before we swap to the next book, where you have to find, in your group ...
Bridget: Okay ...
Maxine: … and then, like, we went through how to use the contents page, how to find like ... reading the contents page ... you know like ... this one tells us what I believe in ... this chapter is about what I believe in so you might find the information you need for important teachings there. And then when you get to that book ... when you get to that page, there are some bold words there ... some underlined words ... those might be the important things. Look straight for those ... scan the page ... look for only the important things. The first one took them a little bit of practice, but by the time they'd done the 5th book, 'cause they did it ... 5 different religions!
Bridget: Wow!
Maxine: … they were doing it so quick, because they knew exactly what am I looking for ... what am I doing ...

what am I doing. And I really saw there that, at the beginning of the term they wouldn't have been able to do that ... absolutely no way. I would have had to sit there with every single group pointing out the things for them, but now, even like some groups with pretty weak learners in them ... and I put them like that in case they needed help ... and then I could sit only with one group and help ... and I'd have to split myself into like 5 ... but even the weak groups were like coping with it.
Bridget: So do you feel you've really taught them something?
Maxine: Ja, like, when I saw this now, I said ... thought to myself there's absolutely no way they would have been able to do this in the beginning of the term.
Bridget: But that's such a cool feeling.
Maxine: So nice! Because they were actually doing it completely independently ... bar like one or two like questions to ... more just to clarify ... not asking me to come and show them ... more: "Okay, I see this, but then on this page there's also this ... which one's correct or which one's more important?" And then um ... I would just like help them with that, but if I look back to the beginning of the term when we tried to do mind-maps, which is also getting the important information ... we did that with leaders ... they really struggled. Like I had to help them like ... go through the text and find all the important facts ... now they did it completely like ...
Bridget: Good! And you said something about Parent's Evening?
Maxine: No, just that Parent's Evening like ... I like tried to pre-warn the parents like ... "You know, your child is ..." The strong kids dropped maybe 5% in English, but some of the weak kids have dropped like 13% ... 18% ... but it's because their reading is so weak."
Bridget: Mm.
Maxine: And I said to the parents ... "Don't get a fright when you see it, because look at the ... the class average has also dropped significantly, so it's not just your child," and I said ... I said, "To be honest, I have expected a lot from them this term with regards to using sophisticated reading techniques and practice and they've ... it's been daunting because it's something they've never done before ... they've never had to get information for themselves ... they've never had to understand what they're reading. But," I said, "Hopefully, that by next term they will have mastered these techniques and their English marks will go up again."
Tamika: Do you feel with ...
Violet: You know? And it leads to you being more confident in explaining to the parents: "You know, this is what we're doing, and this is why it's good or ..."
Bridget: Ja, that confidence is an important thing.
Maxine: Ja, like it was very easy for me to say to parents like ... "Listen, ..." I was a little bit nervous with some parents, because they just think about the mark ... they don't really care how the child got there, but I was very ... like ... confident to say to them, "Listen, their mark has dropped, but it's because of this, and it was difficult, and it was difficult for them ... but I ..."
Bridget: But you can tell the parent why ...
Maxine: "... but I'm confident that next term, they will be much more comfortable with these new techniques, and it will be much easier for them next …" And hopefully their marks will go up ...

Violet added to this and summarised what her impressions of the CoI results were to that point:

Vignette #33 (from 11:6/17)
Violet: It's usually more confident, in explaining to the parent, which is the importance of this group ... and also the ... just the main importance is that ... is that everybody is ... their eyes have been opened to what is expected ... they've been thinking about what is expected ... so just that in itself ... um, leads to better classroom practice, leads to the children improving.

Maxine reported that she was also becoming more able to identify reading difficulties:

Vignette #34 (from 11:6/17)
Maxine: Like I see all of that stuff ... I see the kids do all of that stuff, but ... like ... I never knew what it was or ...
Bridget: ... what to do about it.
Maxine: ... what to do ... and like how to really identify it, because it's difficult to explain to a parent: "I think your child has ... has ..."
Bridget: ... has a reading difficulty.
Maxine: ... is struggling with reading", and then they say, "Well what're they struggling with?" and you don't know how to ... like I could easily pick up that one child had a reading difficulty, but, for the life of me, I couldn't say ... I couldn't pinpoint exactly what she was doing wrong. And now, like, I know exactly what she's doing wrong. Like now I look at her and I say why didn't I see it before?

Maxine explained her new reading groups and another change in her practice:

Vignette #35 (from 11:9/17)
Maxine: So now ... like ... we read less in a lesson, but much more in-depth. So every single word, I make sure that the kids understand it, whereas before I just assumed that ... using context, they would get it ... but now I realise that they don't get it. So now I literally ... but even now the kids know to ask the minute they don't

understand a word, and then we discuss it as a ... we discuss it as a class. '"What could this mean?" And even the strong readers, I'm noticing, sometimes don't even understand a word.
Bridget: Mm?
Maxine: So ... the fact that we're doing it more deliberately is like much better.
Bridget: And how do you provide children with a ... with a big perspective? *[A cell phone rings]* In other words, because what can happen often is that you get bogged down in the details, and children lose the bigger picture of what you've been reading. Do you summarise at the end of the lesson? What do you do?
Maxine: What I do is I like ... uh ... what I've been doing is going through the chapter ... whatever ... picking out the difficult words ... blah, blah, blah, ... and then when we're finished, then we like do a quick summary: "Okay? Who remembers what Wilbur was feeling when this happened? Um ... What did this person do?" Blah, blah, blah. And then they have an activity. Either it's a language activity, so like when we did a chapter that was full of new gender that they had ... an animal gender that they hadn't ... then we'd do a language activity. Sometimes we'd do a more comprehension activity ... um ... where there's questions based on that chapter ... like how ... more ... so there's questions we would have already dis... answers we would've really discussed ... but now they have to do it more formally. "What was Wilbur thinking at this moment?" Blah, blah, blah. And then ... um ... ja.

In Session 12, Tamika and Violet said that they had had a good phonics debate in the week, which had been interesting. Mel was aware of the books children were reading. Maxine reported that she had included more comprehensions in the homework packs and that parents had welcomed this. Tamika and Maxine reported that they were concentrating on a new writing lesson per week where the children were practicing the transfer of reading skills into written documents. All participants showed a much greater understanding for sophisticated reading practices in the Intermediate Phase as they worked through designing their own reading curriculum in this session.

In Session 14, Violet reported that the CoI had been a revelation for her as a non-language teacher:

Vignette #36 (from 14:1/38)
Violet: Okay, that's what I've just said is ... um ... you know, being Junior trained and having ... taught from the bottom-up and listening to ... especially Maxine and Tamika, who are the language teachers, I didn't not ... you know, it's an eye-opener for me, because I didn't realise that you didn't have something to work on in the reading in that way, you know ... I know that you've been trying to create something new, but that there wasn't something specific, and um ... I love all of these ideas and ... but, are these things that they are teaching in any case, and just not putting them specifically ... um ... now you've categorised that they're going to do this in week which is great because then they are going to cover all these skills.

