

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The teaching and learning process of any group or level of students is always dynamic. It can change its characteristics depending on the context in which it takes place. Accordingly, the process of training teachers is also characterised by several changes which are dictated by the process itself and the context and conditions inherent in the same process. McLeod & Reynolds (2007: 1) contend that “... we are teaching and learning in times of overwhelming change – changes in the way we know, changes in the way we teach and changes in what is expected of us as teachers and learners”. This being so, it is important for the lecturers at the Teachers Training Institute nr 200, henceforth TTI nr 200 to equip students with the skills they will need in order to cope with the changing demands of the society in general and education in particular.

This study is grounded in the researcher’s thirty-six years teaching experience at different levels, especially, at TTI nr 200 in Luanda where she has worked for more than seventeen years. As a former student, lecturer, and supervisor, and currently as the Head of the Department of Foreign Languages, she has constantly reflected on the high dropout rates of students in her and in other departments. However, she has been unable to get a plausible response to the question regarding drop out rates which she had in mind. This question is elaborated on page 3 in Table 1.1. She decided to undertake a study that could help find answers to this question, and also assist in finding some possible ways to improve the situation.

It is her conviction that it is important to consider the quality of the lecturers available before one considers the quality of students. The discussion in this study focuses on the academic and research literacy practices of a group of Teacher Education Students, henceforth TES, and lecturers in TTI nr 200. In trying to discover the reasons for the students’ failure to produce their research reports, the study also looks at the assessment procedures and the curriculum in use to see whether there is alignment between course work assessment and the writing of the research reports (Biggs, 1999).

The following themes constitute the parameters of the discussion:

- ❖ Background
- ❖ Research question
- ❖ Aims and scope of the study
- ❖ Rationale
- ❖ Significance of the study
- ❖ Contribution to the research knowledge
- ❖ Definition of key terms
- ❖ Outline of study and
- ❖ Summary

1.2 Background

The major aim of the study was to examine the academic and research literacy practices of TES at one of the Higher Teacher Training Institutes in Angola, TTI nr 200. Within an academic community of practice literacy practices do not only mean reading and writing habits. These practices have a broader meaning based on social and cultural contexts (Street, 1993; Ballard & Clanchy, 1988). To this end some academics suggest that literacy is best examined through looking at its social practices (Street, 2007; Purcell-Gates, 2007; Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009). These writers view literacy as ‘multiple’ and social and believe that it can be best understood in the domains in which it is practiced. Focusing on the multiplicity of literacy practices means recognizing the plurality of reading and writing practices for different purposes and within different socio- cultural contexts, values and practices (Ivanic et al., 2009; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000).

Therefore, it is believed that in selecting a particular group of students and examining their situated practices through a socio-cultural construct, the current study should be able to identify and reconstruct the academic research literacy practices of these TES and their lecturers. The outcomes of the research should help uncover the main hindrances that are preventing TES from concluding their research reports successfully and timeously.

1.2.1 The overarching problem: the high failure rate of TES

Lack of adequate preparation at previous levels of education, and the students' difficulties in dealing with academic reading and writing are among the many reasons for students' high failure rates, and delayed conclusions to projects. These problems are not unique to the Angolan TES mentioned in this thesis.

The table below provides the statistical data of TES' achievements in either completion, or partial completion, of their research reports in all the subjects of specialisation. Every year 45 new students are enrolled for each course. These figures were provided by the Head of Academic Affairs Department at the TTI nr 200 which deals with all the statistics related to students progress from the time they are enrolled to the end of the course. The figures on the table refer to the period from 2006 to 2011.

Table 1.1 Figures from the Deputy Director of Academic Affairs Department (2006-2011).

Nr.	MAJORS	2006/7		2007/8		2008/9		2009/10		2010/11		Total	
		Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%
1	Philosophy	13	28.8	7	15.5	11	24.4	24	53.3	15	33.3	70	31.1
2	French	13	28.8	6	13.3	9	20.0	16	35.5	31	68.8	75	33.3
3	History	8	17.7	9	20.0	10	22.2	3	6.6	15	33.3	45	20.0
4	English	10	22.2	6	13.3	6	13.3	5	11.1	18	40.0	45	20.0
6	Mathematics	2	4.4	3	6.6	9	20.0	27	60.0	30	66.6	71	31.5
7	Pedagogy	6	13.3	8	17.7	7	15.5	16	35.5	73	162.2	110	48.8
8	Portuguese	31	68.8	9	20.0	8	17.7	11	24.4	7	15.5	66	29.3
9	Psychology	27	60.0	19	42.2	29	64.4	41	91.1	40	88.8	156	69.3
10	Sociology	8	17.7	8	17.7	12	26.6	16	35.5	15	33.3	59	26.2
11	Total	118	26.2	75	16.6	101	22.4	159	35.3	270	60.0	723	32.1

As indicated in the table, out of the 2 250 students enrolled for five years only 32.1% (723 students) succeeded in completing their research studies. Line four of the table summarises the English language TES' achievements for the same period. Out of 225 TES enrolled over a period of 5 years, only 20% successfully finished their studies.

It must be emphasised that in all the subjects, the number of students completing the research report does not include students who were expected to write their research reports in that same year. According to the Head of the Academic Affairs Department, no data is available to determine the year in which students finished their coursework. Therefore the groups are heterogeneous and include TES from different final academic years.

The present study is the researcher's first attempt to try to discover the reasons for the students' high drop-out rates and the failure of many of them to produce their research reports within the allocated time.

1.3 Research Questions

In terms of the problem that needs to be investigated we decided on the following research questions. The first of these is the main one:

In what ways do academic and research literacy practices contribute to the successful completion of a research report?

- ❖ In what manner do TTI nr 200 TES acquire academic and research literacies?
- ❖ In what ways do TTI nr 200 TES deploy academic and research literacy practices in the production of research reports?
- ❖ To what extent does curriculum alignment affect the production of the research reports? (Biggs, 1999)
- ❖ In what ways do supervision practices enable and /or constrain the successful completion of research reports?

In the context of this study, academic literacy can be construed as TES' ability to read and write within the academic context with a degree of independence, understanding and a high level of engagement with the learning (Biggs & Tang, 2007). Academic literacy in this study refers to what Ballard & Clanchy (1988: 7) refer to as 'functions of and demands upon language in a particular social cultural context'. An appraisal of the students' academic literacy practices requires an investigation into the manner students acquire and deploy the explicit and implicit conventions and methods of inquiry in their specific disciplines for the

production of research reports (Leibowitz, 1995: 34). An overlap becomes unavoidable with research literacy understood as the students' ability to locate, understand, evaluate and appropriately utilize resources needed for the production of their research reports. Research literacy also involves the ability to design and successfully carry out a research project (Achilles & Dreyden, 2002: 13).

The table below shows the inter-connectivity between the research questions, the aims and the data that were used to support the study under investigation:

Table 1.2 The relationship between the research questions, aims and methods of data collection

Research questions	Aims	Method
In what ways do academic and research literacy practices contribute to the successful completion of a research report?	To understand the connection between academic and research literacy practices and the completion of research reports.	Interviews, document analysis of students' research proposals, and classroom observations.
1. In what manner do TTI nr 200 students acquire academic and research literacy?	1. To identify acquisition loci and processes as well as modes and approaches of transmission	1. Classroom observations, interviews and survey.
2. In what ways do TTI nr 200 students deploy academic and research literacy practices in the production of research reports?	2. To understand students' academic and research literacy practices and identify challenges.	2. Interviews, questionnaires and document analysis of students' research reports
3. To what extent does curriculum alignment impact on the production of research reports?	3. Using Biggs', (1999) idea of constructive alignment I will check alignment within the system and investigate its impact on research report production.	3. An examination of course content and course material will be conducted to verify the connection between coursework and research report production, together with some classroom observation and semi-structured interviews to the head of the English sector and some teachers.
4. In what ways do supervision practices enable and/or constrain the successful completion of research reports?	4. To identify strengths and weaknesses of supervisory practices and their impact on the production of research reports using (Dysthe, 2002) and (Grant, 2010).	4. Interviews and questionnaires

1.4 Aims and Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the academic and research literacy practices of final year TES, at TTI nr 200, and the challenges they face in writing their research reports. In addressing this purpose the intention in this study is two-fold: to explore issues related to the academic writing and research literacy practices within a foreign English language teaching context and to understand the drop- out rates of large numbers of final year students. The study also seeks to understand the reasons why some students (although very few) succeed in producing their research reports within or before the time limit whilst others do not. Special attention is devoted to the writing process, perceptions of writing as well as the academic and research literacy practices of students. Additionally, an examination of the whole course was conducted to investigate the connection if any between coursework assessment and research report production. The principal idea was to identify whether all the elements in the system were aligned by looking at them from a critical point of view; as a way of making a comparison to what is actually happening at TTI nr 200 at the moment, how it is happening, and what could be done to improve the situation Biggs (1999) principle of constructive alignment was used as a basis to understand the situation. Therefore the main aim of the study is:

- ❖ To understand students' academic and research literacy practices and identify possible challenges.

The sub-aims are:

- ❖ To identify which parts within the teaching learning system may not yet be aligned (Biggs, 1999).
- ❖ To raise all subject lecturers' awareness for the need to expose students to more specific academic and research literacy practices and experiences.
- ❖ To identify strengths and weaknesses of supervisory practices and their impact on the production of research reports (Dysthe, 2002; and Grant, 2010).

This study is limited to final year TES in the English section in the Modern Languages Department-MLD as well as their lecturers. The study focuses primarily on the academic and research literacy practices of TES and their lecturers within the Angolan teaching and learning context where English is a foreign language. The high failure rate of students is the major

concern. The researcher confined this study to this specific group, because it was felt that this would give her more opportunity to investigate the problem in more detail.

1.5 Rationale

The study has a strategic importance within the Angolan educational context since it constitutes the first study to be carried out with a twofold objective. On the one hand, it looks at the academic and research literacy practices of TES at TTI nr 200 and the extent of the alignment between the components in the system (Biggs, 1999). On the other hand it looks at the assessment procedures in place to see whether there is an alignment between the assessment procedures throughout the coursework and the final assessment which is the production of the research reports.

At TTI nr 200, prior to the early 1990s, students used to be selected from the best TES at the training college “*Escola de Formação de Professores*” number 306 - henceforth EFP nr 306. The teaching and learning process seemed to work well in terms of coursework, because most of the students had a basic knowledge of teaching skills. After the admission of students from other secondary institutions rather than EFP, as previously mentioned, the institution moved into a situation whereby classes are not only larger (from 25 to 45 students), but also quite diversified in terms of students’ motivation and educational background. The institution is now enrolling students from different secondary schools regardless of the type of course they had in the previous level. As a result, it could be claimed that there are some difficulties in maintaining good teaching standards which are translated into students’ high drop-out rates in completing their studies.

However, if one regards good quality teaching as “...encouraging students to use the higher order learning processes that academic students use spontaneously”, standards need not to decline (Biggs, 1999: 5). As Biggs (1999), posits, depending on their attitudes towards the teaching/learning process(es) teachers [and lecturers] can create conditions which are conducive to students’ attainment of desired academic literacy skills. According to Biggs (1999), in order to get students performing tasks that require using higher order level skills, teachers and lecturers need to go through a process of reflection so as to discover which parts of their work needs to be improved or developed. Biggs (1999) emphasises that “Reflection in

professional practice, [contrary to reflection in a mirror], gives back not what is, but what might be, an improvement on the original” (1999: 6).

Moreover, he posits that teachers and lecturers elsewhere, need to be reflective practitioners in order to create an “improved teaching environment suited to their own context” (1999: 2). In addition to that, Morell (2008: 222), states that, “Nothing is inevitable as long as there is a willingness to contemplate what is happening”. He emphasizes that:

Contemplation is important because it forces us to think carefully about our conditions and then to think deeply about alternatives to those conditions. Once we imagine alternatives, we begin to understand the possibilities for transformation, for making the world anew, even if in our cases we are talking about the world of the classroom (ibid.).

If one looks at the academic and research literacy practices as complex and contextually situated there are issues that need to be addressed separately because of the complexities of each and every context like the one under study. Therefore, the researcher sees herself playing an important role within the institution by trying to ascertain the existing situation and discern possible ways to promote academic growth and teacher development among English Foreign Language, Teacher Education Students- EFL, TES, and lecturers in the Modern Languages Department, and perhaps in other departments and institutions, too.

1.5.1 Significance of the Study

There is a lot of research in second and foreign language teaching and learning. Nevertheless, most of the research in the field has been done by lecturers and educators who do not share the same educational background, experience and culture of the students. These educators, in most of the time, have taught English or French, either as second or foreign languages, for quite a long period. Therefore, they have some sort of experience in the field but they lack some background knowledge compared to the local lecturers. Thus, a study like this one is of significant importance if one takes into account the researcher’s accumulated experience she has had as a student, a teacher, a lecturer, a teacher trainer, a supervisor and a novice researcher. As a student, it took her more than two years to complete her research report due to changes of supervisors. As a teacher she has a lot of accumulated experience

about some of the problems in teaching and learning in all levels of education. As a lecturer and trainer she has always been conscious about the problems that students might face in their studies and tried to help them when possible. As a supervisor and reflective practitioner she has discussed this problem with other lecturers and supervisors within the institution but could not find a good solution. As a novice researcher she is researching on an area where she is still facing problems of various types.

This particular aspect makes this research to some extent original, within the Angolan context, because although the problem being researched might not be new it is being analysed from a different perspective. The researcher does understand that the problem is common to other institutions in the country and perhaps internationally and therefore, students in different areas of professionalization would need different kinds of support in the academic and research literacy practices. However, there will always be areas in academic and research literacy practices which are quite similar to all students regardless of what the courses are and what languages they are using. Hence, this study can be replicated in other institutions and other contexts of a similar type to provide information about the views and practices of other lecturers working with students in and outside the classroom.

1.5.2 Contributions to the Research Knowledge

The main focus of this study is the academic and research literacy practices of TES. However, one cannot look at the research supervision practices, (the effect), without first looking at the teaching/learning practices (the cause). Students who are incapable of writing their research reports have been through a four-year period of learning, which means that at the final stage of their courses they should be able to apply in practice what they learnt over the four year period of coursework. In other words, research report writing should be viewed as part of the four year learning process and not an extra and difficult task. It is this task (the production of the research report) that gives way to students get to the final product which is the Honours degree. However, in reality the majority of the students are simply not equipped to write their research reports.

Therefore, instead of looking at only research supervision practices, a searching look at what is happening in classrooms is essential to understand completely what needs to be changed in the teaching and learning process so that future students are not faced with a

myriad of problems in writing their research reports. Thus, a move was made to analyse the academic and research literacy practices being used at TTI nr 200, departing from the point of view that each and every institution functions within a particular context. Every organization has its own norms, regulations, culture, sets of conventions, and modes of expression (Biggs, 1999).

The results of this study can be compared to other similar studies in the field, in contexts which although different in the type of course, they require students to go through a process of research report writing in order to get the degree, and will help improve the quality of teaching and supervisory practices not only at TTI nr 200 in Luanda, but also at other higher institutions countrywide. It is intended that the results from this research will to some extent be genuine and, therefore, be published with two main objectives: (1) to serve as a resource for further research of the same type, (2) to promote change at all institutions of the same type.

The findings of this research will also help raise decision makers' awareness for the need to take some actions and change the teaching and learning practices required in the four years of coursework, leading to the improvement of the quality and of the production of students' research reports. In so doing, they will be saving time, money, students' and lecturers' mental efforts, and avoid students' frustration and de-motivation.

Therefore, although the sample for this research might be relatively small, the findings in this study will raise other researchers' awareness for the need to look at research literacy practices with "magic lenses", always taking into account that the way we teach and assess our students, and our attitude to the teaching/learning process will have a strong influence on the way we supervise our students and on research standards.

We believe that this study can be replicated at institutions of the same type and we presume that more research will take place with regard to the supervisory practices at Honours level. In fact most of the research done in this field has placed more emphasis on supervising Masters or PhD students (Belcher, 1994; Hockey, 1996; Deuchar, 2008), when in our humble opinion it should be more concerned with this group of students who, in order to conclude their studies, apart from the ongoing assessment tasks throughout the course, need to

complete a lengthy piece of writing in order to receive a degree and enter a new academic community, the community of research practice and production. This is what makes the latter group of students different from other students.

1.6 Definition of Key Concepts

The definition of concepts starts from the key concepts in the topic sentence of this research: literacy, academic literacy, research literacy, and constructive alignment. Other key concepts from the conceptual framework will be defined as they appear in the text.

❖ *Literacy*

When people talk about literacy they are implicitly talking about reading and writing as a central aspect of literacy; therefore, literacy is viewed as a learnt ability from formal education, which resides in people's heads and which facilitates logical thinking and active participation in the roles of modern society (Hyland, 2002: 53). Baynham (1995: 1) offers a broader conception of literacy: "Investigating literacy as practice involves investigating literacy as concrete human activity, not just what people do with literacy, but also what they make of what they do, the values they place on it and the ideologies that surround it." Street (1995) emphasises the complexity of literacy and argues from a social point of view that there is no single literacy, no dominant literacy: what exists is a wide variety of practices relevant to and appropriate for particular times, places, participants and purposes, and those practices constitute an integral part of the individual identity and the social relationships among specific community members (Street, 2007; Purcell-Gates, 2007; Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009). Barton & Hamilton (1998: 7) provide a useful summary of what literacy as social practice means:

❖ *Literacy as social practice*

- Literacy is a set of social practices which can be inferred from written texts.
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others.

- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in wider social goals and practices.
- Literacy practices change through informal learning and sense-making.
- Literacy is specific to particular historical times.

(Barton & Hamilton, 1998: 7)

The social role of literacy shows how complex the meaning of writing can be as people can take different roles and identities in different literacy events. It also shows that writing can be situated in unequal social relationships of generation or gender within the home or community, (Street, 2007; Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009).

❖ *Academic literacy*

It is generally believed that language is not simply a neutral carrier of our understandings but it is fundamentally implicated in the construction of meaning. Reading and writing are basic educational resources for constructing our relationships with others and for understanding our experience of the world, and as such they are centrally involved in the ways we negotiate meaning construct and change our understanding of our communities and ourselves. Leki (2007) defines academic literacies as “membership in communities of academic readers and writers” and goes on to relate academic literacies to the activity of interpretation and production of academic and discipline based text often within important social contexts such as group-work project or written report, which rely profoundly on students’ experience with the text. However, TES at TTI nr 200 seem to be facing problems in adapting themselves to the new dominant literacy, with its own norms, nomenclature, sets of conventions and modes of expression which are dictated by the new academic community (Bartholomae, 1986).

Every time a student sits down to write for us, s/he has to invent the university for the occasion- invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. S/he has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that defines the discourse of our community”. (Bartholomae, 1986: 4).

Because academic ability is frequently evaluated in terms of students’ competence in a given written register, TES find it sometimes very difficult to produce and see their own writing practices marginalised and regarded as being useless and meaningless by their

lecturers. As a result there is lack of motivation and fear to try to produce a text which is approximate to the ones required within the academic community (Bartholomae, 1986).

❖ *Research literacy*

Research is generally defined as a detailed study of something in order to discover new facts, especially in a university or scientific institution (Macmillan Dictionary, 2002: 1204). Research literacy involves the ability to design and successfully carry out a research project (Achilles & Dreyden, 2002: 6). Research Literacy is generally considered as part of Academic Literacy because its core function is the ability to engage critically with academic texts and produce a specific type of academic texts, i.e. a research report, a dissertation or a thesis. In this study, Research Literacy is understood as the ability to design and carry out research as well as the ability to successfully produce academically acceptable texts.

1.7 Outline of the Study

This thesis addresses an existing problem which is the failure of TES at a TTI nr 200 in Angola to complete the required end-of-course research report within the allocated time. Beginning from the actual situation, the thesis focuses on three aspects of completion-in-time, which are: (i) academic and research literacy practices (ii) approaches to teaching and learning and (iii) curriculum alignment (Biggs, 1999). Thus, in addition to seeking a solution to the current problem that is not unique to the institution which is the research site, the thesis aims to develop new theoretical informed understandings of academic and research literacy practices in relation to teaching and learning at this level of specialisation and also to open the way to further research possibilities. The study consists of seven chapters:

Chapter One begins with the provision of some background to the study and presents some background to the study, the research questions, the rationale and scope of the study, as well as significance of the study and possible contributions to the research knowledge. It concludes with definitions of some key terms, and an outline of the study followed by a summary of the Chapter.

Chapter Two serves as an advance organizer of the thesis. It provides some background information about the Angolan educational system in general, and a description

of the institution (TTI nr 200), with special emphasis on the students' origin and background, the lecturers, course components, resources availability as well as the assessment procedures being used. The Chapter aims at giving the reader the general context of the teacher training course, by showing its aims and constraints.

The literature review is presented and discussed in Chapter Three. Three different approaches to teaching writing are presented and discussed, namely the traditional, the progressive and the genre theory, and Richard's (2007: 2) six teaching orientations for teaching writing to Second Language learners- L2 and English Foreign Language -EFL students are presented and discussed. These teaching orientations are contrasted and compared in relation to the teaching context at TTI nr 200.

Chapter Four presents and discusses the conceptual framework underlying this study, which is framed within the postmodern qualitative paradigm. The main theory underlying this study is Biggs' (1999) idea of constructive alignment and the 3P Model, together with Cummins, (1996) differentiation between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills- BICS and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency- CALP; Lea & Street, Academic Literacy; Grant's (2010) Map for Supervision; and Dysthe's (2002) Models of Supervision.

The research methodology is discussed in Chapter Five and the selected research approach is discussed and justified, together with the research instruments. Issues relating to the validity and confidentiality as well as generalisability of the research findings are also discussed with regards to their strengths and weaknesses. The thematic approach to data analysis is explained.

Chapter Six focuses on the presentation, discussion and analysis of data. Data are presented and discussed under the same categories as included in the data collection process. The discussion concerns respondents' ideas and opinions about their life experiences, and the way they see the phenomena around them.

Chapter Seven presents the responses to the research questions and a reflection on the results arrived at from Chapter Six. The reflection is based on the following research statements that were derived from the research questions:

- ❖ TTI nr 200 Students' Acquisition of Academic and Research Literacy Practices;
- ❖ TTI nr 200 Students' Deployment of Academic and Research Literacy Skills in the Production of the Research Reports;
- ❖ Curriculum Alignment and the Way it Affects the Production of the Research Reports; and the
- ❖ The Impact of Supervision Practices on Completion of the Research Reports .

The reflection is conceptualized according to the main findings that emerged from the discussion and analysis in Chapter Six. The explanation of the above statements framed the researcher's understanding of what the data portrayed and helped evaluate Biggs (1999) idea of constructive alignment and the 3PModel and suggest an improved version the "4PModel" as a contribution to the research knowledge.

The last chapter, Chapter Eight, provides a broader view of the study through a summary of the whole study followed by the conclusions and some recommendations. The limitations of the study are addressed and some suggestions for future research are presented.

1.8 Summary

This chapter has provided an advanced organizer to the research about the academic and research literacy practices of TES at TTI nr 200. The study seeks to understand why the majority of students, especially English language TES, fail to complete their research reports after concluding successfully the four-year course work and some of them, although very few, manage to do so within the time limit. In so doing the study tries to find out some possible solutions to the problem.

A rationale for study was provided as well as the illumination of ways in which the current study may contribute to research knowledge especially in the field of academic and research literacy acquisition within a foreign language learning environment. It is common complaint at TTI nr 200 that lecturers of other disciplines leave the burden of teaching academic literacies to content subject lecturers. The study provides some measures to solve students' problems with academic and research literacy practices. Therefore, some key concepts such as literacy, academic and research literacy and literacy as power have been clarified and the chapter ends by giving an overview of the outline of the thesis followed by a

short summary of the chapter. Due to the specificity of the research participants who are English Foreign Language, Teacher Education Students- EFL, TES, it was felt that the provision of an overview of the contextual background to the study would help the reader understand and position her/himself in the discussion. The next chapter provides the background knowledge to the study.

Chapter 2

Contextual Background

2.1 Introduction

Angola is a multilingual country, where more than 20 local languages are spoken. Unfortunately none of the local languages was taught at schools during the colonial period. Although the language in education policy might favour the teaching of local languages from Primary school onwards, this institutional objective is still far from being achieved. For most of the students Portuguese is the second language-L2 and English their third language-L3 or foreign language-FL. In Angola, Portuguese is the medium of instruction - MOI at all levels of schooling except for the teaching of English and French as optional languages or languages of specialisation. The teaching of English and French as optional languages starts in Grade 7, the seventh year of schooling. In this study English is referred to as a Foreign Language.

Before independence in 1975, English, French and German were taught at schools, but not many people had access to education before then. The local languages were simply ignored, even forbidden at schools. After independence, the language policy remained the same with special emphasis on English because of the need to communicate with people from most of the African neighbouring countries. English is the official language in most of these countries. French was given less importance, but it continues to be taught at all levels of education. The teaching of these two subjects at secondary schools did not stop, owing to their importance in the international arena. English became more relevant with the independence of the neighbouring African countries where English is the official language, especially Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, and also with development aid from the British government (1990-1998). The new Angolan educational system was introduced in 2005 but it does not differ much from the after independence educational system. One of the innovations in the new Angolan educational system is the introduction of the teaching of local languages. However it has been difficult to implement this project because of the diversity of local languages. At University level some changes were also introduced regarding the teaching of local languages. At TTI nr 200 for instance a course in Teaching African Languages and African Literature is now being taught. For an outline of the new Angolan educational system see appendix B in Volume II.

2.2 Background to the study

As previously stated, the discussion in this study focuses on the academic and research literacy practices of a group of TES at TTI nr 200 with special emphasis on the difficulties they experience in writing their research proposals and reports. Thus, particular reference is made to the academic and research literacy practices used by these TES, when undertaking research and writing their final research reports.

At TTI nr 200 TES are required to complete an academically approved research study successfully. In addition they are required to produce a research report of 45-60 pages. However, very few of them manage to accomplish this task.

Having studied and faced similar problems at TTI nr 200, as a lecturer, a supervisor, a reflective practitioner and as the Head of Department for Modern Languages, I could not remain indifferent to flaws in the teacher training and learning programmes. Therefore it is hoped that this study will succeed in discovering ways of minimising the challenges faced by students not only in producing their research reports (supervision practices), but also throughout the four years of course work (teaching practice sessions).

2.3 The Origins, Location, and Development of the Teacher Training Institute-TTI nr 200

The TTI nr 200 is the only Post-Secondary Teacher Training Institution in Angola. It caters for teacher training in all levels of education in the country.

During the political turmoil that characterised the arrival of independence in 1975, the vast majority of Portuguese teachers, left the country and went back to Portugal. The educational system had to manage with very few Angolan trained teachers most of whom had been teaching at primary schools. In 1977, the Portuguese Educational System was replaced by the National Educational System.

The TTI nr 200 was therefore created with the main purpose of supporting all the teachers who at that time needed to go through an in-service training course - INSET - in order to update their qualifications. In the early 1990s, it changed its goals and now it aims at

training teachers for both "Ensino Médio" and "Pre-Universitário"- PUNIV which are intermediate or secondary level schools.

The TTI nr 200 courses started in 1980/81, in Lubango, a town in the south of Angola and in 1988 in Luanda the capital of the country. The course takes five years, four of which are dedicated to the training course work. In their fifth year of study TES are supposed to produce their research reports, in order to get the Honours degree in Education.

In the formative years, the TTI nr 200 was part of the Agostinho Neto University which was the only public university in Angola in the early 1980s. Angola. In 2009 the TTI nr 200 was officially granted the status of an independent institution. For more details of the Angolan educational system see appendix B.

Currently, there are seven teacher training (TT) institutions in seven provinces of Angola, namely, Luanda, Huambo, Benguela, Cabinda, Uíge, Lubango, and Kwanza Sul. For the Angolan map and location of the TT Institutions see appendix A.

2.4 Majors and Qualification Requirements

The TTI nr 200 was implemented to provide teacher training in 13 Majors, namely, Pedagogy, Psychology, History, Philosophy, Biology, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Portuguese, French, English, and African Languages and Literature Studies. The course aims at training teachers to teach these subjects at upper secondary level schools. However, the TTI nr 200 in Luanda is only offering 10 Majors, namely Sociology, Psychology, Pedagogy, History, Philosophy, Mathematics, African languages and Literature Studies, Portuguese, French and English. Each major requires four years of course work, after which students are expected to produce a research report.

2.5 Origin, Background of Students and Admission Requirements

TTI nr 200 has been set up to provide continuous training to students from EFP nr 306, a Secondary Education Teacher Training College with the aim of contributing to teacher development and improvement of the quality of education in Angolan schools. However, due to the shortage of students coming from EFP nr 306, and the need to cater for a wider

student's population, the Angolan Government decided that the TTI nr 200 should also admit students from other secondary schools. Currently, most of students joining the TTI nr 200 are from various secondary institutions other than EFP nr 306 and, therefore, have different learning backgrounds.

As Biggs & Tang (2007: 1) posit, "in the days when university classes contained highly selected students, the lecture and tutorial seemed to work well enough. However, the increasingly drastic changes in the tertiary sector have redrawn the university scene..." One of the shortcomings of students coming from other secondary schools is lack of English Language Training Methodology and Teaching Practice, which are the main core course subjects at both EFP and the TTI nr 200. Therefore, admission of students from different learning backgrounds seems to also contribute to the hindrances to the teaching learning process at the TTI nr 200; most of the TES will need some extra help in order to cope with the above mentioned main core course subjects and the demands of the course because of their learning experiences from the previous levels.

2.6 The Lecturers

As was already mentioned in the introduction of this study, at the beginning of the TTI nr 200 implementation, due to the lack of teachers, many non-tertiary level teachers were asked to join the teaching team, as long as they had considerable background knowledge in the profession. Therefore when TTI nr 200 was established very few lecturers had the necessary qualifications to teach at a tertiary level. However, the situation has improved. Nowadays most of the lecturers hold Masters degrees and some have PhD degrees.

Regarding the Modern Languages Department, the English section has five lecturers with PhD degrees. It is expected that one more lecturer will be graduate in 2014. The English section in Luanda is therefore operating with ten full time lecturers and one part time lecturer.

2.7 Teacher Education Students-TES

The main consideration in any course description is always the students who take that course. There are a number of considerations to be taken into account when describing the type of students that take a course. Some of the aspects are the number of students in a year group, students' backgrounds, their language competence, attitudes and the motivation of each student.

The expression "TES" in this work is used to refer to people attending the teacher training course, who are already teaching somewhere, or to those who are doing work other than teaching. The words also refer to students who are not working.

One of the important aspects in analysing a teacher training course is the trainees' starting point. Biggs (1999) refers to important details regarding students at the outset of a course. He calls these '*presage*' factors. These are among prime elements recognised in (Stevens, 1974:77) that should be considered in order to produce an optimum match for the training. The maximum number of students in Year 1 is forty five (45). As time goes on the number tends to diminish in such a way that sometimes only half of the group reach the final year (year 4). As already mentioned, students' backgrounds are different, even though the pre-requisite to enter the course might be some communicative competence in English. It is assumed that all the students come with a positive attitude in terms of joining the course. Internal and external factors that influenced their decision to register vary. However, it has been observed during the individual pre-admission interviews with every individual student, that they all arrive strongly motivated to do the course.

It is commonly accepted that, provided that they do not have any serious psychological problems, students all want to succeed in life, particularly as they engage in course work. Unfortunately, many aspects of the teaching and learning process can contribute towards discouraging students from wanting to learn. It is true that no one wishes to do anything which s/he perceives as useless. Few people want to do something that, although highly valued and useful, is extremely difficult to achieve. In either case doing the task will be almost certainly be construed as a waste of time. Students tasked with completing such tasks tend to either adopt surface approaches to learning by making the minimum effort to succeed.

Alternatively they will almost certainly give up the task as a result of repeated failed attempts to succeed. The common sense theory of why students do or do not want to learn is called '*expectancy-value theory of motivation*' (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 33).

The expectancy-value theory posits that if anyone is to engage in an activity, s/he needs to value the outcome and to expect success in achieving a pre-determined goal. Expectancy-value plays an important role in the students' academic engagement, especially at early stages of a block of work, such as at the beginning of a course, 'before interest has developed to carry continuing engagement along with it' (Biggs & Tang, 2007). Many teacher trainees joining the English course arrive with high levels of expectancy-value. However, it has been noticed that as soon as they realise that they lack some background knowledge they start losing motivation.

2.8 Class Size

Class size is without doubt one of the greatest influences on course development. The number of students in a classroom often determines the teaching style and methodology to be employed. Although some attempts have been made to improve the teaching process at TTI nr 200, the dominant style has been the lecturing mode based on the traditional models of teaching.

The maximum number of students per speciality class is 45. Working with 45 students in a class would not be a problem provided that the classroom is big enough to accommodate them, and sufficiently large for the lecturer to move around freely and be able to organise the class in pair or group work. However, classrooms at TTI nr 200 are too small to accommodate forty five (45) students and this is perhaps the first constraint that lecturers face in their daily work. Therefore lecturers tend to stick to the lecturing mode of teaching, with the students sitting in rows one behind another, not being able to move desks around and work differently.

2.9 Teacher Education Students' Background

The students' previous general education, their EFL experience in particular, and their extra-curricular interests and pastimes are of great importance. These details constitute a very important source of information that is needed by both curriculum planners and lecturers.

When TTI nr 200 courses started in 1980/81, there were at least three different groups of students:

- Those who had completed ‘Liceu’ (a non- professional Upper Intermediate School that aimed at preparing students to join the University during the colonial time) and had learnt some English as an optional Language
- Those who attended ‘Liceu’ but could not finish their studies before independence
- Those who attended the Portuguese Primary Teacher Training course ‘Magistério Primário’, with very little knowledge of English.

With the implementation of the new educational system, after independence in 1975, the Angolan Ministry of Education decided that TTI nr 200 should only cater for training for those who had completed their courses at EFP. However, since there are no rules without exceptions, nowadays we now find more than one type of student at TTI nr 200, as follows:

- Students coming from EFP English Specialty, who have had four years of coursework, and two years of Teaching Methodology and Teaching Practice
- Students coming from EFP but from rather different courses; with some kind of training but not for English teaching
- Students who have attended other upper intermediate schools elsewhere with no teacher training background but sometimes with a good standard of English, compared to b).

Therefore, we can see how heterogeneous the groups of students at TTI nr 200 are. This can be considered as one of the major constraints within the process of training. In most cases they join the course with by very particular objectives and interests:

- ❖ To improve their English for further studies abroad
- ❖ To be able to get a good job or to get a better post within the same job
- ❖ To fulfil their personal dreams such as becoming good translators or interpreters.

Becoming teachers in future, is therefore the last thing they think about when they join the course. Students’ attitudes to learning are therefore oriented towards goals other than teaching. These different linguistic backgrounds and experiences as well as the different

attitudes that students bring to the course seem to be part of the constraints that are hindering the course.

2.10 Course Components

Course components contribute, either positively or negatively, to the results of any course. In this study course components will be grouped into two different categories:

Table 2.1 Course Components

Special Professional Components	General Professional Components
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to English Grammar • Morphology and Syntax • Phonetics and Phonology • Theories of Syntax • Presentation Skills • Academic Reading • Academic Writing • Research Methodology I, II • Introduction to Linguistic Studies • Sociolinguistics • Applied Linguistics • Psycholinguistics • Introduction to Literary Studies • African Literature • Anglo-American Literature • ELT Methodology I, II • ELT Practice I, II • Trainer Training Methodology • Curriculum Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Psychology • Developmental Psychology • Pedagogic Psychology • Education Sociology • General Pedagogy • General Didactics • School Administration and Management • Portuguese I, II, III • French I, II, III • Information Communication Technology - ICT • Introduction to Bantu Linguistics

Subjects considered to be special professional components are taught through the medium of English and they constitute the main body of the course. Subjects considered to be general professional components are supposed to provide students with a broader general knowledge. French is the only optional Language for students in the English specialty.

As we can see, there is considerable exposure to English Language. Students spend most of their time listening to English lectures. Regarding the professional components, the only subject that started from year one up to year four is English Language. English language is the subject in which the four language skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing) are supposed to be addressed to students more profoundly. However this does not seem to be the case. The teaching of the four language skills with special reference to reading and writing at an academic level has been quite neglected. It was probably taught at surface level. Concerning the research methodology subject the picture seems to be the same. As a result there is a great number of students who have concluded their course work and achieved successful marks but are unable to perform higher level academic tasks such as writing the research proposal.

But it is not only the content subject lecturers who are responsible for the academic development of TES. It is assumed that all the lecturers in the Department should contribute to the academic growth of the students. Even the ELT Methodology lecturer, for example, has an important role to play by bringing into the classroom materials about reading and writing at a higher level of academic engagement. As Bolitho (1988: 23) puts it,

Teachers whose first Language is not English can themselves be classed as advanced learners of English and the way into a problem area can usefully be through an exercise for learners either one focusing on their level, (...) or one drawn from teachers' resource books...

This means that TES can act either as advanced learners, or just as trainees themselves. Woodward (1988) tries to make this process clear by suggesting the “full-loop” process in which a topic is demonstrated using content about the topic itself. For example a dictation activity is presented, by using a dictation which matches the level of the trainees and which content deals with teaching methodology. Following is a table showing the subjects taught in Portuguese and the ones taught through the medium of English.

Table 2.2 Subjects taught in English and Portuguese

Subjects taught in English	Subjects taught in Portuguese
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to English Grammar • Morphology and Syntax • Phonetics and Phonology • Theories of Syntax • Academic Speaking • Academic Reading • Academic Writing • Sociolinguistics • Psycholinguistics • Introduction to Linguistics • Applied Linguistics • Introduction to Literary Studies • African Literature • Anglo-American Literature • Research Methodology I, II • ELT Methodology I, II • Trainer Training Methodology • Language Curriculum Development • ELT Practice I, II • School Administration and Organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Pedagogy • General Psychology • Developmental Psychology • Education Psychology • Introduction to Bantu Linguistics • French I, II, III • Portuguese I, II • General Didactics • ICT • Education Sociology

It is presumed that students have a lot of exposure to the language and therefore writing a research report would be more a problem with the academic writing and research practices and not a problem with the language. This study shows that this assumption is questionable and it probably needs further investigation.

2.11 Resources Availability

The provision of books for courses is essential, particularly for those which emphasise reading and writing skills. Books are of great and central importance in all education systems. In the case in question they are the determining factor in successful course development. In the MLD, students fortunate and at the same time unfortunate. They are fortunate to have

plenty of English academic textbooks available in the Department's library. There is also a main library in the institution which contains all sorts of books ranging from magazines, articles and storybooks, to academic books and other types of readings. Even for African Literature a new subject introduced into the curriculum in 1997/98, there are a great deal of books.

Most of the English books have been provided by the English Project that functioned in Angola for more than 20 years. Some equipment such as tape recorders, computers, a photocopier and visual aids, are also available for both lecturers and TES. There are also two bookshops in town that sell all types of English books ranging from Literature to Applied Linguistics, Sociolinguistics to Physics, and so on.

On the other hand, students are *unfortunate* because, although there is a good resource centre students are not making use of it.

It should be emphasised that it is not the aim of this study to talk about the physical conditions such as classroom shape, size, the acoustic conditions, seating arrangements, size and weight of furniture, and other constraints that belong to this category.

2.12 Assessment Procedures

With regard to the assessment procedures the situation has changed to some extent, although it is not yet quite satisfactory. The most commonly used method of assessment is still the traditional test at the end of a unit or semester. In most of the subjects lecturers tend to follow this model of testing. Very few lecturers expose students to problem-solving and decision-making situations, aspects which are highly relevant in the teaching learning process, especially in a teacher training course.

What is interesting in this course is the fact that students are hardly asked to perform highly demanding academic tasks such as summarising a chapter or reviewing a book, aspects that would train them for the production of the research project (Cummins, 1996). One cannot expect students to succeed in writing their research projects without giving them practice and supervision during the course of their studies.

The problem seems to lie on the type of assessment that is taking place throughout the four years of course work, which is mainly based on the traditional type of assessment, which consists of asking students to reproduce what they have learnt.

Students need to learn how to perform any given task before they are actually asked to perform it for assessment purposes. It is thought that this lack of practice and awareness of how to perform highly demanding tasks is hindering students' progress and academic success at TTI nr 200.

2.13 Summary

This chapter has presented the contextual background to the study and discussed some of the key aspects inherent in the teacher training courses at TTI nr 200, the only Post-Secondary Teacher Training Institution in Angola. Special emphasis was placed on the acquisition of academic and research literacies by English language TES. TTI nr 200 has been set up to provide continuous training to students from EFP no 306, a Secondary Education Teacher Training College. However, due to the shortage of students coming from EFP, and the need to cater for a wider student's population, the Angolan Government decided that the TTI nr 200 should also admit students from other secondary school. As a result, classes at TTI nr 200 are heterogeneous with students from different learning backgrounds.

With regard to lecturers' qualifications, as previously stated, all the lecturers in the Department hold a MA degree, and the majority of them are enrolled on PhD programmes in the UK, South Africa and Brazil. The maximum number of students per class at TTI nr 200 Luanda is forty five (45). There is considerable exposure to English Language because most of the subjects are taught through the medium of English. Although there is a 'good' resource centre students do not seem to be making adequate use of it.

Regarding the assessment procedures, the most commonly used method of assessment is still the traditional test at the end of a unit or semester. Students are hardly ever asked to perform highly demanding academic tasks such as reacting to a text, summarising a chapter or reviewing a book (Cummins, 1996). In the next chapter some of the relevant literature that preceded this study is presented and discussed as a way of illuminating the discussion that will take place in the study.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by offering a broad view of studies in academic and research literacy acquisition, with special emphasis on teaching writing not just as a first, but also as a second or foreign language. Since this thesis is concerned with students learning to write a research report and with lecturers' role in that learning, this chapter relates student writing to conceptualisations of learning, and includes suggestions for pedagogy with special reference to the academic and research requirements of the research report which are expected at TTI n° 200. The genre approach is given particular emphasis as it refocuses issues in a way which is particularly relevant to the research site. Hyland (2007) gives seven pedagogic orientations to teaching writing as a second language a special place in this study. Biggs (1999) concept of constructive alignment is presented and discussed, and finally the process of research supervision is discussed with a brief discussion on Grant's (2010) map of supervision and the supervision models by Dysthe (2002) are also discussed and they will be further discussed in the next chapter as they constitute the conceptual framework underpinning this study.

3.2 Mapping the field

Academic Literacy

The acquisition of academic literacy in a second (L2) or foreign language (FL) learning context is a complex and challenging process. The process requires that students, conscious and/or unconsciously come to terms with new ways of making sense of academic literacy practices that may be below their level of expressing their own ideas and opinions. In addition, the same students might be further challenged by the limited control they have over the language, which represents both an important linguistic resource for their studies and a form of power. Thus for the English language TES at TTI nr 200, whose medium of literacy acquisition is English, the acquisition of academic literacy should be analysed from the existing perspectives and see how they can contribute to the understanding of the problem being researched.

It must be acknowledged that there have been different perspectives with regard to academic literacy acquisition, namely the feminist poststructuralist view, the poststructuralist view, the post colonialist view, Canagarajah's (2002) concept of local knowledge construction and imagination together with Wenger's (1998) view of imagination.