Maxine continued confidently to identify reading problems. Sunni and Violet reported that they were using reading resources in their classrooms and that children were making use of these areas. Sunni reported that even the librarian had noticed changes in the children's reading practices. In this last, and arguably highly important vignette, Maxine also reported that she had completely changed her practice:

Vignette #37 (from 14:3,4/38)
Maxine: I've noticed, especially ... it's hit me with *Butterfly Lion* this term, the most ... it's like last year when I asked the Grade 4s, in my class, "Who likes ... who enjoyed *Butterfly Lion*?" There were like three kids because only three kids understood it ... because I didn't do it the same way I did it this year. I did it completely different. Like I would sit and read with them, but we didn't go really a lot into the meaning and ...
Bridget: You were just reading it.
Maxine: Yes. We read it, and we did talk about the book, but like ... not in the same way.
Lorraine: I bet it's changed your opinion of the book now, because you've guided it ...
Maxine: Exactly!
Bridget: And this year, like there's reading and there's reeeading!
Maxine: Exactly!
Bridget: You know?
Maxine: And like it hit me this year while we were reading *Butterfly Lion* how much the kids were enjoying it. And I'm like, it's not because the kids are different and they just enjoy African stories more ... like ... it's because for the first time, they're actually understanding what's going on in the book.
Bridget: And because you did it differently.
Maxine: And I completely did it differently, and I realised well obviously it's completely changed ... I would

never read like I did last year. And then I look at last year, and I think how embarrassing that I used to do that.
Bridget: But that's how you learn as a professional, you know?

6.7 Conclusion to Chapter Six: Narrative Analyses of Data

Chapter Six of this report has presented a narrative description and analysis based on the coded data as a means to reconstitute this data to show the development of the CoI over time. It has been organised according to four main themes that tried to capture the unfolding process of the CoI. The first was to introduce and illustrate the evidence of what the participants brought to the CoI in its establishment phase, as well as the particular challenges that substantiated the formation of the CoI. Secondly, an overall picture was drawn of the evidence that illustrated the affordances that the community created for participants. Thirdly, evidence of the constraints that impinged on the CoI were investigated, and finally, the CoI was weighed in terms of whether there was evidence to show that development took place therein over time. The research question was to assess whether development took place in the CoI or not, and to what extent, if any, did it benefit the teachers in their professional development, the principal as an instructional leader, and in building a Community of Inquiry at the school with a focus on improving reading instruction and practice in the IP. Chapter Seven will present overall findings with regard to answering this question.

Chapter Seven: Findings

7.1 Introduction: Revision of the Research Questions and Aims

At this point of presenting the overall findings of the study, it may be important to revise its original research questions and aims.

7.1.1 Main Research Question

The main research question was as follows:

> *What are the affordances and constraints of the establishment of a Community of Inquiry for the professional development of teachers as an instructional leadership intervention by the principal?*

7.1.2 Sub-Questions of the Research

The sub-questions that emerged from the main research question were:

- What would be the affordances and constraints of the principal establishing, facilitating and researching such a community as an instructional leadership intervention?
- What would be to the benefit of the teachers (and their learners) of establishing such a community for professional development and reading instruction in the Intermediate Phase?
- What processes are entailed in establishing a Community of Inquiry?

7.1.3 Aims of the Research

The overall empirical aims of the research that emerged from these questions were to explore to what extent and how a Community of Inquiry enables professional development at a school:

- For the principal as an instructional leader, the facilitator and researcher of such a community;
- For the teachers in terms of their professional development and improvement of reading instruction in the Intermediate Phase;
- For the building of a community of reading teachers at the school which could have implications for the improvement of the reading of the IP learners.

A theoretical aim of the study was to contribute to the growing body of research about establishing Communities of Inquiry in South African schools.

From the narrative presentation of data in the previous chapter, we can begin to draw out answers to these questions and evaluate whether the research achieved its aims.

At this point, it may also be useful to revisit Chapter 2, which dealt with Professional Development – that school improvement is necessary on four reciprocal dynamics in order to have positive effect on the fifth: the learning of the child. The first occurs at the level of the teacher, the second at the level of

teaching, the third at the level of collegiality (community), and the fourth, at the level of the principal effectively running the school as an administrative and instructional leader.

7.2 Findings: The Affordances of the CoI

7.2.1 CoI Affordances Impacting at the level of the Teacher

In this area, we look to where the data from the CoI could have shown a positive impact at the level of the teacher. Did the CoI help in any way what the teachers bring to their teaching situation? Did it positively affect their world-views and preferences, their expressions of personality and attitude, their temperament, habits, physicality, self-concept, epistemology and management of knowledge, intra- and inter-personal management, abilities/skills/talents, biographical history, strength of character, pedagogical philosophy, creativity and use resources? Of course, the CoI could not hope to comprehensively touch on and improve all these areas.

There were significant affordances of the CoI for teachers that we can draw from the data. From the point of view of challenging the world-views of teachers this may have occurred at the level of their sharing about teaching experiences in different countries. They were instances where they may have been challenged to confront their prejudices and biases about colleagues and learners – especially those with differences and difficulties. It has been shown that the teachers certainly demonstrated inclusivity towards newcomers and novices, such as Lorraine, Mel and Tamika, and colleagues of different age-groups, particularly Violet, who went from what seemed to be a more peripheral role to being increasingly included in the core group. The CoI also challenged the established knowledge of teachers. The teachers showed trust in one another and vulnerability in their sharing of personal frustrations, mistakes and limitations. It seems, from the discussions, that while they acknowledged that I was an authority figure and showed respect for that, they felt free to disagree with me and put forward their own viewpoints. They also showed their own leadership and initiative in taking the lead in discussions, teaching their colleagues, taking ownership for certain tasks, producing documents for the CoI and in sharing and helping each other outside of the CoI. The teachers had opportunities to show professionalism in terms of the boundaries they respected – they did not use the CoI to offload about personal problems or to elevate their needs above others – and if they did share personal stories, these were to the benefit of the group and in keeping with the topic of discussion. Certainly, the sense of humour of each participant came to the fore and may have positively contributed to the CoI success and the teachers' positive experience of the CoI meetings. Although this cannot verify this precisely from an individual point of view, it seems likely, from the degree of sharing, the CoI enabled participants to be comfortable and feel open to share without fear of ridicule or adverse consequences. Certainly, the dominance and reticence of individuals in the group did feature and helped us learn more about one another on many levels – Sunni was usually quiet and often her utterances were sometimes accompanied

with an apology, but she shared useful insights and often made a positive contribution to the discussions; Maxine was quite talkative and offered many constructive illustrations and anecdotes. The personalities and temperaments of the individuals added positively to the liveliness, atmosphere and dynamic interaction of the CoI and added to their interaction as a staff. Confidence levels of staff in class, as particularly reported by Maxine, may have improved, which seems (from the data) to have had a positive impact on their self-perception. The teachers' regard for Lorraine's expertise also gave her confidence to share her ideas and legitimised her as a welcome member of the group, even though she came from a different country. Where they did have fears and reservations, such as Lorraine trying to come to terms with a significant change in her teaching, they were able to express these. The teachers certainly had opportunities to demonstrate their strength of character. They were resilient in finding answers to their frustrations. They showed tenacity, perseverance and commitment to the CoI in their regular attendance, good focus during discussions, and in continued seeking for answers. The CoI participants also showed that they took initiative to make changes to their teaching philosophies and practices. They demonstrated accountability to the group and its goals and to their tasks as teachers. Further to this, they showed trustworthiness and integrity – to their learners and colleagues – in the sensitive and professional way they discussed learner difficulties and in how they interacted constructively with one another. The teachers had opportunity to show empathy for one another, and helped each other in and outside of the CoI meetings, listened to others, and were respectful of turn-taking.

From the point of view of enriching the resources of teachers, the CoI also had positive effects. It did expose teachers to a variety of resources available and gave them an opportunity to share expertise and knowledge about such resources. They explored the curriculum specifications with regard to reading in the South African and UK curriculum and reflected their experiences of the Asian. The CoI encouraged teachers to begin to expand the body of resources they used for their profession, also to look to others' expertise and experience as resources, and created a space where they could ask for advice from each other. They critically examined textbooks and the manner in which they used these. More resources were also purchased for teachers. In terms of stretching their creativity – in the CoI the teachers produced and showed 'ownership' of their own artefacts – especially the '*Habits of Effective IP Reading*' posters for classroom use. They were free to design them in the way they wished, and shared their expertise with each other in this process. They focused on creating useful resources for their classrooms that both the children and they could use.

Where the CoI may have made an important contribution is that it seemed to be effective as a space where teachers could share their prior knowledge, questions, and experiences about reading and reading instruction in the IP. This seemed to be to the benefit of all the teachers. They could express their

ideas, queries and knowledge about learners, learning and teaching reading. A significant degree of pertinent knowledge about emergent reading, IP reading skills, the curriculum, reading methodologies and approaches, reading resources, reading difficulties and remediation, was shared in the CoI meetings. What is important is that this newly shared CoI knowledge could begin to be utilized to advance teachers' pedagogic content knowledge about reading instruction, which takes us to the next level of the CoI as a means of PD.

7.2.2 CoI Affordances Impacting at the Level of Teaching

Here the study was interested in data which showed where the CoI might have begun to make a positive impact on IP reading instruction by the teachers. Did it affect their planning, their management of learner behaviour, their communications skills, their dialogical skills, their management of knowledge in the classroom, their physicality in the classroom, their technical competence and their reflectivity? At the level of planning curricular reading activities, the CoI seemed to have a significant impact – in both English and other learning areas. Armed with the growing body of knowledge as expressed in the CoI, teachers did begin to change their planning, as shown in the vignettes in the previous chapter. In Session 14 especially, they focused on how they would break down vital reading skills, how they would teach these over the school year, the school term and during the week. They reported using the new resources in their classrooms. They developed new rubrics and shared these. They began to think about how they would alter their assessment tools for learners – such as diagnostic tests, exam papers, and worksheets – to reinforce the newly explored IP reading skills. They reported that they used reading resources, setwork books and textbooks in different ways. They shared that they had begun to focus explicitly on IP reading skills in all classes.

In terms of managing learner behaviour, teachers reported that the CoI had had an impact. From their stories, teachers seemed more confident about identifying reading difficulties and assisting learners where they could. Where they could not, they referred learners for support from external experts. Teachers reported during lessons where reading was an activity, they were more able to direct learners – they were exposed to different methodologies and had highlighted the specific IP reading skills that needed to be reinforced. Teachers also seemed far more able to deal with the differentiation needs of learners – particularly the language teachers when working specifically on reading in their lessons. Teachers reported that this even affected their physical movements and interactions with learners in classrooms: how they moved between groups of learners; where they placed themselves as teachers, i.e. their proximity to learners – either working with strong or weaker groups. They way in which they mediated the content of setwork books and other resources also changed. The level of contribution that they expected from learners changed – instead of asking learners to paraphrase or to repeat content, they reported that they encouraged learners to look deeper, use the metacognitive skills of looking for the

structure and 'voice' in texts, to express their personal opinions, to make deductions and infer meaning, and to examine the author's purpose.

The CoI space was essentially a place where teachers were called upon to reflect – reflect upon their practice, evaluate their knowledge and experience, reflect on changes in their practice, think about different and better ways of doing things, make suggestions, verify understanding, question issues, think deeply on IP reading skills and ways to improve these in teaching and learning. Another vital transition that teachers can make as a result of being involved in a CoI through sharing with colleagues is that they can move from a focus on children's difficulties to one of 'this is how I changed/what I did' as a teacher (Curry, 2008) – and there is evidence of this in the CoI data. It moves the focus from the problem in the learner, to the teacher actively attempting to solve it.

7.2.3 CoI Affordances Impacting on the Level of Community and Collegiality

Here the study was interested in the affordances the CoI contributed for greater community and collegiality between staff. Certainly, there was evidence of a joint sense of responsibility for the CoI task, and teachers even showed joint ownership of the products of the CoI. Teachers began to acquire and used a common language of practice – e.g. 'shared reading', 'paired reading', 'IP sophisticated reading skills' (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Learning to work together can generate a greater degree of corporate identity and collegiality, and the CoI seemed to afford that experience to teachers (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Although this is beyond the scope of the study, a spin-off of this can be an improved overall positive atmosphere at the school. The CoI can be a means of breaking down differences between staff that may divide them – the narrowing of age and experience gaps between the participants of this CoI are demonstrative of this. CoIs can be creative spaces to break down complex challenges that staff face and this was certainly the case with the CoI and its focus on IP reading. This interaction can help to break down teacher isolation and feelings of being overwhelmed – imposed either by the teacher on themself, or by the wider staff (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). It seems all staff experienced less isolation to some degree in the CoI. As part of the CoI, the teachers discovered that their problems with learners' reading difficulties – as well as other frustrations – were shared by the others and they took joint responsibility for this (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). The positive impact that this has on novices is important – when they hear that more experienced teachers are also struggling, they feel they are not alone, as when Maxine shared about Lorraine. Sometimes more experienced teachers can mentor new and novice staff – and this occurred in the CoI. Teachers may also feel overwhelmed at solving difficult teaching problems, and if they have the knowledge that the task of solving this is shared, their fears may be somewhat assuaged. It is clear this was the case especially for Maxine (and even for me as principal). Staff who feel they are able to safely express themselves, grow in their trust of their colleagues and look to them for support – there is also evidence