For the poststructuralists literacy acquisition is seen as a process of identity and reconstruction (Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000; Collins & Blot, 2003; Erdreich & Rapoport, 2002; Gee, 1996, 2000; Street, 1984, 1993). Erdreich & Rapoport (2002) conducted a study of identity and schooling among Palestinian Israeli female college students, and found that even though students may feel excluded from the dominant academic discourse and challenged by new ways of knowing, they uniquely construct academic knowledge by drawing on their lived and living knowledge and experience. They also found out that students use new literacy skills to explore and articulate their own ethno national identity.

In the same way of reasoning, Morita (2002) conducted a qualitative case study of graduate students in a TESOL program and brought to light some of the conflicting aspects that could hinder students' progress in the process of L2 academic discourse socialization. The study provides a rich account of how L2 graduate students' identities and power are negotiated and reconstituted while participating in academic communities of practice. These two studies suggest that the acquisition of academic L2 literacy is not a unilateral process of socialization but requires "the adoption of radically different perspectives" (Kutz, Groden, & Zamel, 1996:29) that lead to the reconstruction and extension of embodied knowledge and learner perspectives (Canagarajah, 2002; Spack, 1997b). Canagarajah's (2002) concept of local knowledge explains what it takes to acquire and make sense of new academic discourse in a second or foreign language.

A great contribution was also provided by Wenger (1998) . The telegram was an example of course content which attempts to facilitate the smooth process of academic literacy tuition and practice. Wenger defines imagination as "a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves". He posits that :

Throughout imagination, we can locate ourselves in the world and in history, and include in our identities other meanings, other possibilities and other perspectives. It is through imagination that we recognize our own experience as reflecting broader patterns, connections, and configurations.

It is through imagination that we see our own practices as continuing histories that reach far into the past, and it is through imagination that we conceive of new developments, explore alternatives, and envision possible futures ... imagination can make us consider our own position with new eyes. By taking us into the past and carrying us into the future, it can recast the present and show it as holding unsuspected possibilities (1998: 178).

The understanding of imagination helps to examine how L2 students engage in academic disciplinary knowledge as well as the way they position themselves in relation to their academic community.

There have also been some empirical studies in the field of academic literacy acquisition; for example, in an unpublished study, Younghee Her, a Korean student, conducted an in-depth, longitudinal case study based on auto ethnography and ethnography to investigate her own and two Korean colleagues' experiences with academic L2 literacy; Ellis & Bochner (2000), reported on their experiences with students from different cultural backgrounds enrolled in an American graduate program. In another study, the Department of English for Quality Teaching and Learning Fund reports on academic literacy practices of University Science in Cape Town, South Africa, where students were asked to report regularly on their academic literacy practices as well as the linguistic difficulties and challenges they faced and the strategies they employed to overcome them.

One of the main conclusions of that study was that English courses should provide students with the opportunities to reflect on concepts such as audience and purpose to enable them assess new communicative contexts and evaluate the gender and practices that are specific to those contexts.

At the University of Witwatersrand for example, research related to academic literacy acquisition is in place. Examples of such work follow. Dison (1989) has analysed various approaches to teaching writing to ESL students in South Africa. Linington (2003) made a critique of the process and genre approaches to teaching of writing and proposes an approach to teaching writing that should combine the two approaches. Leibowitz (1995) has done extensive research on academic writing and the concepts of imagination and imaginative writing from the teachers' points of view.

The feminist poststructuralist view of identity as discursive production and agency illuminates how identities may be both discursively imposed as well as chosen and how agency is activated. Second, the poststructuralist view of the inter-relationship between literacy practices and identity construction is useful for exploring the dynamics of literacy, power, and identity. Third, the post colonialist concept of ‘emotional colonialism’ explains the unconscious mindset that constitutes subject positions and therefore has an impact on the way we engage in new academic discourses. Finally, the notion of local knowledge helps not only to better understand the social and historical construction of imagination but also the way imagined identities are contested, negotiated, and re-shaped when L2 learners manoeuvre within a range of competing academic discourses.

It can be concluded that much has been written regarding academic literacy acquisition within a second or foreign language environment. However, it must be recognised that the context under investigation has its own particularities and characteristics and therefore deserves special attention. Ballard & Clanchy (1988) compare literacy to “beauty”. To them, beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder and therefore the meanings attached to the concept of academic literacy are diverse and complex. The complexity of academic literacy practices derives from the poststructuralist literacy theorists’ view which sees literacy practices as particularly situated practices of reading and writing within society, involving people’s values, attitudes, and beliefs about literacy and the discourses of literacy (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Collins & Blot, 2003; Street, 1984, 1993). Like with other human activities literacy practices structure social relations; those social relations are built into literacy practices what makes literacy inherently political and ideological resulting in broader social relations involving dimensions such as identity, class, race, and gender.

Street (1984: 8) asserts that “literacy can only be known to us in forms which already have political and ideological significance”. Similarly, Gee (1996: 132) points out that social power relations within discourses set people apart from one another by categorizing “who is an insider and who isn’t, often, who is normal and who isn’t, often too many other things as well”. In a language use and child socialization study, Heath (1983) demonstrates how schooled discourses serve to screen out some groups of students from one social class while promoting others from other classes.

To sum up, the study of academic and research literacy practices is a never ending study and therefore in each and every study related to this topic researchers need to position themselves and delimit the scope of their studies. This suggests that the present study is just an introduction to the topic taking into account that the population being investigated shares the same culture and educational background as the researcher. In other words, both TES and lecturers have experienced the same difficulties in their studies, although at different moments in time. This prompts us to think that perhaps what needs to be deeply examined are the social power relations between students and lecturers in order to see in more detail what really happens in the classrooms and in the feedback supervisory meetings during the process of research report writing. As a result it should be possible to determine whether the relationship between students can or could be influenced by those power relations.

In the following part of the thesis conceptions and perspectives on writing are grouped under five headings which together represent a broad map of conceptualisations of writing which inform in different ways the later discussion of teaching and learning pedagogy and research writing:

- (i) Writing as expressive
- (ii) Writing as a linguistic object
- (iii) Writing as contextualised; brings in power
- (iv) Social practice-power
- (v) Genre theory.

Each of the perspectives on writing in (i) to (iv) incorporate differences of emphasis and modulations. Genre (v) is given particular emphasis as it brings together and relates to (i), (ii) and (iii) in a wider context.

(I) Writing as expressive

For the expressivist view of writing, (Elbow, 1998; Murray, 1985) writing is seen as a creative act of discovery in which the process is as important as the product; writing is learnt, not taught and lecturers should be non-directive and facilitating writers to make their own meanings through an encouraging and cooperative environment. Writing is also seen as a non-linear, exploratory and generative process, whereby writers discover and reformulate their

ideas as they attempt to “*approximate meaning*” (Zamel, 1983: 165). To them, writing is a cognitive process, (Emig, 1983 and Zamel, 1983).

(II) Writing as linguistic object

A weakness of the expressive approach is that writing as a linguistic object may be neglected and so too the different kinds of texts/genres that students need to produce differently problematic may be debates about the theory of language that should be used in writing, e.g. conventional grammar or functional linguistics (for example EFL which draws on Halliday (1994). However, language in the form of text is undoubtedly socially and culturally situated and as some theorists posit, it has to be ‘constituted, deconstructed, reconstructed, produced and reproduced’ (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; van Dijk, 2001).

(III) Writing as contextualised

However, new rhetoric studies have given more emphasis to contextual features and assumptions and to the use of particular forms used by particular communities (Bazerman, 1997: 323). Knowledge of the social context which gives life to texts is seen as being more important than the formal patterns in texts. Writing is seen as a situated act. Nystrand (1989). For example, it is seen as a social act that can only occur within a specific situation and is influenced by the personal attitudes and social experiences that the writer brings to writing as well as the particular socio-cultural and institutional contexts in which it takes place. Nystrand (1989) does not develop the notion of audience; however the idea is implicit in his view that “*The process of writing is a matter of elaborating text in accord with what the write can reasonably assume that the reader knows and expects...*” (Hyland, 2002: 34).

The writer is now seen as a member of a given community. In order to understand a text fully we must go beyond the decisions of individual writer and explore the regularities of a given community’s practices. Brufee (1986) states that the ways we think, and the categories and concepts we use to understand the world are “...all language constructs generated by knowledge communities and used by them to maintain coherence” (Hyland, 2002: 41).

Consequently writing should be viewed as a social interactive process and not simply a cognitive and individual skill. In other words, writing may be produced individually but it is formed within social contexts to serve specific social needs (Butt et al., 2000).

Writing as a pedagogic process is the combination of a number of activities (setting goals, generating ideas, organising information, making various drafts, reading and reviewing, revising and editing. Hedge (2000: 302) sustains that “writing [in an academic way] is neither easy nor spontaneous for many second and foreign language writers. Therefore, writing should be viewed as a complex and never complete process rather than as a mere product (Emig, 1983; Zamel, 1987).

(IV) Social practice-power and ideology

As a human activity, literacy practices are based on social relations. That means that literacy is inherently political and ideological and caught up with broader social concerns involving such dimensions of identity as class, race, and gender Street (1984: 12). Street (1984: 8) asserts that “literacy can only be known to us in forms which already have political and ideological significance”. Similarly, Gee (1996: 132) postulates that social power relations within discourses set people apart from one another by categorizing “who is an insider and who isn’t, often, who is normal and who isn’t, often too many other things as well”. In a language use and child socialization study, Heath (1983) demonstrates how schooled discourses serve to screen out some groups of students from one social class while promoting others from other classes.

The working of power relations in schooled discourses is best examined using the notion of markedness, (Bucholtz & Hall, 2003). Bucholtz & Hall (2003: 3), define markedness as “the hierarchical structuring of difference”. The working of power relations in schooled discourses constitutes a huge area of enquiry and therefore should be studied separately, not in this study.

(V) Genre theory

Writing research has given some evidence of the need to expose students to and have practice with various genres in addition to narrative writing (e.g. Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Martin, 1989; Perera, 1984). Genre based pedagogies have been applied in a variety of ways and educational contexts, and proponents of the genre school agree in principle on the

social mission of the genre movement - that students from marginalised social groups need to have access to the discourses or genres of power and that an explicit pedagogy of those genres is required. However, there have been some divergent opinions along linguistic and pedagogical lines (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). What follows is an account on the three main paradigms to teaching writing and their relevance within this study.

3.3 Traditional Approaches to Teaching and learning

Traditional approaches of literacy teaching and learning place the teacher at the centre of the teaching/learning process and they are based on the transmission model where students are required to reproduce the knowledge transmitted by the teacher. One example of the use of transmission model in the classroom is the “product approach to writing”. Crucial to this literacy pedagogy is the emphasis on the composed product rather than on the composing process. Teaching is based on guided composition where no context is needed but a few skills mainly the ability to call up learnt structures. Interpretation is then left out: the beliefs and knowledge writers assume readers will possess (Sperber & Wilson, 2001).

Young (1978: 31) and Silva (1990: 33) present the main characteristics of these approaches:

- ❖ Analysis of discourse into words, sentences and paragraphs;
- ❖ Strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style.

The product approach to writing is based on a sequence of events that take place until the final product is achieved. Of these events, planning is regarded as a prerequisite to accomplish the task. It is argued that this stage consists of predicting and resolving the problems that students may encounter in the task (Dison, 1989). Thereafter, the content is suggested and filled into a pre-existing outline. Such an approach to writing, according to Grabe & Kaplan (1996: 30) has a very limited tradition of composition teaching and emphasises on ‘*correct usage, correct grammar, and correct spelling*’, focusing on the topic sentence, the various methods of developing the paragraph and the text division (introduction, body, conclusion).

This scenario can be found in many TTI nr 200 classrooms. Generally speaking, students joining TTI nr 200 come with little or no experience at all in academic writing

matters, not only in English but also in Portuguese. In this context, a writing syllabus that focuses initially on grammar usage and spelling would be acceptable. However, it is often assumed that once students have mastered the surface features of the language, they should be able to compose written work on their own. Conversely, this is not always a straightforward process. As a result, when students are asked to write assignments, their final product is always verbatim copies of different sources without acknowledgement resulting, therefore, in plagiarism (Angelil-Carter, 1998). Angelil-Carter (*ibid.*) goes further arguing that plagiarism is evidence that students have not yet been initiated into the academic writing discourse.

Zamel (1987: 267) posits that "... methods that emphasise form and correctness ignore how ideas get explored through writing and fail to teach students that writing is essentially a process of discovery". In fact, students' awareness of how to approach writing tasks is an important factor in the process of developing and using academic writing skills. Such knowledge helps students understand their interaction with the task in hand and the resulting product is in itself evidence of the conscious effort that the students have gone through to achieve the required goal. Hence the need for transition to a more learner- centred approach to teaching writing: the progressive approach to teaching and learning.

3.4 Progressive Approaches to Teaching/Learning

In contrast to the traditional approaches, progressive approaches are learner-centred. The learner is encouraged to learn by undertaking the task with the teacher acting as a facilitator, rather than the knowledge expert. Progressive approaches are primarily concerned with creating opportunities for students to communicate meanings by using topics that they are interested in, rather than drilling the rules of what is correct.

The process-approach to writing is an example of a progressive approach to teaching and learning. For the proponents of this approach to teaching, writing is seen as a "non-linear" process (Emig, 1983). Adopting a case-study approach, Emig (1983) found out that while composing, students displayed a range of behaviours that indicated non-linear nature of writing. His findings revealed that, like first language skilled writers, second-language (L2) skilled writers exhibited "recursiveness" in their writing. The students' engagement in the interchangeable tasks of planning, writing, rewriting and revising of a text, helps them

explore, generate and reformulate ideas. This process helps students to approximate meaning (Zamel, 1987).

Schaughnessy (1977: 234) posits that rather than being the development of some preconceived and well-formed ideas; writing is the “record of an idea developing. It is a process whereby an initial idea gets extended and refined...” Similarly, Jones (1982) investigated the written products and written processes of two writers that he designated as being one “poor” and the other “good” and he concluded that while “poor” writers rely on the information provided by the text at the expense of their own ideas, “good” writers allow their ideas to generate the text. His main conclusion was that lack of writers’ competence in composing was the main source of difficulties in writing rather than lack of second-language linguistic competence. Perhaps, this is the problem that TES at my site are currently facing.

Like Jones (1982) Zamel (1983) also found out that competence in the composing process was more important than linguistic competence. They both postulate that ability to compose academic texts such as an essay or research report requires explicit teaching, and this might be what participants need. The absence of explicit teaching may confine students to language uses such as those observed in informal settings; that is, in everyday conversation as “the conversation aspects of language proficiency” (Ellis, 1990).

The process approach views academic writing as creative process where teachers’ roles are to engage students in the task through discussion, drafting, revision, feedback and informed choices. Feedback plays an important role in the process approach to writing. “...assessment procedures which only yield scores or grades do not adequately fulfil the needs of classroom based assessment. They may be useful in establishing norms and in clarifying whether standards are being met (Hedge, 2000: 385). Therefore, in order for teachers to get a better understanding of their students’ personal development, the provision of constant feedback is necessary. In addition, Keh (1990) discusses three types of feedback: peer evaluation, conferences, (i.e. teacher student interaction) and written comments (by the teacher). In the same way of reasoning, Renandya (2005) suggests three types of feedback which are quite similar to the above mentioned. They are *self-response* whereby students react to their own work. This type of feedback encourages students to be self-sufficient and independent. This type of feedback is a step forward towards building students’ autonomy. *Peer response* is another type of feedback; in peer response students provide feedback to their

peers and share their writings in a non-frightening atmosphere. However, because EFL students lack language competence, teachers must guide and control the activity. Kroll (2001: 252) suggest the use of a checklist with some typical questions such as: *What is the main purpose of the paper? Have all the answers been answered? What do you find particularly effective in the paper?* The third type of feedback is **teacher response**. The teacher is the last person to respond to students' written work. Teachers can gradually employ self and peer response in their classrooms so that students get used to it on one side, and on the other side these can lighten the teachers' load especially in large classrooms. The one to one conversation between the teacher and the student is normally coined as conferencing (Kroll, 2001), and it is an effective way of providing students' feedback. According to Kroll (2001: 259) one advantage of conferencing is that it "...allows the teacher to uncover potential misunderstandings that the student might have about prior written feedback on issues in writing that have been discussed in class".

From the academic writing point of view, the above two approaches have the advantage of drawing students' attention to the constant need to draft and revise, thus, encouraging students to be more responsible for making improvements in their writings. After all, academic writing involves the presentation and manipulation of one's ideas and this can be better achieved through process writing.

Some research has been conducted to investigate the composing processes that students use or prefer using while writing their research reports or research papers (Shaw, 1991; Zamel, 1983). Using interviews, (Shaw, 1991) conducted a survey of the composing techniques of overseas postgraduate students, and found out that students benefit more from practice in co-authoring, and from getting feedback from their colleagues; and they also benefit more from practice writing on their subject rather than on more general topics. This is to say that the process approach to writing not only applies to teaching writing in the classroom but also to students' research reports writing, where variations of the structure such as preliminary ideas, the outline, getting started, pre-writing activities, writing the first second paragraph, the first draft, revising, editing, proofreading, etc, can be adopted.

3.5 Genre Theory

The Genre Theory is a movement that presents a reaction to the process approach to writing, led by some Australian theorists like Martin (1989), Christie, (1985) and Kress, (1997). Genre theorists cast doubt on the so-called “non-linear” practice in process writing consisting of drafting and revising interchangeably and editing. They felt that such a practice could deviate students’ attention from the normal aspects of writing and problem solving required by different genres of writing. Exposing students to different genres and involving them in tasks to perform those genres is just as good to L1 students as well as to L2 students. Asking students to write a lot in English will not definitely provide them with sufficient practice and awareness in the different types valued for academic writing. Genres are ‘abstract socially recognised ways of using language’ (Martin, 1993). When we write we follow certain conventions for organising messages because we want our readers to recognise our social purposes. Genres vary from shopping lists to book reviews. There is a great deal of literature on the structures of many written professional and academic genres in English. Hyland (2002:19) presents some of them:

- ❖ *Abstracts (Hyland, 2000);*
- ❖ *Business response letters (Ghadessy, 1993);*
- ❖ *Corporate mission statements (Swales & Rodgers, 1995);*
- ❖ *Discussion sections of research articles (Dubois, 1997);*
- ❖ *Grant proposals (Connor & Mauranen, 1999);*
- ❖ *Methods sections of research articles (Paul & Charne, 1995);*
- ❖ *Results sections of research articles (Bret, 1994);*
- ❖ *Sales letters (Bhatia, 1993);*
- ❖ *Theses (Bunton, 1998; Dudley-Evans, 1993).*

To the genre theorists, genre-literacy teaching represents a new educational paradigm which pedagogy involves being explicit about the way language works to make meaning. It incorporates a balance between form and process in a functional approach to writing development. The focus on the functions of language use, it is believed, accounts for the

cognitive and social influences of writing, which is realised through the generic forms of texts that students are exposed to (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

The genre movement emerged out of a social mission to provide equitable access to students, especially those who did not come from mainstream cultures, to the “privileged” genres and ‘*cultures of power*’. Since the 1980s researchers have been concerned with the use of written language in elementary classrooms, and this research goes beyond simply describing the situations and features of the language to proposing strategies, methods, that would enhance students’ performance in various situations at an acceptable level. Some other researchers, however, (Christie, 1992; Martin, 1989) have argued for the relevance of language form and structure as an integral part of meaningful teaching of language use, and this view is nowadays seen as increasingly more important in L2 language teaching situations such as the one at TTI nr 200.

TES at TTI nr 200 would probably have been included in this category because most of them come from educational backgrounds with little or no academic literacy practices. Even students whose medium of instruction is Portuguese could have been included in this category, for the same reason. In fact, one would contend that some students may need explicit teaching to access a range of genres. “The primary focus should be on academic discourse genres and the range of academic writing tasks, aimed at helping to socialise the student into the academic context” (Jordan, 1997: 166). The types of genres that TTI nr 200 TES are expected to become familiar with and produce are exam answers, book reviews, reports, essays, research papers and articles, research proposals and finally research reports. Each of these has obviously its own format, style and various conventions which need to be addressed in the classroom.

The genre-based approach in the classroom is represented and illustrated in Martin’s (1993) ‘*Wheel Model*’. It offers a framework for thinking of the stages and activities involved in learning to write academically. This model was first implemented in disadvantaged schools in Sidney and is divided into three phases: modelling, joint negotiation construction and independent construction of a text (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993).

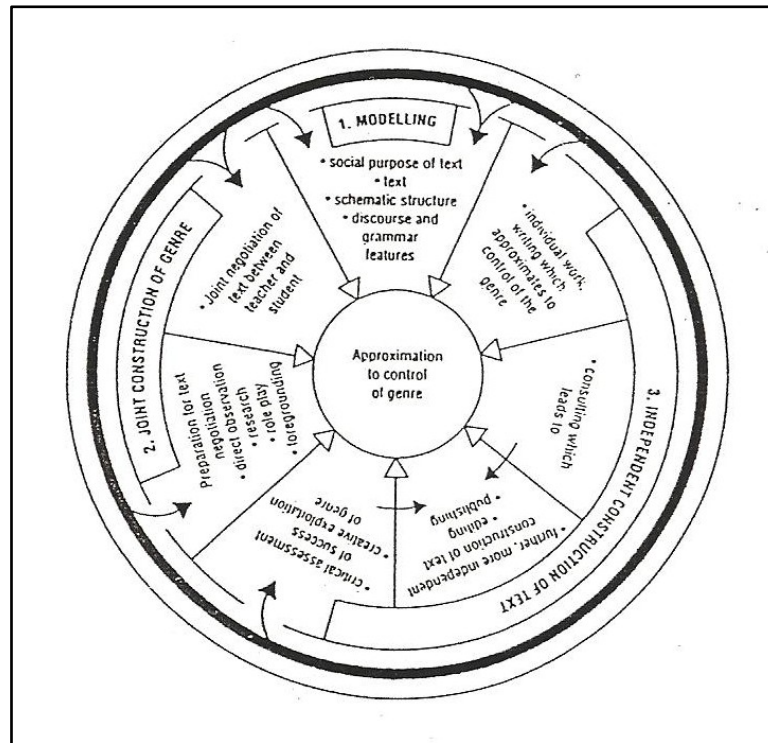


Figure 3.1 The Wheel Model of Genre Literacy and Pedagogy¹

Each stage in the above diagram comprises different activities. For instance, in ‘*the modelling phase*’ students would be exposed to a number of text samples to exemplify a particular genre. It involves the discussion of the functions of the text, how the information is organised, and what lexical and grammatical choices have been used in the text to convey meaning.

In the ‘*joint construction phase*’ students and teachers participate in the joint construction of a class text with the teacher acting as scribe and the students contributing with suggestions.

In the last stage, ‘*independent construction phase*’ (the researcher’s own emphasis), students are asked to construct their own texts through a process of talking out the task with the lecturer or peers, drafting, critically re-evaluating their texts and editing. Martin’s model was found very useful as it shows the stages that students need to go through in order to write an academic piece of writing. “Teaching genres involves increasing learners’ awareness of the conventions of writing to help them produce texts that seem well formed and appropriate to

¹ In Cope and Kalantzis (1993).

readers” (Hyland, 2002: 48). This approach to teaching writing has been a response to the occasional excesses of a process approach to writing which often disregards the importance of the written form and takes power away from the students particularly those who have English as a second or foreign language, thus from a different educational and cultural background. Replacing the product approach with the process approach neglects direct and traditional ways of teaching writing; nevertheless, students are still assessed by their control of the text features such as text organisation, sentence structure, paragraph length, etc.

It is only when students are asked to talk about texts that they come to understand better how to make a piece of writing more effective and appropriate to the communicative purposes implied in them. This, in its turn, helps students improve their writing skills and become more effective in editing and revising their texts individually or in pairs. Increasing students’ awareness of how different ways of organising written information interact with the purpose of the text is an important step in helping students become more successful academic writers. By discussing text features of various texts, students learn the language needed to talk about texts, start to understand how and why texts are organised in certain ways, and are able to evaluate their own pieces of writing and participate in peer editing and revision effectively.

Kress (1997) contends that the continuous grouping of types of texts into closed clusters such as, narratives or arguments, might lead literacy teaching into pre-packaged genres, which could exclude other genres that are of equal social value. Such an approach to literacy teaching might lead to a “curiously static world, seemingly fixed, immutable; [whose] boundaries are clear, and decisive, one moves more or less strictly within them, they are in very sense, authoritarian” (Green, 1987: 86).

Furthermore, what might be called a discussion genre would inevitably involve a combination of different generic features and for this reason it is argued that it would seem unjustifiable to locate it within a particular group.

Cope & Kalantzis (1993) have been sceptical about Martin’s wheel model. Their main concern is that modelling texts all too easily results in dictating to students how they should write such genres. Success in the task is ultimately assessed in terms of the extent to which students have reproduced the pre-determined structure. Yet, the authors are of the opinion that such pedagogy would bring to life the transmission model. They then sought to incorporate

another dimension into the genre theory and pedagogy namely the critical aspect. They argue that

To become “good readers” and “good writers”, students should be encouraged to be critical and not just follow the generic line. The most powerful texts cross generic and cultural boundaries. We might gain new insights if we were to read a logic scientific text on building a bridge as a story, for example, or a technical treatise on a nuclear power as a moral homily. (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993:16).

In a teaching/learning context like at TTI nr 200 where students have hardly had opportunities to be exposed to different genres not just in English but also in Portuguese, being able to produce a pre-determined “schematic structure”, as it has been termed by Cope & Kalantzis (1993), it is a good starting point. Moreover, students can be encouraged to be critical about what they read and what and how they write. This is to say, students should possess abilities to argue and provide counter arguments, and thus, encouraging them to “resist the power of print”, urging them not to believe everything they read (Janks, 1995: iii).

It is generally believed that while successful writers distinguish themselves because of the choices they make in their writings, it is unlikely that writers, such as TES at TTI nr 200, will make choices which are wrong or beyond their academic level of writing (Reid, 1989: 2). In other words, students are less likely to add their own voice and style to their writing, unless they have gained experience in and practised the different options available in academic writing. Morrell sees teachers and students as critical philosophers and states that “... philosophy is meant for real people to deal with real problems of real life” (Morell, 2008: 206).

Morell (2008) goes further to state that students must be exposed to multiple genres of literature; to use multiple reading strategies to decode texts and to draw upon multiple literacy tools to interrogate the texts they read. At the same time students should be given “...opportunities...to produce sophisticated texts across multiple genres that include expository essays, poems, plays, short stories, autobiographical narratives, advertising campaigns, letters, and, in some cases, electronic and multimedia texts” (Morell, 2008: 217).

However, it can be speculated that students at TTI nr 200 face many constraints which probably derive not only from their limited linguistic abilities, but also from the lack of

composing competence, partially due to the ‘traditional’ model of lecturing that some, if not the majority of lecturers insist to continue with.

Therefore, one may contend that an approach to writing that would integrate both process and product approaches should be applied for the creation of a genre-based syllabus for academic writing skills. After all, there is no single and perfect approach or method to teaching; we presume that what is missing within the teaching/learning process at TTI nr 200 is not the acquisition of new techniques or teaching approaches or methods but perhaps an alignment in the system, as well as an improvement of the research supervision practices.

So far we have presented and discussed the three main paradigms to teaching writing no matter the context, whether in an L1, L2 or foreign language classroom. In order to understand better the application of the above teaching approaches in the L2 or EFL classrooms Hyland (2007: 2) suggests six dominant concepts that can guide the teaching of writing in L2 classrooms from different perspectives, “representing potentially compatible means of understanding the complex reality of writing”. (Hyland, 2007: 2).

3.6 Six L2 Teaching Writing Pedagogic Orientations

As Hyland (2007: 7) posits: “Everything we do in the classroom, the methods and materials we adopt, the teaching styles we assume, the tasks we assign, are guided by both practical and theoretical knowledge, and our decisions can be more effective if that knowledge is explicit.” Taking its cue from that statement this chapter focuses on the range of pedagogies which have each been presented over time as a better way to equip students to produce the kind of writing that is required. To cite Hyland (2007: 7) again: “A familiarity with what is known about writing, and about teaching writing, can therefore help us to reflect on our assumptions and enable us to approach current teaching methods with an informed and critical eye.”

The starting point in teaching has always been which of the many perspectives on writing to adopt. Although teachers might adopt more than one approach, there will always be one which predominates and is translated into the teaching tasks and the learning stages that teachers and students go through in the teaching learning process. Drawing on different

views of writing like those referred to above Hyland (2007: 2) presents six ‘curriculum options’ that can help lecturers improve their performance in the writing lessons and not only:

- ❖ *Language structures;*
- ❖ *Text functions;*
- ❖ *Creative expression;*
- ❖ *Composing process;*
- ❖ *Content;*
- ❖ *Genre and contexts of writing.*

The above curriculum perspectives should be seen as forming a whole. However, for the purpose of this section they will be briefly explained separately.

❖ **Focus on language structures:** Based on the traditional approaches to teaching writing, this view sees writing as marks on the page, or screen, i.e. writing as primarily consisting in the correct arrangement of words to form sentences based on the rules of the language. In this view learning to write in a foreign or second language classroom implies acquiring the linguistic features and the vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns, and cohesive devices that contribute to the production of texts. “Essentially, writing is seen as a product constructed from the writer’s command of grammatical and lexical knowledge, and writing development is considered to be the result of imitating and manipulating models provided by the teacher” (Hyland, 2007: 3).

There are many EFL and L2 classrooms where students learn to write in this way. For most of TES at TTI nr 200, this is the way they were taught to write in the earlier levels of learning. As a result, the trainees tend to find it difficult to go beyond the writing of a few sentences to writing their own ideas based on their own experiences. Thus this study argues that the goal of teaching writing should not focus on training in explicitness and accuracy. However, it would be unacceptable to regard the rules of language as irrelevant to learning to write. The principle adhered to should be that texts are always produced in response to specific communicative settings in which people tend to draw on their knowledge, their readers’ knowledge and similar texts to decide both on what to say and how to say it, bearing

in mind that different forms of text convey different relationships and meanings. Students in general and L2 or EFL learners in particular need an understanding of how words, sentences, and larger discourse structures can build and express the meanings they want to transmit.

❖ **Focus on text functions:** It is widely believed that particular language forms perform certain communicative functions and students can be taught the functions most relevant to their needs. According to Hyland (2007: 6), functions are the means for achieving the objectives or purposes of writing. This orientation is sometimes called the *'functional approach'* and it is influential in L2 or EFL situations when students are being prepared for academic writing. One of the aims of this focus is to help students produce and develop meaningful paragraphs, *"through the creation of topic sentences, supporting sentences, and transitions, and to develop different types of paragraphs"* (Hyland, 2007: 7). Based on free writing methods, the process takes the form of re-ordering sentences in scrambled paragraphs, selecting appropriate sentences to complete gapped paragraphs, and write paragraphs from provided information. This function is strongly influenced by the emphasis on structures described above, where paragraphs are seen as syntactic units like sentences, in which writers can fit particular functional units. Texts are seen as composed of structural entities, such as *Introduction- Body- Conclusion*, and particular organisational patterns are taught such as *description, exposition, narration, etc.*

Although meaning is involved in this approach to teaching writing the learning activities that students are engaged in are more concerned with producing coherent patterns rather than with activities which are related to students' purposes and personal experiences. Therefore this pedagogical orientation would not bring positive results with TES at TTI nr 200 as it sees texts as objects that can be taught separately of particular contexts, writers, or readers. Although there is an assumption that by following the text structural rules herein mentioned, students will achieve the intended learning outcomes, writing should be seen as more than rearranging sentences or paragraphs, and writing instruction is more than helping students to remember and execute these patterns; writing instruction implies looking at the student- writers as the departure point.

❖ **Focus on creative expression:** This teaching orientation takes the writer as the starting point in producing an academic piece of paper. Students are encouraged to express themselves, and produce writing that is fresh and spontaneous. Writing is creative and seen as an act of students' self-discovery. Personal experiences and opinions are key aspects in the

development of arguments and provision of counter arguments. Teaching in that way contributes to self-awareness, raising of the students' social position and '*literate possibilities*' (Freire, 1974) and it also facilitates '*clear thinking, effective relating, and satisfying self-expression*' (Moffett, 1982). From this perspective writing is seen as nondirective and personal but also as a way of sharing experiences and emphasising the power of the individual to construct meaning. The role of the teacher is to provide students with space to make their own meanings within a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Teachers try not to impose their views on students or suggest responses to topics; instead they offer models of writing and encourage students to come up with their own texts based on the examples provided through a developmental process of writing that goes from simple to complex tasks. Hyland (2007: 9) contends that "*In contrast to the rigid practice of a more form-oriented approach, writers are urged to be creative and to take chances through free writing*". However, this orientation misses the writer's social position within the community and its ideology of individualism may disadvantage L2 or EFL students that see self-expression from a different perspective (Hyland, 2007: 9). One of the biggest shortcomings of this orientation lies in the idea that it neglects the cultural backgrounds of the students, their social position and the purpose of communication in the real world context, where writing is to take place

Focus on the composing process: For many years, the most popular model of L2 writing has been the original planning-writing-revising framework devised by Flower & Hayes (1980) and lately improved by (Flower, 1989). This model sees writing as "a non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (Zamel, 1983: 165). Just as with the expressivist orientation, the process approach to teaching writing emphasises the writer as an independent producer of texts, but it goes a bit further to address the issue of what teachers should do to help students perform successfully a writing task. "The numerous incarnations of this perspective are consistent in recognising basic cognitive processes as central to writing activities and in stressing the need to develop students' abilities to plan, define a rhetorical problem, and propose and evaluate solutions" (Hyland, 2007: 10). Therefore, in addition to knowing what students must write, lecturers should be concerned with what students need to know, what they do when they write and how they can be helped to do it better.

Hyland (2007: 11) provides a useful process model of writing instruction that can guide L2 or EFL teachers in their approaches to teaching writing:

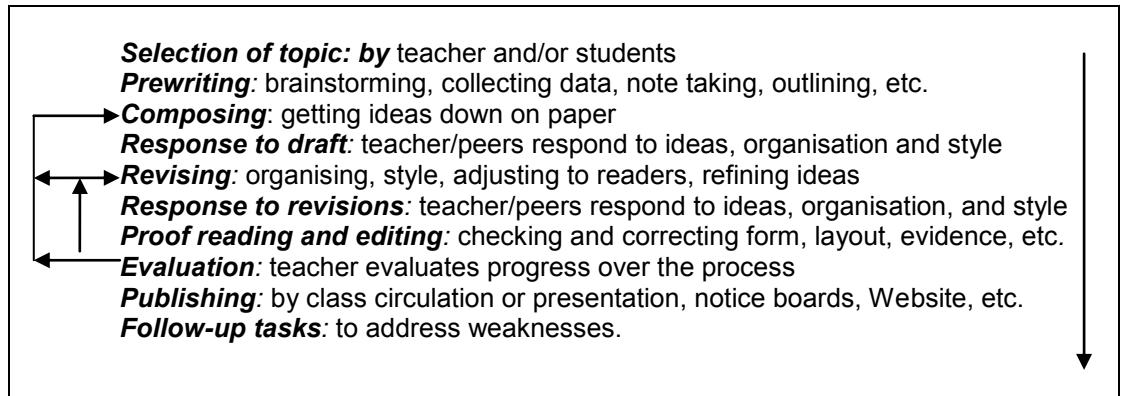


Figure 3.2 A process model of writing instruction²

As the above figure shows, process writing is a recursive and interactive process that moves forward and backward from planning to drafting, to revising and editing until the product is finished. The teacher's role is to guide students through the writing process and help them develop strategies for drafting, generating ideas and revising their own work. This orientation has helped L2 and Foreign language teachers and lecturers in their practices and although there is considerable research into writing as a process, "we still do not have a comprehensive idea on how learners go about a writing task or how they learn to write", especially L2 or foreign language learners. Hyland (2007: 13).

Knowing exactly what writers do when they write and why they make certain choices, constitutes a grey area in the development of process writing. It can be argued that like with the previous orientations, among many other elements, process writing concentrates on one aspect of writing which is '*cognition*' and it fails to offer a clear perspective between the social nature of the writing, the role of the language and text structure in effective written communication. "Process approaches overemphasise the cognitive relationship between the writer and the writer's internal world" (Swales, 1990: 220), and encouraging students to make their own points of view and find their own texts does not teach them how to construct the different types of texts they are asked to write.

Therefore there is a need to look beyond one single orientation. Processes approaches have not been helpful enough to guide teachers and lecturers in the writing classrooms especially at higher levels. As Polio (2001) posits, equipping novice writers with the

² From Hyland (2007: 11).

strategies of good writers does not lead to any development, and (Hyland, 2007) concludes that students need help in learning how to write, but mainly in understanding how texts are organised by topic, audience, purpose, and cultural norms. At TTI nr 200 for example, lecturers also need to look at the effectiveness of particular teaching methods and assessment procedures being used in the different core course subjects with special regard to the Research Methodology subject. This leads to the next orientation which is focus on content.

❖ **Focus on content:** another way of conceptualising L2/ EFL writing teaching has to do with the content, what students are required to write about. This presupposes that teachers should set up themes of interest in the key areas of the subject matter of the study. Students will have some background knowledge about those topics and they will write about them meaningfully. Hyland (2007: 15) maintains that “*themes and topics frequently form the basis of process course, where writing activities are often organised around social issues such as pollution, relationships, (...) smoking, and so on*” and he argues that L2 and EFL students might be in a disadvantaged position as they may not be familiar with the topics and the types of texts they have to write. For TES at TTI nr 200 and students in Angola in general this would not be a problem as they are likely to be familiar with topics such as pollution, corruption, smoking, stress, juvenile crime and so on. Moreover, exposing students to new topics can be productive as it would encourage them to think about issues in new ways. What teachers and lecturers need to do in these cases is to activate the appropriate *schemata* necessary to perform those tasks. “Schema development exercises usually include reading for ideas in parallel texts, reacting to photographs, and various brainstorming tasks to generate ideas for writing and organising texts” (Hyland, 2007: 15). Content driven approaches are quite useful in the teaching of writing to L2 or EFL students due to their flexibility with regards of the level of the students. Thus, while in lower levels much of the information might be provided by the teachers to reduce the level of difficulty in generating and organising material, at higher levels students are required to co-operate in collecting and sharing information as basis to produce texts.

Content-oriented courses tend to rely on reading and explore the relationship between reading and writing, especially in L2 and EFL contexts and research suggests that second language writing skills cannot be acquired only by practice in writing alone, they need to be supported with ‘*extensive reading*’. (Krashen, 1993). Reading plays an important role in developing students writing skills at various stages of proficiency. Both writing and reading are individual meaning making skills in the activation of the existing knowledge of both

structure and content and also in problem solving situations (Grabe, 2003). Reading provides students with new knowledge within different subject areas, but most importantly it helps them spot the conventional features of written texts, with regards to grammar, vocabulary, organisational patterns and interactional devices, etc.

Therefore students should be exposed to different types of genres, so as to acquaint them with the common characteristics and different among those genres. Although the above mentioned orientations all focus on the content to some extent, *content-based orientation* goes a bit further to look at the language, the composing skills, and ‘the specific text conventions associated with a particular domain and its content or subject matter’ (Hyland, 2007: 17). However, such an orientation fails to address the issue of genre. What follows is an account on the genre orientation to teaching writing to L2 or EFL students.

❖ **Focus on genre and context of writing:** Genres are social processes which are used by members of the same community for communicative purposes. Martin (1993) defines genre as ‘*goal-oriented, staged social practices*’; they are *goal oriented* because they are employed to achieve things, and *staged* because the process of meaning making goes through steps and it usually takes more than one step for the writers to achieve their goals. Thus, writing instruction, starts from the purpose of communication, to the stages of composing a text; lecturers are expected to help students distinguish between different genres and to write them appropriately; knowing the structures of the genres is very important. Teachers who adopt the genre orientation to teaching writing look beyond the content of the subject, the composing stages, and the textual organisation of texts, and they see writing as an attempt to communicate with readers. They are mainly concerned with teaching students how to use the language for communicative purposes in a meaningful way.

To paraphrase Hyland (2007), the central idea is that we do not just teach writing, we teach students to write something, with a purpose and an audience in mind. In genre-based classrooms, teachers do not just focus on the content of texts; they look at the linguistic patterns, and go beyond the word on the page to ‘*the social constraints and choices that operate on writers in a particular context*’ (Hyland, 2007: 71).

To sum up, genre-based orientation consists of an integration of discourse and contextual aspects of language use that are usually neglected when attending to structures, functions, forms and processes alone. This means that this orientation, rather than just drawing attention

to the students needs to produce texts for particular readers, it also draws the students' attention to how texts are composed and how they can be used and work as communication. Classroom practices based on the genre orientation to teaching writing date from many years ago based on the systemic functional linguistics originally developed by Halliday & Hansan (1989); and later on improved by Halliday (1994). This theory addresses the relationship between language and its social functions and sets out to show the systematicity of the language from which users can make choices to express their ideas feelings and opinions. Halliday (1994) argues that in order for students to accomplish their goals of communicating (whether orally or in a written form), they need to develop very specific ways of using that language, and those specific ways of using the language will determine the type of genre in use.

The genre-based teaching writing classroom will always be inspired by the work of the Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1978) and its interpretation by Bruner (1986). This view emphasises that the intended learning outcomes are better achieved when students are engaged in classroom activities which are within students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the area between what they can do independently and what they can do with the support of the teacher. The learning process evolves from oral communication and task negotiation with a more knowledgeable person, usually the teacher, and the teacher has a central role to play in this development. What follows is a figure illustrating the practical application of Martin's (1993) wheel model in an L2 or EFL language learning environment:

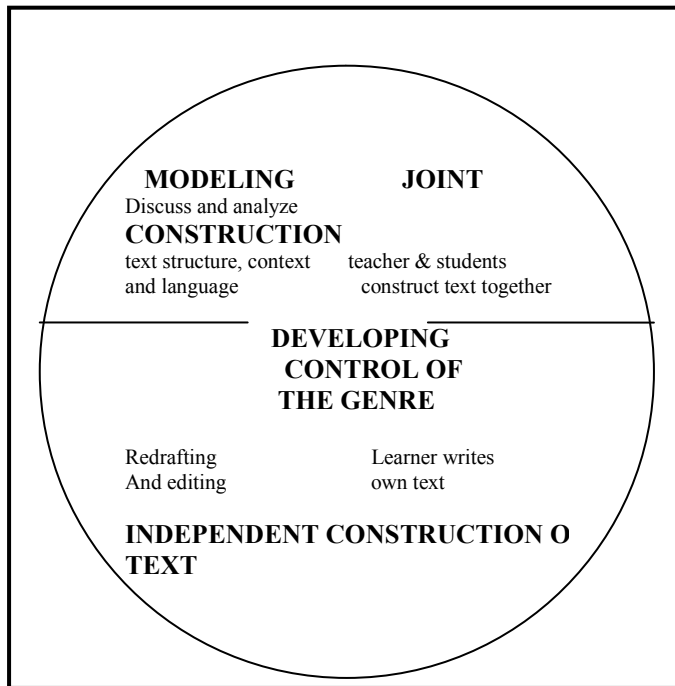


Figure 3.3 The teaching learning cycle³ (adapted from Hyland, 2007: 21)

This figure is just an illustration of how the method suggested by Martin (1993) (figure 3.1: 42), works in L2 and EFL classrooms. The teaching cycle is characterised by a process of contextualisation, modelling, negotiation, and independent construction of text. The first stage is characterised by direct instruction from the teacher with students trying to assimilate the content of the lesson and perform the learning activities set up by the lecturer. The lecturer's support is crucial at this stage and the lecturer checks students' understanding of the '*rhetorical patterns*' they need to reproduce and express their meanings. Gradually the lecturer gives more autonomy to students by increasing their talking time, and writing many different drafts of texts they are likely to produce. As Hyland (2007: 21) posits, "writing is the outcome of activity, rather than an activity itself" and in the EFL classroom students are supposed to develop their '*linguistic metalanguage*' which will enable them to describe and control the structure and grammatical features of the texts they produce. Within this approach, grammar is seen as a way of giving students the language they need to construct and produce different genres and to reflect on how language is used to accomplish the communicative needs. Genre pedagogy is based on a belief that learning should be based on explicit awareness of the language rather than through experiment and exploration of texts (Hyland,

³ Adapted from Hyland (2007: 21).

2007). Thus, lecturers engage students in learning activities that require them to analyse and react to texts which are carefully selected.

Hyland (2007: 22) alerts that the reproductive element of the genres, may lead *‘untrained or unimaginative teachers’* to failure to acknowledge variation and choice in writing, and neglect the importance of contextualisation of the language. By so doing students will see genres as *‘rigid templates and forms represented as linguistic abstractions’* (Hyland, 2007: 22). Students might then feel that genres are sets of rules to be followed and learnt, turning into what Freedman (1994: 46) calls *‘a recipe theory of genre’*.

To sum up, and using Hyland, (2007: 22) words,

There is still a tension between expression and repression in genre teaching that is not fully resolved. It is clear, however, that learners must know how to employ conventional patterns and the circumstances where they can change them as much as they need ways of drafting and editing their work.

It is therefore important for lecturers in general and EFL lecturers in particular to stimulate students creativity in the tasks they perform while at the same time calling their attention to the conventional rules that govern the production of different types of genres.

3.7 Writing a Research Report at TTI nr 200

All over the world, becoming a student in higher education means that someone has joined a ‘new community of practice’ which is definitely different from the previous one(s). As Lea maintains, learning in higher education involves ‘adapting new ways of knowing, new ways of understanding, interpreting, and organising knowledge’ (Lea, 1999: 106). Therefore learning at university is not just a matter of acquiring skills and information. As Freire & Macedo postulate, “To study is not easy, because to study is to create and recreate and not repeat what others say” (Freire & Macedo, 1987: 77). In addition, Seligmann (2012: 5) states that many students in South Africa, study the content of their subjects while they are still learning the language of instruction, in that case English. At our research site TES’ are also experiencing the same difficulties with English being learnt as a foreign language and used as the medium of instruction and communication.

As stated in the introductory chapter, the challenges of writing for the TES at TTI nr 200 increase when they are required to write their research reports. Writing a research report implies that students draw upon outside sources and adopt the styles and genres of the academic discourse. They have to conduct research on their own, summarise and paraphrase, quote sources, adopt genre conventions that meet the audience expectations and select vocabulary and grammatical items that are more formal and proper to academic writing.

It seems, however, that lecturers in general and content subject lecturers in particular at TTI nr 200, are paying little attention to the teaching of this important and lifelong skill as most of the students in the English Department are facing problems in writing their research reports. Success in understanding academic texts is cognitively demanding and it depends on conceptual knowledge (students background information about specific topics), text structure knowledge (knowledge of how information is organised and presented) and knowledge about text processing (being skilled in using different reading strategies), (Bartholomae, 1986). Writing a research report is different from many other types of writing because:

- ❖ The topic is negotiated or chosen from a list of topics;
- ❖ Writing is not voluntary; it goes through a process of negotiation between the student and the supervisor;
- ❖ The final work is evaluated not just read (Johns, 1997).

As in many institutions, the process of research project writing at TTI nr 200 comprises two different stages of writing:

- ❖ The research proposal and
- ❖ The research report.

The research proposal is a very important piece of work in the process of writing a research reports; it serves as a starting point. At TTI nr 200, TES are expected to produce their research proposals in the Research Methodology II subject as the final assessment task. However, experience has been showing that there are some difficulties in getting the research proposal written in an acceptable format and content, though it constitutes the final examination of the Research Methodology subject. As a result, supervisors find it hard to help students write their research reports due to the poor quality of the research proposals they bring and also because of some uncertainty on the part of the students in stating what it is that they really want to investigate.

In addressing this issue Lategan (2008: 15) states that “... *new research [undergraduate] students often do not know what is required in a research degree (...) not only in terms of administrative requirements but also in terms of language, thinking and analytical style of research in a particular subject*”. And this appears also to be the problem of most TES at TTI nr 200, where most of them are judged as performing well during coursework but find writing the research report a very hard task to complete.

Sayed et al. (1998) found that students who ‘perform well’ in coursework are usually those who prefer to work on their own, take ownership of their studies and do not rely on the supervisor for answers and direction. However, this statement needs to be critically analysed, as the concept of ‘performing well’ may have negative effects on the type of approaches to teaching/learning, i.e. surface or deep approaches (Biggs, 1999) that teachers and students use. Surface approaches to learning are based on a student’s strategy to get the task done with minimum effort, using low cognitive levels when higher level activities are required to do the task properly. Deep approaches to learning consist in engaging students in tasks that are appropriate and meaningful to their learning, using high cognitive levels of performance. This requires a sound foundation of students’ prior knowledge.

Borrowing from Biggs’ (1999), it can be argued that ‘*good performance*’ is not always a synonym of ‘*an attainable form of high literacy*’. For Bereiter & Scardamalia (1987), it might mean the opposite. In fact, there are occasions when ‘good performance’ is used to mean getting ‘good marks’ in written tests; however, getting good or high marks in tests does not necessarily mean having attained high levels of literacy. Viewed as meaning making all depends on the type of approach to teaching/learning that lecturers and students adopt.

With this regard it has been argued that although writing is both personal and individual, the act of writing to others is interactional and social, and it expresses culturally agreed purposes, and it reflects a particular kind of relationship; it also acknowledges an engagement of a given community. Thus writing cannot be translated into a set of cognitive or technical abilities by individuals, or just as a system of the rules of a language. In other words, learning to write in a second or foreign language goes beyond the ability to draft and revise texts. Therefore teachers and lecturers should draw on the best of what each orientation offers.

One of the conclusions that can be drawn from Hyland's pedagogic teaching orientations is that L2 or EFL students bring five kinds of knowledge to the production of texts which teachers and lecturers should take into consideration (Hyland, 2007: 27):

- ❖ *Content knowledge*- the ideas and concepts of the topic the text will address;
- ❖ *System knowledge*- the language system, the syntax, lexis, and appropriate grammar and vocabulary to use
- ❖ *Process knowledge*- How to prepare and carry out a written piece of work;
- ❖ *Genre knowledge*- the communicative purposes of the genre and its value in specific contexts;
- ❖ *Context knowledge*- readers' expectations, cultural preferences and content related texts.

From the perspectives analysed in this section a number of conclusions can be drawn: that composing is non linear and goal driven; that writing seeks to achieve purposes through recognised ways of using the language; that writing is a purposeful and communicative activity; that writing is structured according to the demands and expectations of a specific audience, or discourse community. Therefore, lecturers should engage students in planning, writing and revising strategies, provide them with 'metalanguage' to help identify genres and their structures, through analysis of authentic texts and modelling genre stages; encourage students to consider the readers' expectations by simulating different types of audiences and social contexts. In addition to that lecturers need to build on students' own language abilities, backgrounds, and expectations of writing and help them recognise that different communities use different genres as a way of meaning-making.

Although there is a close relationship between the teaching approaches to writing and the supervision models here discussed, for the supervision practices, due to their characteristics, there is more to say with regards to what actually happens during supervisory sessions and the kind of language discourse offered by both parties during the research process. It should be clear that for quality and equality reasons within the interactions between lecturers/supervisors and students, students need to be proactive agents within both teaching and supervision processes and to be able to manage not only their own time, tasks,

identity and power, but also of their lecturers and supervisors. Since there have not yet been any studies in this area in Angola, one should neither blame students nor lecturers.

3.8 Towards an Integrated Way of Teaching Writing

The different orientations presented and discussed above provide useful insights for writing teachers and lecturers with complementary alternatives for designing their materials and planning their lessons. What follows is a table summarising them:

Table 3.1 Summary of the principal orientations to L2 writing teaching⁴

Orientation	Emphasis	Goals	Main pedagogic technique
<i>Structure</i>	Language form	Grammatical accuracy; vocabulary building, L2 proficiency	Controlled composition, gap-fill, substitution, error avoidance, indirect assessment, practice of rhetorical patterns
<i>Function</i>	Language use	Paragraph and text organisation patterns	Free writing, reordering, gap-fill, imitation of parallel texts, writing from tables and graphs
<i>Expressivist</i>	Writer	Individual creativity, self discovery	Reading, pre-writing, journal writing, multiple drafting, and peer critiques
<i>Process</i>	Writer	Control of technique	Brain-storming, planning, multiple drafting, peer collaboration, delayed editing, portfolio assessment
<i>Content</i>	Subject matter	Writing through relevant content and reading	Extensive and intensive reading, group research projects, process or structure emphasis
<i>Genre</i>	Text and context	Control of rhetorical structure of specific text-types	Modelling-negotiation-construction cycle <i>Rhetorical consciousness-raising</i>

As the table shows, there is no complete approach or teaching orientation. They all present some shortcomings and therefore there is a need for their complementarities for teaching to be effective. Hyland (2007) stresses that there is no specific approach to use in a given classroom. Classrooms are typically characterised by the mixture of the existing approaches to teaching any subject content and writing lecturers frequently combine these orientations in creative and effective ways so as to make the most of their teaching. Research has shown that there are still lecturers who tend to stick to a specific approach; however, it is

⁴ From Hyland, (2007: 23).

commonly believed that when a combination is made, it favours the process and the genre orientations. In this way, the strengths of one might complement the shortcomings of the other. The table below shows the complementarities of the process and genre orientations:

Table 3.2 A comparison of genre and process orientations⁵

Attribute	Process	Genre
<i>Main idea</i>	Writing is a thinking process; Concerned with the act of writing	Writing is a social activity; Concerned with the final product
<i>Teaching focus</i>	Emphasis on creative writer; How to produce and link ideas	Emphasis on reader expectations and product How to express social purposes effectively
<i>Advantages</i>	Makes processes of writing transparent; Provides basis for teaching	Makes textual conventions transparent Contextualises writing for audience and purpose
<i>Disadvantages</i>	Assumes L1 and L2 writing similar; Overlooks L2 language difficulties; Insufficient attention to product; Assumes all writing uses same processes	Requires rhetorical understanding of texts Can result in prescriptive teaching of texts Can lead to over attention to written products Undervalue skills needed to produce texts

As the table reads, both approaches carry some advantages and disadvantages with them as well as strengths and weaknesses; however, they represent the two sides of the same coin and a careful and thoughtful combination of them will result in productive and effective writing teaching in L2 or EFL classrooms. It can then be inferred that content subject lecturers at TTI nr 200 should adopt this combined orientation to teaching writing if they are willing to improve their teaching. For the combination between process and product there seems to be no correlation as they represent two different and opposite views of teaching writing, and a combination of the two would result in a conflict that can be damaging to classroom practice; *“the two are more usefully seen as supplementing and rounding each other out”* (Hyland, 2007: 23).

In fact, writing is a socio-cognitive activity and in order for students to achieve the skill of academic writing, they need knowledge of the language, the purpose of using the language, and the role of the context and the audience in the process of producing the language; they also need to be involved in learning activities that range from the skills of

⁵ Hyland, (2007: 24).

planning and drafting, revising and editing. An effective methodology for L2 or EFL writing classroom should therefore address and incorporate the insights suggested by (Hyland, 2007: 24) in the following ways:

- ❖ Broaden formal and functional orientations to include the social purposes behind forms;
- ❖ Locate the process concepts of strategy, schema, and metacognition in social contexts; Respect students' needs for relevant content through stimulating readings and source materials;
- ❖ Support genre pedagogies with strategies for planning, drafting, and revising texts;
- ❖ Situate writing in a conception of audience and link it to broader social structures.”

Translated into practice the above points mean that students ought to have an adequate understanding of the *processes* of text creation and production; know the *purposes* of writing and how to express their ideas effectively in a formal, academic way based on the rhetorical text choices; and define the *contexts* within which texts are produced and read and which give them meaning. These three aspects have been broadly discussed in the literature; however, the notion of context in this study deserves a little more detail.

Within the perspectives of genre orientation writing does not take place outside the communities of learning; therefore, the writing we teach should be aligned to the purposes of addressing those communities, whether professional, academic, or socially (Bruffee: 1986). Skilled writers are expected to produce texts that take into account the readers' background knowledge and anticipate what those readers' reaction will be in relation to the texts read. In our everyday writing (letters, shopping lists, short descriptions and compositions) we are comfortable with these genres because we are familiar with them and we are familiar with the readers' background knowledge, as we belong to the same community of practice. In an L2 or EFL classroom, however, things tend to be slightly different; students may not always be able to predict readers' background knowledge, and their reaction to the texts.

Lecturers in process oriented classrooms have tried to suppress the gap between the writer and the reader by engaging students in pre-writing activities to develop an understanding of vocabulary choice and grammar structure. However, schema knowledge is

more than that; it includes knowledge of the context, the interpersonal relations, the roles of writers and readers, and how all these influence the production of the text. In other words, apart from knowing what to write about and how to express ourselves, we also need to know what to include and what to leave out in our texts, the level of formality, and the appropriateness of using a specific genre. Thus, teachers in general and lecturers in particular, should help students to develop the socio cultural schemata they will need to produce their texts and extend their knowledge of form, content, process and discourse community.

The notion of context also addresses ideas from New Literacy Studies that posit that writing and reading only make sense within wider social and cultural practices (e.g. Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Lea & Street, 2006). From a broader point of view a context can be seen as the way institutions, societies and cultures influence writing. Such an extended view of contexts has four main implications within the teaching/learning process (Hyland, 2007: 26):

- ❖ *It recognises that different communities use different genres, conventions, and even varieties of English, and that not all writing has the same standards of acceptability.*
- ❖ *It takes account of the way English is used as an international language between non-native speakers, and, in many countries, as an international language with local norms and models.*
- ❖ *It highlights the fact that because socially powerful institutions, such as education and the professions, support certain genres and conventions, these become dominant and possess greater prestige.*
- ❖ *It helps learners to guard against devaluing their own writing and to see so-called superior forms of writing simply as other practices that are open, like others, to scrutiny and challenge.”*

The different writing orientations constitute a strong theoretical basis from which teachers and lecturers can select the best approaches to teaching writing in accordance with the level of their students, the purpose of teaching writing and the institutional context where teaching is taking place. By doing so, teachers and lecturers will select activities that would engage students in reading different text genres and involve them in the production of the same genre types, increasing therefore their experiences of texts and readers expectations as

well as providing them with a clearer understanding of the writing processes, language, forms, and genres.

Lecturers also need to be sensitive to the practices and perceptions that students bring into the classroom and build on those so that students can see the writing process as relative to particular domains and groups. What also seems to be needed is some flexibility from lecturers to expose students to different genres to writing as they proceed from less to more demanding tasks, from surface to deep approaches to learning, from essays to writing research reports; always with the idea of constructive alignment in mind.

As Martin (1993) puts it, the role of genre in content writing instruction should emerge naturally from the materials being used. Rather than asking students to manipulate certain textual features, they should be engaged in tasks that require them to respond to the informational and organisational demands of various genres; students should then progress from less academic to more academically valued ways of writing, while at the same time learning the content of the materials and having better chances to practice in the classroom. By so doing students will understand the discourse communities they are likely to write for, while at the same time valuing those of their own communities and cultures. What follows is a brief history of Biggs' (1999) idea of constructive alignment.

3.9 Biggs idea of Constructive Alignment

One of the aims in any teaching/learning environment is to keep a fair balance between form and content and that fair balance depends on the teaching programme, the assessment procedures and the context in which we are teaching. Biggs' (1999) constructive alignment and the 3P Model was selected to support the conceptual framework in this study because it is suitable to the reality on the grounds.

Biggs' idea (1999) of constructive alignment came about as the result of an experiment with portfolio assessment in a bachelor programme with Psychology students. Students were used to being evaluated through the typical academic assignment in which the main aim was to see how well the theory and the relationship between the content of the subject matter and education were understood. It was then realised that although the

assignment was academic, it had nothing to do with the experience and working space of the students. After all the ultimate goal of any professional education course has to do with the experience of the students and help them improve their professional competence (Biggs, 1999: 50-51). However this was far from happening. In 1994, Biggs returned from a study leave in Canada to teach the third year of part-time Bed. in-service teaching programme, where he had been very impressed by the use of portfolios in the assessment of elementary students. Therefore, he thought that such a type of assessment would be ideal for the course and bring up better results. At the beginning students felt quite apprehensive as they did not know what exactly the teacher wanted them to do and what items to select.

Biggs suggested some item types and tried to exemplify them for the students to get an idea on how the process was meant to be. When the students submitted their portfolios, Biggs was astonished with the results that came up. The portfolios were so rich and exciting that most of the marks that the class received were characterised mostly by A and B grades. As the author states, by that time he did not know that he was implementing a new way of assessment based on outcomes based teaching and learning. It is only when he came to realise this new type of assessment that he started calling it “*constructive alignment*” (Biggs, 1999: 51). *But why did the experiment with portfolio assessment work so well?* Biggs answers this question in the following way:

...because the learning activities addressed in the intended outcomes were mirrored both in teaching/learning activities the students undertook, and in the assessment tasks. This design of teaching was called ‘constructive alignment’ (CA), as it was based on the twin principles of constructivism in learning and alignment in the design of teaching and assessment. (Biggs, 1999: 52).

The alignment is constructive because it is based on the constructivist theory which postulates that students use their own activities to construct their knowledge, their world, or other outcomes. This idea in its turn aligns to (Shuell, 1986: 429) statement that what students do is more important than what teachers and lecturers do. The intended outcomes are dictated by the type of learning activities that students are asked to perform as well as the level of engagement required from them. These in their turn depend on the content of the activities, the tasks designed by the teacher in relation to the intended learning outcomes as well as the learning environment where the process is likely to take place. The learning environment is an important factor in the teaching/learning process in that it encourages students to perform the learning activities at a higher level of thinking and then facilitates the assessment procedures

which will dictate the learning outcomes while at the same time checking if they match with those.

Constructive alignment is primarily concerned with what the student does with what is learnt and how well he does that, rather than with what the student learns. “The alignment in constructive alignment reflects the fact that the learning activity in the intended outcomes, expressed as a verb, needs to be activated in the teaching if the outcome is to be achieved in the assessment task to verify that the outcome has in fact been achieved.” (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 52). Biggs (1999) theory constitutes the main theory underpinning this study and it is discussed in detail in the conceptual framework chapter.

3.10 Research Supervision

In any country in the world, research should be viewed as playing the central role towards the development of individuals in particular and the Society in general. Research supervision is an integral part of any higher teaching context and it has to do with the transference of the academic reading and writing skills into the research. Despite differences in detail in the supervision processes, most of the principles involved in research supervision are nearly similar across the world (Deuchar, 2008).

There is a lot of research dealing with the issue of research supervision and most of that research has been from the supervisors’ perspectives. To take an instance (Belcher, 1994; Hockey, 1996; Deuchar, 2008) look at supervision styles; Delamont et al. (2000) and Cryer (1997) offer some “*guides to success*” for supervisors; (Pearson & Brew, 2002; Manathunga, 2005) focus on supervisor training and development; and Dysthe (2002), Lee (2007), Makinnon (2004) and Grant (2010) provide models of supervisor-student relationships. There is also a group of researchers who look at the gender and race issues as elements of autonomy and dependency (Johnson et al., 2000; Boud & Lee, 2005; Goode, 2007), which according to (Holligan, 2005) need to be interrogated and placed within a wider political context of governmentality.

Furthermore, there is another group of researchers who focus on supervision as a form of pedagogy applying different models of learning-adult and peers (Haggis, 2002; Boud & Lee, 2005; Watson, 2000); and those who look at it as learning, as well as studies that

examine specific aspects of the pedagogy that may or may not take place within supervision (Kamler & Thomson, 2004; Norton et al., 2005) and doctoral examination (Burnham, 1994; Hartley & Jory, 2000; Morley et al., 2002; Tinkler & Jackson, 2004). Those studies offer important insights with which lecturers and supervisors may reflect upon and analyse their own contexts and experiences of supervision.

As stated in the introductory chapter, most of the students are taking a relatively longer time to get their work completed. Belcher (1994: 25) studied three graduate students relationship with their supervisors within different disciplines and she concluded that while there are some students who succeed in becoming full-fledged contributors to their research communities without too much support from their mentors, the cases in her study pointed to the determinant factor that the student/supervisor relationship plays in the academic and professional success of the students.

One of the major problems with research supervision is, perhaps, the fact that it is considered as an aspect of research rather than of teaching. Therefore, research supervision is often not given a formal timetable, classroom, or a specific programme to work on. Thus, it becomes something that supervisors have to carry out in their own time, rather than in properly allocated time as in the case of teaching. This in its turn can result in students being given inadequate supervision time, and place.

The fact is that for classroom practices there is observation and multiplicity of participants, who in this case are the students. As for supervision practices, none of the above mentioned aspects applies. There is no specific classroom and the process is based on one-to-one interaction (Malfoy & Webb, 2000: 117).

Therefore, as Delamont et al. (2000: 134) put it,

[T]here is ... a continuing lack of observational data on the actual conduct of the most private supervisory relationships. The data that are available, and that have been reported in recent years, consist almost exclusively of accounts, collected under the auspices of qualitative interview studies.

This makes research in research supervision somehow complex and difficult to understand. As a result students tend to take longer to get their research reports finished on

time and for most of the TES at TTI nr 200 never get started. It is generally believed that the longer a student spends on doing research, the greater the possibility of not completing it; Therefore, “If completion within a given time is accepted as an aim-and most universities apparently do accept this since their regulations impose a maximum time within which the thesis must be completed- it follows that both the student and the supervisor must have some rudimentary timetable in their minds from the start” (Rudd, 1985: 80). Planning ahead is a key aspect in research supervision and setting up an action plan constitutes the main organisational point of start. However this is not happening at TTI nr 200. Thereafter comes the setting up of a timetable and place to meet. The relationship between supervisor and student also plays an important role within the process.

Some observational studies have been put in place to show the supervisor-student interactions within the supervision meetings and they are beginning to show some sort of evidence. However, there have been problems such as students failing or refusing to take turns in talk and fear to express themselves freely. Observational studies are therefore needed to help uncover what actually happens in supervisory meetings, and to build a clearer picture for understanding what ‘*doing supervision*’ means in practice and how students survive the system from their own point of view. The reality shows that students need to be active participants in the research supervision sessions, not only in managing their time, tasks, and availability but also their supervisors’ and their interactions with them.

Below are Malfoy & Webb (2000: 134) suggested roles for supervisors:

- ❖ *Facilitator (providing support, advice and monitoring progression)*
- ❖ *Intellectual catalyst (supporting energy and motivation, developing mutual rapport)*
- ❖ *Mentor (distant but available, comfortable and supportive)*
- ❖ *Partner (an equal participant in the research project, a collaborator)*
- ❖ *Friend (a role characterised by trust, as of a “foster parent”).*

However, some supervisors at TTI nr 200 seem to be ignoring those roles. In most of the cases they do not seem to know how much advice and help to provide. As Rudd (1985: 115) postulates, “*Some supervisors, not through incompetence or neglect, but through genuine conviction, are adopting procedures for supervision with which most of their colleagues would disagree and which decrease the likelihood of the student completing*”.

Some supervisors believe that leaving students at their own responsibility is the best way of ensuring that they learn to do research. There are certainly many things that students cannot be told or taught. However, some sort of guidance is required if one wants students to learn something from the experience of doing research and the usefulness of that guidance depends primarily on the way the content subject in the Academic Reading, Writing and Research Methodology is addressed to students. Boote & Beile, (2005: 14) seem to be reinforcing my idea by assuming that graduate students are introduced into the research community through the reading and writing they do, through instruction in research methodology, and through interaction with faculty and their peers. Literature on supervisory practices has shown the potential difficulties encountered in the student-supervisor relationship. Mackinnon (2004: 399) provides an overall overview of the literature on post graduate supervision and posits that:

Much of the literature relating to postgraduate supervision has focused on its complexity, highlighting issue such as unclear, differing and sometimes incompatible expectations of students and supervisors, problems with interpersonal relationships between supervisor and student, diversity in the roles required of supervisors, lack of institutional policies or guidelines to support postgraduate students and the sense of isolation experienced by postgraduate students.

Good supervision should start from a good relationship between supervisor and student, based on mutual respect and humbleness. According to De Gruchy & Holness, (2007), supervising, in a broader context, can be defined as the ability to provide scientific and theoretical advice to students, as well to create and maintain the conditions for a good working atmosphere, based on a good relationship between the supervisor and the student.

Good supervision will set the student on the road to solving problems or difficulties on his/her own, and this type of apprenticeship will be provided by the supervisor; however, there are some instances when the supervisor is not a well disciplined and organised person. To this end, Rudd (1985) argues that there are very few supervisors who feel that there is a need to make a plan and therefore are unable to convey that idea to their students as they do not see the need to do that. In order to meet the supervision demands, Dysthe (2002) and Lee (2007) propose models of supervision, and Grant (2010) provides a map where the supervisory relationships are described. Both models and Grant's map of supervision

constitute the supplementary support to the main theory underpinning this study and will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

3.11 Summary

In this chapter we have focused attention on the operational concepts related to academic and research literacy practices worldwide and reviewed the literature on Second and Foreign language (L2/EFL) writing research. We have looked at the literature on current trends in L2/EFL teaching and writing research on a global perspective and we have shown how early writing models were constructed and how approaches to L1 writing were used to inform L2/EFL writing models. Various studies were cited and contributions related to academic and research literacy practices and how they relate to this particular problem were addressed. Thus, the chapter starts by mapping the field and then discusses the three main approaches to teaching writing. The process of writing a research report by TES is also augmented and Hyland's six pedagogic orientations to teaching writing to L2/EFL students is discussed, leading to a suggestion of a more integrated way of teaching academic literacy within L2 or EFL contexts. A comparison between process and genre orientations to teaching is made with the final aim of suggesting a more integrated way of teaching writing. Biggs (1999) idea of constructive alignment was introduced to help understand its role within the study and the main aspects implicit in the supervision practices were presented. Next chapter presents the conceptual framework for this study.

Chapter 4

Conceptual Framework

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned before, the major purpose of this study is to examine the academic and research literacy practices of final year TES a teacher training institute in Luanda, Angola as well as the main challenges they face when undertaking research and writing their final research reports. One of the aspects that was taken into consideration was to understand how subject content lecturers are addressing the academic reading and writing subjects to the TES (TES). Another aspect considered was how Research Methodology I and II prepares them for the writing of the research reports. The organization of the conceptual framework was guided by the contributions of Maxwell (2005) who advises that a conceptual framework should focus on:

- a) *What is going on as far as teaching and learning of TES is concerned in light of:*
 - ❖ The issues under discussion;
 - ❖ Improvements under way; and
 - ❖ Individuals that are being studied. (i.e. TES)
- b) *Highlights of theories, beliefs and prior research findings that inform the study, and*
- c) *Preliminary studies that inform the understanding for this thesis.*

The last two aspects were discussed in the previous chapter.

While the point of departure in the previous chapter makes reference to the teaching of writing in general, specific reference was made to teaching of academic writing. The discussion took off in Chapter 3 by clarifying and providing justification of the three main approaches to teaching writing. A discussion of the different pedagogic orientations to teaching writing to L2 and EFL students followed. In this Chapter we refocus the conceptualisations of the earlier chapters in a discussion of the study which is the subject of this thesis. The study is based on a qualitative paradigm and takes interviews as the dominant

research instruments to help explore and understand what actually is happening on the site and how TES see and evaluate their difficulties in producing their final research reports.

The conceptual framework underpinning this research is therefore informed by a different deployment of

- ❖ *Biggs (1999)- constructive alignment and the 3P Model*
- ❖ *Biggs & Tang's (2007)-Deep and surface approaches to teaching and learning and the students' level of engagement;*
- ❖ *Cummins' (1996)- differentiation between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills- (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency-(CALP) with regard to language acquisition;*
- ❖ *Lea & Street (2006)- Academic literacy models,*
- ❖ *Grant's (2010)- map for supervision; and*
- ❖ *Dysthe's (2002) models of supervision.*

Biggs (1999) is the main theory that supported this study and was complemented by the other theories above mentioned. What follows is an account on each theory and the interconnectedness of this theory for the common teaching goal which is equipping TESs with the tools they need to effectively produce their research reports.

4.2 Biggs' Constructive Alignment and the 3P Model

As previously stated, constructive alignment is primarily concerned with what the student does with what is learnt and how well he does that, rather than with what the student learns. "The alignment in constructive alignment reflects the fact that the learning activity in the intended outcomes, expressed as a verb, needs to be activated in the teaching if the outcome is to be achieved in the assessment task to verify that the outcome has in fact been achieved." (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 52).

By presenting the principle of "*constructive alignment*", Biggs (1999: 11) state that in order to enhance optimum learning to students from impoverished learning backgrounds, opportunities should be given to them in order to enable them to perform higher order

activities that otherwise only *'highly competent'* students would be able to do. Biggs (1999) suggests what he calls *'The 3P Model'* of teaching and learning which consists of *'Presage'*, *'Process'* and *'Product'* where all the components support each other and cannot work alone. This model illustrates the three main points in time at which learning related factors are placed: *Presage* (before learning takes place), *Process* (during the process of learning) and *Product* (the outcome of learning).

Biggs' (1999) *3P Model* helped me understand better the teaching and learning system at TTI nr 200, and to spot which parts in the system are not yet aligned and what might need to be done in order to get all the components in place. Following is an illustration of Biggs' constructive alignment and the *3P model* of teaching and learning.

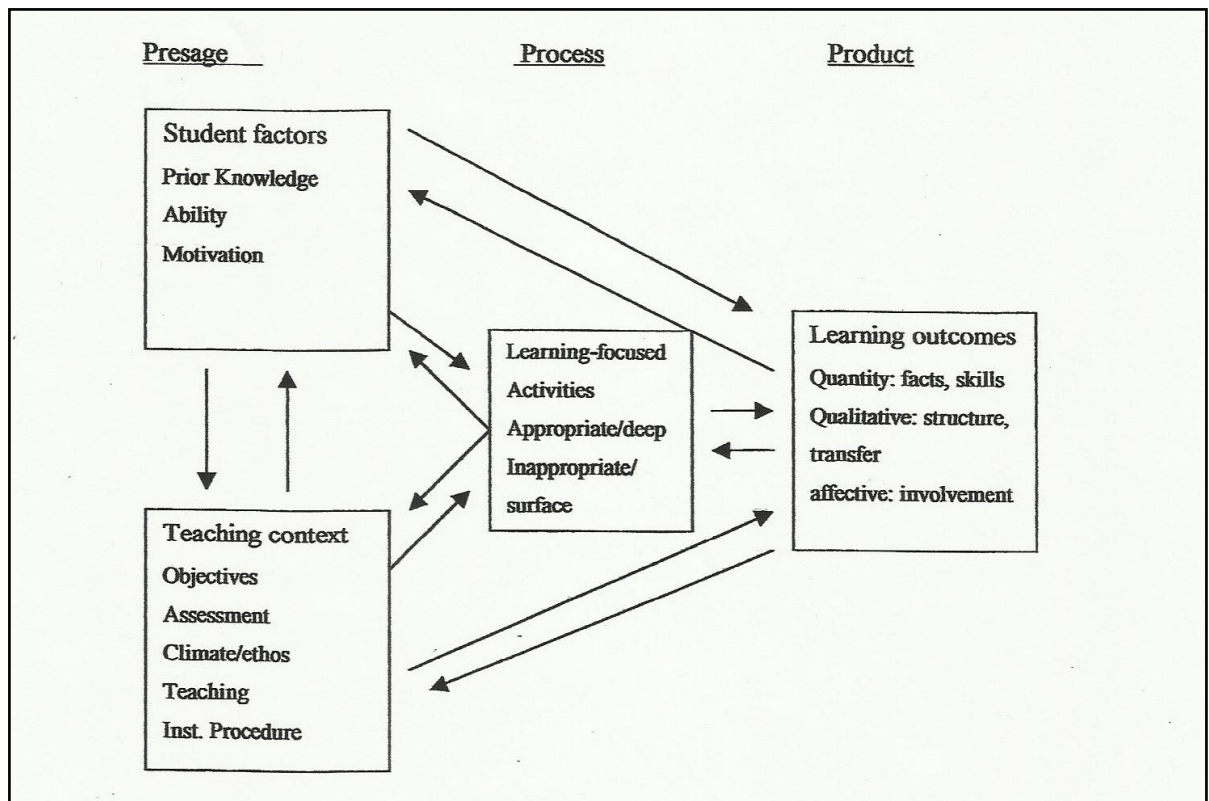


Figure 4.1 The 3P Model of teaching and learning⁶

⁶ Adapted from Biggs (1999: 18).

As the table shows, *Presage factors* are of two types:

- **Student based:** the relevant prior knowledge and motivation the students bring to the new environment of study as well as ability, interest and commitment to study at a higher level.
- **Teaching context based:** the content to be taught, the way it will be taught and assessed, the teachers level of knowledge of the discipline and ability to teach, as well as the classroom atmosphere and the institution's environment. These components are intrinsically connected to each other, in such a way that, if one component fails to support or collaborate with the others, there will be an imbalance within the teaching and learning system.

Process factors include the learning-focused activities that students are asked to perform throughout the course, and the type of approach they adopt to learning. The type of approach students adopt to learning is directly influenced by the type of approach lecturers adopt to teaching.

Product factors are translated in the intended learning outcomes (ILOs), in this specific case, the quantity and quality of students one gets at the end of each academic year and at the end of the four years of coursework. In principle, the students' learning outcomes at the Product stage should enable them to embark in a new teaching/learning stage, which is the writing of their research reports within the allocated time. The alignment in this model derives from students background knowledge and abilities, and the teaching context (*objectives and institutional procedures*), which in turn will determine the level of cognitive processes that students are required to engage in (*recognising, relating, applying generating and reflecting*); and the result will be the learning outcomes (*students being able to complete their research proposals and/or research reports*). However, this does not seem to be happening at TTI nr 200. For example, the students' prior knowledge and motivation when they join TTI nr 200 and the type and degree of difficulty of classroom tasks that students are exposed to during the four years of coursework, do not seem to prepare them for the final assessment which is writing the research proposal, followed by the writing of the research report; moreover, there is a tendency of students adopting surface approaches to learning in detriment to deep approaches. The intended learning outcomes should be translated into the academic level achieved by the students after four years of coursework as well as the ability to write the research proposal and the final research report.

Taking Biggs & Tangs (2007) example of driving instruction, the intention is that the learner learns how to drive a car, not receiving lectures on car driving. Therefore ‘car driving’ is the verb to take into account in all components of instruction (the intended learning outcomes, the teaching/learning activities and the assessment procedures). “The alignment is achieved by ensuring that the intended verb in the outcomes statement is present in the teaching/learning activity and in the assessment task” (Biggs & Tang, 2007:52). With regards to education, the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) are always translated in a helpful verb (e.g. reflect, apply theory on...), that guides the teacher to achieve the outcomes. Specification of these verbs help clarify the kind of tasks to design, in Biggs & Tang’s, words, the type of teaching learning activities (TLAs) that students should be engaged in and determine what students need to perform in the assessment tasks (ATs).

As Biggs & Tang (2007) point out, in a teaching and learning system, the teaching and assessment procedures need to be aligned to the learning objectives, and all the components should support each other in order to achieve a common goal. *“As a system, if any component fails to corroborate, it is the whole work that gets jeopardised. Such a failure in teaching and learning situation, leads to, poor teaching and surface learning”* (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 14). Surface approaches to learning are based on students’ strategies to get the task done with minimum effort, using low cognitive levels when higher level activities are required to perform the same task properly. Examples of surface approach to learning in an academic environment are: rote learning, listing points instead of addressing the argument, quoting secondary sources instead of primary ones etc. When teaching and assessment methods are not aligned, surface learning can likely occur. According to Biggs & Tang (2007: 23), the presence of surface approach to learning is always a sign that something is ‘out of kilter’ in our teaching or in our assessment methods.

When students use surface approaches to learning they tend to focus on what Marton & Booth (1997) call ‘*signs of learning*’. They use isolated facts, pre-selected words and items are treated independently of each other. This fact prevents students from seeing what those signs mean and store knowledge in a structured way. As the proverb says, students cannot see the wood from the trees, and learning becomes a burden in their lives, something to avoid whenever possible. Anxiety, cynicism, and boredom are some the adjectives that Biggs & Tang (2007) use to describe students feelings. Biggs & Tang (2007: 9) provide a comprehensive account of the route that students have to follow towards engaging with

higher-order cognitive activities that are compatible with developing academic reading and writing skills.

It is worth mentioning at this point that the idea of aligning assessment tasks with the intended learning outcomes dates from many years ago and it was very obvious; it is referred to as '*riterion-referenced assessment*' and it translates the assessment procedures that anyone outside educational institutions does when teaching anyone else anything. However, educational institutions became more interested in determining the role of the assessment tasks in the teaching/learning process, to see '*who learnt better than whom*' (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 53). This was just helpful in situations whereby people were trying to select people to occupy a specific job or post or allocating a scholarship to a number of people. For educational institutions, the aim of teaching is more than deciding who is learning better than whom; what educational institutions are looking for is better ways of teaching, to allow students to learn the content of the subjects at an acceptable level, aligning the learning activities with the assessment tasks to the learning outcomes.

The theory in any given course is not only meant to be understood and learnt by students but mainly to change the way they see the world and their behaviour within and outside the learning community (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 53). It is generally assumed that all 'good teachers' have some implicit idea on how they want their students to change on the basis of their teaching methodology and techniques, and all other teaching instruments at their disposition that they use to make their teaching as effective as possible. Thus whatever lecturers do in the classroom will be oriented towards achieving that change. To sum up, a constructively aligned teaching system systematizes what teachers have to do: to state beforehand the intended learning outcomes, but with a room for new outcomes to emerge although they were not anticipated. After all constructive aligned system does not only focus on what is pre-determined, it also focuses on the unintended but desirable outcomes.

The main difference between a constructive aligned system and other outcomes-based approaches lies in the fact that the connections between the intended learning outcomes (ILOs), the teaching/learning activities (TLAs) and assessment tasks (ATs) are so intrinsically aligned that the missing of one will make a gap in the system and change the intended outcomes. Biggs & Tang (2007: 53) postulate that in most of the outcomes- based models, the alignment exists only between the ILOs and the ATs, not additionally between the ILOs and

the TLAs. The problem at TTI nr 200 seems to more critical as although the ILOs are well specified and seem to be clear, there is no clear connection between the ILOs and the TLAs and additionally to the ATs. Thus, there is no consistency throughout the system. The curriculum contains lists of content topics that are set up as desirable for students to learn, but those content topics are not translated in outcome statements for both teaching/learning activities and the assessment tasks performed by the students. For example the content topics in the curriculum for TES in the academic writing subject is not taught and assessed in the same way, towards the same goal. Therefore the three elements do not support each other and they do not relate to each other either. For that reason, (Biggs & Tang, 2007), state that when the assessment procedures are not aligned to the intended or other desired learning outcomes, or when the teaching methods do not directly conduct or engage students in appropriate learning activities, students can easily ‘*escape*’ by engaging in inappropriate learning activities that become a surface approach to learning. *Constructive alignment is therefore “a marriage between a constructivist understanding of the nature of learning and an aligned design for teaching that is designed to lock students into deep learning”* (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 55).

With regard to the issue of an aligned system the most important components within a teaching learning system are: the curriculum, the learning or instructional objectives and the assessment procedures.

4.2.1 The curriculum

The term curriculum is a very broad concept and in this study it refers to the whole content that students acquire in schools. The history of curriculum design in language teaching started with the notion of syllabus design, which is one aspect of curriculum development but is not a synonym of curriculum development. A syllabus is a specification of the content of a course of instruction and lists what will be taught and tested over a period of time, generally for an academic year (Hyland, 2001). To this end, a syllabus for a writing course might specify the kinds of writing skills that will be taught and practised during the course, the different stages of writing, the processes to be practised, such as quoting, paraphrasing, referencing, and editing, and the order in which they will appear in the course.

Syllabus design consists of the process of developing the syllabus, while curriculum design looks at a more ‘*comprehensive process*’ (Hyland, 2001). Curriculum design includes processes that are used to determine the students’ needs and develop aims and objectives for a

programme to address those needs; also it determines the type of syllabus to be used, the course structure and content, the teaching methods and materials, as well as it evaluates the results from the whole process. To paraphrase White et al. (1991), a curriculum covers not only the content but also the goals of the teaching programme as well as the activities which will form part of the learning experiences and practices of a given group of students. To show the dimensions of the term curriculum, Rodgers, (1989: 26) comments that

Curriculum is all those activities in which [students] engage under the auspices of the school. This includes not only what [students] learn, but how they learn it, how teachers help them learn, using what supporting materials, styles and methods of assessment and in what kind of facilities. (Rodgers, 1989).

A curriculum is concerned with objectives, methods and content, and the matching up of outcomes with objectives involves evaluation that will help determine whether the teaching learning system is aligned or not. White et al. (1991: 169), present a diagram that expresses the inter-relation between the content, objectives, methods and evaluation in a given educational context.

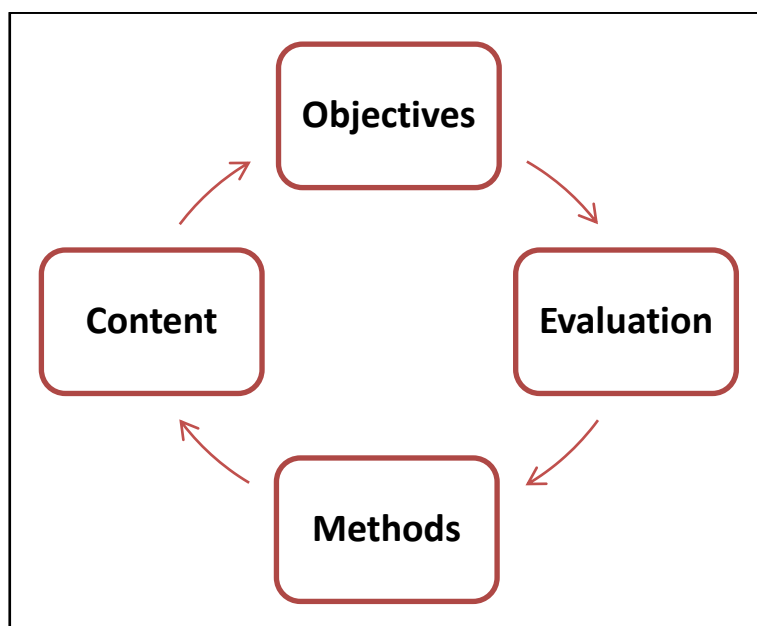


Figure 4.2 A curriculum model⁷

The specification of the learning objectives followed by a plan on how to achieve them using the human and material resources available constitute key aspects in evaluating a curriculum. The outcomes are evaluated by comparing the achievements with the pre-established objectives. In the specific context of this study, the curriculum model will be

⁷ Adapted from White, et al. (1991: 169).

based on the content to be taught throughout the four years of course work with special regards to the core course subject areas (academic reading, writing, and Research Methodology I and II), the kind of methodology in use in order to transmit the knowledge to students, and the main objectives for teaching that content; all those elements together will lead to a stage of evaluation of the product (TES at the end of the course) and their competence to produce the research reports on time.