of this in the teachers' sharing about how they began to interact outside of the CoI. For experienced teachers, this can also be beneficial, as being challenged to change their practices can feel threatening and create a sense of dissonance in the teacher, as was the case with Lorraine. If they have colleagues with whom they can share, and whom they can trust, this may be easier. Another aspect of this is that the shared trust of colleagues in a sensitive CoI may also afford them space to disagree professionally constructively with one another – and even with the principal – without adverse consequences. There is evidence of this in the CoI. Certainly, in the CoI there was evidence of empathy and compassion expressed for colleagues. Another benefit is that teachers feel that there is a sense of a unified approach to dealing with difficult parents – parents who range on the spectrum from over-involved and critical, to absent and apathetic. This was especially important for Maxine. Likewise, there developed a unified approach to the identification of reading difficulties and their remediation. Further to this, teachers shared skills in completing CoI projects, which means that less technically skilled staff were assisted and more technically skilled staff had an opportunity to shine and show initiative and leadership and gain respect from their peers. A significant portion of discussions focused on reading instruction methodology and teachers were able to teach each other – share, influence, and demonstrate to each other different methods and practices. There is evidence that teachers did learn from one another in the CoI. Another affordance of working in a CoI is that there is a greater opportunity for cross-pollination of ideas, which was also evident in the CoI discussions. Although the focus on reading skills in the CoI did have cross-curricular implications, the specific pedagogical content knowledge for language teachers about IP reading skills, difficulties, remediation, methodologies, approaches, resources, differentiation, and other areas, could also be deepened and enhanced. Teachers were quick to remind one another that they needed to remain centred on the child and their learning. A critical look at the curriculum and an examination of reading skills at different levels also began to provide some curricular coherence – between colleagues, between Grades, in language classrooms and in other IP learning areas (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). The CoI also placed the school within a local, national and international context. Curricula and other policies could also be contextualised and implemented into the school through the work of the CoI (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). The sharing of resources and experiential knowledge definitely contributed to collegiality – colleagues provided salient input from their experiences as well as their knowledge about resources (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). The CoI was also a place where important news could be shared – such as changes in policy and curriculum. Further to this, the usefulness of different in-service training workshops, meetings, conferences and presentations, were evaluated. The effectiveness of other aspects of the school were also examined – administrative problems, the timetable, the work of assistants, the effectiveness of extra-curricular activities – and also assessed in a corporate forum. In terms of building collegiality, the CoI was a place for working through the viability of ideas, testing tacit theories, and verifying personal understanding. It seemed to push some colleagues to think laterally and outside of their usual frameworks. The

sophistication of pedagogical knowledge – the transition of moving from surface knowledge to deeper knowledge – did occur in the CoI. The CoI allowed teachers the space to make new suggestions and the viability of those suggestions could be explored and contextualised to the school. It also afforded a space for brainstorming solutions and the refining of ideas to have specific application in the context of the school. The CoI was also a place where teachers could express concerns and reservations about decisions of colleagues – and even mine as the principal. It was a place where shared and distributed leadership was effected – as principal I could not operate in isolation or be solely responsible for making decisions.

7.2.4 CoI Affordances at the Level of the Principal

The CoI enabled me to develop as an instructional leader. It was a place where possible future decisions I as principal wished to take could be mooted, explored, tested, adopted or vetoed. Principals involved with CoIs also cannot simply hand down commands and expect these to be implemented (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Through CoIs, they are made aware that these need to be negotiated with staff. CoIs can curb the dominance of principals. This I found to be my experience. The CoI was a public space where I could give feedback to staff and praise the work of the teachers – not just from an administrative point of view, but also at the actual point of their instruction. I could use the CoI to communicate to the wider staff curricular expectations, the vision for the school, and its specific challenges. It was a place where I could also find a voice – not just as the administrative leader of the school, but that of an instructional leader sharing and encouraging the growth of professional instructional knowledge within the school.

The CoI of this study generated a significant amount of knowledge for me as instructional leader of many areas and levels of the school. It provided me with a window on children's difficulties and progress through the eyes of their teachers. It gave me deeper insights into individual teachers working in a collegial context and what they brought to their teaching – rather than just observing their teaching behaviours in isolation from their peers. I could better 'study' my staff – their world views and preferences, their prejudices, biases, level of trust of one another, ethics and approaches to authority. I also came to know a little more about their personalities and attitudes – their senses of humour, their dominance or reticence, their introversion or extroversion, their personal tastes and styles. I could gain very valuable insights into their confidence levels, sense of personal autonomy and self-care from a personal and professional point of view, as well as the limitations they faced at this level. (A simple example was observing and discovering in the CoI that one of the participants' hearing device was faulty, and sensitively assisting her outside the CoI to address this). I also gained valuable insight into teachers' epistemology and management of knowledge – their curiosity, learning styles, general, specialist and contextual knowledge, teachers' thinking styles, attention to detail and ability to

discriminate between essential and non-essential knowledge. Through the CoI, I was able to become more familiar with how staff interacted with each other – their management of emotion and self-control, their perceptiveness, social skills, listening skills, their leadership and respect for personal boundaries. I could also see the abilities/skills/talents as well as the creativity of staff in action – and not just in a classroom setting, but in the presence of their peers. I could also gain insights into aspects of the biographical history of staff – such as their culture, heritage, experience, travel experiences, and family commitments. I could obtain knowledge about teachers' concepts about learners, learning, their colleagues and teaching. I gained valuable insight into the resources that staff utilised, where they accessed information and where they still required resources.

The CoI also provided me with a window on the teaching happening in the school. I could hear the teachers explain how they went about their planning, how they said they managed learner behaviour, how they managed knowledge, and their reflectivity. I would have to do further classroom observations to see other aspects of this level – such as how teachers communicated with learners, managed learner behaviour in class, as well as their physicality in class, and technical competence.

Having to lead the CoI and research it meant that I had to spend significant time learning myself – consulting a wide range of resources about professional development, research, as well as reading theory.