As previously stated, curriculum development in language teaching dates back to the 1960s; however, issues related to syllabus design emerged earlier. Most of the changes that have been taking place in the process of teaching learning have been based on teaching methodology.

The method concept in teaching-the notion of a systematic set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language and language learning- is a powerful one and the quest for better methods has been a preoccupation for many teachers and applied linguists since the beginning of the twentieth century (Hyland. 2001: 3).

Generally speaking, the curriculum at TTI nr 200 has always been attached to course books, right from the first to the four-year. The content of the books and its order act as the syllabuses, and it constitutes the most representations of what should be going on in the classroom. However, despite the fact that some of the books have departed from the traditional curriculum, much of the teaching remains of the sort of transmission model.

Essentially, the role of the lecturers falls between transmitting the knowledge and explaining the tasks prescribed in the texts. Concurrently, TES at TTI nr 200 are more likely to reproduce the knowledge, adopting in this way surface approaches to learning. There is much pressure on covering the items listed in the book for accountability reasons rather getting students understanding and interpreting what they have learnt. According to Ramsden (1992: 38),

...learning is a function of both teaching and the context in which it occurs. It is not a matter of learners engaging with a body of knowledge to which they have been introduced, but how this is interpreted by them and the actions they take as a result of these interpretations.

While the use of course books can, on the one hand, provide lecturers and students with an important tool for teaching and learning, on the other hand, it can be alienating on the

account that lecturers might end up teaching the book instead of what actually is perceived to be the learners' needs.

Moreover, "language [teaching] and learning is too complex to be catered by a pre-packaged set of decisions embodied in teaching materials" (Alwright, 1988: 19). From that perspective it is obvious that students studying from course books throughout the curriculum would hardly have opportunity to experiment with the more demanding but potentially creative nature of academic tasks.

Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the TES at TTI nr 200 that go through this type of instruction, fail to accomplish the task when they come to experience the ambiguities and complexities involved in producing the end-of-course research report.

4.2.2 Learning objectives

Felder & Silverman (2002) regard learning or instructional objectives as statements of specific observable actions or behaviours that students should be able to act and demonstrate as an evidence of having accomplished the objectives. They argue that:

Well-formulated instructional objectives are more than just an advance warning for your system to students. They can help you to prepare lecture and assignment schedules and to spot course material that the students can do little with but memorise and repeat. They also facilitate construction of in- class ... [and] out-of-class [activities] (2002: 78).

Most of these instructional objectives, rather than being clear detailed statements of observable actions that students are supposed to act on i.e. objectives that give students guidance in reading, expressing themselves in writing in a variety of genres, will be more like what they (lecturers) *have to do*, or what they have to do about writing. For instance, it would be important to know which abilities or what level of thinking (comparing, analysing, synthesising and evaluating, to cite a few) students are required to engage in each task or year of the course.

Detailed instructional objectives can help stratify the goals within each course and among other courses. This, in turn can help avoid both unwanted duplication of materials and gaps in the curriculum as well as assisting lecturers of subsequent courses to be aware of what their students should have learnt previously.

However, Biggs & Tang (2007) call our attention to the need to differentiate between '*learning objectives*' (LO) and '*intended learning outcomes*' (ILOs). To them, the term 'intended learning outcomes' is more complete/ broader than '*learning objectives*' because it "emphasises more than does 'objective' that we are referring to what the student has to learn rather than what the teacher has to teach" (2007: 70). Intended learning outcomes refer to what students are able to perform after the teaching that they could not perform before it; it also has to do with what students can do after teaching even though it was not intended in the outcomes. Therefore rather than just looking at the behavioural objectives, ILOs are seen from the students' perspectives, skills and abilities acquired from the learning process. They go further to argue that verbs such as *to comprehend, to be aware of, to understand*, are not useful as they do not translate the level of performance required to meet the demands of ILOs. Even the verb 'to demonstrate' does not convey the level of students' performance within the ILOs perspective, as it leaves answered some questions. With ILOs we need to make a statement about what students' learning would look like after they have learnt ('expectancy-value theory'), to the acceptable learning outcomes; defining that the outcome of learning is important" (Biggs & Tang, 2007).

Table 4.1 on the next page shows the complexity of the ILOs. The more ILOs a programme has, the more difficult it will be to align them with teaching /learning activities and assessment tasks. Unlike the learning objectives, the ILOs go beyond the stage of asking students to memorise and reproduce the information, they ask students to explain, interpret, analyse, justify, and make their own judgement about the information learnt.

Table 4.1 From learning objectives to intended learning outcomes⁸

Learning objectives	Intended learning outcomes
<i>1. To provide an understanding of the three stages in writing</i>	<i>1. To describe the basic stages that writers go through in order to produce a text</i>
<i>2. To develop an analytical understanding of the way texts are structured</i>	<i>2. Using different samples of texts students have to identify the way texts are structured</i>
<i>3. To make students aware of the danger of using plagiarism</i>	<i>3. To identify and explain instances in a text where plagiarism is</i>
<i>4. To find authors arguments in a text</i>	<i>4. To find and provide counter arguments to those of the writer.</i>

In most of the teaching situations, students are required to learn the subject matter content and express that knowledge in the written tasks designed by the lecturers. In doing so, lecturers are just checking how well students have learnt the content of a subject rather than how well students can apply that content to different situations (i.e. problem solving). As a result, lecturers are likely to assess their students at the level of the teaching/learning objectives using ‘*surface approaches*’ to teaching/learning, but not with the ILOs in mind- ‘*deep approaches to teaching/learning*’.

Despite the fact that there has been some preoccupation to place the learning goals in a hierarchical order, there is still some evidence of some misplacement at TTI nr 200. For example what has been listed as the second objective in the fourth year (to help students familiarise themselves with the resource centre in order to access required information), has to come in the first year. Should this misplacement and some others actually occur in practice, this may influence the intended learning outcomes of the entire process. Thus, courses in general and a degree programme such as the Teacher Training Programme at TTI nr 200 need to be well determined in terms of the intended learning outcomes and be taught and assessed in their own right using higher levels of understanding such as reflection, problem solving, making generalisations, justifying, etc.

⁸ Adapted from Biggs & Tang (2007: 71).

The problem seems to be based on lack of alignment between intended learning outcomes and the means of teaching and assessing students. Students in general and TES in particular need to be exposed to new teaching situations of the type of deep approaches to learning, and face new problems and interact with them along the teaching/learning process, reflectively and thoughtfully. Skills such as, predicting, reflecting, diagnosing, explaining, and solving real-life problems need to be activated. Lectures at higher levels of schooling ought to be aware of this. Building such performances of understanding into the ILOs, aligning teaching to them and designing assessment tasks that confirm that students can or cannot carry out those performances, is a good way to start ” (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 73). It is therefore the aim of this study to come up with some useful suggestions to be implemented in the teacher training courses at TTI nr 200 with regard to the alignment of the ILOs, the teaching methodology, and the assessment procedures in use at the moment as well as to find ways to raise lecturers’ awareness for the need to be more practical and reflective in their way of teaching.

4.2.3 Assessment procedures

Once a curriculum is in place, before we start looking at the assessment procedures as they were, a number of important questions emerge and need to be asked:

- ❖ *Is the curriculum achieving its goals?*
- ❖ *What is happening in the classrooms?*
- ❖ *What kind of teaching methods are being used?*

Curriculum evaluation is concerned with answering questions such as the above mentioned, and it focuses on collecting information about different aspects of a language program so as to understand how the programme works, how productive it is, leading to a stage of decision making. Issues such as whether the programme is responding to the learners’ needs, if further teacher training is needed for those who are involved in the process and the overall students’ outcomes are also addressed. Hyland (2001: 287) enumerates the main aspects to consider in evaluating a curriculum. Among those, the most important are:

- ❖ ***The syllabus and program content:*** for example, how relevant and engaging it is, how easy or difficult, how successful tests and assessment procedures were;

- ❖ ***Classroom processes***: to provide insights about the extent to which a programme is being implemented appropriately;
- ❖ ***Materials of instruction***: to provide insights about whether specific materials are aiding student learning;
- ❖ ***The teachers***: for example, how they conducted their teaching, what their perceptions were of the program, what they taught;
- ❖ ***The students***: for example, what they learnt from the programme, their perceptions of it, and how they participated in it;
- ❖ ***Learner motivation***: to provide insights about the effectiveness of the teachers in aiding students to achieve goals and objectives of the programme;
- ❖ ***The institution***: for example what administrative support was provided' what resources were used, what communication networks were employed;
- ❖ ***Learning environment***: to provide insights about the extent to which students are provided with a responsive environment in terms of their educational needs;
- ❖ ***Staff development***: to provide insights about the extent to which the school system provides the staff opportunities to increase their effectiveness;
- ❖ ***Decision making***: to provide insights about how well the school staff-principals, teachers, and others-make decisions that result in learner benefits. (Hyland, 2001: 287).

Although it is not the aim of this study to evaluate the curriculum, it is assumed, an understanding between curriculum evaluation and course assessment is needed, in order to place the reader in the heart of this discussion. Before I look at the assessment procedures being used at TTI nr 200, perhaps it would be better to distinguish between the two terms: evaluation and assessment.

The most confusing words often discussed by authors are assessment and evaluation. They are occasionally used interchangeably. In fact, it is difficult to discern the difference between them, as different authors talk about them in a synonymous way. While Hyland & Hyland (2003: 30), for instance, describe evaluation as being '*The systematic gathering of*

information for purposes of decision making', and state that '*The evaluation of individuals involves decisions about entrance to programmes, placement, progress and achievement*', Ur (1991: 33) presents assessment as being used '*...to decide whether he or she (testee) is suitable for a certain class*'. On the other hand, Hyland & Hyland (2003: 30) assert that, '*In language teaching programmes, evaluation is related to decisions to be made about the quality of the programme itself, and decisions about individuals in the programmes*', stating, at the same time, that '*Assessment is the measurement of the ability of a person or the quality or success of a teaching course, etc*' (1992: 23).

Despite the fact that most definitions of evaluation and assessment overlap, it is possible to make a clear and more accurate distinction between these terms. Then, it can be asserted that *assessment* has to do with the students through the learning process, that is, how well they are doing, how far they are, etc, whereas *evaluation* has to do with checking the materials and programmes used to make the learning process happen. In other words, assessment corresponds to '*...learner performance*' and evaluation corresponds to '*...innovation or change in, for example, school organization or a course syllabus*' (Ur, 1991: 244).

Assessment is a multi-faceted concept that links together all the elements in a teaching-learning process. "It is the means by which students' language learning development and achievements are monitored over time" (Hedge, 2000: 376). Assessment can be applied for different purposes. From the pedagogical purposes, *formative assessment* is usually applied to help teachers gain information about the students' progress for further classroom work and improvement. The second purpose of assessment is to measure students' level of achievement in a specific subject, this is *summative assessment*. Summative assessment has to fit into the administrative requirements of an institution, for example a school curriculum in which all the subjects have to be assessed. Sometimes the results from schools and institutions may be compared at local, national or international level, to set up standards. (Hedge, 2000) presents a table which summarises some of the distinguishing features of *formative* and *summative assessment*. See next page.

Formative assessment	Summative assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is prepared and carried out by the class teacher as a routine part of teaching and learning.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is necessarily prepared and carried out by the class teacher.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is specifically related to what has been taught, i.e. content is in harmony with what has been taught.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Does not necessarily relate immediately to what has been taught.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The information from the assessment is used diagnostically; it is focused on the individual learner's specific strengths and weaknesses, needs, etc.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The judgement about a learner's performance is likely to feed into record-keeping and be used for administrative purposes, e.g. checking standards and targets.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is frequently externally imposed, e.g. by an institution or a ministry of education</i>

Table 4.2 Differences between formative and summative assessment⁹

It should be emphasised that contrary to summative assessment, formative assessment is mainly focused on the learning process and it is concerned with the students' progress as it happens and identifying ways of helping them (students) along the process. For the summative assessment, the main focus is on the results of learning, e.g. identifying overall levels of students' achievement and measuring what they do against them. It can therefore be inferred that, while formative assessment has to do with students' performance along the learning process, evaluation has to do with the curriculum implementation and results, development of school organization, course syllabus and materials. What follows is a surface description of what seems to be happening in terms of the type of assessment procedures being used at TTI nr 200.

The aspects listed above helped me reflect on the teacher training system of trainees doing the English speciality and come to conclusions about what is happening and how what is happening can be improved.

⁹ Hedge (2000).

At TTI nr 200, students are expected to sit for written tests and are seldom asked to write reports and/or long essays though these constitute the end-of-course examination in each subject. These tests are generally short form tests that focus on particular aspects of a topic rather on the overall issue. It can thus be said that writing is mostly seen as a tool for testing rather than a tool for learning, and experimenting with ideas for communicating one's experiences.

However, students do have expectations about the work they do in the classroom; the way they are supposed to be assessed will then influence the choice of learning strategies they consider to best suit their learning context. We therefore need to know "...what approaches to learning students are adopting, what students' expectations are of different assessment tasks and what they choose to do and what they choose not to do in response to the different assessment regimes which are introduced." (Knight, 1995: 39).

At this point, it is perhaps useful to recall Cummins' distinction (1996) between conversational and academic aspects of language proficiency. The former aspects are supported by contextual or interpersonal clues which are less cognitively demanding, while the latter aspects are decontextualized (absence of interpersonal or contextual clues) in that the meaning being communicated is dependent solely on linguistic clues and therefore more cognitively demanding. Such a distinction conforms to that proposed between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1996). To this end a question that could be asked is:

What aspects of language proficiency are assessed in short form tests as opposed to essay writing such as the end-of-course research reports?

Most of the short form tests are generally contextualised exercises. These types of tests, it is believed, require relatively less cognitive effort for students to answer them. If this is the case, it could be possible for students to go through up to the fourth year without actually developing the academic aspects of language proficiency. The real challenge comes at the end of the four years of course work when students who have always been assessed through short tests, are asked to write the research report. Faced with the real task of identifying a problem, designing the research proposal and, reading, gathering information, analysing it and writing up the whole research report, most students, as already stated, just cannot do that.

It could then be claimed that this type of ongoing assessment does not build up student writing competence and confidence so that they are able to write the final research projects successfully. Instead, it could be said that it promotes surface learning strategies such as memorisation and reproduction, which aims to gather marks rather to help students master the skills (Biggs, 1999). A student studying in a deep teaching/learning environment will certainly employ some of these strategies depending on the learning moment. However, on their own, these strategies fail to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the task, which is likely to make it difficult for students to apply what they have learnt in real life situations.

Learning by doing, which has become lecturers' common sense principle particularly in writing over the last few decades, has now attracted attention and changed the assessment direction. As Kutz et al. (1996: 83) put it, "*The more students write as part of their learning and working with others, the more effectively they will engage in the process of discovery, struggle, and intellectual growth and the more they will be able to articulate what they take out of this process*".

The traditional assessment practices at TTI nr 200 have led students to a dependency on the lecturers in making decisions about what they know, preventing them from judging for themselves. Therefore we need to find ways of giving students opportunities to assess themselves and to learn from their own and their colleagues' mistakes. We need to make a move from *norm referenced* to *criterion referenced* assessment (Knight, 1995).

As Knight (1995: 39) maintains, "Students must leave University equipped to engage in self-assessment throughout their professional lives. They need to be able to make reliable judgements about what they do and do not know and what they can and cannot do".

Students need to be exposed to learning activities that train them to become more autonomous and interdependent learners, and this is only possible if lecturers provide them with a lot of practice and feedback. The main goal of assessment should therefore be to develop better assessment practices in order to answer questions such as: to what extent is what we thought to be effective is really effective and what we intended to happen is really happening?

The problem is that the credibility of our work depends to a large extent on the adequacy of the assessment procedures we have in place. The challenge is therefore to ensure that teaching does not focus only on lower cognitive levels but also at the higher cognitive levels of thinking. These skills must be assessed and not just written in document papers. We need to start practising '*good assessment*' which translated in Knight's (1995: 42) words "...is that which both closely reflects desired learning outcomes and on which the process of assessment has directly beneficial influence on the learning process." Knight calls our attention to the fact that:

Assessment is a critical focus of attention in any programme for University teachers, not simply because of the considerable time and effort it demands, but also because of the dilemmas it posits in trying to reconcile the tension between the summative purposes of assessment-for-grading and formative purposes of assessment-for-learning (Knight, 1995: 126).

Biggs & Tang (2007: 169) state that while teachers and lecturers see the intended learning outcomes as the central pillar of an aligned teaching system, students do not. From the students' point of view, assessment defines what the curriculum is about and they will only learn what they think they will be tested on. Thus, "...assessment may determine what and how students learn more than the curriculum does" (Elton, 1987: 92). Therefore, as with the ILOs, assessment needs to be aligned with the content of the lessons and the lecturers' methodology, in other words, assessment has to be aligned with what students should be learning and the activities they are engaged in. Figure 4.3 illustrates the way assessment should be aligned to the learning activities.

Perspectives

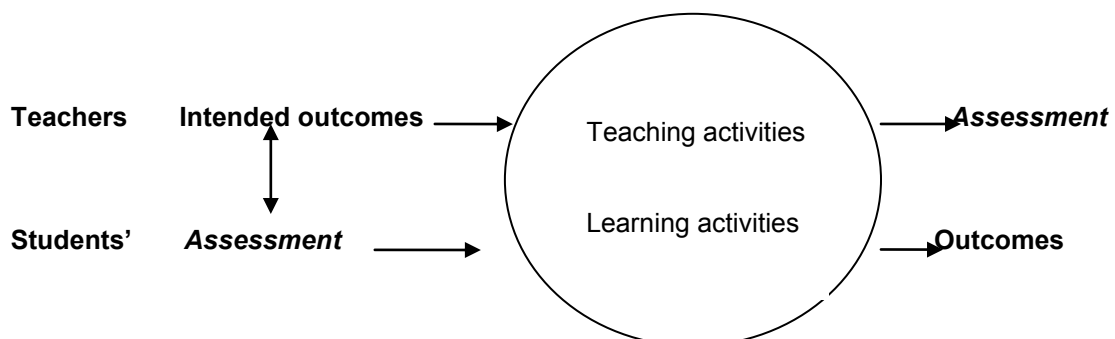


Figure 4.3 Teachers and students perspectives on assessment¹⁰

¹⁰ Biggs & Tang (2007: 169).

As shown in the figure, the intended outcomes need to be reflected in the assessment activities, as indicated by the arrow. The teaching activities of the teacher/lecturer and the learning activities of the students are directed to the same goal, the desired outcomes. However, while for the teacher/lecturer the summative assessment is at the end of the teaching, for the students it is at the beginning. Thus, when students prepare themselves for the assessment they will be learning the intended outcomes. This sounds quite a straightforward process but it is not so easy to put in practice.

In the context of TTI nr 200, problems arise due to lecturers' different occupations in different institutions that can make them have little time to correct students work; finding time for supervision is another serious problem. As a result, lecturers are not available most of the time for guidance and orientation of students' research and, from the institutional side, if not properly supervised the marking of the assessed work will not readily satisfy the quality assurance and other accountability requirements. Therefore meetings should be set up to check the development of both the teaching and the supervisory processes.

Finally, it has to be said that is not without reason that lecturers adopt transmission approaches to teaching and short form testing procedures based on the old learning objectives. The ever increasing size of classes and the shortage of qualified lecturers in some courses force them to teach more than one subject and it actually gives rise for them to employ less demanding strategies as to make their lives easy.

Feedback provision- As already stated this study intends to show not only the important writing issues relating to our students but aims particularly to raise content subject lecturers' awareness for the need to teach writing as a socially contextualised act by offering students more opportunities to express themselves and react critically to the materials they read. Therefore, lecturers' goals should be to teach students appropriate writing strategies that would enable students to analyse assignments gather materials and extract the relevant information from the books they read.

Writing academically is a difficult skill to master, and it develops slowly. Its development requires constant practice, response and reinforcement. Informal responses, summaries, personal experience essays, especially if they lack strong analytical components, do not alone adequately prepare students for research proposal and reports writing. Another

important aspect regarding students' academic skills attainment and development is the provision of feedback. *“Providing feedback is often seen as one of the ESL writing lecturers' most important tasks, offering the kind of individualised attention that is otherwise rarely impossible under normal classroom conditions”* (Hyland, 2001: 177).

In the classrooms in general, students usually write for an intended audience (lecturers or peers) and feedback is expected from them, especially from the lecturers. Providing feedback is a useful classroom technique as it helps students identify their main weaknesses and strengths in producing written texts. In other words, this kind of ***‘formative feedback’*** aims at consolidating the materials and improving the time of texts produced leading therefore to students own development and confidence in writing. The role of feedback in the classroom is always to help students move from the stage of skills getting to a level of skills using. Writing is seen as a process whereby students first learn how to construct texts based on specific genres and they move to a further stage of producing different text genres independently from the teacher. Feedback emphasises a process of learning to write through trial and error until the expected level is achieved; students go through different stages of writing and re-writing, where the text is seen not as a final product in its own but as a starting point to other texts. Issues such as context, purpose, audience are taken into account not only in the process of writing but also at the feedback stage. Feedback practices can vary from classroom to classroom from subject to subject, from lecturer to lecturer, but in the end it will primarily depend on the type of tasks set up and the effect they are likely to produce on students. Generally speaking, although feedback to written work may contribute to students' development of writing skills, all will depend on who should provide that feedback, the form it should take and whether it should concentrate on form or ideas. Hyland presents three types of feedback:

- ❖ *Teacher written feedback*
- ❖ *Teacher-student conferencing*
- ❖ *Peer feedback.*

Teacher/lecturer written feedback has been the central role of the teacher/lecturer in the majority of our classrooms, and many students see it as a crucial aspect in their development as writers. There is a great deal of research questioning the effectiveness of

lecturers' written feedback as a way of improving students' writing skills. Researchers on first language learning are of the opinion that much of written feedback is of poor quality and frequently misinterpreted by students (e.g. Kroll, 2001; Hyland, 2000) and most of the time authoritarian (Hedge, 2000). Zamel (1985), believes that the picture is similar to ESL contexts.

ESL writing teachers misread students texts, are inconsistent in their reactions, make arbitrary corrections, write contradictory comments, provide vague prescriptions, impose abstract rules ... and rarely make content-specific comments or offer strategies for revising the texts... the teachers overwhelmingly view themselves as language teachers rather than writing teachers.

Despite these all being negative findings, it is generally believed that feedback on early students' drafts can lead to development in subsequent drafts (e.g. Kroll, 2001), and this is also true in ESL contexts (Hyland & Hyland, 2003).

Research suggests that ESL students place great value on the lecturers' written feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2003) and most of the students place more value on the grammar corrections rather than on content (Leki, 2007). For students at TTI nr 200 for example a major concern has been on error free corrections that some lecturers give them. In fact, from some of the feedback sections observed in the classroom there are lecturers who just allocate marks to the answers without providing any comments to them.

However, Hyland (2000) argues that although students try to use most of the feedback provided, the effect of feedback on student writing still needs to be understood and studied extensively. In many cases for instance students often revise their texts with no real understanding of what to do and how to do things. Thus, although revisions may contribute to an improvement to the quality of the text to be produced, they may not always contribute to students' future writing development (Hyland, 2000).

The problem seems to reside in the fact that individual students have their own expectations from the feedback and they make different use of it. Some students want praise, others see it as condescending; some want a response to their ideas, others demand to have all their errors marked; some use teachers' comments effectively, others ignore it altogether... (Hyland, 2000: 332).

Whatever perceptions and expectations students make, it will be difficult for teachers to accommodate all these perceptions and expectations. Perhaps a dialogue with individual

students would help minimise the problem. It should be emphasised that it is not the aim of this study to go deep into analysing the types and forms of writing lecturers' feedback. What I want to emphasise is the importance of feedback, whether written or oral, and the possible need for writing lecturers to change their way of teaching and assessing students' writings.

4.3 Ways of Giving Feedback

Feedback can be given in writing or in face-to-face meetings. Among the several ways of giving feedback lecturer-student conferencing has got many advantages in relation to written feedback; lecturers and students can negotiate the meaning of the text through immediate response, resolve ambiguities, and help the teacher identify the students' educational and writing needs. It also helps save time in comparison with the time spent in marking students' work. For students, writing conferences not only assist learners with auditory learning styles, but give them a clearer idea of their strengths and weaknesses, help them develop their autonomy, allow them to raise questions on their written feedback, and help them construct a revision plan (Hyland, 2000; Riley, 1997).

There are, however, both advantages and disadvantages in using teacher-student conferences. Unlike in written feedback, in lecturer-student conferencing, students receive more focused and useful comments (Zamel, 1985) and students are more participative and free to ask questions and for clarification on issues they may not understand.

Some of the disadvantages might be that they are time consuming, and require good interactional skills for both teachers and students. Some researchers have expressed their concern regarding the effectiveness of this type of feedback and argued that some students might lack experience, interactive abilities or aural comprehension skills to understand teachers' explanations. Another factor that might prevent students from learning and developing their writing skills is that most of the time students do not make the most of this practice, especially ESL and EFL students. "Some learners have cultural inhibitions about engaging informally with authority figures, let alone questioning them..." (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990).

As a result, students tend to passively accept and incorporate the lecturers' suggestions into their work without questioning or thinking about them. Thus, it can be assumed that instead of providing opportunities for students to develop their writing skills and genre awareness, face-to-face conferencing can lead to surface approaches to learning and undermine the students' progress. Therefore, as in any teaching situation this technique can lead to success or failure and therefore it requires careful planning and preparation.

Peer feedback- Research that deals with L2 feedback is quite scarce and “its benefits have been hard to confirm empirically” in those contexts. Peer feedback consists of students getting feedback from their peers. This technique was first applied to L1 learners and has become an important alternative to teacher and lecturer-based forms of feedback in some ESL contexts. The main objective for peer feedback is to promote learning among students and improve the skills of drafting and redrafting texts. Although lecturers have been more positive about this type of interaction, students tend to be sceptical about it and to prefer teacher/lecturer /student interaction.

One of the advantages in using peer feedback is that writing and learning are social processes and collaborative peer feedback helps students engage in a community of learning where they respond to each other's work, creating therefore an authentic social context for interaction and learning, (Hyland, 2000). In addition, students also acquire the skills of revision, skills they need to critically analyse their work and the work of their peers; as well as the ability to create a sense of audience and of what needs to be improved to meet the demands of that audience. However, as the students at TTI nr 200 are not trained yet, they may focus their revision at sentence level rather than on ideas and organisation. In addition to that, their comments might be vague and unhelpful or even too critical and sarcastic (Leki, 2007). Hyland (2000: 329) presents a table showing the main advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback. See next page.

Table 4.3 Potential pros and cons of peer feedback

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Active learner participation</i> • <i>Authentic communicative context</i> • <i>Non-judgemental environment</i> • <i>Alternative and authentic audience</i> • <i>Writers gain understanding of reader needs</i> • <i>Reduced apprehension about writing</i> • <i>Development of critical reading skills</i> • <i>Reduces teachers' workload</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tendency to focus on surface forms</i> • <i>Potential for overly critical comments</i> • <i>Cultural reluctance to criticise and judge</i> • <i>Students unconvinced of comments' value</i> • <i>Weaknesses of readers' value</i> • <i>Students may not use feedback in revisions</i> • <i>Students may prefer teacher feedback</i>

It can be inferred from the table that for TES at TTI nr 200, peer feedback can be a strong source of learning how to read and write in the foreign language, but much of the work will still be on the lecturers' side especially in the first stages. Students need support and training until they become *good readers, good analysts* and *good commentators* (Leki, 2007). Once again it should be emphasised that it is not the aim of this study to look at feedback practices profoundly. The aim of this study to raise lecturers' awareness of the important role feedback plays within the teaching/learning process.

What is emerging from the discussion so far is that it is not only feedback that matters; apart from designing authentic and relevant writing tasks that would gradually engage students in more and more complex tasks lecturers should also encourage students to react to the situations they find difficult to handle. This can be translated in Biggs & Tang (2007) phrase: '*effective teaching*'. According to Biggs & Tang "*Effective teaching requires that we eliminate those aspects of our teaching that encourage surface approaches to learning and that we set the stage properly so that students can more readily use deep approaches to learning*" (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 31). Next section discusses deep and surface approaches to teaching/learning (Biggs & Tang, 2007).

4.4 Deep and Surface Approaches to Teaching and Learning and the Students' Level of Engagement

In Chapter 3, we discussed deep and surface approaches to teaching and learning in general. At this stage more emphasis is put on the teaching at TTI nr 200 in mind, moving, therefore, closer to what is happening in the classrooms. Biggs & Tang (2007: 4) provide a comprehensive account of the route that students have to follow towards engaging with higher-order cognitive activities that are compatible with developing academic reading and writing skills which are needed for writing a research report or research report.

Figure 4.4 illustrates the students' orientation and level of engagement in the different learning activities.

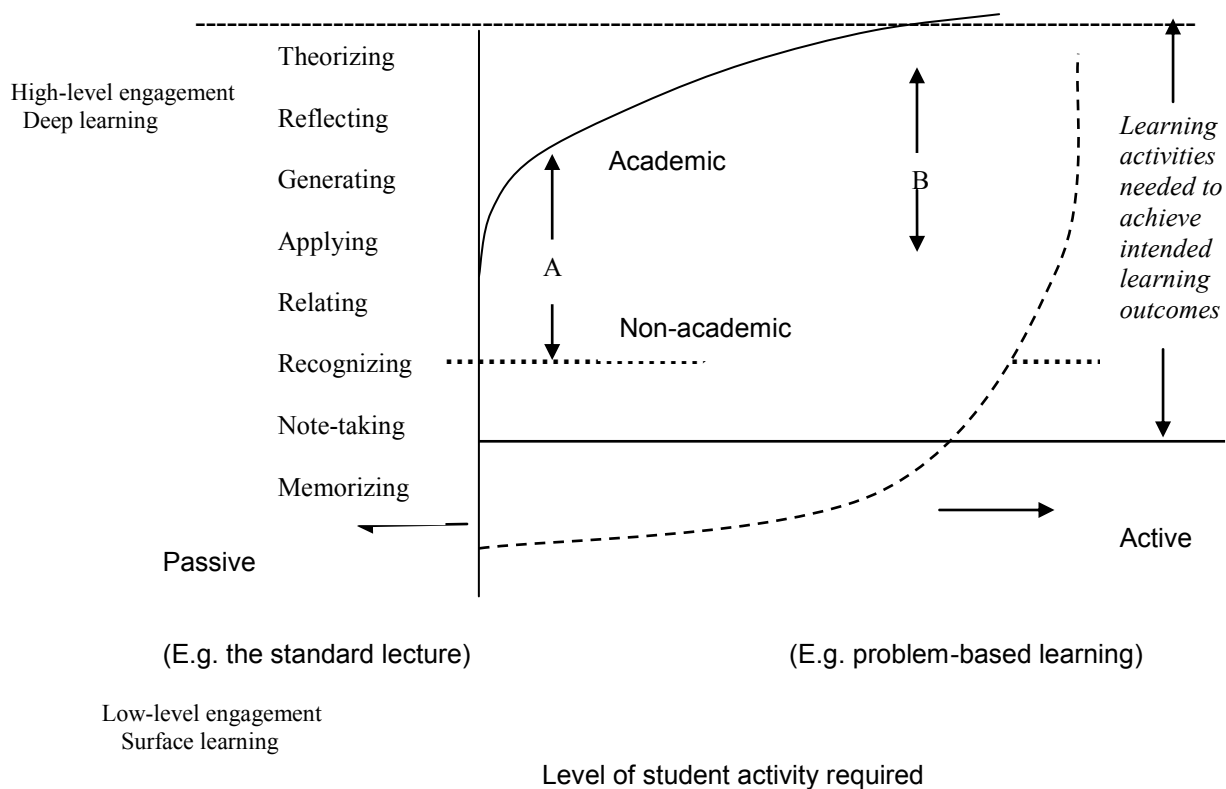


Figure 4.4 Students' orientation, teaching method and level of engagement¹¹

Biggs & Tang (2007) suggest that problem-based learning is an active method of teaching that requires students to question, to speculate, to generate solutions so that “surface learning students” can become or adopt “deep approaches” to learning and the gap between the two can be narrowed. Students at the academic level of thinking and doing things will use

¹¹ Adapted from Biggs & Tang (1999).

more complex thinking verbs such as explaining, relating, applying and theorizing, and at the non-academic level they will perform tasks such as note-taking, memorizing, reproducing knowledge in the same way they acquired it. “Teaching is not a matter of transmitting [knowledge] but engaging students in active learning, building their knowledge in terms of what they already understand” and can do on their own (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 21). It should be the aim of the teachers to narrow the gap between the two levels of students’ engagement so that students who are applying surface approaches to learning can move into deep approaches. However, for that to be possible, the teaching and learning activities should be aligned to the intended learning outcomes as previously stated.

Biggs & Tangs (2007: 11) posit that “Good teaching is getting most students to use the level of cognitive processes needed to achieve the intended outcomes that the more academic students use spontaneously”. In other words, good teaching seeks to keep academic level students at the same level and move non-academic students to the academic level and this is the challenge we seem to be facing at TTI nr 200. In order for lecturers to minimise/reduce this problem appropriate teaching is needed and three factors can contribute to the success or failure within the process, depending on the type of methodology, the activities set up, the assessment procedures and the intended learning outcomes. The three factors are:

- ❖ *The students’ levels of engagement in relation to the level of learning activity required to achieve the intended learning outcomes in relation to a particular content and context (ranging from describing to theorising, as between the dashed lines in the figure above.*
- ❖ *The degree of learning-related activity that a teaching method is likely to stimulate.*
- ❖ *The academic orientation of the students.* (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 9)

When students use surface approaches to learning they tend to store knowledge in a structured way and recall this knowledge in the same way. They do not connect the new knowledge to the existing one. Conversely, when they engage in deep learning they move from ‘*context –embedded*’ to ‘*context- reduced*’ situations and more ‘*cognitively-demanding*’ tasks such as writing a research report or research report (Cummins, 1996). Deep approaches to learning encourage the need to know, and instil curiosity based on students’ background knowledge.

Biggs & Tang (2007: 27) provide a figure in which the desired intended learning outcomes and the actual level of students' engagement can be translated and discussed.

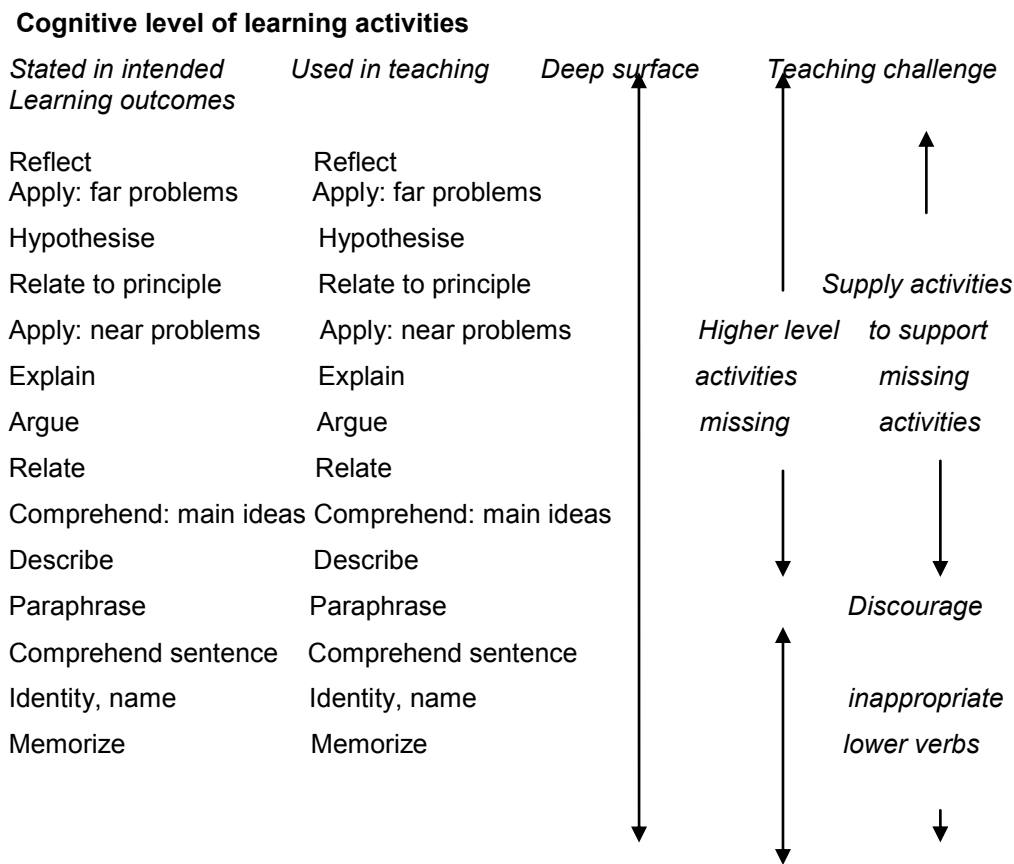


Figure 4.5 Desired and actual level of engagement approaches to learning and enhancing teaching¹²

In order to achieve most of the intended learning outcomes, a range of activities can be designed, using verbs ranging from low to high cognitive levels. These verbs need to be activated and the highest verbs should be reflecting and theorising and the lowest ones, memorising and identifying.

When using surface approaches to learning, students handle tasks (low and high) with low level verbs. When using deep approaches to learning students use the full range of desired learning activities; they learn terminology, they memorise formulae, but move from there to applying these formulae to new examples and new situations. The lecturers' job is therefore to

¹² Biggs & Tang (2007).

prevent shortfalls from happening and if they happen, to correct them appropriately and accordingly depending on the students level, the teaching context and the intended learning outcomes.

Cummins (1996) posits that ways of conceptualising the nature of language proficiency and its relationship to other constructs have been discussed since ancient times. He also refers to misconceptions regarding the nature of language proficiency that are common amongst educators in North America, which could be applied to the context of this study. Cummins further argues that students who have the ability to communicate fluently in a given language are often misconstrued as having reached all aspects of language proficiency. He proposes that a distinction should be made between conversational and academic aspects of language proficiency.

4.5 Cummins' (1996) Differentiation between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills- BICS and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency- CALP

According to Cummins (1996) the distinction between conversational and academic aspects of language proficiency refers to the extent to which the meaning to be communicated relies on contextual and interpersonal cues rather than on linguistic factors solely. In essence this distinction is about 'contextualised' and "de-contextualised" language.

He posits that, in any learning situation students need to progress from less demanding to more demanding tasks. In Cummins (1996) words, students will progress from context-embedded and cognitively undemanding tasks (quadrant A) to context-reduced and cognitively-demanding ones (quadrant D). It should be emphasised that the division between quadrants is watertight and depending on the level being taught, a situation that is context-embedded and cognitively-undemanding to one student, might be context-reduced and cognitively-demanding to another student. Also, a situation which is cognitively demanding to a student might turn in being cognitively undemanding after the student has learnt and understood it. All depends on the students' background knowledge, level of engagement and understanding. Following is a figure showing the four levels of cognitive development by Cummins (1996).

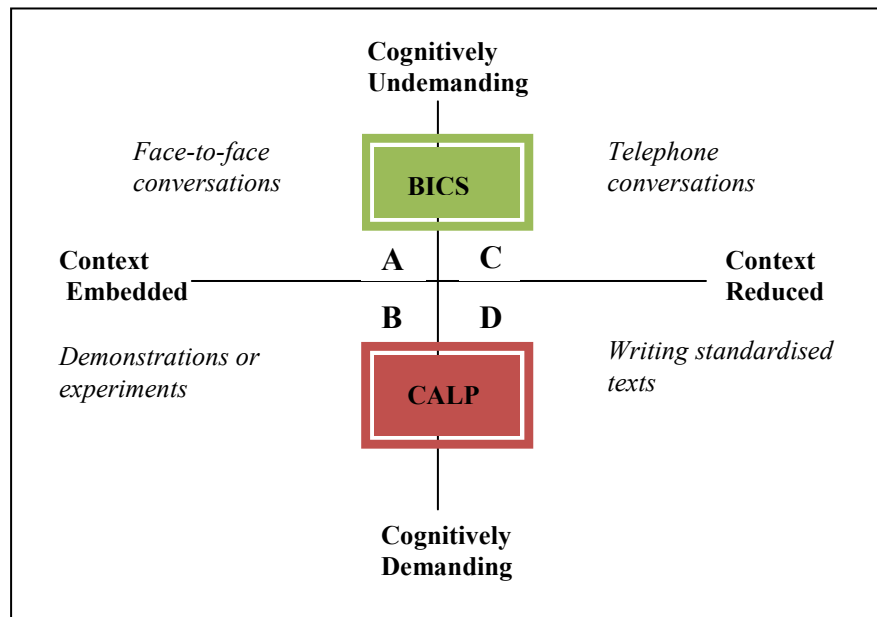


Figure 4.6 The four levels of cognitive development¹³

The four extremes refer to the amount of support available, as well as the cognitive involvement that is required to accomplish a given task. While in context-embedded situations participants can actively negotiate the meaning by asking for clarification or by providing feedback, in context-reduced situations the meaning and the successful interpretation of the message depends exclusively on the language itself.

An example of context-embedded situations is the use of language in the classroom, where the uses of language are generally informal and typical of out-of-class communication; and an example of context-reduced situations takes place when students are required to accomplish a task such as writing a book review or an essay. Students take relatively short time to develop conversational abilities (quadrant A, C), because of the embedded contexts that make these abilities less cognitively demanding. On the other hand, mastery of academic aspects requires a high level of cognitive involvement because of lack of interpersonal clues (quadrant B, D). Thus in the process of learning students will move from quadrant A (context embedded and cognitively undemanding activities), to quadrant B (context embedded and cognitively demanding situations), and so on. The progress from one quadrant to another requires a cognitive challenge and some support from the lecturers is needed to allow for such

¹³ Adapted from Cummins (1996: 57).

progress. If there is no cognitive challenge students will not move from one quadrant to another.

Cummins (1996: 62-3) reports that on average, in order for immigrant students to attain the conversational skills for English language proficiency (context embedded and cognitively demanding tasks) it is required not less than two years, whereas, it is at least required five years for the same students to achieve reasonably good grade marks in academic teaching/learning contexts of English language proficiency (context-reduced and cognitively demanding tasks). If we assume that these students are leaving in an English speaking country (USA), thus learning English within an English community of practice where English is the official language and the language of communication among people in and outside the classroom, unless alternative measures are taken to help them accelerate the process of English language learning, practice and development, TES will probably face more difficulties and take more time to attain the academic aspects of language proficiency.

In other words, one would contend that perhaps TES have problems in writing their research reports due to lack of exposure to language outside the classroom, to tasks which are content-reduced and highly cognitively-demanding such as writing a long essay. Therefore, the type of activities that students are expected to perform in and outside the class, the level of lecturers' support during the class, and the assessment procedures to be used, should all contribute to equipping students with the necessary and appropriate tools for academic writing, tools that they will need for writing their research reports. Writing the research reports implies engaging students in academic literacy practices which, compared to the previous levels, are more demanding and complex. Lea & Street (2006) suggest three conceptual overlapping models that would help lecturers and students achieve an acceptable level of performance in the academic literacy tasks.

4.6 Academic Literacy models

Learning in Higher Education, for the students, involves adapting new ways of understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge; in Lea & Street's words (2006: 158), it involves engaging students in academic literacy practices. From a holistic point of view academic literacy encompasses the skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking, critical thinking, use of technology, and habits of mind that foster academic success (Lea & Street, 2006), and TES and lecturers should understand them as larger, more holistic and broader than just being a list of discrete skills.

In this study academic literacy practices are primarily characterised by the processes of reading, writing and thinking critically. These competencies should be learnt in the core course subject disciplines in High schools and Institutions and should regard them as an obligation. Therefore, in order for students in general and TES in particular to be prepared for writing academic papers and thinking critically greater exposure to and instruction in academic literacy specially with regards to the teaching of academic reading, writing and critical thinking skills is needed.

Critical thinking generally refers to a set of cognitive habits and processes (Lea & Street, 2006). Thus, critical thinkers are constantly engaged in probative questions, rigorous analysis, synthesis and evaluation of ideas. Such thinking ability can and should be acquired through a joint effort between lecturers and students through a process of continuous instruction based on collaborative teaching acting in this way as a gatekeeper to academic success in all disciplines. Critical thinking as a skill seems to be neglected by most of the lecturers at TTI nr 200. Quite often, lecturers do not engage students in tasks which are context reduced and cognitively demanding, that require identifying sources, describing facts and processes, comparing, contrasting, analysing, interpreting and evaluating, abilities that require higher order mental processes. What has been happening most of the time is surface approaches to teaching where students are asked to perform tasks that require lower order cognitive challenges such as memorising and describing. As a result students are hardly able to apply critical thinking skills in their academic practices.

It is widely believed that good writers are most likely careful readers and that most of the academic writing is a response to reading. Lea & Street (2006) postulate that reading and

writing within disciplines helps students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge across disciplines. Students must therefore be taught to be active, makers of meaning and learn the strategies all good readers employ in the process of reading, namely, to think critically, to argue, to compare, to own an idea, and to remember. Reading is a skill that stimulates imagination analysis and inquiry, thus it requires time and reflection. It follows that students are expected to imitate in their writings the forms and strategies of the written texts they encounter in their assigned readings. Lea & Street (2006) argue that approaches to students' academic writing and literacy practices should be conceptualised through the use of three conceptual overlapping models: *the study skills model*, *the academic socialisation model* and *the academic literacies model*.

The *study skills model* focuses on the surface features, (Biggs, 1999) of subject learning as well as the transfer of the knowledge from one context to another, similar to Cummins' (1996), context-embedded and cognitively-undemanding tasks such as memorising and note-taking, to deep features.

The *academic socialisation model* is concerned with students' acculturation into disciplinary and subject based discourses and genres. In this model it is expected that students will acquire new ways of talking, writing, thinking and using literacy that typify members of specific disciplinary or community area. Students are expected to recognise, relate, and apply, (Biggs, 1999) the rules of using the language within a specific community. In so doing they will be moving from less context-embedded and undemanding tasks, to more context-reduced and demanding tasks (Cummins, 1996).

The third model, *academic literacies*, is concerned with meaning-making, power, identity and authority and it foregrounds the institutional nature of what counts as knowledge in a particular academic context. This model views the processes involved in acquiring effective and appropriate uses of literacy as more dynamic, complex and situated (Lea & Street, 2006: 369). Thus it requires the adoption of deep approaches to learning, (Biggs, 1999), and highly cognitively-demanding tasks (Cummins, 1996). Therefore, it is expected that lecturers at Universities and higher educational institutions should assign writing tasks to get to know how students think, and help them engage critically and thoughtfully with course reading materials, to encourage independent and critical thinking and at the same time to check what students understand from the lectures.

As previously stated, for the trainee teachers at TTI nr 200, English is a foreign language. At the same time English is also their language of specialisation which means that they need academic English in order to perform their tasks successfully. Academic English involves dispositions and skills beyond those of conversational fluency. In other words, we cannot rely on students conversational skills to assume that students who are good at speaking are also good in writing. Classification of foreign language students' English speaking fluency would imply the assessment of the four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. However this is not part of this study. Lea & Street (2006) concept of academic literacy is used in this study from the social dimension of academic reading and writing instruction as way of searching the skills and attitudes that shape academic literacy within TTI nr 200's teaching context. *But how should students acquire academic literacy?*

In order to prepare students for university courses students need to be exposed to teaching and learning practices which are conducive to the attainment of the academic literacy skills that they are going to find at that level. To this end it can be inferred that academic literacy is an obligation at higher level institutions. Thus, greater coordination of literacy education among subject lecturers within high schools is needed. Just as the focus of teaching at TTI nr 200 is shifting from amassing knowledge to learning how to find and apply knowledge, academic literacy can also be progressively introduced as an experiential learning process and gradually find its place within the teaching/learning process at TTI nr 200 and other institutions. In so doing lecturers will be preparing students to read, write, think, and communicate not only in their learning community but also in the larger world for which they are being prepared to become educated citizens and problem solving agents.

4.7 Research Supervision

The process of supervising graduate students has become the focus of a growing scholarship and the relationship between students and supervisors has been seen as a complex a difficult task. As Delamont et al. (2000: 76) posit supervising graduate students has to do with their expectations, expertise, efficient use of time and empathy; these are all important ingredients of the student-supervisor relationship. What follows is an account on Dysthe's Models (2002) and Grant's (2010) map for supervision.

4.7.1 The three models of supervision

Dysthe (2002) investigated student's and supervisor's views of what constituted good supervision, particularly in relation to the development of written texts and she is of the opinion that, in the supervisory practices supervisors represent the disciplinary culture and discourse community in which the student is being introduced and socialised. She identified three distinct models of supervision:

- ❖ *The teaching model;*
- ❖ *The partnership model; and*
- ❖ *The apprenticeship model.*

The first model describes a traditional teacher-student relationship, “defined by an emphasis on asymmetry, status difference and dependency” (Dysthe, 2002: 518). This model is often characterised by a joint focus of both student and supervisor in an effort to produce an acceptable research project. In *the second model* there is more conscious pedagogical concern of the supervisor, where the supervisor aims at fostering independent thinking. *The last model* is characterised by the student learning by observing and performing tasks under the guidance of the supervisor. The student research report is seen as a joint product. (Dysthe, 2002) notes that there seems to be a more conscious pedagogical philosophy behind this model, and the supervisor main role is to engage students in to independent and critical thinking. The difference between the last model and the partnership one is that in the apprenticeship model the supervisor assumes a much clearer authority which is recognised by both parties with the student learning by observing and performing tasks in the company of the supervisor.

Dysthe (2002: 536) points out that the conceptualisations of supervision as teaching, partnership and apprenticeship are not mutually exclusive, as elements of one might appear in another. She further posits that in most of the situations the three models overlap, though one of them is the dominant, depending on which phase the work is. It is, therefore, clear that the role of supervision is both “complex and pivotal”. Mutual expectations of both parties are expected and the process requires continuous negotiation and management in order to achieve successful outcomes.

Similarly, in looking at different models of supervision, Lee (2007) identified some conceptual models of research supervisory practices:

- ❖ *The functional model;*
- ❖ *The critical thinking model;*
- ❖ *The relationship development model;*
- ❖ *The enculturation model;*
- ❖ *The emancipation model.*

In the *functional model* the most important activity of the supervisor is rational movement through the process of engaging students in the tasks prescribed. This model is the one which is preferred by most of the lecturers at TTI nr 200. In the *critical thinking model*, the supervisor is meant to evaluate and challenge the student's work. Supervisors at TTI nr 200 do evaluate and challenge the students work; however, the type of feedback they provide is not always corrective feedback and therefore supervisors are seen as the "*knowers*" of the content and unquestionable people. In the *relationship development model*, supervisors act on the basis of their accumulated experience using emotional intelligence and a range of strategies to draw on. The most important aspect in this model is the kind of relationship that exists between the supervisor and the student. The relationship between students and supervisors seems to be quite reasonable but there are many situations whereby students complain and sometimes ask for supervisor change.

For the *enculturation model*, the principal aim is to make the student a member of the academic community. (Lee, 2007: 685). In the enculturation model, the supervisor is expected to provide some specific expertise to the student and act as a gatekeeper to many more learning resources, specialist opinions and academic networks. It is this model that needs to be encouraged among supervisors and students at TTI nr 200. Finally the *emancipation model* which main activity is to support the student in the construction of knowledge whereby the students is required to experience personal growth and reframe his/her knowledge. This model is to some extent similar to the previous one; however, it adds a new aspect which

consist of the students emancipation, leading to independent academic growth and reshaping of the concepts, ideas and opinions about the existing knowledge.

The mentoring process involves providing educational tasks and activities which include "...progressing the candidature, mentoring, coaching the research project and sponsoring student participation in academic practice (Lee, 2007: 686). It can be inferred that the role of supervision is both pivotal and complex; mutual expectations from both students and supervisors characterise the process and need to be negotiated and managed along the process, in order to achieve the intended supervision outcomes based on a good and respectful relationship. In order to see in depth the complexity and fogginess inherent of the supervisory practices Grant's, (2010) presents a map that illustrates the process of supervision with regard to the relationship between supervisors and supervisees.

4.7.2 The four-layered relations of supervision

Influenced by the advocates of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Janks, 1995; Kamler, 1997). Grant (2010) elaborated a map for supervision that reflects the main aspects inherent in the process of supervision which was explained in detail in the Literature review chapter. In his view the process of supervision has two dimensions: the pedagogical and the personal relationship between supervisors and students. He claims that, supervision is a complex and unstable process, an interesting mixture of the personal, the rational, and the irrational, the social and the institutional. Supervision can be a source of pleasure to some students and supervisors but it also can constitute a source of risk and end up in sad memories. (Grant, 2010: 89).

The map consists of different layers ranging from the simpler to the more complex ones and it describes the different positions and power relationships that supervisors and students play in that complex process. Below is the map showing the four layers:

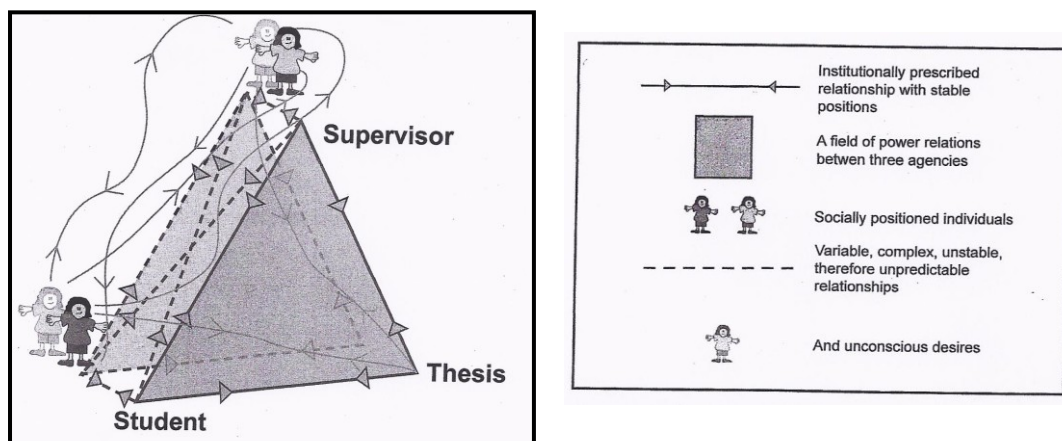


Figure 4.7 The four layers of supervision practices¹⁴

The first layer of the map is based on the traditional models of supervision where like in the traditional models of teaching, the supervisor is seen as the “knowing authority” and the student does not know anything and therefore needs guidance from the supervisor who has total power on him/her. The relationship has a unilateral quality and it is based on the traditional model of supervision where the main goal is that the supervisor teaches the student something that s/he does not know (Grant, 2010: 85).

The traditional model of supervision places the supervisor on a higher position where the supervisor talks the most and makes the most knowing comments. The student listens, agrees with what is being said and answers the questions posed by the supervisor. Within this layer the student is not expected to react against or disagree with what the supervisor says: “...the student is an agreeable and co-operative listener and the supervisor is an authoritative knowing teacher” (Grant 2010: 93).

The second layer lies below the first one and it adds the term “pedagogy”, it looks at the pedagogical power relations. Rather than being dyadic as in the teaching /learning process (between teacher and student), a third element is added: knowledge. Therefore supervision does not only consist of teaching the student skills but also how to become an independent researcher, an academic, and at a later stage a supervisor. Both supervisor and student have the capacity to act and interact towards the production of the written piece of work.

¹⁴ Grant (2010).

What is interesting in this layer is the role that the research report plays in the process of interaction between supervisor and student, as it definitely affects their actions and reactions. In other words, they need to work together to accomplish a general and common aim which is the production of a document which is formal, original and academically acceptable.

The third layer is based on the diverse social positions that both supervisors and students can occupy within and outside the institution. This layer is more concerned with the unpredictable relationships that may result from the process of mutual interaction which can be affected by their identities and stereotypes. As Grants (2010: 96) maintains, “*More, in the intimacy of supervision, student and supervisor respond to each other as more than student and supervisor, as embodied beings who are seen as gendered, aged, ethnic, sexual and thought to be different, same, other*”. These social power relations will have many effects on the supervision process and may result in derailments of communication, supervisors lack of availability, feedback delays and so on.

The relationship between “real” people is a complex process whereby individuals always try to impose their power on each other. That power can take both directions (supervisor/student or student/supervisor). When the student feels more powerful than the supervisor, it can lead to other intricacies such as delay in producing the research report or at some extremes the change of a supervisor.

The fourth layer adds another element: the unconscious desires. The unconscious desires derive from the relative intensity and privacy of supervision, where both parties make unconscious responses to each other.

Normally, the process of supervision is characterised by supervisors and students’ desires to please, to do well, to challenge, to take risks, to be recognised as intelligent, etc., and those desires can result in strange behaviours from both supervisors and students.

Desire and identity make supervision opaque. They are dimensions no code can regulate and no literal reading of the body can guard against. In the delicate zone between encouragement and discipline that makes up much of supervision, the workings of identity and desire provide fertile ground for misreadings, resentments, confusions. Most of us are

unprepared and ill-equipped to deal with these responses when they happen. (Grant, 2010: 101).

From Grant's (2010) map it can be inferred that neither supervisor nor student can escape the effects of power because they are implicit within the process of supervision, where both parties have the power to act and react on each other. This map will help understand what is going on in the supervision practices at TTI nr 200.

Sayed et.al (1998: 16) state that most of supervision problems are predictable and preventable; and most of the problems have their origin in the supervisory relationship rather than in the research topic. As Mouton (2001: 16) holds, if the relationship between a supervisor and a student is unsatisfactory and the student feels neglected or unattended, the student will feel insecure. As a result there will be delays and even termination of studies, in other words, drop outs. Perhaps this is the problem being faced by final year education students. Therefore, in order to successfully carry out supervision one needs to take into consideration the three models of supervision (Dysthe, 2002: 518), and the four layers which are inherent of the process, (Grant, 2010), so as to avoid falling into the negative aspects embedded in them. What follows is a table showing the inter-connectivity between the four conceptual frameworks and research supervision:

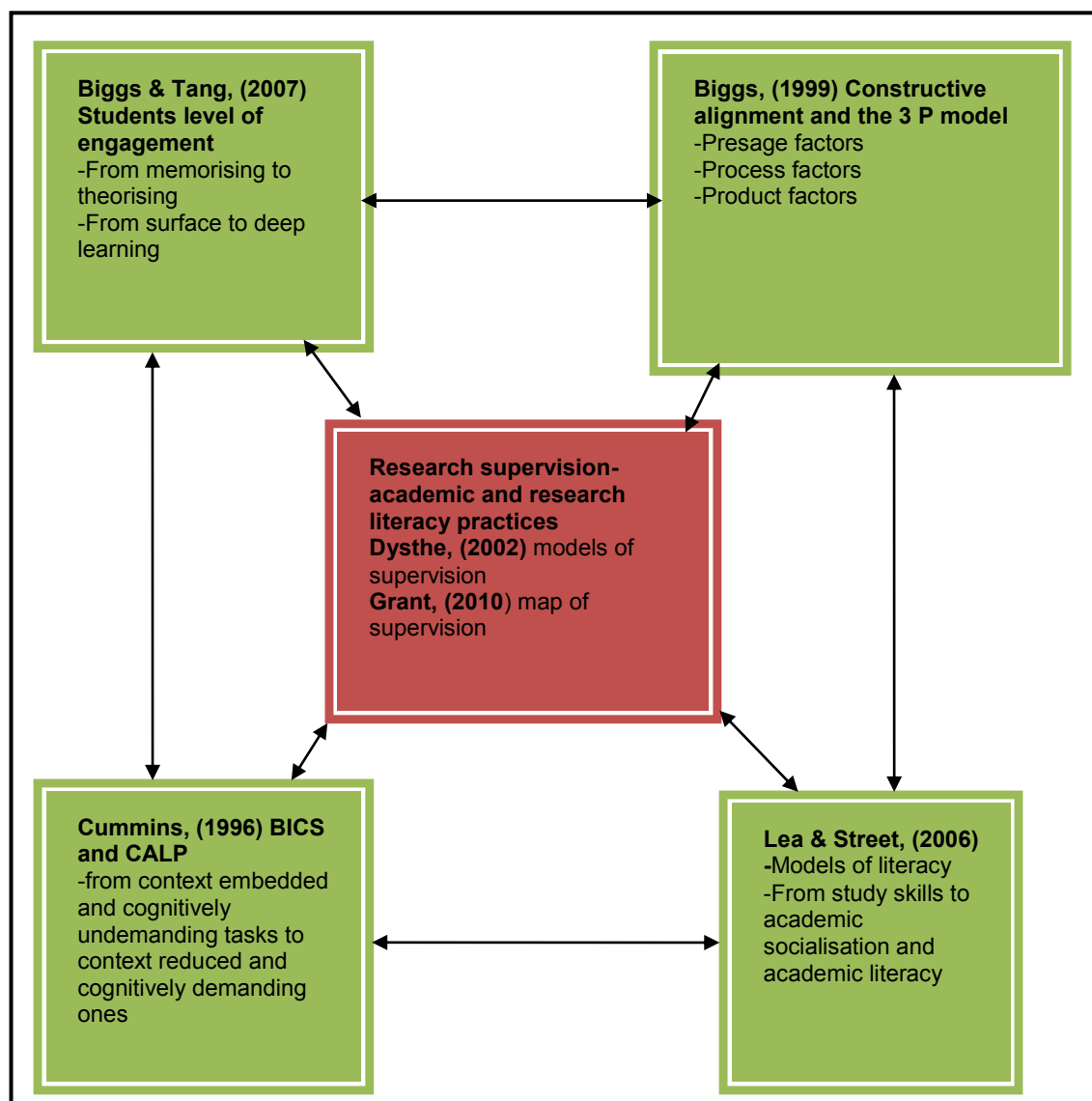


Figure 4.8 An interactive model between the conceptual frameworks and research supervision¹⁵

The above table shows the different stages TES need to go through during the process of teaching and learning, as well as the various types of learning activities that they need to engaged in, in order to achieve higher cognitive levels of learning and reach an acceptable academic level. The stages include Presage factors, Process factors, and Product factors (Biggs, 1999); and the activities range from memorising to theorising; from surface to deep approaches to learning (Biggs & Tang, 2007); from context embedded and cognitively

¹⁵ Adapted from Maxwell (2005: 9).

undemanding to context reduced and cognitively demanding tasks (Cummins, 1996); from study skills to academic socialisation and academic literacy skills (Lea & Street, 2006). It is only by then that students can perform academic and research literacy tasks with relative independence.

The inter connection between the four theoretical frameworks in relation to students' level of engagement in the learning activities to be set up and the cognitive levels that students go through as they progress in their learning process is a complex and hard task not only for students but also for the lecturers. The move from a lower level to a higher one always requires a cognitive challenge from the students, such as problem-solving or theorizing and so forth. On the basis of what has been said, it can be postulated that academic writing is a complex process that involves a series of activities ranging from pre-writing, drafting, revision, re-drafting and editing. Like the moves from one level to another, these activities are recursive, not linear. In other words instead of moving from one activity to another in discrete stages, writers return to them as many times as necessary during the composing process. Similarly, during research supervision practices, lecturers and students will need to move back and recur on the learning activities they have gone through during the teaching learning process.

Students are therefore required to consider and reconsider additional information or arguments, and reconstruct their texts as the composing process progresses- writing as a recursive process. We assume that TES who have adopted deep approaches to learning will be prepared to write their research proposals and/or reports. However, writing is also a way of learning. When students write about the subject matter they are greatly enhancing their understanding about the materials, and showing their level of achievement in that subject matter. In addition, students will be simultaneously exercising control over the language they use, (Kroll, 2001). Under the literacy models, the last cognitive level is academic literacy, the level where supervision practices are likely to take place. For the production of a research report students must express their ideas clearly and effectively. To this end they need to make use of varied sentences, choose appropriate vocabulary for an academic audience, and produce finished papers that follow Standard English conventions of grammar, capitalisation, punctuation and spelling. Thus research report writing includes both rhetorical and editorial skills. Only by understanding the correlation between the conceptual frameworks one will understand the high complexity illustrated in nature of the academic writing skill. Worth

mentioning is the fact that the division between the conceptual frameworks is watertight and the correspondence among them can go any direction. This is to say that, there are no clear cut boundaries between them.

4.8 Summary

This chapter has presented the conceptual frameworks that helped analyse, understand and interpret the main difficulties faced by TES when dealing with academic and research literacy practices. The conceptual framework underpinning this research was informed by Biggs (1999) constructive alignment and the 3P Model which is discussed in details in this chapter ; the other conceptual frameworks discussed in this chapter are Biggs & Tang's (2007) deep and surface approaches to teaching and learning and the students' level of engagement; Cummins' (1996) differentiation between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills- (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency-(CALP) with regard to language acquisition; Lea & Street (2006)- Academic literacy models; Grant's (2010)- map for supervision; and Dysthe's (2002) models of supervision.

The chapter starts by presenting each concept separately and culminates with a table showing a holistic interaction between the conceptual frameworks, and research supervision practices. The combination of distinct theories in the conceptual framework enabled the researcher to better undertake the investigation and deal with the phenomenon under the study accurately, which is students' difficulty in producing their research reports. In the next chapter the research methodology used in this study is presented and discussed.

Chapter 5

Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

As previously stated, the main purpose of this study was to examine the academic and research literacy practices of TES at TTI nr 200 and investigate the difficulties they experience when undertaking research and writing their final research reports. The major question that guided the study was *“In what ways do academic and research literacy practices contribute to the successful completion of a research report?”* In this chapter the research design needed in order to carry out the study is discussed and the research instruments are elaborated including the pilot testing of the instruments. Procedures of data collection and data analysis are presented and discussed. Finally, we conclude with issues relating to the validity and generalisability of the study, a brief account of research ethics, as well as the limitations of the study.

5.2 Research Design

The present study addresses a somewhat neglected field of enquiry. Thus, as the study is a new attempt in the field within the Angolan context, and therefore exploratory, the researcher decided on a phenomenological approach. According to Thomas (2009), phenomenology attempts to get insightful descriptions of the ways members of a specific living community see and interpret their world on the basis of the lived experiences.

Drawing from Thomas (2009: 76) assumption that “...there is no clear or disinterested knowledge”, that people have feelings and understandings that affect the way they see and interpret their world we have decided to take phenomenology as an approach to undertake this research. The researcher belongs to the same world as the participants. Therefore, in order to see the phenomenon from different lenses, the researcher was very interested in what students and lecturers thought about the phenomenon under study to help crosscheck her own assumptions and see if they match or not with those of the participants.

Phenomenology as a research approach helped understand and interpret the meaning of the phenomena being studied, from the participants’ points of view and to look at the way

they interrelate; it also helped in considering what participants think and how they form ideas about their world; in other words, how they construe their own world (Holliday, 2007: 16). It is therefore assumed that each and every participant has his or her own experiences which might be similar or different from other participants' experiences.

There are two major assumptions that underlie phenomenology:

First- what counts most for phenomenology is the individual's lived experiences. Human life can only be understood from within a social living context and the ways individuals interact and interpret that world.

Second- social life is with no doubt a distinctively human product. People can only make themselves understandable within their own contexts. By studying individuals in their own context the researcher was in a better position to understand the participants' perceptions and the way they perform their activities. In this study it is believed that there is no single truth that can explain the world, but people can always approximate to the real truth by moving from the simple to the complex, from particular to general.

Although the study is mainly qualitative, in a loose sense, a combination with quantitative data is used as a starting point for the discussion. Therefore questionnaires served as a basis for analysing data together with classroom observation and some textual analysis (students' research proposals and reports).

According to Thomas (2009: 49) phenomenological reflection takes place within four dimensions: *temporality*, which refers to the lived time; *spatiality*, that refers to the lived space; *corporeality*, that deals with the lived body, and *relationality, or communality*, which relates to the human lived relations within a community. Therefore phenomenology is not just interested in, and does not only rely on, the descriptions made by the representatives of a specific group of population. The above described dimensions are also important in the process of gathering and interpreting data.

Phenomenology helped the researcher explore the academic and research literacy practices of TES at TTI nr 200, and transform that experience into textual expression through a continuous process of reading and writing. In other words, the experiences and voices of the participants were the most reliable source of information that led us in the process of

exploring and interpreting the teaching learning and supervision practices characterising the educational process at TTI nr 200.

As Creswell (1994: 22) sustains “... if a concept or phenomenon needs to be understood because little research has been done on it, then it merits a qualitative approach”. Hence, this study is based on survey research where the main research instruments used for data collection are interviews. Survey research, as Leedy & Omrod put it, involves obtaining information about one or more groups of people, perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences “ *by asking them questions and tabulating their answers*” (2010:187).

As mentioned before, as a way of gathering more accurate and reliable data and in order to avoid potential biases, apart from the interviews, another three research instruments were applied in the data gathering and analysing process, i.e. questionnaires, classroom observation and textual analysis, *inter alia*, students’ research proposals and research reports as well as the current curriculum. Please refer to appendices AD and AF for the students research proposals and research reports respectively.

The interviews were semi-structured with an open ended format so as to encourage participants to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner. An interview schedule was used to help control the process. All the interviews were pilot tested with a different group of respondents before the study took place.

The questions were organised under specific categories (for the interview schedule for students, lecturers and the DDAAD see appendices E, F, G, H, I, and J) and with the participants consent, (see appendices Q, R, S and T). The interviews were recorded and transcribed before being analysed. In all the sessions the researcher played the role of a listener and passive participant only interfering when necessary. The main categories that were addressed are:

- ❖ *Students’ academic achievements and course expectations;*
- ❖ *Lecture delivery and assessment procedures;*
- ❖ *Availability of resources;*
- ❖ *Research supervision;*

Similar to the interviews, the questions in the questionnaires were organised under the very same headings. For samples of questionnaires see appendices K and L. Questionnaires were also pilot tested to help improve the questions asked and guarantee more reliable data and better quality of the information obtained.

As for classroom observation only core course subject lecturers were observed (Research Methodology and Academic Reading and Writing courses). In all the observed classes the researcher played the role of a ‘non-participant’ observer (Dörnyei, 2007). The observation consisted of a combination of structured and unstructured observation. She entered into the classroom with a semi-structured observation scheme, with pre-selected categories to look at. However, she did not refer so often to the classroom observation sheet while observing. During the lessons she tried to take some notes as accurately as possible and soon after the lessons she filled a classroom observation sheet. As most of the lessons were lecturer centred, she did not have problems in taking notes and following the pace of the lesson. For a sample of a classroom observation sheet see appendix M.

With regard to textual analysis, as stated above, two students’ research proposals and research reports were analysed. The research proposals and research reports were taken from the library’s department without looking at their content or marks. The research reports were then analysed at two different levels:

- ❖ at the sentence level to check the syntactic, morphological and lexical problems that students might have (Kroll, 2001);
- ❖ at the discourse level to check the ability of students to display features of organisation and coherence in their research reports (Kroll, 2001).

Textual analysis was used as a research instrument to help understand both academic writing and research practices problems of the TES.

This study was based on a continuous process of reflection through every stage of the study. That continuous reflection allowed me to make critical judgments as the process went on, and this was possible due to Maxwell’s (2005: 9) model of research design that supported the organisation of the process. This model shows clearly the inter-relationship between all the components inherent in the process. What follows is a figure showing how the elements interact and influence each other:

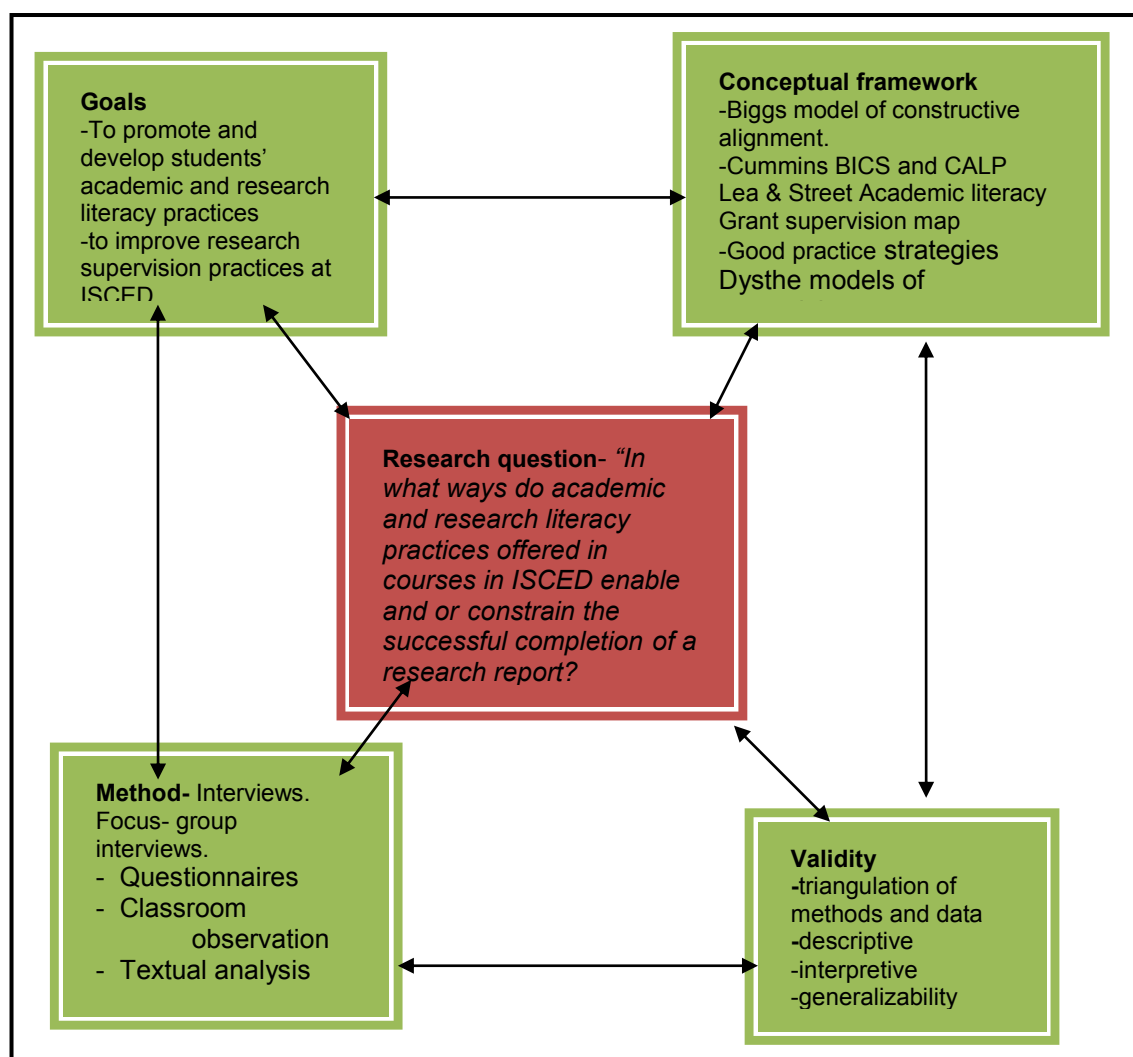


Figure 5.1 Interactive model of research design¹⁶

As the figure shows the various components (goals of the study, conceptual framework, research instruments, and data validity), interact among them and this leads to a holistic view of the research process. In this model the starting point is the research question which dictates the goals to be achieved and consequently the research instruments to be applied in order to collect data. Data analysis starts from the onset with the collection of the first questionnaires and interviews at the piloting phase, moving to their improvement and later applying those instruments together with classroom observation and textual analysis. The study is based on a conceptual framework that helps the researcher understand and interpret data with some accuracy in terms of scientific background knowledge about the phenomenon being investigated. The process of triangulation is used in order to improve validity of the

¹⁶ Adapted from Maxwell (2005: 9).

findings. Because in qualitative research data is generated as the process develops the table above helped us not only to reflect holistically on the study but also to find the necessary literature.

5.3 Research Site and Research Sample

This research was carried out at one of the Higher Institutes of Education i.e. TTI nr 200 in Luanda, Angola. TTI nr 200 trains teachers for the intermediate level schools in all the subjects. The Department of Modern Languages has been selected for the purpose of this study; this Department comprises two separate sections, the English and the French section. The research site is therefore TTI nr 200 and the research venue is the English section in the Modern Languages Department.

The research sample of the study includes the Deputy Director of the Academic Affairs Department (DDAAD), ten lecturers and eighteen TES from the English Department. As for the interviews, six (6) general subject lecturers (GSLE), four (4) content subject lecturers (CSL) and 18 TES composing three different groups participated in the focus groups interviews. For the focus group interviews, TES were grouped into three categories comprising six students each:

- ❖ Type 1 Students - *who have successfully completed their research reports (6 students)*
- ❖ Type 2 Students - *who are currently writing their research reports (6 students)*
- ❖ Type 3 Students - *who have not succeeded in writing their research reports (6 students)*

For the questionnaires all Year Four TES (35 students), were selected and all lecturers from the English section.

5.4 Sampling Technique

As mentioned above, the research sample for this study is composed of English lecturers and different groups of TES from the Modern Languages Department. Since the study is mainly qualitative, the main goal of sampling was to find individuals who shared the same experience and therefore could describe their world in the way they perceived it.

Qualitative research focuses on describing, understanding, and clarifying a human experience and therefore qualitative studies are directed at describing the aspects that make up idiosyncratic experience rather than

determining the most likely, or mean experience within a group.
(Polkinghorne, 2005:139)

This goal was better achieved through the use of ‘*purposive sampling*’ Dörnyei (2007: 126) which is a synonym of theoretical sampling. In their influential work, Glaser and Strauss (1967) spoke about ‘*theoretical sampling*’, emphasising the fact that sampling should be a ‘*flexible, ongoing, and evolving process*’ of selecting successive respondents or sites, directed by earlier findings so that the emerging ideas and theoretical concepts can be tested and further refined. The term theoretical sampling was transferred from grounded theory to qualitative research in general and nowadays it is typically used as a synonym of purposive sampling (Silverman, 2005).

Purposive sampling in this study consisted in finding a group that could provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation with the purpose of maximising the findings. Therefore the main issue was not how big the groups were but how representative they were.

The selection of a representative sample is an important consideration for every researcher. As Dörnyei (2007: 127) argues, when using purposive sampling, one can select participants from particular sub-groups who share the same context and experience relevant to the study. Therefore, groups of lecturers and students were chosen and specific participants were selected to represent the population within the Department.

5.5 Research Instruments

As stated before, the main data collection methods were interviews. Interviews were chosen as the main research instrument because they allowed me to tap into the experiences of both lecturers and TES. Interviews can provide rich and valid data if well designed, implemented and interpreted by the researcher.

According to Charmaz (2006), obtaining rich data means seeking thick descriptions through compilation of detailed narratives from transcribed interviews. Interviews were basically focus groups with the exception of the interview with the DDAAD which consisted in a semi-structured interview. The informants were to some extent free to express their

views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as suggest some solutions to solve the problem; they could take different directions under the researcher's guidance and she tried not to interfere and influence their responses. The interviews and questionnaires were tested before the actual study took place. Among all the research instruments the interview was the one that provided more thoughtful and informative answers on sensitive issues especially from students about their lecturers. As the process of interviewing went on the researcher not only got explanations about issues raised by students but she also could read feelings and emotions expressed by them. To this end the interview provided a more complete and in-depth picture than any other instrument.

5.5.1 The interviews

According to Hyland (2002: 181), interviews enable informants to discuss their understandings of the world and express themselves freely on how they see the problem(s) from their own point of view. Consequently in qualitative research, they can be a valuable source of information. In this research the main reason for using interviews was to fulfil the three main purposes they play in education research as:

- a) The principal source of information;*
- b) A means of listing hypothesis and generating new ones;*
- c) A means of triangulation and cross-checking data.*

Data from the interviews was collected under specific categories, as referred to earlier. With the exception of the interview with the Deputy Director of Academic Affairs Department, the interviews were basically informal in order to create a more relaxed environment and get more information from the participants. Both lecturers and TES were organised in focus groups, not only to save time but also to create conditions that would facilitate participation in the discussion and so would generate more varied and solid data.

Because the main research instrument was based in qualitative research participants were helped to express their views of the phenomenon in their own words, with the researcher's indirect participation (Gall et al., 2007: 245). The role of the researcher was to guide participants in their interaction and not to interfere or speak on their behalf.

i. Interview design

As previously mentioned, participation in this research entailed participants to take part in focus group interviews at a time and place that was convenient for both participants and the researcher. As for the design of the interview the researcher was inspired by Miles & Huberman (1984) who define qualitative research as an interactive process in which data are collected in response to some initial questions. Data are then reduced and interpreted, and further more specific and clarification questions are set up to generate more data collection and analysis. The interviews in this study were organised under four main headings:

- a) Students' academic achievements and course expectations;*
- b) Lecture delivery and assessment procedures;*
- c) Resource availability; and*
- d) Research supervision.*

Questions were then devised under these four main headings and during the interview respondents were free to randomly discuss the issues depending on the direction they took under the guidance of the researcher. The researcher was mindful not to lead respondents into preconceived answers (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In other words, the respondents guided the direction of the interview by the extent of their willingness and enthusiasm to discuss the topics.

Overall a constructivist approach was taken so as to enable respondents to explain what they meant by using some terms, as well as to elaborate a bit more on what seemed to be a bit confusing in terms of meaning (Charmaz, 2006: 33). However, the researcher tried to keep a balance between what the respondents said and the information she was looking for.

Before analysing and interpreting the data gathered the researcher did the transcription of the interviews. Miller & Crabtree (1999: 104) argue that no matter how accurate and elaborate a transcript is, it will never capture the reality of the recorded situation. To them, transcriptions are '*frozen interpretive constructs*' where the nonverbal aspects of the original communication such as facial expressions, intonation, and body language are left out.

In the transcription process these materials underwent several editing phases to attain '*clarity, completeness and conciseness*' (Dörnyei, 2007: 246). Thus, unnecessary items were omitted. These included the researcher's own questions and comments, false starts, interjections and so forth. Dörnyei, 2007: 249), postulates that the transcription process

consists essentially of leaving out our questions, using standard spelling, creating sentences and paragraphs structure, leaving out extra things, adding missing things, and possibly reorganising certain sections to keep common subject matter together. For us this was one of the most demanding and interesting part of the research. However, for reasons of practicality, we decided to limit the changes we made to the transcripts. The intention was to keep the voices of the interviewees ‘alive’ and as natural as possible, and to maintain a sense of their presence. This is the reason why the transcripts are used as appendices. As the language of the Deputy Director of Academic Affairs Department is other than English, the original version of the transcript was translated into Portuguese in order to facilitate the process of interviewing. The translation is attached in appendix J.

ii. **Pilot testing the Interview Schedule**

In any study, research instruments need to be carefully designed and piloted to ensure reliability and avoid ambiguity. The research instruments were tried on groups which are similar to the ones that took part in the study and participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the significance of the information that they provided. (Tuckman, 1994). The main objective for piloting the instruments was to avoid ‘real’ respondents facing difficulties when participating in the study. The wording and format of questions was also checked to see if there was a logical sequence between them, and some changes were made. We also took the opportunity to check small but relevant things such as the opening and the ending of the sessions as well as the language used to address the participants.

In order to pilot the instruments the researcher worked with a group of French lecturers and TES which is different from the one used in the actual study. What follows is the composition of the groups:

- ❖ Four (4) core course subject lecturers from the French section, (Academic Reading, Academic Writing and Research Methodology I and II);
- ❖ Six (6) lecturers from the French Section;
- ❖ The person in charge of the Head of Academic Affairs Department;
- ❖ 18 TES from the French section, being:
 - *Type 1 Students* - who have successfully finished their research reports (6 students)
 - *Type 2 Students*- who are currently writing their research reports (6 students)
 - *Type 3 Students*- who have not succeeded in writing their research reports (6 students).

The following is a table showing the days and places where the interviews and questionnaires were conducted:

Table 5.1 Days and places where the interviews and questionnaires were conducted

Date	Group	Type of instrument	Time	Venue	Hand in day
01/09/11	<i>The Head of Academic Affairs Department</i>	<i>Interview</i>	7:00-8:30	<i>Office</i>	NA
01/09/11	<i>Lecturers</i>	<i>Focus group interviews</i>	9:00-10:40	<i>Modern Languages Department</i>	NA
05/09/11	<i>Students (Type 1)</i>	<i>Focus group interviews</i>	7:30-9:00	<i>Modern Languages Department</i>	N/A
05/09/11	<i>Students (Type 2)</i>	<i>Focus group interviews</i>	10:00-11:30	<i>Modern Languages Department</i>	NA
06/09/11	<i>Students (Type 3)</i>	<i>Focus group interviews</i>	7:30-9:00	<i>Modern Languages Department</i>	NA
07/09/11	<i>Students (Type 1,2,3)</i>	<i>Questionnaires</i>	7:30-8:30	<i>Room 2/6</i>	Same day

NA-not applicable

Throughout the interview the researcher tried to get closer to the respondents by asking questions such as: ‘How long have you been studying at TTI nr 200? When did you finish your course work? How long have been writing your research report?’ She also tried to probe some answers by asking for example: ‘From what you have said you took more than 4 years to complete your course work. Why?’

The researcher also asked other questions that might help me to understand the respondents’ experiences and opinions about the process of teaching and supervision. ‘How would you describe the relationship between students and supervisors? Why do you think some students take longer to complete their research reports?’ The interviews were closed with questions that solicited positive responses or respondents suggestions to the problem being investigated. ‘Please feel free to mention some of the aspects that were not covered during the interview. In summary what would you suggest to minimise this problem?’

At this stage respondents were assured about confidentiality and anonymity as well as informed about the need for the recording of the interview prior to their signing the recording consent forms (refer to Appendices O to U). The researcher also tried to create a good and

friendly atmosphere, offering a glass of water, some tea and coffee as well as some sweets and biscuits that respondents could take during the interview.