The CoI touched on many methods of PD (as outlined in 2.3) and assisted me in accelerating this for staff. Through the CoI discussions, I could learn about areas where I could improve on the administration of the school. The CoI stemmed from me creating a space at staff meetings for discussions about curricular difficulties, and from these, the poor reading skills of IP learners was identified as a priority area. The CoI created a space for dialogue between colleagues and between the staff and me. It enhanced the collection of teacher resources at the school. It led to the production of useful resources. The CoI contributed to improved management of relations with parents. I could see from the involvement of teachers who could be developed – where I could create specialist roles for staff, or promote them to Grade Tutor or even higher (one was promoted to Grade Tutor, another to Deputy Head). Through the CoI, I could increase my approachability and accessibility to staff. The CoI also allowed for peer and principal feedback to staff. It allowed for greater inductive mentoring for novices and new staff. It provided a window for me to see how experienced teachers were being challenged, where they were experiencing difficulties, and whether they were allowing themselves to grow. The CoI allowed for specific input and presentations for the staff that were tailored to meet their needs. It also allowed me to gain insight into teachers' pre-service and experiential knowledge. It allowed for the suggestion of further PD and improvements to the school. The CoI also allowed for

formal research to be conducted at the school. It provided a means for me to discover where staff would benefit from further individualised informal and formal professional development.

7.2.5 CoI Affordances Impacting at the Level of the Learner

The research could only limit itself to the utterances in CoI meetings by the teachers and did not observe or investigate change in classroom practice. (The next phase of the research could have begun verifying these changes – particularly using action research and involving the teachers in the research process.) However, we can gain from the discussions what the teachers reported and how they felt the CoI was impacting on their classroom practice. From this, we may trace a few changes that could have had an impact at the level of the learner.

As seen in the data, a significant affordance of the CoI was a critical examination of, and an increase in, specific reading resources for IP learners. New books were ordered for classroom and library use. This was also true for learning areas outside of English. Teachers seemed to become 'conscientised' to begin observing what learners were reading, the appropriateness of the content and level of their reading materials. Learners were also sorted into more appropriate reading ability groups, which allowed teachers to begin to meet their specific reading needs. They may have experienced a change in the way CoI teachers presented text to them – from highlighting salient features in text, exposing them to sophisticated reading skills of the Intermediate Phase, and the increase in the use of everyday resources. Teachers in the CoI had designed their posters – '*The Habits of Effective IP Reading*' for all classes and these were due to be implemented in all classrooms in the new year. Learners experienced this focus not just in their English Language classes, but also in all learning areas, from Mathematics, Natural Science, Social Sciences and Arts and Culture. The reinforcement of language and reading skills impacted on other learning areas – children wrote spelling tests and had to increase their vocabulary in different knowledge domains, and had to pay attention to answer in full sentences and with accurate spelling in all learning areas. Learners' reading at home also experienced some changes – there were adjustments made to the amount of daily reading, a more structured guideline was given to parents on how to do reading at home with their children, more comprehensions appeared in homework packs, there was a better design of the homework reading card, as well as an increase in vigilant checking of homework reading cards, and a presentation to parents about reading in the IP including the CoI '*Habits of Effective IP Reading'* posters. Teachers reported that children had noticed when teachers became excited when reading aloud to them. Perhaps children experienced the teachers as being more confident in class – particularly Maxine's classes. As the teachers – and again especially Maxine – expressed a greater understanding of the diagnosis and treatment of reading difficulties – children may have experienced teachers in class being more able to assist them with their difficulties, and also subject to being referred to other reading assessment and support systems. (It is hoped that through the CoI that

children with difficulties may have experienced greater compassion, patience and understanding from their teachers on the whole.)

As proposed, the language teachers also learned how to do a basic reading assessment and learners could have discovered more about their reading speed and fluency levels. Teachers also discussed the implementation of a new continuous reporting system in-school and for parents. This was due to be implemented in 2012. With the significant difficulties experienced by Grade 4 learners, and the focus of the some of the CoI on targeting these, teachers were especially aware of the need to fill the gaps at that level. A meeting was conducted with the Grade 3 and Grade 4 educators to discuss the reading curriculum and where to improve on the gaps between the Grades; reading resources were sourced to ensure a better cohesive transition for learners between Grade 3 and 4; Grade 4 teachers especially targeted phonics for weaker learners and tried to implement interventions that would help learners at that level.

Another interesting point Mel picked up on about the CoI affordance at the level of the learners is encapsulated in her words: "Ja, I just want to say like the kids enjoy it and they see that the teachers are working together …" (14:38/38). Perhaps this co-operative work by teachers could have contributed to a positive atmosphere of the school as one of greater cohesiveness, about which learners particularly could have felt more secure.

7.3 Constraints of the CoI

7.3.1 CoI Constraints at the level of the Teacher

The CoI consisted mostly of younger, female participants from one sector of the population. This could have led to a favouring of perceptions and agendas from one point of view. The adaptability and flexibility of some participants was limited – some had difficulties adjusting to change, or even the suggestion of change. The availability of teachers for CoI sessions was a difficult hurdle to overcome and hindered the progress of regular meetings. These had to be especially carved out of school time. Some teachers may have felt that they made less of a contribution to the discussion than others, especially if they were not directly involved in language teaching. In addition, the fact that the majority of the staff were Junior Primary trained and experienced, meant that initial discussions regarding IP reading skills were seen through these lenses and this was an obstacle that took some time to overcome – some staff with greater success than others. Teachers may have also felt intimidated by my presence, my facilitation of the CoI, as well as my research needs. Teachers could have felt that I favoured certain teachers over others – or their needs over others'. Staff can also form alliances with one another through working together in the CoI – something that has the potential to intimidate colleagues.

Disagreements with colleagues in CoI meetings can also create a sense of unhappiness and dissatisfaction.

7.3.2 CoI Constraints at the Level of Teaching

Non-language teachers – i.e. teachers of other learning areas may have felt that they were subordinate to the roles of the language teachers. They may have felt more peripheral rather than equal participants. They may have felt that some of the content was not relevant to their learning area. There was also no time for peers or me to begin to evaluate changes in practice at the level of the classroom. Teachers may have felt under great pressure to change their planning and teaching – to adjust their teaching styles according to those suggested in the CoI.

7.3.3 CoI Constraints at the Level of Community and Collegiality

As this was a voluntary activity, not all teachers on the staff participated. This could have led to tensions between participants and non-participants. It could have also led to further feelings of isolation in non-participants, which I had to work hard to try to counter by making a special effort to engage with non-participants outside of the CoI. Feelings of tension from non-participants could have been further exacerbated when teachers of the CoI received new resources – what could have been viewed as preferential treatment. I had to make sure the needs of non-participants were also being addressed. Although this was difficult to gauge, the dominance or reticence of certain individuals in the group could have been difficult for participants to deal with – on occasion, it was so for me as facilitator and researcher of the CoI. There were many instances when participants talked at the same time. For quieter participants this could have been overwhelming. There were some instances of participants not listening to each other, talking over one another, or ignoring the questions of other participants. Teachers may also have felt reticent about sharing their experiences, difficulties or personal knowledge for fear that this would make them vulnerable among their colleagues and in front of their principal.