At the end of the interview the researcher mentioned that the conversation was just the beginning of a conversation in which discussion could go a bit further should there be a need to clarify some aspects or get more information from respondents. Surprisingly the majority of the respondents manifested their willingness and readiness to come back to the researcher if necessary, and both lecturers and TES provided her with rich and varied insights some of which she was not expecting at all. As the interviews were designed under similar headings, it was quite easy for her to compare different views, from different segments of data (lecturers, TES, DDAAD about the same issue, facilitating in this way the triangulation of data. The term triangulation relates to *“the use of multiple data-collection methods, data sources, analysis, or theories as corroborative evidence for the validity of qualitative research findings”*, (Gall et al., 2007: 657). In other words, data from the three main segments was analysed, interpreted and this helped cross check the information obtained and come up with more trustworthy findings.

Piloting the interviews was quite a useful exercise as it helped check if the questions sounded right and also if they were clear and understandable (Brace, 2008: 164). Therefore some changes were made. Most of the changes made were basically based on the combination of two questions that seemed to be addressing the same question, but there were also some instances where the questions did not provide the expected answer and therefore they were cut off. What follows are some examples of questions that were combined because they carried almost the same meaning.

1. *What do you think about the resources in the library and how adequate are they in helping students write their dissertation?*
2. *What do you think about the computer lab and how adequate it is in helping students write their dissertations?*
3. *How many students have you supervised so far and how many have successfully completed their dissertations?*

About 10 questions were taken out from the interview schedule and others were re-written to make more sense to respondents. The main changes took place under the research literacy practices section where with the exception of the first question, 3 more questions were added to address the issue of literacy practices. See appendix D.

The focus group interviews were a bit longer because participants were quite excited to discuss the issues and the researcher just let them speak their minds. The face-to-face interview was more direct and took less time than was expected. In general the feedback helped identify some of the double-barrelled questions as well as the loaded ones. Therefore, some questions have been better structured in order to get the right information from the students. For example, the researcher asked “*What do you think about the resources in the library? Are they helpful?*” instead of “*What do you think about the library?*” and “*Some lecturers are of the opinion that research report should be taken out from the course. Do you agree them?*” instead of the previous question which was “*Do you think the research report should be taken out from the course?*”

Regarding the comments on the layout and type of questions asked respondents were unanimous in saying that they thought there were no major changes to be made although two lecturers raised as a problem of some similarities between some questions, but they did not mention the questions. The researcher then had to double-check the questions and made some changes. For the interviews schedule see appendices E to J.

5.5.2 The Questionnaires

Questionnaires also need to be carefully designed and piloted to ensure reliability and to avoid ambiguity. That is to say that the questions that one designs for the questionnaire need to be directly related to the phenomenon under investigation.

For the questionnaires the research participants were:

- ❖ Lecturers from the French Sector (only five lecturers were available)
- ❖ *Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3* French teacher education students.

It should be emphasised that due to shortage of lecturers, the participants were the same for both questionnaires and interviews. For TES we tried to diversify the groups and have different participants in the questionnaires and interviews. As there was no similar group to observe, we did not do any classroom observation to test the research instrument. The other reason for not piloting this research instrument is that classroom observation was introduced as a research tool later on as suggested by the research proposal external examiners. For document analysis some students’ final research reports were analysed in terms of general layout and content, looking at the ways that students address the research topic, their ability to tell the reader what the information is about, the ability to provide evidence and support the

main ideas, the logical sequencing of ideas as well as the general structure of the text. It should be emphasized that the research proposals and research reports selected during the piloting phase, helped me design the research instrument for textual analysis.

i. Questionnaire design

The use of questionnaires in the research field has become one of the most popular research instruments applied in the social sciences. The fact that questionnaires are “...*relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processable has made questionnaires very popular*”. Dörnyei (2007: 102).

However, in spite of their popularity, even in situations where there is a bit of common sense and good word processing software and skills, there is still a lot to learn concerning the theory of questionnaire design and processing. Just as it happens in real life where not every question elicits the right answer, it is also true that in any research not all the questionnaires lead to the achievement of the proposed or needed information.

Dörnyei (2007) suggests three types of questions that researchers should use depending on the objectives of the study:

- ❖ *Factual questions*: usually used to find out certain facts about the respondents such as their age, gender, place of birth, marital status, etc.)
- ❖ *Behavioural questions*: which are used to find out what the respondents are doing or have done in the past, focusing on their actions, habits, lifestyles and personal history.
- ❖ *Attitudinal questions*: used to find out what people think about ‘their world’, including their attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests and values.

In this study the attitudinal questions constitute the basis for the design of the questionnaire, with a combination of behavioural questions. Apart from the timing of questions to be asked, there are also some aspects that one needs to consider in designing a questionnaire: the main themes to be covered, the length of the questionnaire, the type of questions, and the time needed to fill it in. We took into account all these aspects, and we tried to use the same categories as in the interviews but with slight differences.

Dörnyei (2007: 102) posits that “... *most questionnaires used in applied linguistic research are somewhat ad hoc instruments, and questionnaires that yield scores with sufficient (and well-documented) reliability and validity are not that easy to come by in our field*”. However, the information gathered from questionnaires could complement information from other sources and made the findings more trustworthy.

He postulates that,

Although most researchers tend to use qualitative and quantitative methods in supplementary and complementary forms, what [they are advocating] is a true interplay between the two. The qualitative should direct the quantitative and the quantitative feedback into the qualitative in a circular, but at the same time evolving, process with each method contributing to the theory in ways that only each can (Dörnyei, 2007: 43).

The question is not whether to use one research instrument or another, but to see how they can work together towards the development of a theory. However, for the purposes of this research, there is a combination of interviews (the main research instrument), with questionnaires, classroom observation and textual analysis which constitute a second source of information for data collection.

ii. Pilot testing the questionnaire

As mentioned earlier, before the actual study took place the researcher tested the questionnaire with groups different from the ones that took part in the study. Before the questionnaires were distributed she had a short meeting with respondents to inform them about the purpose of the study. Respondents were also informed that permission had been given by the General Director and they also had to sign a consent letter. The issues of confidentiality and/or anonymity were addressed and ensured by explaining that there would not be ways of identifying the subjects as no names would be mentioned should the researcher need to use that data.

Unlike the students’ questionnaires that were filled in the researcher’s presence in their respective classrooms, the lecturers’ questionnaires were handed in the following day and the researcher asked them to provide her with some written comments about the layout, relevance of questions and sequence. Unfortunately none of the lecturers did that.

The purpose of piloting the questionnaires was to check the time the target audience would need to complete them, the clarity to the respondents of the questions included in the questionnaire and to see whether key questions could lead to a varied range of responses as required.

In order to get clearer feedback from respondents we decided to set up some follow-up questions to help them evaluate the instruments:

- ❖ *Were the instructions clear?*
- ❖ *Did you object to answering any question? Why?*
- ❖ *Was the layout of the questionnaire clear? Attractive?*
- ❖ *Do you think the questions match the objectives of the study?*
- ❖ *Any other comments?*

TES complained that the questionnaire was too long and some questions were quite similar in terms of meaning. That was indeed a very good input and the researcher had to revise the questionnaire and make some corrections and changes. As previously stated there was no classroom observation at this stage.

Being a novice researcher it must be confessed that piloting the research instruments was a very exciting experience because it helped anticipate problems and correct most of the mistakes found before the study took place. That was a great lesson ever learnt and the researcher would recommend everyone go through this process in order to improve the quality of the instruments being used as well as the type of data gathered and consequently the findings that have to be reached. For the questionnaires see appendices K and L.

5.5.3 Classroom observation

Any study that examines how teaching and learning takes place in context, uses classroom observation as the one of the research instruments. Wragg (1999) describes classroom research as a key research instrument in understanding teachers and lecturers behaviours during the teaching and learning process. Classroom research dates from 1920s to 1930s, in the United States of America, with researchers seeking to understand the effectiveness of teacher behaviours and teacher talk. Modern classroom research, however, started much later in the 1950s, as part of the teacher training courses when trainers decided that they needed

proper observation instruments and quality teaching in order to evaluate their TES' performance in the teaching practice sessions.

With the emergence of the so called '*methods comparison studies*' by Nunan (2005) that consisted of comparing different teaching methods, for example the Direct Method to more traditional approaches in the language teaching area, classroom research became one of the commonest used research instruments in educational research. From that time on, a salient move from teacher training to more basic research was noticed. This resulted in a refinement of the instruments used for classroom observation. Observation schedules and schemes which were primarily descriptive were replaced by more elaborate checklists that served descriptive purposes and a number of standardized observation schemes were published. The most famous scheme published was Flander's Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) (see Alwright & Baley, 1991).

There are many different places that can be considered as being classrooms, for example, seminar rooms, language labs, computer rooms, lecture theatres etc. Therefore defining a classroom is not a straight forward process, and perhaps the best thing would be to rely on our own concept of the classroom and include in this category any physical space in which planned teaching takes place. It should be emphasised that in this study the meaning of the word, classroom, does not cover the notion of classroom research relating to internet-based environments. In this study the classroom is the physical space where lectures are administered independently of the size, acoustic conditions, illumination, layout, type of furniture, etc.

Dörnyei (2007: 174) posits that "...the classroom- and most often the foreign/ second language classroom- is a primary research site in applied linguistic investigations and the unique features of this context have a strong bearing on the way we can conduct research in it". However, in classroom research a wide range of research tools can be used such as surveys, ethnographic research, case studies, etc. Dörnyei (2007) presents three aspects to consider in conducting classroom research, which require special attention:

- ❖ *The research method of classroom observation-* which is a highly developed data collection technique typically used in examining the learning environments.

- ❖ *The prominence that most classroom researchers place on conducting mixed methods research-* in order for researchers to be able to understand the “*intricate tapestry*” of classroom events mixing methods is an indispensable methodology in classroom research.
- ❖ *The challenges imposed by the use of this research tool-* Doing high quality classroom research can be quite challenging and difficult to manage. Dorniey (2007) states that

Although doing good research is never easy, it appears that the inherent difficulties of classroom investigations are a salient feature of this particular research type, usually underplayed by research reports and methodology texts. (Dörnyei, 2007: 177).

Classroom observation is a valuable research instrument for any study that examines how teaching and learning takes place in context provided that the researcher takes into consideration the above three main aspects directly or indirectly implicit in it. As Dörnyei (2007) posits,

Contemporary classroom research, both in educational psychology and in applied linguistics, is striving for a situated understanding of learning, documenting, and analysing the dynamic interplay of various classroom processes and conditions that contribute to variation in learning outcomes (Dörnyei, 2007: 178).

In her overview on classroom SLA research, Lightbown (2000: 438) states that the existing various classroom research projects share the unilateral intention to identify and understand the roles of teachers and students during class interaction, the impact that a certain type of instruction may have on EFL/SL learning, as well as the main factors that promote or prevent students' learning.

Classroom observation is a very important tool in data gathering because it allows the researcher to see directly what people do without having to rely on what they say they do. However, teachers and lecturers in general tend not to perform well when they are being observed. In addition, observation is a skill that requires some sort of training from the observer/researcher's point of view. The observer/researcher needs to know how to observe, what to look for and how to make use of the information obtained from the observation.

From a research perspective, observation is very different from interviewing as it provides direct information rather than self accounts from the participants. In this study, the researcher was minimally involved in the class, and played the role of a ‘non-participant observer’. She observed Morse & Richards’ (2002: 179) argument that, “*no observer is entirely a participant, and it is impossible to observe in almost every non-experimental situation without some participation*”.

The observation was mainly structured, based on a classroom observation scheme to fill in. However, there were some instances where the researcher combined it with unstructured observation based on field notes. Classroom observation took place during the Second Teaching Semester in 2012, and the subjects observed were: Research Methodology II, Academic Reading and Writing. Each class consisted of two sessions lasting 45 minutes each. This research instrument was meant to provide the necessary information to answer the two main research questions, namely:

- ❖ *In what manner do TTI nr 200 TES acquire academic and research literacies? and*
- ❖ *In what ways does curriculum alignment impact on the production of research reports?*

The first question is related to Biggs and Tang’s (2007) idea of high level engagement of students and the second one is related to Biggs’ (1999) idea of constructive alignment and the 3P Model.

According to the documents from the Academic Affairs Department, for the period between 2006-2011, among the applied competencies and knowledge that TES should have acquired from the Academic reading and writing and the Research methodology courses are:

- ❖ *A comprehensive and systematic knowledge in the field of teaching as well as in depth knowledge in their areas of specialisation;*
- ❖ *A strong and critical understanding of the existing theories in education and not only as well as an ability to critique current research and make their own judgements based on evidence;*
- ❖ *Ability to identify, analyse, compare and deal with complex real-world problems using evidence and theory driven- arguments;*

- ❖ *An understanding of a range of research methods and the ability to select them appropriately for a particular research propose;*
- ❖ *Ability to engage with research and professional literature as well as to evaluate quantitative and qualitative data with a critical eye behind it;*
- ❖ *Ability to do oral presentation for different types of audience.*

To sum up, the above mentioned knowledge shows the level of academic and research literacy that is required from TES at the end of the fourth year. Therefore both professional and academic competencies are required. Our main purpose was therefore to check the academic competencies of TES at the end of their course work, which is Year Four. Professional competencies were also addressed but not as deeply as the academic competencies.

We also checked the students' background knowledge, i.e. the type of knowledge they were likely to achieve in the lessons, the level of engagement and the kind of output they provided. From the lecturer's side we looked at the process of delivering the content, the kind of activities students were exposed to and the kind of work they produced including the research proposals as well as the type of feedback and length of time it took for the lecturer to give back the students' work. At the beginning we planned to observe all the lessons in all the three subjects during the second semester. About 12 lessons were supposed to be observed in each subject; however, due to some constraints, which were out of our reach, the researcher could only observe 6 lessons in Academic Reading, 5 in Academic Writing and 4 in Research Methodology. The reasons for not being able to observe the total number of lessons derives from the fact that most of the time the lecturers excused themselves to be observed, and sometimes they missed the lessons without prior notice.

Lecturers tried to skip the lessons on the days set up for observation because according to one of them they were too busy at other institutions that they did not have time to prepare their lessons properly and therefore they were not ready to be observed. There were also some instances where the researcher had to leave the class because lecturers especially the Research Methodology lecturer decided to set up lessons based on revision by asking students to study their materials and ask for clarification should there be a need. The

researcher knew they were doing this to escape from being observed and she did not comment on anything with them. She just stayed in the classroom until the end of the lesson.

It should be concluded that although classroom observation was used as a secondary data gathering instrument, it is assumed that the information gathered added some extra information to that one from the other research instruments and increased in this way the validity and generalisability of the findings. It is worth mentioning that adding structure to observation through the use of an observation scheme made the process more reliable and produced results that are comparable across classrooms at TTI nr 200, and perhaps over time. The structured observation guidelines made the process of documenting the process more doable and easier, and helped focus on specific key aspects of the phenomenon under study. See appendix M for the classroom observation sheet.

5.5.4 Textual analysis

Textual analysis constitutes an important source of information. Rather than relying on what participants say, textual analysis allows us to see what participants actually do in their real world. Qualitative data is typically textual, and the qualitative categories used in textual analysis are “*not pre-determined but derived inductively*” from the data analysed ((Dörnyei, 2007).

Textual analysis has recently become associated with qualitative research and we can therefore easily forget that it actually originates from a quantitative analytical method of examining written texts that involves the counting of instances of words, phrase, or grammatical structures that fall into specific categories (Dörnyei, 2007: 245).

However, for the purposes of this study we are using a combination of the two. As mentioned before, the texts that were analysed were samples of students’ research proposals and research reports. In order to analyse these documents it was necessary to set up some criteria. As textual analysis is mainly based on non-numeric data, we applied a content based analytical process. Apart from the content of the documents, the general organisation of the chapters and layout of students’ research proposals and projects were analysed at both the *sentence level* to check the syntactic, morphological and lexical problems that students had (Kroll, 2001), and at the *discourse level* to check their ability to display features of organisation and coherence.

At the sentence level every syntactic, lexical and morphological error was identified and grouped into categories such as verb noun collocation. In order to decide whether an error was made Kroll's (2001) criteria in analysing her students' compositions was used. The procedure to determine whether an error was made, consisted of identifying what lexical or grammatical items deviated from the Standard English norm (Kroll, 2001); then errors were classified under categories. For the specific purposes of this study the analysis at the sentence level were left out and the study concentrated on the discourse level analysis which is typically qualitative.

As Dörnyei (2007) maintains, one of the serious problems in qualitative research can be too much data collection, which is augmented by the fact that qualitative data are "messy records" (Richards, 2005: 34) usually consisting of a mixture of field notes, transcripts of various recordings as well as documents of a diverse nature and length. "As qualitative data expands quickly novice researchers often find that the real challenge is not to generate enough data but rather to generate useful data". (Dörnyei, 2007: 125). It was therefore thought that analysing the texts at the discourse level would be enough to provide the information needed to complement the information from other research instruments.

At the discourse level the analysis was based on the ability of students to display features of organisation and coherence in their papers. The criteria for analysis were based on Connor's (1990) topic analysis. This analysis was considered in two different instances: the global coherence (what the essay is about) and the local coherence (how sentences build meaning in relation to each other and to the overall topic). This concept was adapted to include Kroll's (2001) scoring guidelines and resulted in the following assessment rubric:

- ❖ *Focus on the topic*- the ability to address the essay question.
- ❖ *Stressing the main idea*- the ability to tell the reader what the issue is about.
- ❖ *Supporting the main ideas*- the ability to provide evidence to support the main idea/s.
- ❖ *Logical sequencing of ideas*- in Connor's words (1990), "*local cohesion*", the ability to look at the way sentences build meaning in relation to each other and the overall text.
- ❖ *Identifiable schematic structure*- to check whether the structure of the text is compatible to the genre in use. See (Kroll, 2001: 144).

Textual analysis helped understand TES' academic writing and research practice problems as well as the core subject lecturers and supervisors' assessment procedures.

5.6 Validity and Generalisability

Every research needs to account for validity and generalisability. These issues will now be addressed.

5.6.1 Validity

One of the criticisms of qualitative studies is that they are weak when it comes to validating data. See for example (Dörnyei, 2007), (Verma, & Mallick, 1999) and (Best & Kahn, 1993). The challenge for qualitative researchers has been how to convince readers to believe in the results of their studies. The problem is that in qualitative studies everything looks so important that novice researchers end up doing '*unfocused explorations of the social world*' Silverman (2005: 79) that end up in an authentic disaster.

This does not mean that qualitative data does not provide valuable results, what Silverman is trying to do is to alert us to the dangerousness of collecting too much data some of which is not necessarily needed. Although researchers need to be careful and selective in collecting data it is worth remembering that qualitative data is by definition '*less systematic and standardised in its data collection approach*' (Richards, 2005: 20) than quantitative research. To put it simply, qualitative data can sometimes become 'messy' in its content if not well organised and selected. In fact because the researcher was aware of this dangerousness she tried to be quite careful in selecting the information.

According to Richards, (2005: 20) the messiness of the rich data that researchers are aiming at in qualitative data derives from the fact that the researchers' reflections are based on complex real-life situations as far as data collection is concerned. Therefore multiple strategies, multiple directions at multiple levels help reduce the quantity of data to collect and increase its usefulness in providing relevant information for the study.

In planning this study special attention was given to ensuring the validity of the findings. Thus the use of multiple research instruments so as not to rely only on the main research instrument for the study which is the interview. Using multiple research instruments helps reach converging lines of enquiry. Such convergence of evidence leads to an important aspect which consists of data triangulation. The use of triangulation increased the validity of the findings because the multiple sources of information provided multiple measures of the same phenomenon. In other words the researcher could analyse, understand and interpret the phenomenon from different perspectives.

According to Hithcock & Hughes (1995) and Maxwell (2002) the term validity in scientific research refers to the degree to which the findings described by the researcher are the real representation of the data collected. Owing to the need to ensure that the findings of the research were trustworthy, the issue of validity was taken into consideration and the major question that was kept in mind was whether by the use of the selected research instruments one could investigate what she wanted to investigate (Henning, 2004: 147), and reach the aims of the investigation.

While some discourse analysts reject this term, others such as Lupton (1992), Ollerenshaw & Creswell (2000) and Roberts & Sarangi (2005) specify criteria for achieving validity in discourse analysis. Lupton (1992) suggests that there are several ways of validating one's findings such as the inclusion of actual textual material (the data) in a report or paper, which provides the opportunity for other researchers to follow the researcher's interpretation and the way of reasoning which should be clearly explained.

Ollerenshaw, & Creswell (2000) and Roberts & Sarangi (2005) indicate that replicating the methods of data analysis has been represented as a way of ensuring validity in discourse analysis by following a step-by-step method. Maxwell (2002) suggests some types of validity in ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings. In this study interpretive validity is the main category that was achieved through seeking to understand and interpret the information gathered from the interviewees' perspective in their own world.

The researcher was mindful of bias that could distort the meaning of the information obtained. In order to avoid bias she tried not to force respondents' views into her own pre-conceived ideas and assumptions. She also tried not to over emphasise some of the questions

and also not to suggest positive or negative answers through the use of facial expressions or gestures.

It should be admitted that it is quite impossible to achieve perfect validity in measuring human beings' experiences and beliefs; however, we should strive to increase that validity. This is what the researcher attempted to do in this study.

5.6.2 Generalisability

The term generalisability refers to the transferability of findings from a specific piece of research to other contexts of the same type. However, the process of transferability is not as linear as one would think, for example, the research sites might be similar but the target population being studied may be different due to the different worlds in which the research takes place as well as in the participants' views about the problem being studied. Thus, depending on the characteristics of the contexts to which results might be transferred there will always slight differences.

However, Richards & Morse (2007: 194) are of the opinion that although generalisability is problematic and complex in qualitative research, "*readers will be able to extract from a well-written report those elements of the findings that they find to be transferable and that may be extended to other settings*". Although we acknowledge that generalisation is more complicated for qualitative research, in the light of Richards and Morse's (op.cit) we argue that the findings from this research can be extended or adapted to other contexts of the same type.

In order to ensure generalisability of findings we used triangulation in order to increase the validity of findings and consequently the transferability of the same findings to other contexts. The purpose of using triangulation '*...is usually the generalisation of results*' (Flick, 2007: 118). We tried to work within parameters that facilitated the possibility of generalising the findings from this study, by keeping in mind questions such as: To which other contexts could the developed arguments be transferred? In which other contexts could the developed argument be valid?

Therefore, the steps taken throughout the whole process of selecting the research instruments for data collection, pilot testing the instruments before the actual research took

place, correcting and changing some parts of the research instruments have given us enough confidence to believe that the findings can be transferred and can be generalised to other contexts and studies. To use Richards & Morse (2007: 194) words again, “...readers will be able to extract from a well- written report those elements of the findings that they find to be transferable and that may be extended to other contexts.”

5.7 Ethical Considerations

According to Flick (2007: 122) ethical considerations are becoming increasingly relevant in the context of research. Most research has to be approved by institutional review boards.

Since qualitative research is almost always research with human beings, it needs to be approved by institutional Ethics Committees before the study takes place. Even in countries, like Angola, where research ethics have not been formally implemented, there is now a growing awareness of the need to protect research participants, and set up mutual conditions of respect, confidentiality and anonymity.

Dörnyei, (2007: 63) posits that “*Social research - including research in education - concerns people’s lives in the social world and therefore it inevitably involves ethical issues.*” Such issues are more important in qualitative than in quantitative research because, in qualitative research one enters into the private life of the participants by tapping into their personal views, as well as sensitive or intimate matters. Thus there is a need to address ethical issues not only in qualitative but also in quantitative studies.

In order to fulfil the ethical considerations, and make this research more participant-friendly, a letter requesting permission to conduct the research was addressed to the General Director of the TTI nr 200 in Luanda where the research took place and an information sheet was attached to that letter. Because the permission from the General Director did not mean that lecturers and students would promptly support the research we had to obtain individual consents and permission from both lecturers and students. We also informed them about the objectives of the study and their role within it. To this end an information sheet was

distributed to participants, in addition to the researcher's own verbal explanation to help them decide whether to participate or not.

Letters requesting consent were issued to the participants both for the interviews and questionnaires. As for the participants, they received from me the following documents: (1) an information sheet, (2) a consent form to indicate consent to participate in the study, (3) a form to give consent to fill in the questionnaire, (4) a consent form to give consent to being interviewed and (5) a form consenting to be recorded. See appendices W to AB. Participants were also briefed on the necessity of using a digital recorder during the interview.

Participants were promised and assured that their identities were going to be protected and that the recorded information was going to be kept safe and not used beyond the purposes of the study. Participants were also encouraged to ask for any clarification they needed and they were requested to formally sign a consent form. For the consent to use of a digital recorder they had to sign the respective consent forms.

The issues of anonymity and confidentiality were also taken into consideration. Dörnyei (2007: 65) posits that a basic dilemma in educational research concerns the fact that although participants should remain anonymous, researchers often need to identify the respondents "*to be able to match their performances on various instruments or tasks*". It was, therefore, our obligation to maintain the same level of confidentiality as promised to participants at the beginning and at the end of the study.

Dörnyei (2007: 68) presents some principles that researchers need to observe in their studies:

- ❖ *We must make sure that we do not promise a higher degree of confidentiality than what we can achieve;*
- ❖ *The right of confidentiality should always be respected when no clear understanding to the contrary has been reached;*
- ❖ *We must make sure-especially with recorded/transcribed data- that the respondents are not traceable or identifiable.*

These principles were followed and the participants' identities were protected; assuring them of confidentiality. Rossman & Rallis (2003) posit that confidentiality has got

two elements: to protect the privacy (identities, names and roles of the participants within their world) and to hold in confidence what they say and share with me and other participants in the research. Therefore, in this study confidentiality regarding participants' names and the information gathered in the process of data collection were guaranteed.

As a novice educational researcher, the researcher tried to confine myself to the guiding principles from the American Education Research Association (AERA, 2002, in Dörnyei 2007: 67) describing the researchers' general responsibilities:

- ❖ *Educational researchers must not fabricate, falsify, or misrepresent authorship, evidence, data, findings, or conclusions.*
- ❖ *Educational researchers must not knowingly or negligently use their professional roles for fraudulent purposes.*
- ❖ *Educational researchers should attempt to report their findings to all relevant stakeholders, and should refrain from keeping secret or selectively communicating their findings.*

Being aware of all these principles, we tried to confine ourselves to them, so as to improve the validity of the findings in this study. As the research did not involve vulnerable individuals such as children aged below eighteen there was no need to ask for consent from parents. Although the researcher had a matriculation number- 9910494H, an ethics clearance letter was granted by the Committee of the University of Witwatersrand to conduct this research under the protocol number- 2011ECE142C. See appendix O.

5.8 Data Collection

Before collecting data, some arrangements were made with the lecturers, the TES and the DDAAD. For instance some negotiation with them for the most suitable day and time to meet for the focus group interviews, as well as for the questionnaires took place. However, there were some challenges in collecting data using questionnaires; for instance it was quite difficult to include students who have completed their studies and therefore are out of the system.

All the sessions were tape-recorded and field-notes for all of them were kept to avoid interference should be avoided during the interview so as not to distort participants' attention and concentration in the discussion. The field notes were of great importance as they served to record the progression of the sessions, mainly the behaviour that students displayed during the activities and they also served as a reminder to get back to points where some clarification was needed. Particular attention was given to the extent to which students were able to demonstrate their own opinions and ideas about the problem.

For data management purposes the transcripts were dated using a computer word processor and saved in computer files for further reference and/or retrieval. For easier reading and consultation hard copies were produced and they were kept safely. Transcripts and field notes were clearly indexed in the files for quick location and easy access. For the interview transcripts see appendices V, X,W, Y, Z, and AA. Participants in the focus group interviews were not the same as those who filled in the questionnaires. Interviews were conducted over a period of *two weeks* and participants were given three weeks to return the questionnaires.

During and after the interviews some water, tea, coffee, soft drinks, and snacks were offered to increase participants' motivation although participants were not expecting refreshments. This helped to create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. To sum up, one of the biggest challenges faced during this period was caused by some lecturers' delay in handing in the questionnaires, on the one hand, and problems in gathering students together for the focus group interviews, on the other hand. Being the Head of the Department, the researcher tried to be as courteous as possible and to resist imposing the authority of her position, but instead to reduce the distance between the participants and the researcher. The researcher also tried to be the first to arrive and the last to leave. On the whole, the data collection phase was very positive based on the cooperation and willingness of participants to contribute to the research.

The data obtained from several informants (lecturers, TES, the Deputy Director of Academic Affairs Department), was analysed through the process of 'triangulation'; in this case the description of the actual context in which participants live, their experience with the problem, the suggestions and ideas provided by participants, and her own experience as a lecturer and trainer were cross checked and contrasted in order to get an approximate picture of what is exactly happening with regard to the major difficulties that students are facing in writing their research proposals and/or research reports and what kind of solutions the

students present. As Robson (1993: 383) maintains, triangulation improves the quality of data and accuracy of findings, and this is one of the purposes of this investigation. Another important tool that was used in the analysis of data is the ‘explanation building’ strategy that, according to Robson (1983: 381) provides an explanation of what is happening on the site and what should actually be happening.

Interviews were basically semi-structured, consisting mainly of open -ended questions such as, (*How many years did you take to conclude the coursework? Why? Which stage are you in writing your research report? What problems did you face or are you facing in writing your research report? What do you think about the assessment procedures during course work? What do you think about the resources in the library? What do you think about the computer room?*). The ideas and opinions obtained from the students at the end of the study constituted an important source of information regarding the actual students’ needs, and some of them were translated into the recommendations and conclusions.

It should be emphasised that given that the sample is relatively small, the information generated from this study, rather than leading to general conclusions can only suggest some strategies needed for successful academic and research literacy practices at this institution, and serve as a basis for further research in the field. Similarly, such data provides an understanding of what abilities lecturers need in order to assist students in the development of their academic and research literacy practices.

5.8.1 Interview data

As mentioned before, four main groups were organised for the interview data. With the exception of the interview with the Deputy Director for Academic Affairs, all the interviews took the form of focus group interviews. Focus group interviews were with three different groups of TES, core course subject lecturers and general English subject lecturers. TES’ groups were divided into three different Types, Type 1, 2, and 3.

5.8.2 Focus group interview with students and lecturers

A) Interview with students:

The students’ interview was organised under four main categories:

- a) *Students’ academic achievements and course expectations;*
- b) *Lecture delivery and assessment procedures;*

- c) *Resource availability; and*
- d) *Research supervision.*

As mentioned before, the three students' groups were composed by six (6) students each, and they were selected from each corresponding population. The three groups were:

- ❖ *Students who have successfully finished their course (6 students);*
- ❖ *Students who are currently writing their research report (6 students);*
- ❖ *Students who have finished their course work some years ago but did not write their research reports, (6 students).*

The focus group interviews were organised under the four above mentioned themes. Interviews were mainly informal and semi-structured in order to create a more relaxed environment and get more information from the participants. Gall et al. (2007: 245) postulate that qualitative interviews tended to be more unstructured because the main goal of using interviews was to help participants express their views of the phenomenon in their own words, with the indirect participation of the researcher.

All the interviews were done through the medium of English but students were allowed to code switch to Portuguese if there was a need to do so. Fortunately there was no need to code switch. The information gathered from students permitted the researcher to perceive what was going on and what students felt or thought about their social, academic and professional lives especially for those who are in the process of writing their research reports and those who have not yet started. Lecturers' interviews were of great contribution and helped understand how much they were concerned with the phenomenon.

B) Interview with the Deputy Director of the Academic Affairs' Department

The Deputy Director of Academic Affairs Department was interviewed in order to see how much he was concerned about students' non-completion of research reports and what kind of action he thought should be taken in order to minimise the problem. As de Grunchy & Holness, (2007: 121) posit,

Heads of Department play, or should play, a very important role in the supervisory process of graduate students. This is often overlooked or not properly understood by all the parties involved. Many of the responsibilities of the supervisor depend in part on the support and sometimes the initiative of the HOD.

As one of the senior lecturers at the institution, the Deputy Director's comments and suggestions turned out to be very useful. The interview was basically informal and based on the same themes as stated before. As mentioned before, all the interviews were audio-recorded for further consultation and a consent letter was distributed and signed by all the participants upon the agreement to be audio-recorded.

C) Focus group interview with Lecturers

The lecturers' interview followed the same categories as the students' interviews. Five general subject lecturers (GSLE) and four content subject lecturers (CSL) were interviewed. Like the students' interviews, lecturers' interviews were informal and they took the form of focus groups. Lecturers' interviews helped understand how much they were aware and concerned with the problem and the information gathered was contrasted with that from students (triangulation) in order to find an approximate version of the actual truth and come up with more trustful findings.

The interviews were somehow informal in order to create a more relaxed environment and get more information from the participants. The role of the researcher was to guide participants in their interaction. The information gathered from the interviews with lecturers allowed us to perceive what is going on and what lecturers feel or think about their social, academic and professional lives as well as their students' difficulties in learning the subjects they teach. All the interviews were conducted through the medium of English. The interviews were transcribed and translated and data was safely kept and available for further consultation.

5.8.3 Questionnaire data

According to Dörnyei (2007: 101), "Survey studies aim at describing the characteristics of a population by examining a sample of that group..." The main instruments for data collection in survey studies are questionnaires; however, for the purposes of this study, interviews constitute the main data collection instrument combined with questionnaires, classroom observation and textual analysis.

The reason for using these three additional research instruments was to increase the level of reliability and validity of the findings. Cohen & Manion, (1996) call novice researchers' attention for the need to avoid relying on one particular research instrument.

They suggest instead the use of triangulation which involves combining different methods and different sources of information.

Triangulation helps analyse and interpret the information from different angles and it allows the researcher to approximate to the truth. Brown & Rodgers (2002: 243) state that if one can examine data from at least two research instruments, they will maximise the possibility of getting credible findings by cross-validating those findings. According to Dörnyei, (2007: 165) triangulation refers to the generation of multiple perspectives on a phenomenon by using a variety of data sources, investigators, theories, or research methods with the purpose of corroborating an overall interpretation. Triangulation has been an effective strategy to ensure research validity, that is, if a finding survives a series of tests using different approaches, it can be regarded as being more valid than a hypothesis tested on one single method only.

It should be emphasised that the term triangulation in this study refers to validation through convergence of the findings unlike in some books where triangulation is used as a synonym of mixed methods approach. Thus although triangulation has become a common and popular umbrella term with different meanings that can be related to various problems, in this study triangulation means contrasting information from more than one source to find similarities and differences and therefore to ensure validity of findings.

There are different types of triangulation. See for example, Denzin, (1978), Janesick, (1994) and Freeman, (1998), in Brown & Rodgers (2002: 243). For the purposes of this study, two types of triangulation were used: '*data triangulation*' and '*methodological triangulation*'. Data triangulation consisted of using multiple sources of information such as people with different roles in the institution (TES, Lecturers, and the Deputy Director of the Academic affairs Department) and helps "*...understand and moderate the natural biases of these people*" (Brown & Rodgers, 2002: 244).

Methodological triangulation implies using multiple data gathering procedures. In this specific context methodological triangulation was based on the use of interviews, questionnaires, classroom observation, and textual analysis (Brown & Rodgers, 2002: 244). As Robson (1993: 383) maintains, triangulation improves the quality of data and accuracy of findings, and this is one of the purposes of this study.

Dörnyei (2007: 102) presents three types of data that questionnaires can yield: *'factual questions'*, *'behavioural questions'*, and *'attitudinal questions'*. In this study, the questionnaire consists of a mixture of close and open ended questions, and most of the questions are of the type of attitudinal questions. Attitudinal questions were preferred as they helped me find what participants think about the phenomenon, phenomenon being investigated their attitudes towards it, as well as their opinions, beliefs, interests and values.

5.9 Data Analysis

The process of data collection is followed by data analysis. Data analysis is the process of making sense of the data collected and what it says about the phenomenon being studied, in this case, the academic and research literacy practices of TES.

Data was analysed under the same categories as in the questionnaires and interviews using the main aspects discussed in the literature review. Using the phenomenological approach to qualitative data analysis, the analysis was based on the interpretive philosophy to understand and interpret the content of the data. In an effort to understand participants' perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, values feelings and experience, an attempted was made to approximate respondents' reality to the existing observable reality.

This was best accomplished through the use of *'inductive thematic analysis'* of qualitative data where the main purpose is to allow the dominant and significant themes to emerge from the raw data. That means that as we were using a qualitative paradigm as the main research instrument we were fully aware of submitting ourselves to emerging patterns of data and we were free to engage with realities that went beyond our pre-established themes (Holliday, 2007: 92).

Since this is a qualitative content analysis, the qualitative categories applied in the analysis were derived through induction process while the process was occurring, rather than predetermined, as in quantitative approaches. Dörnyei, (2007: 245) reinforces this idea by stating that *"...unlike their pre-conceived quantitative counter parts, the qualitative categories used in content analysis are not predetermined but are derived inductively from the data analysed."* This explains the need to allow room for the emergent themes.

Dörnyei (2007: 246) also provides a clear distinction between quantitative and qualitative content analysis by referring to the former as '*manifest level*' analysis because it is an objective and descriptive account of the surface meaning of the data, and the latter as '*latent level*' analysis, because it concerns a second-level, interpretive analysis of the underlying deeper meaning of data. By using latent content analysis, all the collected data was dealt with using a multi-level coding system to allow the analytical process to occur efficiently. Furthermore, memos, vignettes and interviews profiles were produced throughout the process to help the next stage, i.e. interpretation, reflection, run smoothly (Dörnyei, 2007: 245-55).

In order to help organise data Holliday's (2007) thematic approach to data analysis was used. He argues, and we follow his line of reasoning, that "*... taking a purely thematic approach, in which data is taken holistically and rearranged under themes which emerge as running through its totality, is the classic way to maintain the principle of emergence.*" Holliday's (2007: 90) diagram was used to help organize the data from the interviews. What follows is a table adapted from Holliday (2007: 90) that served as a basis to data analysis.

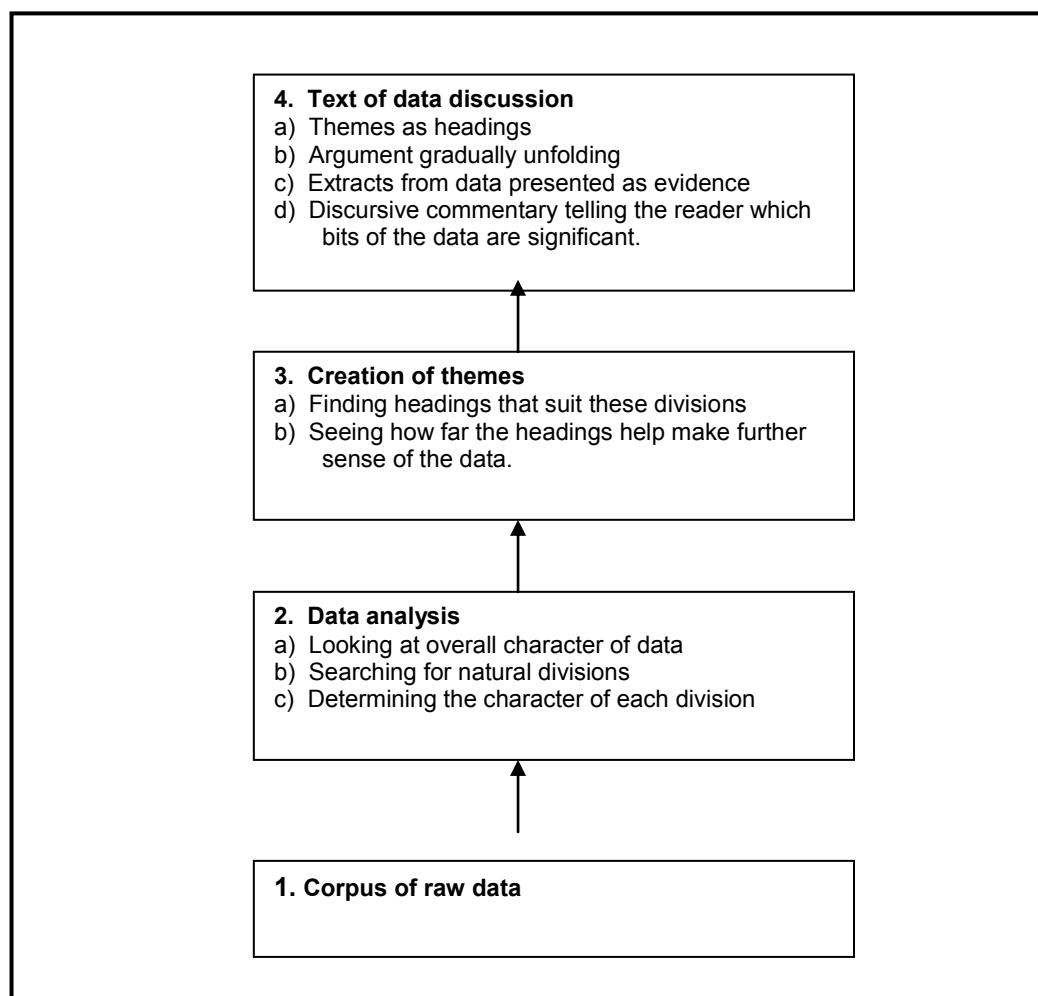


Figure 5.2 The process of data analysis¹⁷

In step one the raw data from participants was gathered using a digital recorder. The information was then elaborated and organised under different themes depending on the type of answers provided by both students and lecturers. In order to allow analytical process to occur efficiently, all the collected data underwent a multi-level coding system. Pre-coding was the first exercise to be done. At this level, the transcripts derived from the interviews were read for several times, followed by a reflection on their relevance for the study and gather the key information (Dörnyei, 2007).

In the second step transcripts were transcribed and read through to get a general view across all of them. Dörnyei (2007: 245) alerts us to the need to be unilateral in transcribing interviews and posits that “...we should always be mindful of the fact that using different

¹⁷ Adapted from Holliday (2007: 90).

transcribing conventions to process the same recording can produce very different effects in the reader". As Roberts (1997: 168) states, "...transcribers bring their own language ideology to the task. In other words, all transcription is representation, and there is no natural or objective way in which talk can be written". Robert then goes further to emphasize that every decision about how to transcribe tells a story; the question, she asks, is "*whose story and for what purpose?*" Dörnyei (2007) suggests that as there is no perfect transcription convention that one could adopt automatically we should follow a *'pick- and- mix'* procedure to select ideas from the various widely used transcriptions. Thus, one can agree with Roberts (1997) who suggests that transcribers have to use or develop a transcription system that can best represent the interactions they have recorded.

The process of reading the transcripts was not a straightforward one; first because the researcher is a member of the group and second because she has her own experience and understanding of the situation. In order to get closer to the participants messages, and get away from her own pre-conceived ideas of the situation the researcher had to re-read the transcripts for several times. Re-reading the transcripts helped in the compilation of the transcripts, leading into a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Richards & Morse 2007: 136). Reading small sections of the transcripts was also a valuable tool in the process and it helped start organising ideas into small sections.

As previously stated, the coding process was the stage in which data was organised, selected and labelled according to the groups of questions they were related to and the respondents' categories, to facilitate the interpretive phase. In other words the raw data was broken into analysable themes, noting down the relevant information, and setting it into appropriate categories (Seidman, 2006: 125). These themes were then horizontally analysed to help find out the main themes that would lead the interpretive stage. While coding the marked passages with terms related to their categories, we also labelled them with codes that designated their original transcript. We allowed the process to run inductively without interfering with any pre-conceived hypothesis or any theory from a different context (Seidman, 2006: 117).

Hence, the interviews were analysed according to the groups of participants first, and then across the groups. In other words, data was analysed separately (questionnaires and interviews apart) and contrasted with the information gathered from both TES, and lecturers.

As the main categories in both interviews and questionnaires are the same for both lecturers and TES' and lecturers' opinions and feelings were compared to see whether they matched or not. This is to say that the process occurred in two different distinct phases. The first step comprised the vertical analysis where, i.e. the data by groups of participants were analysed. The second phase consisted of the horizontal analysis, which consisted of a comparison of data from the different groups. At this stage some more instruments were applied to strengthen the ideas and convert them into '*main interpretable theme(s) of study*' (Dörnyei, 2007: 245-55). The information gathered from the other two research instruments was therefore introduced into the interpretive phase, namely the classroom observation and the textual analysis data, leading to the process of data triangulation Denzin (1978), Janesick (1994), Freeman (1998), Seidman, (2006), Dörnyei, (2007).

Finally, interpretation occurs throughout the whole analytical process, i.e. while coding, producing memos, interview profiles, the real interpretation stage, the one after the analytical phase, was the most crucial stage, since it was at this precise point that conclusions were grounded on the salient points from the interpretation done (Seidman, 2006: 128; Dörnyei, 2007: 257). At this stage, we both let the main themes from the analytical phase speak by themselves, and the researcher posed questions about what she had learnt from the interviews, while studying and interpreting the transcripts, coding them and producing files. In addition to that, she had to find out what was common in the interviewees, and how to understand and explain that. She also had to see whether there was something new that she did not know or expect before the study took place, whether there was anything surprising or which confirmed or contradicted my previous instinct, as well as how consistent the interviews were (Seidman, 2006: 128-9). A summary was produced at the end of the analysis of each of the themes (Dörnyei, 2007: 257). In order to draw up final conclusions, the most important information from the interpretation of the four research instruments, interviews, questionnaires, classroom observation and textual analysis was gathered together. Dörnyei, (2007: 257).

Being a reflective practitioner, the researcher was fully aware of the need to review the transcripts to double-check if relevant information had not been left out. The transcripts were reviewed with the main objective of finding recurring themes and critical responses (Powel et al., 2003). By critical responses it is meant responses that we did not expect, and responses which yielded somehow contradictory responses. We began to colour code segments of data

as a way of categorizing and grouping them, while at the same time reflecting on the meanings and implications contained in them with regards to the research question. Colour coding was a useful technique as it helped in determining data sets that supported or contradicted each other in terms of the themes that emerged (Powel et al., 2003: 68). This led us to the third step where we started to set up headings that suited the pre-conceived divisions. These headings were themes that we attached to the divisions. The themes generated from the theoretical research which corresponded to the headings of the divisions of the interview schedule, were used in data presentation stage. Finally, the identified themes gave form and structure for data presentation and that enabled us to jump to chapter five. Practically speaking, step four constitutes a bridge from data presentation to data interpretation and writing. From data presentation, thick descriptions were made through the articulation of interconnections of different data segments from the four sources of information, namely TES and lecturers' questionnaires, TES and lecturers' interviews, classroom observation and textual analysis of some TES' research proposals and research reports.

5.10 Summary

This chapter has outlined the research design, the methods of data collection, and a detailed explanation of the piloting process has been provided especially with regards to issues of validity, generalisability. Ethical considerations were addressed and discussed. The methods used are primarily based on what the literature says about survey research and were consistent with the qualitative and quantitative paradigms. While it is obvious the danger of drawing generalisations on the basis of very few students, it could be argued that the insight gained from critical analyses of this intensive process as well as the students and lecturers' accounts, is likely to enhance teachers' sensitivity to other learners' perceptions about the usefulness of a different approach to teaching academic reading and writing and implementing a new policy to research supervision practices. In the next chapter a detailed description of data employed in this study is discussed and interpreted.

Chapter 6

Data Presentation and Description

6.1 Introduction

The data presented in this chapter focuses on the academic and research literacy practices of TES at TTI nr 200. Data is organised under the four research instruments used for data collection, namely, questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis and classroom observation. The interviews are the primary research instruments. For the interviews the main categories used for data collection to structure the presentation and description of data were: a) lecture manner of delivery; b) resources availability; c) research report writing d) *assessment* procedures e) research practices f) research supervision. As mentioned in the previous chapter five segments of data are presented as per respondents, that is, the lecturers, the Head of the Academic Affairs Department and the three groups of TES.

For the questionnaires four segments were used, namely the English Section Lecturers and the three groups of TES. It is worth reminding that as there are more students than lecturers, in contrast to the group of lecturers, students who participated in the interview are not the same as the ones who responded to the questionnaire. The main categories used in the data collection phase were used to structure the presentation and description of data, namely, a) information about the lecturers b) resource availability c) research report writing; d) assessment procedures e) students' research practices f) research supervision.

For this section we were aware of Lester's, (1999: 3) caution that researchers should always *"be faithful to the participants and be aware [as much as possible] of biases being brought to the inevitable editing which was needed."* The researcher was also mindful of ethical issues such as guarding against misrepresenting, misinterpreting, distorting or deleting findings which have been provided in good faith by participants. Thus, some quotations from the interview data were used just as they were produced by respondents. In so doing we wanted to conform to Cohen et al., (2008: 462) who are of the opinion that researchers need to *"keep the flavour of the original data, so they report direct phrases and sentences, not only because they are often more illuminative and direct than the researcher's own words, but also because they feel that it is important to be faithful to the exact words used."* As a result of

reporting the participants' narrations verbatim, the reader is given an opportunity to bring to the text their own interpretations and to evaluate the extent to which the explanations and descriptions made by the researcher are plausible.

This approach means that, the reader is likely to find in the interview transcripts and questionnaires' comments some grammar errors, hesitation features and some disconnections within sentences which are associated with foreign spoken language. It is therefore worth mentioning that, every time participants are cited in the text they are quoted exactly in the way they expressed themselves. Thus, the major aim of data presentation is to describe how participants responded to the guiding questions, that is, how they felt and reacted to the questions posed to them with regard to the problem being discussed. At this point it is important to point out that the term participants refers to all the respondents who took part in the study, mainly lecturers, TES, core course subject lecturers and the Deputy Director of the Academic Affairs Department. Basically a combination of letters and numbers are used as referents, for the respondents in the interviews. For general subjects lecturers they were named GSLE1, GSLE2, GSLE3, GSLE5, and for content subject lecturers they were named CSL7, CSL8, CSL9 and CSL10; for TES Type 1 they were referred to as S1, S2, S3 and so on, for Type 2 they were named ST1, ST2, ST3, and so on and for Type 3 there were labelled as STU1, STU2, STU3, and so on. Sometimes they are referred to as 'one' or 'some'. On the other hand the Deputy Director of the Academic Affairs Department is referred to as the DDAAD. In the case of the questionnaires descriptors such as many, a few, percentages or just numbers are used as a larger number of lecturers and students were interacted with.

For data presentation and description, this chapter is divided into four sections: questionnaires, interviews, classroom observation and document analysis. In section one data from the questionnaires is presented and discussed. In section two lecturers and TES' interviews are presented and discussed. And section three and four present and discuss what has been observed from the classes and some data from students' written research proposals and reports respectively.

6.2 Data from the Questionnaires

One of the secondary sources of information, as presented in chapter four, for this study was questionnaires for both lecturers and the three groups of TES. For practical reasons questionnaires are presented before the interviews.

The main aim of using questionnaires in this study was to get a deeper understanding on how participants view, and think about the problem under study. Thus the questionnaire was intended to find out participants' possible differing perceptions in answering the same questions. We also wanted to see whether lecturers and students' opinions converged or diverged and find out the reason for that. This section starts with the presentation and discussion of the lecturers' questionnaire followed by the presentation and description of the questionnaires from the three groups of TES. For a more detailed presentation and description of students' and lecturers' questionnaires see appendix X and Z. Ten lecturers, fourteen (14) Type 1 students, sixteen (16) Type 2 students, and fifteen (15) Type 3 students responded to the questionnaire. For practical reasons and in order to save space in the text, the students' questionnaires are compiled in one single table.

6.2.1 Lecturers' questionnaire

The first category in the questionnaire is about the lecturers, the way they evaluate themselves with regard to their performance and availability to support students. For each statement in the table respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements and to tick the appropriate box next to each statement. What follows is the presentation of the data collected.

Table 6.1 Lecturers' responses about themselves

Lecturers' self assessment		Opinion			
		Agree		Disagree	
		N	%	n	%
A	Lecturers are often accessible and available for consultation	5	50	5	50
B	In general, lecturers have a sound academic understanding of the subject matter they are teaching	7	70	3	30
C	Most lecturers are not committed to their job	3	30	7	70
D	Most lecturers cannot supervise students adequately	4	40	6	60
E	There is a need for some in-service training and refreshment courses for lecturers	10	100	0	0
F	All lecturers are reflective practitioners	3	30	7	70
G	Most of the lecturers holding doctoral degrees refuse to supervise students	7	70	3	30

Lecturers' self assessment- As can be seen in Table 6.1, lecturers were asked to provide their own opinions about points relating to their performance, availability and willingness to support students. The reading from the table tells that (50%) of the lecturers agree that they are always available for consultation, that they have a sound academic understanding of the subject matter they are teaching (70%), and that they are committed to their work (30%). Regarding supervision practices they seem to be quite positive as (60%) of them state that they can supervise students adequately. (70%) of the lecturers disagree that all lecturers are reflective practitioners and they are also of the opinion that lecturers holding doctoral degrees refuse most of the time to supervise students. Interestingly they all (100%) agree that there is a need for some in-service training and refreshment courses for lecturers. What follows is the second table.

Table 6.2 Lecturers' responses about resources availability

Resources availability		Opinion			
		Agree		Disagree	
		n	%	n	%
A	There are plenty of resources in the library	3	30	7	70
B	Library material are adequate for students to do research	4	40	6	60
C	The librarians are well trained and helpful	5	50	5	50
D	The computer lab does not help students in writing their research reports	7	70	3	30
E	Students have easy access to the computer lab	2	20	8	80
F	There are enough computers in the computer lab	0	0	10	100
G	There is a need for a students' writing centre	8	80	2	20

Resources availability- With regard to resource availability, looking at the figures on the table, (70%) of the lecturers agree that there are not enough resources in the library, and library material is not adequate for students to do research (60%). With respect to the librarians half of the respondents (50%), feel that librarians need some kind of training to make them more skilled; however, they admit that the librarians are helpful. Concerning the computer lab, lecturers are of the opinion that the computer lab does not help students in writing their research reports due to lack of accessibility to it (80%). All the lectures disagree, and it is obvious, that there are enough computers in the computer lab, and they say that there is a need for implementing a students' writing centre. Next table is about research report writing.

Table 6.3 Lecturers' responses about research report writing.

Research report writing		Opinion			
		Agree		Disagree	
		n	%	n	%
A	The course work is well organised to meet the demands of research report writing	5	50	5	50
B	The assessment procedures during course work contribute to students' research report writing	2	20	8	80
C	The academic reading and writing subjects are not contributing to students' writing research report	5	50	5	50
D	The research methodology subject is not contributing to research report writing	5	50	5	50
E	Writing a research report helps students become independent researchers	5	50	5	50
F	Students acquire most of the academic literacy skills through the experience of writing their research reports	8	80	2	20

Research report writing- Regarding the production of research reports, (50%) of the lecturers are of the opinion that the course work is well organised to meet the demands of research report writing but the core course subjects are not contributing to students' writing research reports. With regard to the assessment procedures during course work, whether they contribute to students' research report writing, (80%) of the respondents disagree with this idea, and they think that students acquire most of the academic and research literacy skills through the experience of writing their research reports. With regard to whether writing a research report helps students become independent researchers, respondents are divided into two halves, one that agrees and one that disagrees with that position. What follows is the table on the assessment procedures.

Table 6.4 Lecturers' responses about assessment procedures.

Assessment procedures		Opinion			
		Agree		Disagree	
		n	%	n	%
A	Students are given enough time to prepare for essays and tests.	5	50	5	50
B	The essays and tests' questions are appropriate for their level	5	50	5	50
C	The assessment criteria are clear and fair	2	20	8	80
D	Feedback is always provided on time	1	10	9	90
E	The assessment tasks in the course work contribute to the final assessment (research report writing)	1	10	9	90
F	The final research report should not be a requirement for the students to obtain their qualification	0	0	10	100

Assessment procedures- This table presents lecturers' opinions about the assessment procedures being used at TTI nr 200. There is a balance between those who agree and those who do not agree with the view that students are given enough time to prepare for essays and tests. The same balance applies to the point about the essays and tests' questions being appropriate or not for TES' level. (80%) of respondents state that the assessment criteria are not clear and fair. (90%) of respondents posit that feedback is not provided on time and the assessment tasks in the course work do not contribute to the final assessment (research report writing. Interestingly (100%) of the lecturers disagree that the final research report should not be a requirement for students to obtain their qualification. The next table deals with research practices.

Table 6.5 Lecturers' responses about research practices

Research practices		Opinion			
		Agree		Disagree	
		n	%	n	%
A	Students are able to read and analyze academic texts with a 'critical eye'	4	40	6	60
B	They are able to write texts in different genres	2	20	8	80
C	They are able to construct an academic argument	3	30	7	70
D	They are able to access and select information from different sources	6	60	4	40
E	Students are able to quote and paraphrase	4	40	6	60
F	Students are able to find authors' main arguments and provide counter arguments	3	30	7	70
G	Students are aware of the dangers of practising plagiarism	4	40	6	60
H	They know how to structure a research report and what to include in each chapter	4	40	6	60
I	They learn more in writing their research reports than in the four years of course work	4	40	6	60

Research practices- Research practices are another category in this questionnaire. The purpose of this subheading was to find out lecturers view about students' abilities to do research. As the table reads, (60%) of respondents agree that students are able to access and select information from different sources. However, they are of the opinion that students cannot read and analyze academic texts with a 'critical eye', and they are not able to quote and paraphrase sources; For these lecturers students are not able to find authors' main arguments and provide counter arguments and they are not even aware of the dangers of practising plagiarism; lecturers also maintain that students do not know *how to structure a research report* and what to include in each chapter. The majority (80%) of the lecturers are aware of the students' difficulties to write texts in different genres and they think that (60%) students learn more in the four years of course work than in writing their research reports. The last table focuses on research supervision practices.

Table 6.6 Lecturers' responses about research supervision.

Research supervision		Opinion			
		Agree		Disagree	
		N	%	n	%
A	Supervisors have a sound academic knowledge of the research area they supervise	8	80	2	20
B	Supervisors are always available	2	20	8	80
C	The relationship between students and supervisors is good	6	60	4	40
D	Some supervisors are not helpful	7	70	3	30
E	Research supervision contributes to students' academic and professional development	9	90	1	10
F	Supervisors send feedback promptly	3	30	7	70
G	Feedback from supervisors is adequate	3	30	7	70
H	Supervisors lack training in supervision skills	8	80	2	20

Research supervision- Reading this table one can see that in general, in general lecturers agree that research supervision contributes to students' academic and professional development (90%) and supervisors have a sound academic knowledge of the research area they supervise. However, they recognise that supervisors are not always available and they lack training in supervision practices (80%). Although the relationship between students and supervisors might be good (60%), most of the lecturers agree that some supervisors are not so helpful (70%). The provision of feedback and its adequacy is another problematic area that was mentioned by the lecturers.

Summary

The information from the lecturers' questionnaire can be summarized in the following way: most of the lecturers admit that they are not reflective practitioners, and they feel that there is a need for in-service training of both lecturers and supervisors. With regards to resources availability they are of the opinion that there are not enough resources in the library and some of the material needs to be updated. They think that librarians are quite helpful but they lack some training in the area. For the computer lab facilities they claim for a bigger computer room and they are of the opinion that all the students should have access to it. They point out that there is a need for implementing a students' writing centre.

Concerning the issue of research report writing, they posit that the course work is well organized to meet the demands of research report writing, but the core course subjects are not equipping students with the academic literacy skills they need to succeed in writing their research reports (academic reading and writing and research methodology subjects). They state that students do not learn much in writing their research reports. As for the assessment procedures, they posit that the criteria being used are not clear and fair enough for the students to spot what their weaknesses are and how to overcome them. An interesting point lecturers have come up with is their opinion that the research report should not be part of the assessment for students to get the degree.

Responding to the research practices aspect lecturers recognize that students have serious difficulties in reading and analyzing texts with a critical eye. They add that students are not able to identify and write in different genres and to find authors main arguments and provide counter arguments. More importantly they state that students are not aware of the dangers of plagiarism and they do not know how to structure a research report and what to include in each chapter. For research supervision practices they all admit that they have a sound academic knowledge in the area they are supervising, and the relationship between supervisors and students is reasonably good. However they were humble to confess that supervisors are not always helpful in guiding students' work and their availability is another problem. Another negative point they have pointed out is the feedback which is not provided adequately and promptly.

6.2.2 Students' questionnaire

After gathering and organising questionnaire data by groups of TES, data was then combined in one single table for each of the 6 categories, namely:

- ❖ Information about the lecturers
- ❖ Resources availability
- ❖ Research report writing
- ❖ Assessment procedures
- ❖ Research practices
- ❖ Research supervision.

What follows is the presentation and description of questionnaires' data from the TES. The presentation and description is summarised in a table containing Type 1

students, those who have successfully finished their research reports, comprising 15 students; Type 2 students consisting of students who are currently writing their research reports, with 16 students; and Type 3 students which constitutes the group of students who are trying to write their research reports but still struggling, with 14 students participating in the study. For each statement in the table respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements and tick the appropriate box next to each statement. Below is the first table:

Table 6.7 Students' responses about the lecturers

	Information about lecturers	Successful Students				Current Students				Unsuccessful Student			
		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree	
		n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
A	Lecturers are often accessible and available for consultation	10	69.66	5	33.33	10	62.50	6	37.50	4	28.57	10	71.60
B	In general, lecturers have a sound academic understanding of the subject matter they are teaching	12	79.99	3	20.00	14	87.50	2	12.50	7	50.00	7	50.00
C	High standard of work is expected from them during the supervision process	12	79.99	3	20.00	16	100.00	0	0.00	8	57.14	6	42.85
D	Most lecturers are committed to the teaching and research supervision job	6	39.99	8	59.99	13	81.25	3	18.75	8	57.14	6	42.84
E	Most lecturers cannot supervise students properly	11	73.32	4	26.66	12	75.00	4	25.00	11	78.56	3	21.42
F	The lecturer's qualification (degrees they hold) contribute significantly to the quality of research supervision	11	73.32	4	26.66	10	62.50	6	37.50	13	93.85	1	7.14
G	Some lecturers need in-service training	8	53.32	6	46.66	15	100.00	0	0.00	14	100.00	0	0.00

About the lecturers- As can be inferred from the table above Successful students, state that lecturers are often accessible and available for consultation (69.66%). It is common sense among these students that in general, lecturers have a sound academic understanding of the subject matter they are teaching (79.99%) and high standard of work is expected from them during the supervision process (79.99%). Students also think that most lecturers are committed to the teaching and research supervision practices (39.99%), and they recognise that the lecturer's qualification degrees contribute significantly to the quality of research supervision (73.32%). However, they are of the opinion that most lecturers cannot supervise

students properly (73.32%), and therefore lecturers need some in-service training (53.322%).

Current students are the ones who are currently writing their research reports and therefore it is expected that they have their own opinions with regard to lecturers' performance, resource availability, research report writing and the research related practices and skills. (100%) of these students agree with the idea that high standard of work is expected from the lecturers during the supervision process, and some lecturers need in-service training. About (62.50%) of the students state that lecturers are often accessible and available for consultation. They state that in general, lecturers have a sound academic understanding of the subject matter they are teaching (87.50%), but in their opinion most lecturers are not committed to the teaching and research supervision job (81%). Although the majority of the students might think that the lecturers' qualifications contribute significantly to the quality of research supervision (62.50%) and they do think that most of the lecturers cannot supervise -students properly (75%). All the students are of the opinion that some lecturers need in-service training.

The group of unsuccessful students, consists of those who are out of the system, waiting to get started with their research reports. As they are part of the problem being investigated and constitute the overwhelming majority it was thought that their opinion would be very helpful to this study. It can be noted from the table that for this group of students, lecturers are not often accessible and available for consultation (71.70%), and (50%) recognise that lecturers have a sound academic understanding of the subject matter they are teaching and a high standard of work is expected from them during the supervision process (57.14%). Students do also recognize that lecturer's qualification degrees contribute significantly to the quality of research supervision (92.85%) but they do not agree that lecturers are often accessible and available for consultation (71.42%), during supervision practices. They also think that most lecturers are not committed to the teaching and research supervision job (57.14%) and cannot supervise students properly (78.56%). Therefore, they all agree that lecturers need some in-service training (100%).

To summarise the information on the table 6.7, successful and current students agree that lecturers are often accessible and available for consultation and that in general, lecturers have a sound academic understanding of the subject matter they are teaching. For unsuccessful students however, they have a different opinion probably due to the fact that

they could not succeed in their studies, therefore blaming the lecturers for their failure. The three groups agree that high standard of work is expected from them during the supervision process and that the lecturer's qualification (degrees they hold) contribute significantly to the quality of research supervision. They also agree that some lecturers need in-service training but they are of the opinion that most lecturers cannot supervise students properly. What follows is a table about resources availability.

Table 6.8 Students' responses about resources availability

	Resources availability	Successful Students				Current Students				Unsuccessful Student			
		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree	
		n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
A	There are plenty of resources in the library	8	53.32	7	46.66	1	6.25	15	93.75	3	21.42	11	78.56
B	Library material is/were adequate for research writing	10	66.66	5	33.32	5	31.25	11	68.75	3	21.42	11	78.57
C	Most of the books students read are borrowed from other places	8	53.32	7	46.66	14	87.50	2	12.50	12	85.71	2	14.28
D	Students have easy access to the computer lab	3	20.00	12	60.00	2	12.50	14	87.50	1	7.14	13	92.85
E	There are/were enough computers in the lab	5	33.33	10	66.66	3	18.75	13	81.25	2	14.28	12	85.71
F	The librarians are well trained and helpful	7	46.66	8	53.32	10	62.50	6	37.50	2	14.28	12	85.71
G	There is a need for a students' writing centre	4	26.66	11	73.33	2	12.50	14	87.50	0	0.00	14	100.00

Resources availability- This table presents students' perceptions about resources availability. Successful students are positive and of the opinion that there are plenty of resources in the library (53.32%). About (53.32%) of the students recognise that most of the books they read were borrowed from other places than TTI nr 200; Regarding access to the computer lab only (20%) of the respondents agreed that they had easy access to the computer lab, but there are not enough computers (66.66%). With regard to the personnel in the library, students are of the opinion that they are not so helpful and lack some kind of training (53.32%). It is interesting to hear from students there is no need for a writing centre (73.33 %).

For current students it is a fact that there are not plenty of resources in the library (94.75%), and most of the books they read were borrowed from other places than TTI nr 200, (87.50%). They also state that the library materials are not adequate for research

writing (68.75%). However, they think that, (62.50%), the librarians are well trained and helpful. About (68.75), of the students say that the materials in the library are not adequate for research writing. Regarding the computer lab, (87.50%), says that they do not have easy access to the computer lab and computers are not enough either (81.25%). Like successful students they are of the opinion that there is no need for a student's writing centre (87.50%).

For unsuccessful students they think that there are not plenty of resources in the library (78.56%), and they do not have easy access to the computer lab (92.85%). They are of the opinion that the library materials are not adequate for research writing (78.57%). They go further to state that the librarians are not well trained and they are not so helpful either (85.71%). They state that most of the books they read were borrowed places other than TTI nr 200. With regard to the computer lab, they are of the opinion that there are not enough computers in the library (85.71%), and access to the computer lab is difficult (92.85%). This group of students says there is a need for a students' writing centre (100%).

While successful students agree that there are plenty of resources in the Library, and that Library material is adequate for research writing, current students and unsuccessful students are of an opposite opinion. In principle, all the groups agree that most of the books they read are borrowed from other places, and only unsuccessful students favour the need for a students' writing centre. Successful students and unsuccessful ones acknowledge that there are not enough computers in the computer lab and the librarians are not well trained and helpful either. Next table is about research report writing.

Table 6.9 Students' responses about research report writing

Research report writing	Successful Students				Current Students				Unsuccessful Student				
	Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
A	The course work was well organised to meet the research report writing demands	7	66.66	8	33.33	12	75.00	4	25.00	1	7.14	13	92.85
B	I did not learn much from the academic reading subject to help me write my research report	9	59.99	5	46.66	10	62.50	6	37.50	2	14.28	12	85.71
C	I did not learn much from the academic writing subject to help me write my research report	7	46.66	8	53.32	9	56.25	7	43.75	12	85.70	2	14.28
D	I did not learn much from the research methodology subject to help me write my research report	8	53.33	7	46.66	8	50.00	8	50.00	10	71.42	4	28.57
E	Writing a research report helps students become independent researchers	15	99.99	0	0.00	14	87.50	2	12.50	12	85.71	2	14.28
F	I acquired most of the skills through the experience of writing my research report.	13	86.66	2	13.33	12	75.00	4	25.00	1	7.14	13	92.85

Research report writing- The aim of this subheading was to find out students' opinions with regard to issues related to research report writing, such as its usefulness and difficulties. In order to do so the first aspect to be considered was the course work as a whole and its contribution that it might bring to the process in order to equip students with the skills they need to write their research reports. About (66.66%) of successful students agree that the course work was well organised to meet the research report writing demands. Regarding the assessment procedures during coursework whether they contribute to students writing research report, (59.66%) of the students favour the idea that the assessment procedures during coursework contribute to students' research report writing. One half of the students agree that they learnt quite a lot from the academic reading and writing courses to help them write their research reports (53.33%). Looking at the research methodology subject students were honest to confess that they did not learn much from the research methodology subject to help them write their research reports (53.33 %). For this group of students, a (100%) agrees that writing a research report helped them become independent researchers.

Current students were also asked to reflect on research report writing practices. The table reads that in principle students agree that the course work was well organised to meet the research report writing demands (75%), that writing a research report helps them become independent researchers (87.50%) and that they acquire most of the skills through

the experience of writing their research reports (75%). They state that the assessment procedures during course work contribute to students writing research reports (62.25%), but they feel that they did not learn much from the academic reading and writing courses to help them write their research reports (56.25%). While (50%) of the respondents says they learnt much from the research methodology subject to help them write their research reports the other half says the opposite. However, (75%) of them recognise that they have acquired most of the skills through the experience of writing their research reports.

The majority of unsuccessful students is of the opinion that the course work was not well organised to meet the research report writing demands (92.85%), and that they did not acquire most of the skills through the experience of writing their research reports (92.85%). For them, the assessment procedures during course work did not contribute to the writing of their research reports either (92.85%). They feel that they did not learn much from the academic reading and writing courses to help them write their research reports (85.60%), nor did they learn much from the research methodology course to help them write their research reports (71.42%). However, they agree that writing a research report helps students become independent researchers (85.71%).

Successful and currently writing students agree that the course work was well organised to meet the research report writing demands but they did not learn much from the academic reading subject to help them write their research reports; however, type 3 is of an opposite opinion. Currently writing and unsuccessful students feel that they did not learn much from the academic writing subject to help them write their research reports, but successful students acknowledge the opposite. All the groups are of the opinion that they did not learn much from the research methodology subject to help write their research reports but they think that writing a research report helped and helps students become independent researchers. Successful and currently writing students accept that they acquired most of the skills through the experience of writing their research reports. However, unsuccessful students do not share the same opinion. Next table presents students opinions about the assessment procedures.

Table 6.10 Students' responses about the assessment procedures

Assessment procedures	Successful Students				Current Students				Unsuccessful Student				
	Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
A	I was given enough time for essays and tests	15	100.00	0	0.00	10	62.50	6	37.50	13	92.85	1	7.14
B	The essays and tests were appropriate for my level	14	93.32	1	6.66	12	75.00	4	25.00	12	85.71	2	14.28
C	The assessment criteria were clear and fair	12	80.00	3	19.99	6	37.50	10	62.50	3	21.42	11	78.56
D	Feedback on my work was always provided and appropriate	11	73.32	4	26.66	10	62.50	6	37.50	4	28.57	10	71.42
E	The essays and tests I wrote prepared me for research report writing	11	66.66	4	33.32	14	87.50	2	12.50	2	14.28	12	85.71
F	The final research report should not be a requirement for students to obtain their qualification	9	60.00	6	40.00	3	18.75	13	81.25	12	86.71	2	14.28

Assessment procedures- Successful students posit that they were given enough time for essays and tests (100%) and the essays and tests they wrote were appropriate for their level (93%). Around (80%) of the students say that the assessment criteria were clear and fair throughout the course and they are also positive about feedback provided by lecturers (73%). About (66.66%) of these students say that the essays and tests they wrote prepared them for research report writing. With regards to the production of the research report as a final assessment task, (60%) of the respondents think that the final research report should not be a requirement for students to obtain their qualification.

Currently writing students seem to agree that the essays and tests were appropriate for their level (75%), and the essays and tests they wrote prepared them for research report writing (87.50%). They also agree that the final research report should be a requirement for students to obtain their qualification (81.25%). These students seem to agree, in principle that they were given enough time to write essays and tests (62.50%), and feedback on their work was always provided and appropriate (62.50%). However, according to them, the assessment criteria were not so clear (62.50%).

Unsuccessful students indicated that they were given enough time for essays and tests (92.85%), and the essays and tests they did were appropriate for their level (85.71%), but the assessment criteria were not so clear (78.56%). Feedback on their work was not

always provided and it was not so appropriate (71.42%). In their opinion the essays and tests they wrote did not prepare them for research report writing (85.71%). These students are of the opinion that the final research report should not be a requirement for students to obtain their qualification (85.71%).

With regard to the assessment procedures, all the groups have acknowledged that they were given enough time for essays and tests and the essays and tests were appropriate for their level. While successful students are of the opinion that the assessment criteria were clear and fair, currently writing and unsuccessful students do not think the same. Successful and currently writing students accept that feedback on their work was always provided and appropriate and the essays and tests they wrote prepared them for research report writing. However, unsuccessful students are of an opposite opinion. With regards to whether the final research report should not be a requirement for students to obtain their qualification successful and unsuccessful students are of the opinion that the final research report should not be a requirement for students to obtain their qualification, but currently writing students think the opposite. Research practices come in the next table.

Table 6.11 Students' responses about research practices

Research practices	Successful Students				Current Students				Unsuccessful Student				
	Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
A	I am able to construct an academic argument	15	100.00	0	0.00	13	81.25	3	18.75	2	14.28	12	85.71
B	I am able to access and select information from different sources	15	99.99	0	0.00	13	71.25	3	18.75	4	28.56	10	71.42
C	I am able to quote and paraphrase	13	86.66	2	13.33	10	62.50	6	37.50	4	28.56	10	71.42
D	I am able to find the author's main arguments and provide counter arguments	15	99.99	0	0.00	14	87.50	2	12.50	4	28.56	10	71.42
E	I am aware of the dangers of practicing plagiarism	15	99.99	0	0.00	15	93.75	1	6.25	5	35.70	9	64.28
F	I am aware of how to structure a research report and what to include in each chapter	14	93.32	1	6.66	14	87.50	2	12.50	5	35.70	9	64.28
G	I learnt more in writing my research report than in the four years course	14	93.33	1	6.66	11	68.75	5	31.25	a)	a)	a)	a)

Research practices- Research practices are another aspect that students had to think about. For successful students, all of them (100%) are of the opinion that they are able to construct an academic argument, to access and select information from different sources, to find the author's main arguments and provide counter arguments. They are also all aware of the dangers of practising plagiarism. Most of them (86%), say that they can quote and paraphrase authors. The majority of them (93%) recognize that they are aware of how to structure a research report and what to include in each chapter and they say that they learnt more in writing their research reports than in the four years of course work (93%).

For currently writing students, with regards to research practices, it can be observed that the overwhelming majority of students (93.75%) are aware of the dangers of practising plagiarism and they also say that they are able to construct an academic argument (81.25%), as well as to find the author's main arguments and provide counter arguments (87.50%). Accessing and selecting information from different sources does not seem to be a problem for them as (81.25%) state they are able to do so. They also think that they are aware of how to structure a research report and what to include in each chapter (87.50%). They agree that they are learning more in writing their research report than in the four-year course work (68.75%), and in principle they are able to quote and paraphrase authors (62.50%).

Concerning unsuccessful students tend to rank their research practices as their serious problem. Some of the students admit that they are not able to construct an academic argument (85.70%), and they cannot quote and paraphrase authors properly (71.42%); they also feel that they are not able to access and select information from different sources (71.42%). They are not able to find the author's main arguments and provide counter arguments (71.42%). About (64.28%) indicated that they are not aware of the dangers of practicing plagiarism and that they are not either aware of how to structure a research report and what to include in each chapter (64.28%). Regarding the last aspect on the table type 3 students had no comments because they are still on the process of writing their research projects.

Looking at the information about research practices it can be inferred from the table that there are no problems for successful and currently writing students; they accept that they are able to construct an academic argument, to access and select information from different sources, to quote and paraphrase and to find the author's main arguments and provide counter

arguments. They also posit that they are aware of the dangers of practicing plagiarism, they know how to structure a research report and what to include in each chapter and they even recognized that they learnt more in writing their research reports than in the four years of course work. However, unsuccessful students admit that their research practices are quite poor. They state that they are not able to construct an academic argument, and they cannot quote and paraphrase writers; they also state that they are not able to access and select information from different sources nor are they able to find the author's main arguments and provide counter arguments. They also indicated that they are not aware of the dangers of practicing plagiarism and they lack awareness on how to structure a research report and what to include in each chapter. Next table deals with research supervision practices.

Table 6.12 Students' responses about research supervision

Research supervision	Successful Students				Current Students				Unsuccessful Student				
	Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
A	My supervisor has/had a sound academic knowledge of my research area	14	93.33	1	6.66	13	81.25	3	18.75	5	35.70	9	64.28
B	My supervisor is/was always available	9	59.99	6	40.00	11	68.75	5	31.25	4	28.56	10	71.42
C	The relationship with my supervisor was good	13	86.66	2	13.33	11	68.75	5	31.25	5	35.71	9	64.28
D	My supervisor is/was not helpful	0	0.00	15	100.00	10	62.50	6	37.50	7	50.00	7	50.00
E	Research supervision has contributed a lot to my academic and professional development	12	79.99	3	20.00	15	93.75	1	6.25	4	28.56	10	71.42
F	My supervisor does /did send feedback promptly	6	40.00	9	60.00	7	43.75	9	56.25	7	50.00	7	50.00
G	The feedback from my supervisor is/was adequate	7	46.66	8	53.33	9	56.25	7	43.75	10	71.42	4	28.56
H	There is a need for supervisors training	7	46.66	8	53.33	14	87.50	2	12.50	12	85.71	2	14.28

Research supervision- Table six is based on research supervision practices. Looking at the table, most of the successful students are of a positive opinion about the supervisors. In general they say that their supervisors had a sound academic knowledge of their research area (93%), and the relationship between them and their supervisors was good (86.66%). All of them state that their supervisors were helpful (100%), and about (80%) recognize that research supervision has contributed a lot to their academic and professional development. With regards to supervisors availability some students say that

their supervisors were always available (59.99%). In response to the type of feedback provided by their supervisors students say that supervisors did not send feedback promptly (60%), but feedback from their supervisors was adequate (53%). (46.66%) reckon that there is a need for supervisors training and the remaining (53%) thinks that there is no need for supervisors training.

Currently writing students indicated that their supervisors have a sound academic knowledge of their research area (81.25%), and research supervision has contributed a lot to their academic and professional development although they have not yet finished writing (93.75%). More than (50%) of the group indicated that their supervisors are always available (68.75%), that the relationship between them and their supervisors is good (68.75%), but they did not find their supervisors so helpful (62.50%). they are of the opinion that their supervisors do not send feedback promptly (56.25%), but when they do the feedback is adequate (56.25%). About (87.50%) of the respondents are of the opinion that supervisors need some sort of training.

For the unsuccessful students have had some experience in being supervised but they did not succeed to the point of concluding their studies. Looking carefully to the table one can read that according to the students, their supervisors do not have a sound academic knowledge of their research area (64.28%) and the relationship between supervisors and students is not so good (64.28%). About (71.42%) say that their supervisors are not always available and they have not been so helpful either (49.99%). In their opinion, supervisors do send feedback promptly (50%), and the feedback from supervisors is adequate (71.42%). However, research supervision has not contributed that much to their academic and professional development (71.42%). They conclude that there is a need for supervisors training (85.71%).

Regarding research supervision, the information from the table provides the following results: While unsuccessful students are mainly negative about the points made, for successful and currently writing students they accept that their supervisors have a sound academic knowledge of their research area, and they were always available; the relationship between them and their supervisors was good and, they state that research supervision has contributed a lot to their academic and professional development. Successful students posit that their supervisors were helpful but the feedback provided was

not so adequate and they also think that there is no need for supervisors training. All the students think that feedback from lecturers was not sent promptly. Unsuccessful students have a feeling that there is a need for supervisors training.

6.2.3 Concluding Summary

This is the summary of the students' information gathered from the six questionnaire tables. In principle, with regard to the lecturers, most of the students agree that lecturers are often accessible and available for consultation and they have a sound academic understanding of the subject matter they are teaching. However, Type 3 students disagree that lecturers are often accessible and available for consultation. The three groups agree that high standard of work is expected from lecturers during the supervision process and that the lecturer's qualification and the degrees they hold, contribute significantly to the quality of research supervision. They also agree that some lecturers need in-service training but they are of the opinion that the majority of them cannot supervise students properly.

Concerning *resources availability*, while Type 1 students agree that there are plenty of resources in the library, and that library material is adequate for research writing, Type 2 and Type 3 are of an opposite opinion. In principle, all the groups agree that *most* of the books students read are borrowed from other places, but they do not favour the need for a students' writing centre. Type 1 and Type 3 students think that there are not enough computers in the computer lab and the librarians are not well trained and helpful either.

Type 1 and Type 2 students agree that the course work was well organised to meet the research report writing demands but they did not learn much from the academic reading and writing courses to help them write their research reports; All the groups are of the opinion that they did not learn much from the research methodology subject to help them write their research reports but they think that writing a research report helped and helps students become independent researchers. Type 1 and Type 2 students accept that they acquired most of the skills through the experience of writing their research report. But Type 3 does not share the same opinion.

With regards to the assessment procedures, all the groups have acknowledged that they were given enough time for essays and tests and the essays and tests were appropriate for their level.

While Type 1 is of the opinion that the assessment criteria were clear and fair, Type 2 and Type 3 are negative about that. Type 1 and Type 2 students accept that feedback on their work was always provided and appropriate and the essays and tests they wrote prepared them for research report writing. However, Type 3 students are of an opposite opinion. With regards to whether the final research report should not be a requirement for students to obtain their qualification Type 1 and Type 3 students are of a positive opinion but Type 2 students think the opposite.

Looking at the information about the research practices it can be inferred from the table that unlike Type 3 students, there are no problems for Type 1 and Type 2 students; they accept that they are able to construct an academic argument, to access and select information from different sources, to quote and paraphrase and to find the author's main arguments and provide counter arguments. They also posit that they are aware of the dangers of practicing plagiarism, they know how to structure a research report and what to include in each chapter and they even recognized that they learnt more in writing their research reports than in the four years of course work.

Regarding research supervision, the information from the table reads that Type 1 and Type 2, in contrast to Type 3 students, accept that their supervisors have a sound academic knowledge of their research area, and were always available; the relationship between them and their supervisors was good and, they state that research supervision has contributed considerably to their academic and professional development. Type 1 students posit that their supervisors were helpful but the feedback provided was not so adequate; Type 1 students also think that there is no need for supervisors' training. All the students think that feedback was not sent promptly.

6.3 Data from the interviews

6.3.1 Interview data from lecturers

i. Interview data from general subjects lecturers (GSLE)

a) Lecture delivery

As mentioned in the research methodology chapter, lecturers were named differently in order to keep the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. General subjects lecturers were referred to as GSLE1, GSLE2, GSLE3, GSLE4 and GSLE5. The main issues

raised with regard to lecture delivery were the lecturing method or style of teaching, the type of materials used in the classroom and the extent to which the subject taught by each of the respondents contributes to the writing of the research report. In response to the first question about what teaching method lecturers used mostly, the majority of respondents indicated the following:

- ❖ *Lecturing method;*
- ❖ *Small discussion;*
- ❖ *Group and pair work.*

GSLE1 was the first to start the discussion and pointed out that while he found it necessary to use the traditional lecturing mode, he still tries to make the lessons as interactive as possible, to break every stage of the lesson into practical activities. *“You know, it is very productive to stop from time to time and get students work with each other on something.”* Like GSLE1, GSLE 2 also indicated that, he never uses one single method in his classrooms and that there is always a mixture of one-way transmission lecturing and classroom active engagement of his students. He said that he gives a lot of opportunities for students to work either individually or in groups. He went further to explain that his subject requires active engagement from students and sometimes they are required to act as ‘decision makers’ and ‘problem solvers’, and clarified that students have a number of practical activities to complete. GSLE3 also expressed a similar sentiment to the foregoing lecturers. He acknowledged that he does use the traditional method a great deal *“...because the level that students bring to the classroom is too low... As a result students wait for the lecturer to say everything because they think lecturers know everything”*. He went further to state that *“Sometimes you need to tell them to take notes of the material...but I try to stage my lessons, and play the role of a guide in order to help them learn”*.

GSLE4 indicated that he could not attach a name to his way of teaching but could definitely describe what occurs within his classrooms. He explained that what happens in his class is that students have to speak, because if they don’t speak it means they do not understand what he is explaining to them. When students do not speak he stops and tries to set up a scene for them to talk, to react to what he is saying. According to him, this is quite difficult and time consuming, as the lecturer needs to work hard to get there. First students need to be motivated for the topic and then the lecturer needs to ask as many questions as possible for them to participate in the lesson.

Like GSLE4, GSLE5 believed that “...teaching is based on conversation between the lecturer and students; the classroom is a learning community, where all members of the community need to interact among themselves”. He went further to emphasise that he cannot make sense of, and negotiate meanings on behalf of his students. Students need to be engaged all the time, and encouraged to talk with the lecturer and their colleagues. He explained that he likes to challenge what students say, to get to develop their own thinking and understanding. This is his preferred method of teaching. The advantage of approaching students in that way, according to him, was that the lecturer listens to their voices and can check whether there are gaps in their understanding, whether they bring their knowledge background into the classroom. To most respondents the traditional method seems to be the main vehicle for lecture delivery.