7.3.4 CoI Constraints at the Level of the Principal (also as Limitations of the Study)

Many constraints were evident at the level of the principal. My lack of availability as the principal because of the administrative demands on me and the contextual upheavals at the school also impacted negatively on the CoI. This was a cause of considerable concern for me. If I was not present, or cancelled meetings, interest and commitment of the staff could have waned, although this does not seem to be the case with this CoI as the teachers seemed to remain committed throughout. Heads that are too authoritarian or domineering can also negatively affect the CoI, and I had to be especially sensitive about this. The principal can also impose unrealistic expectations on the staff through the CoI. I could have also underestimated the difficulties and time it takes to establish CoIs (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). This was perhaps evident when I suggested reworking the learning outcomes and assessment

standards for reading and staff seemed overwhelmed. Uncooperative or resistant colleagues can be unfairly treated or side-lined, and I had to be especially careful with staff that resisted my suggestions – sometimes the cracks appeared in my tolerance of resistant staff. The participant teachers could have also streamlined their sharing to suit what I wanted to hear – the success of the CoI needed to be verified in the classroom, although this became beyond the scope of the study. Conversely, in the face of a unified CoI of teachers, the principal can be undermined and overruled – there may have been a few instances where I felt this was so. The fact that, as an authority figure, I was the facilitator of the CoI could have also been problematic. Staff could have felt that I imposed my own agenda on the CoI or led discussions in a way that gave preference to my needs. The way forward would have been to appoint a teacher-facilitator, perhaps to have even withdrawn and left teachers to record themselves without my presence, and used the recordings for research.

The fact that I was also the researcher of the CoI caused me significant internal conflict that also may have impacted negatively on the CoI participants and the research. I found it difficult to reconcile the roles of active, instructional leader and that of more passive, participant observer. When I wanted to be, and was forthright about issues – an expectation of an instructional leader – I felt worried about this from a researcher point of view. When I was a researcher, I felt guilty and protective of my staff in that these demands may have increased pressure on them. I would have liked to have done much more data collection – such as interviewing the teachers (the interview questions were prepared), as well as more action research involving the teachers in tracking progress and change in their lessons and reviewing these in CoI meetings, but felt I could not if I was to truly respect the demands already placed on them as teachers. Although I also gained a vast amount of insight through the CoI, the pressure it placed on me as a principal was also significant. Staff expressing dissatisfaction or need in CoI meetings was difficult for me to address – especially in the light of the contextual upheavals at the school. I felt guilty about where staff struggled, about the lack of resources at the school, although this was not directly my fault. Decisions that previous management had made also impacted negatively on my role and where and when I could, I changed such decisions as soon as I could. Because I was in a management position, I could have been the target of staff dissatisfaction about issues at the school. I also had to remain as neutral and protective as possible over all constituents of the school – learners, parents, teachers, teachers in other sections of the school. There were times when I was not able to do this and also showed some frustration myself. I also had to spend a considerable amount of time educating myself about the curriculum, reading theory, professional development of staff and other areas. As I had been an English teacher for many years, I could draw on that experience to read further, but one wonders how I (and for that matter, other instructional leaders) would have been able to do this if the CoI focus had been in an area of the curriculum outside of my expertise – such as Mathematics. In an already demanding administrative role, compounded by management changes at the school, it was

difficult to find the time to do so. In fact, many resources were gathered and read in the course of the study, but the time constraints made it difficult to draw these together in a more meaningful and integrated way.

7.3.5 CoI Constraints at the Level of the Learner

Although this was generally sensitively and confidentially handled in the CoI, there always exists the potential danger that children can be discussed in CoI forums and then insensitive teachers can target them unfairly in classes. This is also true about parents. The ethical dilemmas of this were of concern to me. Children can also be placed under tremendous pressure to perform if teachers themselves feel pressurised and keen to produce results.

7.4 Conclusion to Chapter Seven

This chapter has aimed to revisit the research questions and aims, and has then attempted to provide overall findings of the affordances and constraints of establishing the CoI. Final conclusions for the study can now be attempted, as well as reflections, implications of the study, and further recommendations.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions – Further Implications, Limitations, Reflections and Recommendations

The answer to the main research question is that there are many affordances to establishing a CoI, and that these benefits far outweigh the constraints. The CoI provided a strong springboard from which the Intermediate Phase staff could begin to address on a wide scale the problems related to reading and reading instruction in the IP. It enabled me as the principal to develop as an instructional leader, and the teachers to develop as professionals and reading instructors.

The sub-questions, aims and general considerations of the research also found positive answers in the CoI – from teacher's reports it began to benefit the IP learners; it enabled teachers to unearth and articulate their frustrations about reading in the IP in a constructive forum; teachers had a safe, collegial environment in which they could share their pre-service and prior learning in reading, as well as their constructs about reading and reading instruction; it encouraged the sharing and building-up of resources for IP reading for teachers and learners; it allowed for the learning of teachers through the input of tailor-made presentations and participants teaching each other; it provided a space where teachers could begin to critically engage with the curriculum – particularly reading; it allowed for teachers to share their rich experiences; it began to make headway in assisting the teachers to improve their practices with regards to reading instruction, the diagnosis of difficulties and reading remediation in the IP; it benefited me in my instructional leadership of the school; and it was a hotbed for the professional development of all participants, including me.

In hindsight, this project was a vital one, but one that was considerably ambitious, difficult to implement, and perhaps even more ambitious for me to establish, facilitate and research myself. However, without me as an instructional leader driving, facilitating and researching the group however, one wonders whether such an intervention would have taken place, or have been beneficial in the face of the many demands placed on teachers (Louis & Kruse, 1995). Sometimes external insistences from authority can provide valuable impetus for change at schools, as long as these are sensitively handled and one has the support and trust of participants (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Perhaps having an alternative facilitator and researcher for the CoI may have yielded even better results (Morrissey, 2000), but the actual acceleration in learning that I experienced was vast, and, sometimes it is only the principal that can play this role – especially in newly established communities (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

It is also important to note that the sample group represented a fairly mono-cultural, mono-racial and female demographic. This has implications in that the generalisation of the study to different contexts may be variable in the South African milieu, where CoI's may be representative of broader race groups and have variable outcomes in different socio-economic and cultural contexts. The CoI was established

in a small, independent school. Further to this, a small school lends itself to greater connectivity between staff and did contribute to the success of the CoI of this study (Louis & Kruse, 1995). In larger schools, and across schools, it is not as easy to implement CoIs. All too often, the daily demands of teaching and running a school are all-consuming, and can take precedence over the need for teachers and principals to develop as instructional professionals, especially in the light of the critical problems they face – such as poor reading skills in learners.

The CoI was also established at a school with access to resources and expertise, educated and committed teachers, supportive and involved parents, and was in a relatively privileged position in the upper echelons of private schools in South Africa. Even with the heavy demands on me, in the light of the many challenges of the teachers, and the contextual upheavals at the school, the CoI was established and provided significant affordances for its participants within a short space of time. One wonders, in more deprived environments, larger schools, schools with less committed teachers and principals, where learner difficulties are in the majority, where parents are absent or very poor, where educational resources are scare, how CoIs could be effectively established in the face of such difficulties? (McLaughlin & Talbert (2006) indicate that it seems very difficult to do so in these environments.)

Researchers in South Africa are beginning to establish across-school Professional Learning Communities for teachers – such as the Data Informed Practice Improvement Project by Professor Karen Brodie for Mathematics educators at Wits University – but these are few and far between. Cluster meetings in government and private sectors, which could be developed as Professional Learning Communities, can also seem ineffectual and disappointing to teachers. CoIs at the level of the principal are also scarce. Although Heads Conferences and Meetings take place in the independent sphere of South African education, how powerful or effectual are these in the government sector? Perhaps not enough attention (research and intervention) is paid in South Africa to providing much needed support to principals in their professional development as instructional leaders and the establishers of in-school CoIs. The process is a difficult, sometimes lonely one, and requires much more research and support.

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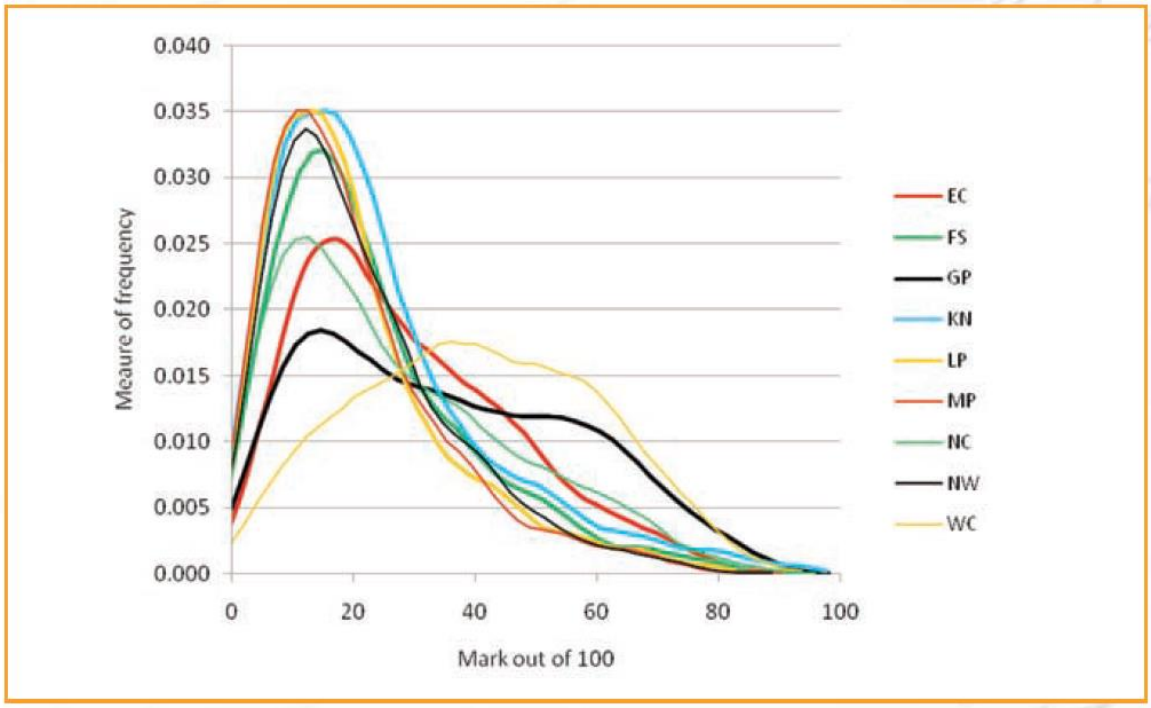
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Appendix A: Figure 3.1 Distribution of Grade 6 Language Scores, ANA, 2011 (ANA, 2011:23)



Appendix B: Intermediate Phase, RNCS 2005 Learning Outcome 3 Reading and Viewing Assessment Standards for Grade 4, 5 and 6:

4	AS1	Reads a variety of South African and international fiction and non-fiction texts for different purposes (e.g. poems, stories, myths, brochures reference books and text-books); * reads independently using a variety of reading and comprehension strategies appropriate for different purposes; * skims for general idea; * scan for specific details; * surveys content page, headings, index for overview; * makes predictions, uses contextual clues to determine meaning, and makes inferences; * reads aloud clearly and with expression
4	AS2	Views and comments on various visual and multi-media texts for different purposes (e.g. pictures, posters, cartoons and, where available, computers and CD-ROMs): * interprets message; * identifies and discusses graphical techniques such as colour, design, choice of images, etc. and how they affect the message conveyed.
4	AS3	Describes feelings about text (factual or literary, visual or multimedia), giving reasons
4	AS4	Discusses how the choice of language and graphical features influence the reader
4	AS5	Shows understanding and identifies and discusses aspects such as central idea, characters, setting and plot in fictional texts
4	AS6	Infers reasons for actions in the story
4	AS7	Understands the vocabulary and discusses the choice of words, imagery and sound effects in poems, stories and multimedia texts (e.g. rhyme, alliteration, word pictures, humour)
4	AS8	Recognises the different structures, language use, purposes and audiences of different kinds of texts: * identifies the different purposes of texts (e.g. speeches, stories, poems, advertisements); * identifies the way texts are organised; * identifies how language and register (degree of formability) differ according to purpose and audience; * identifies the language used in different kinds of texts (e.g. Direct speech in fables, sequence words in procedures, passive speech in reports)
4	AS9	Identifies and discusses values in texts in relation to cultural, social, environmental and moral issues (e.g. moral of the story and its validity in different contexts, issues of fairness and equity in relation to different situations and characters
4	AS10	Understands and responds appropriately to information texts: * identifies main and supporting ideas; * scans for specific details in texts (e.g. weather reports, bus timetables, maps)
4	AS11	Interprets simple visual texts (tables, charts, posters, graphs, maps) and can change text from one form to another (e.g. graph to explanatory paragraph)
4	AS12	Selects relevant texts for own information needs (e.g. dictionaries, children's encyclopaedias and reference books)

5	AS1	Reads a variety of South African and international fiction and non-fiction texts for different purposes (e.g. poems, stories, myths, brochures reference books and text-books): * reads independently, selecting appropriate reading and comprehension strategies for the purpose; * skims to get the general idea; * scans for specific details; * surveys contents page, headings, index; * uses previous knowledge or textual clues to determine meaning and make inferences; * predicts content or ending; * makes story maps or notes key points to track comprehension; * reads aloud clearly, adjusting speed according to purpose and audience
5	AS2	Views and comments on various visual and multimedia texts for different purposes (e.g. advertisements, video/films, television dramas and where available, computers and CD-ROM's); * discusses message conveyed; * identifies and discusses graphical techniques such as colour, choice of images, kind and size of lettering, symbols, layout, etc.
5	AS3	Describes and analyses emotional response to texts.
5	AS4	Discusses how much writers and visual artists relate to their readers in different ways, and how they create different views of the world using language and visual features
5	AS5	Shows understanding of fictional text: * discusses central idea, plot, setting, atmosphere and characters; * makes inferences about plot and character; * discusses themes and issues and offers opinions with justification
5	AS6	Understands the vocabulary and discusses how writers have used language to achieve effects (similes, rhythm onomatopoeia, etc.)
5	AS7	Recognises the different structures, language use, purposes and audiences of different texts: * identifies the way different kinds of texts are organized (e.g. fables, letters, book reviews); * identifies what characterizes different forms of writing such as science fiction, mystery stories, etc. * identifies the different purposes of texts and analyses how language and register differ for purpose and audience.
5	AS8	Identifies and discusses environmental, cultural and social values in texts: * identifies and discusses point of view and its purpose and effect; * recognises and discusses different stereotypes and how they are created; * discusses and compares the treatment of social and cultural issues by different writers on various topics
5	AS9	Understands and responds appropriately to a range of information texts: * identifies main and supporting ideas, notes specific details and summarises information; * reads and carries out fairly complex instructions, and follows directions with minimum assistance
5	AS10	Interprets and discusses more complex visual texts (e.g. tables, charts posters, bar graphs, maps) and can change text from one form to another (e.g. a table of data into a graph)
5	AS11	Selects relevant reading material and applies research skills to find information in dictionaries, reference books and textbooks from community sources or electronic media (where available)

6	AS1	Reads and responds critically to a variety of South African and international fiction and non-fiction (journals, poetry, novels, short plays, newspapers, textbooks, etc.); * reads aloud and silently, adjusting reading strategies to suit the purpose and audience; * uses appropriate reading and comprehension strategies (skimming and scanning, predictions, contextual clues, inferences, monitoring, comprehension, etc.)
6	AS2	Views and discusses various visual and multimedia texts, photographs, television advertisements, dramas and documentaries, internet and CD-ROM's where available): * interprets and discusses message; * identifies and discusses techniques such as lighting and sound effects, choice of images, camera angles, shape and design, graphics, etc., and their effect on the viewer.
6	AS3	Explains interpretation and overall response to text, giving reasons
6	AS4	Discusses how the techniques used by writers, graphic designers and photographers construct particular views of the world and position the reader in various ways
6	AS5	Shows understanding of the text, its relationship to own life, its purpose and how it functions *explains themes, plot, setting and characterization; * discusses author's point of view, how meaning is constructed, and way in which reader is positioned (e.g. "Is the author telling the story as an observer or insider? How do you feel about the main characters)? Are you sympathetic or critical? How does the author succeed in whipping up an emotion?)
6	AS6	Recognises and explains the different structures, language use, purposes and audiences of different kinds of text: * identifies and evaluates suitability of the language and register of a text for its intended audience; * identifies and analyses the characteristics of various writing genres or text types (e.g. the organisation and convention that are used in different kinds of poems, a biography, different kind of newspaper articles)
6	AS7	Identifies and critically discusses cultural and social values in texts: * interprets the writer's intentional and unintentional hidden messages; * identifies different perspectives within more complex text and give own perspectives based on evidence within the text; * discusses the diversity to social and cultural values into texts
6	AS8	Understands and uses information texts appropriately: * summarises main and supporting ideas; * selects and records relevant information appropriately; * follows fairly complex instructions and directions independently
6	AS9	Interprets and analyses details independently in graphical texts (maps, line graphs, bar graphs and pie charts) and transfers information from one form to another.
6	AS10	Selects relevant texts for personal and information needs from a wide variety of sources as in the local community and via electronic media (where available)

Appendix C: Difficulties within the Child Causing Reading Problems

- Visual difficulties – poor vision (requiring spectacles, medical intervention), sensitivity to certain light-waves (scotopic syndrome); visual processing problems – weak visual discrimination and sequencing skills (visual figure-ground perceptual problems, poor depth perception, difficulties repeating or reproducing what was just seen);
- Auditory difficulties – poor hearing, including damage from untreated childhood ear-infections; auditory processing problems – difficulty in acquiring phonics, weak sound or pattern recognition (identifying and synthesising sounds, identifying and generating rhyming words), difficulty with associating sounds with the letters that represent them (sound-symbol correspondence), weak auditory discrimination or in distinguishing sound (picking up signal from noise, counting syllables in words) and faulty auditory sequencing skills (being unable to repeat what one has heard in the correct sequence, auditory filtering or figure-ground perceptual problems) as well as difficulties processing spoken instructions.
- Children may have difficulty learning the alphabet, also make errors of pronunciation; mix up sounds in polysyllabic words, ignore punctuation; make omissions, insertions, reversals, substitutions; sequence incorrectly; only partially sound out words; and use faulty self-correction techniques.
- The child could also have other difficulties involving poor working memory, or concentration difficulties – Attention Deficit Disorders including hyper- or hypo-activity.
- Speech disorders or problems with expressive language, such as lisping, stammering, stuttering, indistinct pronunciation, sound substitutions and aphasias (difficulties in interpreting and expressing language), can cause difficulties when reading aloud or difficulties in comprehension.
- There can also be disorders related to physical illnesses, genetic disorders and syndromes, various levels of epilepsy, brain damage, cerebral palsy, and other developmental dyspraxias (difficulties in the planning and integration of physical movements and co-ordination because of inaccurate messages being transmitted from the body to the brain through the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems) – poor balance, fine-motor control, difficulties crossing the mid-line of the body, or in kinaesthetic co-ordination.
- Socio-affective difficulties arising within the child – these are difficulties related to emotional processing which will affect comprehension – such as empathy, identifying with characters or people in texts, finding humour, irony, or inferring hidden meanings. Causes of these can be underlying anxiety, psychoses and disorders, autism, which may affect emotional processing.

Appendix D: Out-of-School Reading By American Grade 5 Learners in Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, (1988)

Percentile	Independent reading Minutes per day	Words read per year
98	65.0	4,358,000
90	21.1	1, 823,000
80	14.2	1,146,000
70	9.6	622,000
60	6.5	432,000
50	4.6	282,000
40	3.2	200,000
30	1.3	106,000
20	0.7	21,000
10	0.1	8,000
2	0.0	0