Asked about the mode of lecture delivery they used mostly, GSLE4 asserted, “*For me I suppose I use the traditional teaching method, what some people would consider to be chalk and talk. If you get in the classroom waiting for students to ask questions and come up with ideas about the topic then forget it. It will be the end of the lesson and a waste of time.*”

Discussing the lecture method, GSLE5 expressed the reservation that what worries her about lecturing is that the problem seems to focus on the lecturers’ part and not on the students. “*Students are what lecturers want them to be*”, she said. They do not come into the classroom to dictate rules but to react to the lecturer’s action. So if the lecturer tells them from the beginning that s/he wants them to be active and participate in the lesson, if the lecturer encourages them to do so and if the classroom atmosphere facilitates that interaction, of course they will be active; Despite this observation she went on to support the use of traditional methods of teaching, as according to her, “*sometimes it is important for students to get some preliminary input about what the theory says regarding the topic under study, in that case, the lecturing mode applies.*” She went further to explain that under those circumstances “*it is important to have some visuals for students to both see as well as listen.*” She went further to state that she uses power point slides in most of her lessons and she thinks that this way of teaching “*encourages students to participate in the class. Of course you cannot expect all the students to perform at the same level of knowledge but they do participate.*”

Giving another justification for the use of the traditional method, GSLE3 was of the opinion that one of the main difficulties that students are confronting is their lack of preparedness. He

said: *“Even when they are given something to do before the lesson they never prepare the material and when the teacher asks questions about that material they just do not say anything because they did not read and prepare it”*. He observed that is therefore “rather strange that most students asked for more interaction during lectures but when you pose a question and try to engage them in the discussion, most of them do not interact, he said. He argued that, *“Sometimes you find that in a class probably one or two students have read the text and can engage with you, so that is why I say that I mainly use the traditional lecturing mode. I just use power point slides to guide me with the key points of the discussion and help them take notes”*”.

It would appear that under those circumstances GSLE3 had no option except to proceed with the traditional method of teaching. Like GSLE3, GSLE4 put across the sentiment that *“basically the mode of lecturing is the traditional one where we transmit the knowledge and ask some questions to check students’ understanding”*.

To enhance lecture delivery, most respondents commented that the main technique they use is board work, as well as some hand outs; three lectures did mention the use of power point slides. Transparencies, overhead projectors and videos, were not mentioned at all.

Responding to how they taught writing GSLE1 explained that he was using the traditional model of layout based on introduction, development and conclusion but he is of the opinion that *“it is the academic writing lecturer’s responsibility to teach writing as a skill, as an academic skill at university”*. In principle most of the lecturers seemed to agree with GSLE1 that academic writing should be taught by the lecturer responsible for that subject. However, *“just because students have academic writing we cannot close our arms and assume that students know how to compose an acceptable piece of writing. We could and...should help students to produce academic written pieces of paper.”* said GSLE2. Expressing a similar sentiment about teaching students to write academically, GSLE3 asserted that *“if we spend time teaching students how to produce a text within the academic requirements, we will not have time to teach the content of our subject. That is the reason why students have specific subjects to teach them how to read, write and do research. Everyone is aware of that...I am sorry but we shouldn’t feed other peoples’ monkeys.”* However, GSLE5 is of the opinion that there is nothing wrong with the academic writing lecturer. He said: *“Content subjects lecturers have the main responsibility of teaching students how to do things*

but this does not prevent other lecturers from helping students improve their academic literacy practices...especially because our students join the institution with a very low level of proficiency.”

b) Resources availability

The second topic in the interview schedule is about resource availability and lecturers were asked to comment on whether the resources in the library were enough and adequate for students' writing research reports. They were also asked to provide their opinions about the computer lab and its contribution to students in the production of the research reports.

In general there was a constraint that most lecturers expressed; that is, both the main library and the computer lab do not contribute to students' process and production of their research reports. GSLE1 argued, *“The library is there, and it has always been there. What needs to be done is to update the materials...they are quite old”*. Discussing along the same line GSLE3 indicated that *“one of the problems that the institution is facing is lack of space; there is no space for anything. Classrooms are not enough the library is too small, there is no place for students to sit and concentrate on their studies...and on the top of that we are enrolling new students year after year.”* Commenting on the same aspect and trying to reinforce GSLE4 comments, GSLE2 is of the opinion that what needs to be done is to close the institution for an academic year to wake up decision makers and raise their awareness for the need to find a bigger place for this institution which is training teachers for all educational levels *“...but no one is giving it the place it deserves in the society”*.

GSLE4 also argued that he knows a lot of new books were bought recently but the problem is where to keep them and make them accessible to students. Regarding the computer lab GSLE5 has clarified that *“as long as I am concerned there is no computer lab whatsoever at TTI nr 200...what does exist is an ICT classroom for math's students to practice.”* In addition GSLE4 stated that *“what we are calling a computer lab in fact it is a classroom but just for a specific group of students...thus, I think that there is a need for setting up a computer lab just as in many universities in Africa, not to mention in the world.”* Generally speaking some lecturers did not seem to be interested in commenting about these two aspects. They all agree that the library is too small and the materials there need to be updated and there is a need to set up a computer lab where students would go and work independently.

c) Research report writing

Regarding the issue of research report writing three main questions were asked:

- ❖ In your opinion what are the reasons that might make students fail to complete their research reports?
- ❖ What can be done to help them complete their research reports swiftly?
- ❖ Do you think the research report is necessary and important? Please elaborate.

Responding to the first question on the reasons for students' failure to produce their research reports, GSLE2 explained that there were many factors contributing to that: first, students enter TTI nr 200 with a very low proficiency in the spoken and written language, they come from a level where teachers did not ask them to do so much work as they do here; they come from classrooms where cheating is so easy due to lack of space, classrooms are crowded and when there is a test the lecturer cannot control everything. For GSLE3 students fail to produce their research reports because they only start thinking about the research report at the end of the four academic years of course work, which is too late to help.

Commenting on the same issue, GSLE1 pointed out that the situation has changed a little bit, but still needs to be improved. Students need to enter TTI nr 200 with an idea of what is expected from them. In his words, there is nothing wrong with the topic because students are free to choose it, there is no lack of motivation otherwise they would have not finished the four years of course work, there is not too heavy a workload because they are just writing their research reports and he thinks that the problem is not lack of time either. To him, the problem is

...the kind of product we receive at the admission phase and the product we get after the four years of course work. Perhaps we need to rethink the admission process. I favour an educational policy where all students have the right to study but in order to enter Higher education we need to set up a placement test or whatever you can call it.

In the same line of reasoning GSLE3 went further to emphasise that there seems to be lack of commitment on the students' side. Students are quite lazy and irresponsible about their studies, he said. They take higher education studies in the same way as they did in the previous levels; for example they do not participate in the group work assigned by the lecturers, and most of the time it is just one or two students who do all the work; most of the students get very low marks in the written tests and they keep going and passing from one

academic year to another without making any extra effort; as a result when they are asked to think about their research reports they panic, and they give up most of the time because they are not used to working independently and seriously, said GSLE3.

Reacting to the same topic, GSLE4 was of the opinion that the institution needs to change the entry exam rules and ask departments to set up tests comprising the content of the subject matter, the pedagogical knowledge, and general knowledge. Weak students will then be left out of the system. However, according to her, this does not seem to be the best solution. According to her the problem is that the entry assessment does not test students' ability but it is used to help select who can enter TTI nr 200 and who cannot. Thus, if, for example, in a specific subject the maximum mark is 10, and 45 students must be enrolled, the number of students will be counted regressively until we get 45 students, no matter whether the last students got 0.5 marks in the test. This is indeed an aspect that is contributing to the students' failure in their studies because groups are so heterogeneous in many aspects that it becomes difficult to find common terms in teaching them.

GSLE4 went further to reiterate that what a lecturer is able to achieve depends very much on the students that s/he gets. In most of the classrooms students have incredible difficulties in reading, and writing, they hardly ask questions in the class, they never ask for clarification and they believe that they must be told everything. They also lack initiative. To this lecturer, *"With this kind of student it is quite difficult to move a step ahead"*.

To close this discussion GSLE5 suggested that rather than admitting students from other schools we should give priority to students from the teacher training colleges who at least have some experience in teaching and therefore will be more or less familiar with the teaching learning practices at TTI nr 200.

Responding to what can be done to minimise the problem, from the responses obtained most of the lecturers are of the opinion that the starting point is the academic competence of students when they enter TTI nr 200. Commenting on this issue GSLE1 is of the opinion that the curriculum needs to be revisited and lecturers who are teaching the content subjects should be more demanding and responsible for the subjects they teach because *"we need to admit that some lecturers are of the type of 'laissez-faire, laissez passé' and sometimes students are not the only ones who should be blamed"*. GSLE5 went further to emphasise that

we cannot expect all the 45 students to succeed in the same final year but we need to look at ways of reversing the numbers, by getting the failure numbers to become the passing ones and vice-versa. With regard to the last question whether the research report should be part of the course or not all the lecturers were unanimous in stating that it must be part of the course otherwise, according to GSLE2 it *“will be a big mistake; we will send to the market individuals who are not prepared to perform their jobs properly”*. GSLE4 went a bit further to point out that training, any type of training, whether in the area of medicine, education, law etc. requires first of all qualified trainers, and *“we need to think carefully about our position and responsibility in all this process”*. Therefore she suggests that students need to be gradually introduced to the type of assessment they will encounter at the end of course work. To her research report writing should be viewed as an extension of the teaching learning process based on the assessment procedures throughout the course.

Finally GSLE3 concluded that there is a need for lecturers to work together and not see their subjects as single subjects that have nothing to do with other subjects. All subjects are important and should contribute to the training of the students for this final assessment which is research report writing. It looks like GSLE3 was calling in the next topic: assessment procedures.

d) Assessment procedures

Just two questions were set up for this topic, namely:

How do you assess your students? and How do you think this kind of assessment prepares students for research report writing?

In response to the first question, the following responses were made by all the lecturers as follows:

- ❖ Individual tests;
- ❖ Group discussions;
- ❖ Group and individual assignments.

The majority of the lecturers still use students' individual tests and they tend to give more value to this traditional way of assessing students. Commenting about the use of individual tests GSLE1 explained that although all the procedures are important the individual test is the one that gives the real picture of the students' level of performance. Most of the lecturers are of the opinion that it is quite difficult to attribute marks to students when they are

doing group discussion. However, according to GSLE4 group discussion is also a very useful assessment tool in that it helps teachers get to know their students better, their level of participation in the class and it encourages shy students to speak and contribute to the lesson. In addition, GSLE2 is of the opinion that when students discuss topics they are likely to learn them better and be evaluated without realising that.

As for the group assignments, some lectures are quite sceptical of its usefulness. GSLE3 explains that most of the time it is only one or two members of the group who do the whole work but in the end the mark is attributed to the whole group which is not fair, and GSLE4 suggests a solution to this aspect, she puts it in the following way: on the day of presentation each member of the group has to say something and the individual presentation is also assessed by the lecturer. So what she does is to allocate a mark for the written work which is the same for all students in the group and an individual mark for the oral presentation and then she works out the average mark; students end up with different marks.

Concerning the individual assignments GSLE3 is of the opinion that they cannot trust students because most of the times they ask someone to write it for them so as to get a high mark. Once again GSLE4 suggested that if we take assignment writing as a process whereby students will need guidance and support from the lecturer, if they present it orally to the class, then you should not doubt about their competence to write it. Commenting further GSLE1 went on to reinforce his idea that due to all the mentioned constraints, the traditional kind of assessment is still the best one.

Commenting on whether the traditional test prepares students for research report writing, GSLE1 was humble to confess that it does not. He said that research report writing is different from writing a test. However he thinks that writing a test helps check whether students have achieved the content of the subject or not. According to him, the research methodology lecturer should be responsible for research report writing.

GSLE4 is of the opinion that if all teachers thought that their subjects were going to contribute to research report writing, then the teaching learning process would have been different and the assessment procedures also. According to him, the problem is that neither teachers nor students have ever thought about the research report before completing course work. Adding to GSLE4 idea, GSLE2 expressed the sentiment that there is a need for the

Department to set up a meeting and discuss new ways of engaging students in all the subjects in a way that will equip them, automatically, with the skills they need to perform this high level skill which is research report writing. GSLE4 mentioned that she assesses her students through developmental portfolio and she thinks that portfolios assignments help improve students writing skills and make students reflect and check their own progress.

e) Research Practices

With regards to research practices the discussion concentrated on the acquisition of the main skills needed for research report writing, namely academic reading and writing, and research methodology I and II. Asked about which skill(s) students have more problems with, GSLE1 was straightforward in saying that students have problems in all the skills; they have problems to speak, to read, to write, and to listen. In principle all the lecturers have admitted that students have problems in all the skills and GSLE4 went on to explain that the main problem is that students join TTI nr 200 with a very low level of proficiency in the four language skills and they find the new learning environment where everyone has to struggle to find his or her own way out. In addition to that, general subject lecturers do not worry too much with contributing to other subjects' knowledge, such as academic reading and writing and research methodology; she then posited the following question: *"How can we expect students to improve if we teachers do not seem to contribute or to promote this improvement?"*

GSLE2 reiterated that *"we should not be afraid of saying that after four years of course work most of the students are still the same as from the first day they entered TTI nr 200. If this is true, what are we doing then?"* And GSLE5 is of the opinion that the department needs to start assessing lecturers work. He thinks that most of problems derive from the lecturers, and that lecturers sometimes do not perform their job properly.

Responding to the question on what can be done to improve the teaching of these subjects to meet the demands of research report writing GSL2 is of the opinion that some workshops and general discussions among teachers should be implemented in order to find out possible solutions.

The general sentiment among lecturers was summarised by GSLE3 who posited that unless TES do not embark in the process at a level which is good enough to continue their

studies students will keep blaming lecturers and lecturers will keep blaming students for their failure.

f) Research supervision

As for research supervision, concerning the kind of difficulties they usually face in supervising students some lecturers expressed that the kind of difficulties students are facing are just normal difficulties the same as supervisors faced when they were students. For instance GSLE2 commented that what he usually does is to tell students that he also had difficulties in writing his research report but with some effort he got there. For GSLE3 one of the problems is that students seem to not have time to concentrate on their work. *“You see them once and then they disappear”*, said him. GSLE4 went on to explain that *“most of the time students do not have difficulties in writing but in finding time and concentration to write”* and GSLE5 reinforced that *“students do not want to do the job they want us to do their work; and that is impossible.”* GSLE4 emphasised that *“students are most of the time so stubborn that you ask them to make corrections and when they bring the updated version the text is exactly the same”*. Apart from all these problems GSLE4 has raised an important issue, viz *“some teachers are not good supervisors; I have had students approaching me to help them; supervision is complex, the way you provide feedback, the way you talk to the student, your motivation to supervise, and so on and so on.”* GSLE5 was of the opinion that *“Students are very lazy and as soon as you ask them to correct things they feel like it will be hard work and then they try to change supervisors or they just give up.”*

For GSLE4 however, the main problem is lack of research practices and lack of reading habits associated with academic writing. Students can hardly write they can hardly find arguments and provide counter arguments, they do not know how to structure a research proposal let alone the research report. So in his opinion most of the difficulties faced in supervision practices are due to students' lack of knowledge on how to do things. With regard to what should be done to improve the supervisory processes, GSLE1 responded that one first needs to improve the teaching of the content subjects, subjects that are expected to equip students with the tools they need to produce their research reports, second we cannot wait for the end of course work to ask students to write their research reports, in any subject they are teaching, lecturers can help students detect problems and see if they are researchable or not, and if they are students can start thinking about them.

GSLE4 seemed to be the same way of reasoning and she stated that in fact she has helped students with regard to finding a possible topic or problem. It does not take so much time; it happens unconsciously as you teach them and discuss things in the class. She then concluded that *“one of the best ways to help students find something to work on is from the assignments you set up. You always select the best and encourage them to continue investigating on what they have done.”*

ii. Interview data from content subject lecturers (CSL)

a) Lecture delivery

The interview schedule for the content subject lecturers was organised in the same way as the one for the general subjects' lecturers. However, for reasons of confidentiality and anonymity they were named CSL7, CSL8, CSL9 and CSL10. In the first part the focus was on lecture delivery with the main aim of learning how they delivered their content of the subjects they are teaching and to what extent they thought their subjects were relevant to students' production of research reports.

The main mode of lecturing mentioned by content subject lecturers was the traditional method of teaching. Even the academic writing subject, seems to favour traditional approaches to teaching writing. He posits that for the type of students he is dealing with he cannot expect them to react positively to what he says in class. He said, *“...therefore you need to transmit the knowledge first and then ask them questions about the material taught”*. He went on to say that he is aware of the different approaches to teaching writing but *“unless you provide students with some input first you won't be able to teach them.”* As far as academic reading is concerned, CSL9 stated that he uses a combination between the traditional approaches to teaching and the more interactive lessons based on discussion and exchange of ideas. The research methodology CSL10 explained that his subject requires a teaching process whereby after transmission one needs to get students practising what they have learnt. But he recognises that this is not so easy. Most of the time, students just can't cope with the exercises either because they were absent in the previous lesson or because they didn't understand the material, said CSL7. In principle the four lecturers mentioned the traditional, one-way transmission approach as the main method being used together with some group discussion and practical exercises to apply theory into practice.

b) Resources availability

Asked about what they think about the library resources and their adequacy to the teaching of the research reports, the four lecturers shared the same opinion that the library has some good books but there is something missing; good librarians to support students when they are there, said CSL8. CSL10 went further to explain that there is nothing wrong with the library and the resources there. What is needed is more space and appropriate conditions to work. And CSL7 went further to state that unfortunately everything seems to be ‘abnormal’ at TTI nr 200. *“But the books are there and students can go and sit for some reading or borrow them and take them home”* said CSL7. In addition, CSL8 went on to state that the most important thing that needs to be done is to ask students to go to the library. He suggested that lecturers sometimes need to accompany students to the library and teach them how to locate materials in it. In this lecturer’s opinion, lecturers need to give more value to the library. CSL9 also emphasised that the library is too small and there is no space for the new books that could be bought. However CSL10 contradicted that idea by explaining that when it comes to research there are not new or old books, all books are valid and they have some important information. To him, what is needed is a bigger place for the institution to work peacefully.

In general the three lecturers agreed with CSL8, who posited that provided that students have time to go and sit in the library with the support of the librarians to find what has been recommended by teachers, the library is adequate for those purposes. Concerning the computer lab, the four lecturers were to some extent sceptical as according to CSL8 the so called computer lab does not exist as such; he went further to emphasise that even for Maths students it does not exist. CSL10 went further to explain that the ICT people who are in charge of the computer room lack some training, the computers need maintenance, and there are just a few computers perhaps less than half a classroom. To conclude CSL7 pointed out that as with the existing library, the institution needs to put in place certain conditions in order to establish a proper computer lab, and find trained people to work there.

c) Research report writing

Concerning research report writing three main questions were asked:

- ❖ In your opinion why do students fail to write their research reports?
- ❖ What can be done to help them complete their research reports swiftly?
- ❖ Do you think a research report is necessary and important? Please elaborate.

Responding to the first question, CSL9 explained that there are many factors contributing to that problem,

- *First the four years of course work are not sufficient to prepare them to write the research reports,*
- *Second lecturers take the easiest way to teach and assess students and students don't make any effort to study and get a pass mark,*
- *Third research supervision has got many problems that need to be discussed in a workshop, finally students are very lazy.*

In the same line of reasoning CSL10 added that he is facing serious problems with the subject he is teaching because *“after a whole year students cannot produce their research proposals and the lecturer is the only one blamed...”* According to him the problem does not lie with the lecturer but with the students who come from educational institutions where everything was easy that they succeeded without learning anything. *“And now the problem is the lecturer who is in charge of the research methodology course... well this is very serious”* he said.

CSL7 remarked that no one should be blamed for the fact that students cannot produce their thesis after completion of their studies. What people need to do is to look at the entire system and see where the problem actually lies. We need to re-think the entry exams' policy and procedures and who are the students that we are receiving, because what is happening and to his own understanding is that TTI nr 200 is the last but not only institution that students look for in order to continue their studies. CSL10 added that unfortunately the educational policy in our country favours the inclusion of all individuals in the system independently of their educational background.

As for the last aspect whether the research report should continue or not as the final assessment for students all the content subject lecturers agreed that it should continue and CSL9 emphasised that the only thing that needs to be done is to improve the quality of teaching in all the subjects and engage students in more highly demanding cognitive tasks, so that by the time they start writing their research reports they won't have major problems in so doing, said CSL8.

d) Assessment procedures

Two main questions were asked: How do you assess your students? and How do you think this kind of assessment prepares them for research report writing?

In response to the first question, lecturers mentioned the following types of assessment:

- ❖ Individual tests;
- ❖ Group and individual assignments with oral presentations.

Commenting about the use of individual tests CSL10 explained that although all the procedures are important the individual test is the one that gives the lecturer the real picture of the students' level of performance. The four lecturers are of the opinion that it is quite difficult to attribute marks to students when they are doing group discussion, and as CSL10 explains, individual tests do not have this type of shortcoming, also if a lecturer does not set up individual tests how will they assess students? And who will be judged and questioned by the department?

It seems that lecturers do not feel comfortable with group and individual presentations, which according to CSL9 *“they are difficult to mark and time consuming”*. However he recognises that group and individual work is very fruitful because it prepares students for the type of work they will be doing when writing their research reports. In principle all the content subject lecturers recognise that *“we know that individual tests do not prepare students for research report writing but they somehow contribute to the process”* said CSL10.

e) Research practices

Talking about research practices the discussion concentrated on the teaching and learning of the main academic literacy skills needed for research report writing, namely academic reading and writing, and research methodology I and II. Asked about in which skill students have more problems CSL8 have held that *“students have problems in all the skills; they have problems with reading, writing, and doing research, I mean research methodology”*. CSL10 went on to explain that, the subject he teaches, which is research methodology depends very much on academic reading and writing, as there are practical issues that need to be tackled within the subject itself but if students are poor in the skills of reading and writing they will not go anywhere and once again he emphasised that people cannot just blame the research methodology lecturer for the students failure to produce their research reports.

For CSL7 who is also teaching research methodology stated that the problem seems to lie in the fact that students join TTI nr 200 with a very low level of competence in all the skills. As a result they cannot cope properly with the demands of the course they find at the institution. As a result they fail or they pass with very low marks, remarked CSL8. And CSL9 added that *“most of the low marks that students get are usually negotiated behind doors and they turn up into 10s and 11s. And then students pass...you know what I’m talking about...”*

In response to the question on what can be done to improve the teaching of these three subjects to meet the demands of research report writing; CSL7 is of the opinion that *“all lecturers should contribute to the empowerment of students in that field of academic writing and research supervision should be looked at more seriously”*. For lecturer 8 there is an urgent need to train supervisors and CSL10 added that there are highly qualified lecturers some are holding MAs and others PhDs; the conditions have been put in place and are still being created; therefore, he thinks that what needs to be done is just to improve the quality of our teaching and stop blaming content subject lecturers for the low level of final year TES.

f) Research supervision

As far as research supervision is concerned content subject lecturers did not have so much to say. Asked about the kind of difficulties they usually face in supervising students CSL8 stated *“I do not face major difficulties, but that kind of difficulties which are inherent of any process of supervision.”* For CSL7, the answer was quite aggressive and he explained that he does not have problems or difficulties but the students do, because it’s their work, their responsibility and the whole process depends on their progress, said CSL9. He concluded that it is the students who face difficulties, not him. CSL10 was more humble to state that he does face some difficulties,

- ❖ First students are quite irregular in keeping up the planned meetings,
- ❖ Second, they sometimes come with empty hands , with nothing done from what has been asked in the last meeting, with a lot of excuses, and
- ❖ Finally he has, most of the time, to correct the language for the students and this is time consuming if one thinks about a lecturer supervising more than eight students.

In order to improve supervision practices CSL9 is of the opinion that the number of supervisees needs to be reduced to three per lecturer, and there should be a deadline for students to complete their research reports. For CSL7 there is a great need to train supervisors as he stated before and he thinks that apart from the number of students being supervised by each teacher and the deadline for completion of the research report, together with the training of supervisors, there is a need for supervising supervisors, because, in his opinion, some lecturers are not supporting and guiding students properly. CSL8 recognises that there are many constraints hindering the process but rather than fighting against those constraints he feels that we are contributing to their reinforcement. According to him students should not be blamed for their weaknesses and failure to produce their research reports. “This is unfair” said CSL8. Following are the TES’ interview transcripts.

6.3.2 Interview data from students

i. Interview data from Type 1 Students

a) Lecture delivery

As was stated before the interview schedule for TES is the same as the one for lecturers and content subject lecturers. Very small changes were made to meet the purpose of asking some of the questions. For example while the question for lecturers is (What mode of lecturing do you use most?), for students it is (What mode of lecturing did your lecturers use most?). For type 1 students they are numbered S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5. Asked what mode of lecture delivery their lecturers did use most? There were two common responses, namely:

- ❖ One way transmission;
- ❖ Discussion based on the material presented by students.

Most of the students were of the opinion that lecturers relied mostly on “chalk and talk” in their classes. S1 explained that most of the time some of the lecturers like standing in front of the class and talking to students. Sometimes they dictate the material or they just take copies from the books and ask them (students) to study them at home. According to S1, lecturers never check whether students have read the materials or not. Commenting along the same lines S2 added that there are also some lecturers who like dictating the material to students but they don’t allow students to ask questions and when students try to ask questions lecturers they think the student is challenging their knowledge of the subject matter.

However S3 was humble in confessing that there are some lecturers who are good. For example there are some lecturers who from time to time give practice activities to students and allow them to work in groups; however, this student admits that in general lecturers sometimes have ‘a strange behaviour.’ For S5, some of the lecturers try to make their classes more interactive, and they ask many questions in the class; however, only a few students respond to the questions; and, when this happens, according to S4, the lecturer takes the leadership and changes the teaching method, ‘and the lesson becomes boring’. Commenting about the kind of methodology being used S1 explains that sometimes students do not react in the class, they wait for the lecturer to ask them questions, and when this happens they do not answer either, because they are afraid of participating in the class. So even if lecturers wanted to make classes more interactive they would have problems in achieving the aims of the lesson and finishing the lesson on time, said S1. To most of Type 1 students the lecturing method mostly used is the traditional one with “*The teacher standing in front of us explaining the lesson and asking some questions from time to time*”, said S2.

With regard to whether the course work prepared them for research report writing they said that it did to some extent because, according to S2 they “could finish ...studies on time...”, however, for S3 it was very hard for him because it was like he was starting from the scratch again, especially because he didn’t have research methodology subject. For S5 and S1 they said they had subjects such as academic reading and writing and research methodology I and II. But they posited that they did not get that much from those subjects.

S4 could not remain silent about his dissatisfaction with regard to the experience he went through and explained that the course work did not prepare him to write the research report, as he had to repeat year 4 twice due to some family problems and his motivation went down. He explained that he did not take the research methodology course. As a result when he started writing his research report he had to work very hard.

S1 went on to emphasise that the way the course is designed now is very good, all the subjects are there; so, if the methodology of the above mentioned subjects changes, students will benefit a lot from them and research report writing will no longer be a problem. And S2 reinforced that idea by stating that it is the teaching methodology that needs to be changed to help students acquire the knowledge they need to write their research reports.

In general these students believe that the course work prepared them for research report writing, and as S5 posits if he succeeded it is because he learnt something from the course, otherwise he would have failed like many other students. S3 indicated that *“the individual effort from the student is very relevant, and unless students do not work hard they will not get anywhere”*.

b) Resources availability

In response to how they thought about the library resources and the computer lab, and whether they helped them write their research reports, students came up with different viewpoints. For S5 for example, both the library resources and computer lab are not contributing to students writing their research reports. The books in the library date from a long time ago and lack updating. The computer room does not exist and even if it existed it is meant to support only Math's students, said S5. In the same way of reasoning S2 explained that he once went there to ask for help and was told that computer lab was just for students who were doing Math's.

One of the problems mentioned by S3 regarding the library was that the librarians don't seem to be trained and they have difficulties in locating books on the shelves, as a result students end up not getting what you are looking for. And S4 contradicted that idea by stating that he was always lucky to get the books he was looking for. He admits that there are some good books in the library and in his opinion some colleagues wait until lecturers have given them work to go to the library. However he asserts that students cannot confine themselves to the main library; they need to go and explore other libraries in town. And S3 reinforced the idea that there are other good libraries in Town such as for example the Ministry of Education's main library which has got a very big and rich library where students can find many good and recent books written in English.

Going back to the computer lab facilities, S2 went on to comment that the computer lab belongs to the department of exact sciences. It appears that if students do not have their own computers they will have problems in doing their work and as S2 posits, he did not have problems because he has his own laptop; but most of his colleagues don't. And if someone doesn't have computer skills and no personal computer, it would be difficult to write the research report.

Following the same line of reasoning S3 went further to explain that if people go to Namibia, they will see the level of organisation at higher Education level. According to this student, in our country we don't have anything in place, even for meeting supervisors one needs to go to their places or somewhere else; because the staff room is also a meeting room, and most of the time it is too noisy. To reinforce this idea S1 who lived in Namibia for quite a long time, emphasised that *“For example people say that Namibia is a poor country compared to Angola, but if you visit their University you will be astonished. Everything is in place and students have a ‘study centre’ or whatever they call it. Here we don't have a quiet place to stay and study; even for meeting our supervisors there is no place available.”*

But there are not only negative aspects to point out. According to S4 things have changed, and they have changed for better. He provides an example that in 2002 there was no computer lab, nor were there updated books in the library as there are now. He also states that the curriculum has also improved with the introduction of new subjects taught in English such as research methodology and school administration. Therefore this student thinks that these are signs of development; *“I am not a politician, but we need to understand that TTI nr 200 is functioning on these poor infrastructures not because our Director is blind or doesn't want to sort out the problem but because the top people don't care...”* said him.

c) Research report writing

Commenting on why students fail to write their research reports, respondents provided the following reasons:

- ❖ Lack of time;
- ❖ Lack of motivation;
- ❖ Wrong topic choice;
- ❖ Unhelpful supervisor.

c.1) Lack of time

All the students have admitted that time was the main constraint in writing their research reports. S5 explained that because he was no longer attending lessons, and he is working it became difficult to find time to concentrate on his work. In the same way of reasoning S3 stated that one of the difficulties in finding time to write was due to lack of electricity at home; he could not work in the evenings, and that was the time he was supposed to do something on his project. In addition to that S2 posited that *“the absence of a timetable*

and a classroom is one of the constraints he found in concentrating on his work". Another relevant point was mentioned by S3 who referred to the issue of lack of time as one of the main constraints in writing the research report in the following way: *"time is very difficult to manage, you are working, you have a family, and you still need to concentrate on your research report when you mind is telling you to stop"* said S3.

c.2) Lack of motivation

Students also mentioned lack of motivation as one of the reasons that is probably preventing students from writing their research reports. For S4 for instance, he had to repeat year 4 twice doing some subjects in delay, what made him lose motivation; when he started writing his research report he had to double the effort to 'retrieve' that motivation. There are some instances when motivation is lost throughout the process of writing, for S1 for example he was quite motivated when he started writing his research report; however, as the process went on he came to realise that he chose a wrong topic and then he lost motivation and he nearly gave up.

Commenting on lack of motivation S5 explained that the first meeting with his supervisor was very important, for him the first meeting was so encouraging that his motivation went up and he never stopped writing until he finished.

c.3) Wrong topic choice

As above mentioned by S4, sometimes students choose wrong topics to work on and as soon as they realise that this not what they wanted they lose motivation and give up writing. In fact, as S5 explains choosing a wrong topic is very common among students and if students don't have a second topic in mind they will have to conform themselves to working on an 'imposed topic' selected from the list in the department. When this happens, most of the students are hardly able to finish their work perhaps because this is not what they want, said S3. Still commenting on the issue of choosing a wrong topic student 1 went further to explain that sometimes it isn't the topic which is wrong, but the supervisor who doesn't accept it probably because s/he doesn't like it; so sometimes it is a matter of being allocated a wrong supervisor and not a wrong topic.

c.4) Unhelpful supervisor

As students raised the issue of having a unhelpful supervisor, they were asked first of all to provide a definition of the concept of an ‘unhelpful supervisor’ and they came up with the following statements:

- ❖ Someone who doesn’t understand the topic and therefore cannot help that much;
- ❖ Someone who understands the topic but doesn’t want to help the student;
- ❖ Someone who understands the topic but doesn’t have time to help the student.

S5 is of the opinion that the attribution of supervisors to students is very important in the process of writing the research report, because if a student gets a lazy supervisor who is never available, the process of writing will be delayed and the student may not finish the writing. S3 reinforced that idea by positing that “everything depends on who is supervising you. The rest comes after.”

In response to what can be done to help students complete their research reports swiftly? S1 is of the opinion that the whole curriculum needs to be revised so that Research methodology II is taught in year 3 and the research proposal is produced in the same year. In so doing students will write their research reports in year four while concluding their course work, said S5.

Following the same comments and in addition to what S5 said, S4 said that the key subjects like academic reading, academic writing and research methodology I and II need to be allocated to more serious and knowledgeable lecturers, and the teaching of the teaching methodology subject needs to change a little bit. In his opinion, more practice is needed. S1 elaborated a bit more by explaining that in his case for example, he had a good mark in his research report defence but he admits that the language was and is a problem, at least for him. To him, sometimes he understands what he reads but he feels that he does not have the language to express his ideas and opinions. In his humble opinion the lecturer responsible for English Language teaching should also reinforce the content of the language and contribute to the students’ academic literacy practices improvement.

Asked if they think that the research report is necessary and important to be kept as the final form of assessment, they all agreed that the research report is the most powerful tool of learning at the moment at TTI nr 200. They all agreed that when they were studying they thought that things were easy to attain and getting a pass mark was not so difficult. However, at the end when they are asked to write their research reports they start to realise that things aren't as easy as they thought. However S2 admitted that he learnt more in writing his research report than in the four-year of course work. S5 concluded in stating that writing the research report is like preparing students to continue their studies; he therefore thinks that this is the time when students enter the world of investigation as *"small babies crawling until they can start walking. The research report is very important for any student"*.

d) Assessment procedures

Asked about the kind of assessment their lecturers used most, students indicated individual tests as the ones mostly used by their teachers. In addition to individual tests S5 remarked that they also did some extra work for assessment purposes *"we used to do some group work but as far as I remember that only happened twice"*. S3 explained that the problem is that when students do group work there is no feedback from the lecturer, the group just receives a mark and that is all. The provision of feedback from lecturers was also mentioned by S2 who commented that lecturers hardly provide feedback to students, even the individual tests come with an overall mark but no feedback is provided. Students never know which parts are right and which ones are wrong; and there are times when students do not receive their tests back.

In response to whether the type of assessment they have prepared them for research report writing S4 commented that what happens during course work is totally different from research report writing. He went on to state that one thing is to sit for a test for 45 minutes and the other thing is to do research. And S5 added that the assignments they wrote throughout the course work did not contribute to the writing of the research report. It is commonly believed by these students that lecturers do not take into account the issue of writing a research report at the end of the course. Thus they all think that assessment procedures need to be revisited. According to S2 everything needs to be revisited, the methods of teaching, the assessment procedures, because, according to him, in the ELT methodology subject students learn all those things which are not taking place in our classrooms, which are not being practised by lecturers. Students think lecturers need a refreshment course in order to update their skills.

e) Research practices

The first question under this subheading is: In which area did you have more problems? in academic reading, academic writing, or in research methodology? Responding to this question S4 explained that as he didn't have all the new subjects he had problems in dealing with research, but he worked hard to overcome the problem; he admitted that he had some help from some lecturers and colleagues. S5 expressed his view stating that it is quite difficult to say in which subject he had more problems, but he thought that he had problems with all the skills. However he posits that those problems did not stop him from doing his research. He asserts that he does not "think there is someone who didn't have problems...problems are always there waiting for us..." said S5.

In general all the students admitted that they had problems in all the subjects in one way or another but the research methodology subject is the most problematic one; they say it needs to be taught in a different way. With regards to the following question, on how the teaching of these subjects should be improved to meet the demands of research report writing, S5, came up with some suggestions. For example he is of the opinion that in order to teach these so important subjects lecturers need to know the subject matter, and have the skills of delivering it. They also need to like what they do, because sometimes there is a feeling that lecturers are teaching because they have to and not because they like what they are doing. And S4 is of the opinion that the teaching process at University level needs to be supervised because so many lecturers are just earning money for nothing; they don't write lesson plans and they don't prepare their lessons; "*we learnt from the teaching methodology course that teachers should always prepare their lessons no matter for how long they have been on the job,*" said S4. And S3 remarked that "more practice is needed, because most of the time we understand the theory but when it comes to writing we find it difficult to do. "*It's like cooking, you read the recipe and you understand it but you might have problems in preparing the dish.*"

f) Research supervision

Supervision is another area of relevant importance in the process of students writing research reports. To this regard two questions were asked:

- ❖ What kind of difficulties did you face in being supervised? And
- ❖ What would you suggest to help improve the supervision practices?

Answering the first question S5 mentioned that lack of availability from supervisors was the main difficulty; it is very difficult to meet the supervisors, and on the top of all that they take long to give feedback. Arguing along the same lines S3 indicated that, it feels like supervisors are obliged to supervise students, and in addition to that, S4 expressed his experience in being told by the supervisor that he was just doing him a favour and therefore he shouldn't put too much pressure on him.

S2 expressed a concern that his supervisor asked him to pay for 'airtime' for his cell phone every week and once his car was in a garage and he had to help him pay not because he (student) wanted but because otherwise he could not come to town to meet me at TTI nr.200.

With regard to providing some suggestions to improve the situation S1 is of the opinion that research report writing should take place simultaneously with course work starting in year 3 so that at the end of year 4 students are ready to present their work. In S4 opinion, students should write their research reports in year 4 in the research methodology subject with the help of the lecturers, because the research methodology lecturer cannot do it alone. For S1 however, there is a need for improving the teaching learning process and create conditions that will provide students with the necessary skills to write their research reports. And S2 remarked that year 5 should still continue the year for research report writing, under a pre-scheduled time, with deadlines and so on; also, in this student's viewpoint supervisors need to inform the heads of department about the students' progress and their own progress. These were the suggestions made by the group of students who have successfully completed their studies.

ii. Interview data from Type 2 Students

a) Lecture delivery

This is the group of students who are currently writing and therefore it is expected that they have their own opinion, different from the other groups. These students are numbered ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4 and ST5. Asked what mode of lecture delivery their lecturers did use most? There were two common responses, namely:

- ❖ One way transmission;
- ❖ Group discussion based.

These students stated that most of the time their lecturers like exposing the material to the students and they are only supposed to speak in case there is a question from the lecturer or there if there is some need for clarification about the material. ST3 confessed that most of the lecturers like using the traditional methods of teaching. He emphasised that sometimes they forget that students are being trained to become teachers and some of them are already teaching. ST2 wanted to reinforce ST3 idea and went further to point out that using the one-way transmission method is not a bad thing; as learnt from the methodology course there are many teaching methods available for teachers and lecturers to choose from; all depends on the level of the class and the type and the content being taught; Commenting along the same lines ST1 added that the problem is that sometimes lecturers do not even bring a lesson plan, what contradicts what they have learnt from the teaching methodology lessons, that a lesson plan is an important tool for teachers and lecturers to present their lessons.

In agreeing with his colleagues ST4 also added that even in the subjects that they thought lecturers were going to give them more practical work, they were not practising at all and this is perhaps the reason why they hardly can write their assignments successfully. He said, *“When lecturers ask us to write assignments and so on it is a disaster. For example last year in my group only three students completed their research proposals successfully”*. Another comment came from ST5 who posited that there are lecturers who bring photocopies from books and ask them to read and to discuss them; and they leave students alone in the class. And when they come back they ask students about their opinions on the reading but as time is not enough they stop the lesson and never come back to that topic. *“The lesson was taught but students didn’t learn anything”*, said ST5.

To conclude ST3 maintained that what matters most is not the type of methodology being used, although it’s important. To him the problem is the lecturers’ attitude and responsibility in doing their job. *“And this is the reason why students fail to write their final research reports because they are not prepared to do that”*; said ST4. To reinforce this idea ST1 emphasised that *“the four years are enough to prepare us for research report...the way lecturers are teaching us, is not good enough to prepare us for academic work. If teachers teach us seriously, in all the subjects, the course will prepare us for whatever academic work.”*

b) Resources availability

Concerning resources availability all the students are of the opinion that there are plenty materials in the main library and also in the English sector library. One student confessed that sometimes students do not have time to go to library and seat and read. He recognises that there are plenty of good books in the English Sector library and in the main library too.

Commenting on the same issue ST5 explained that students cannot expect to find all the books in the above mentioned libraries. There are other libraries in town from where students can borrow books from. He gave as an example the Institute of Languages which has got a rich library and where students can borrow books from. For this student what is missing from the students is more time and willingness to get their studies concluded. In addition to that ST2 said there are also good bookshops where you students and lecturers can buy some good books; With regards to the computer lab these students said that they have never been there because they were told that that place is a classroom for Maths students to practice their ICT skills, said ST1.

Commenting on this aspect ST3 explained that it was a pity that there is only one room with computers at TTI nr 200. He posited that he did not know exactly how many computers were in the computer room, as he has never been there, but he thinks that at this level, the institution should have a well established computer lab as in many other Universities in the world. And in the same line of reasoning ST3 stated that in Namibia, which a smaller country compared to Angola, for example all the Universities are well equipped to guarantee that the teaching learning process can take place under good conditions.

c) Research report writing

Commenting on why most of the students fail to write their research reports, students provided the following problems:

- ❖ Lack of time;
- ❖ Lack of motivation;
- ❖ Bad supervisor.

Commenting on lack of time ST5 explained that one of the big constraints in completing their research reports, in his own opinion seemed to be lack of time. According to

him, he was making progress because he is not married, and he is living with his parents; but it is true that some of his colleagues from the same academic year are not yet writing because of some of the problems he had mentioned. Commenting on the same topic ST3 added that he had to stop working because otherwise it would have been difficult to combine things. He is working on 28 days onshore and 28 days offshore; and when was offshore he did not have time for nothing except for resolving family problems. Therefore he decided to give up working and write his research report; *“I think I did make the right decision because I am almost finished. I must say that I have a good supervisor”*, said him.

Regarding the issue of lack of motivation, ST1 explained that most of the time students lose motivation because they do not have a good and motivating supervisor. He further explained that there are supervisors who say *‘I think you should be somewhere else but not here, because you are very weak’*. Students went on to mention some other factors contributing to lack of motivation, and among them they mentioned that lack of motivation derives from many factors but some of them are: bad supervisor, bad relationship with supervisor, lack of regular feedback “just to mention some” said ST2. And following the same way of reasoning ST3 added that when students do not have a personal computer and the institution does not have a place for students to type their work they can lose motivation. As a result students have to look for someone to type their work; however, the people who do the typing do not know English and therefore they make a lot of spelling mistakes. They may have computer skills but they lack English Language knowledge.

The discussion continued and ST4 mentioned one fact that that according to him is being ignored. He said that there are times when the supervisors do not know so much about the topic and ask students to go and read books, but they do not tell students exactly which books to read. Thus, students end up reading books for the sake of reading with no purpose, and then they lose the initial motivation. He posited that that is not his case, but it is the case of many of his colleagues. According to ST4 *“some teachers were not born to be supervisors, if they were really born to be teachers”*. In addition to was said, student 5 argued that students’ lack of motivation is sometimes originated from lecturers’ lack of motivation. Sometimes the lecturers do not show any motivation to the students; lecturers seem to be doing the job just for salary purposes but not because they like it. For this student, students’ motivation depends primarily on the lecturers’ interest in supporting them and the level of

engagement from both students and lecturers He ended up stating that *“The relationship between supervisors and students is very important”*.

Talking about what a bad supervisor meant to them ST1 explained that a bad supervisor is one who cannot support the student scientifically and personally. Referring to what he said before he stated that if a supervisor cannot advise a student on one or two books to read, if s/he does not have a sound academic knowledge in the area the student is investigating then we are in the presence of a bad supervisor. ST2 reinforced this idea in saying that feedback is also very important, and should be provided on time; for him a bad supervisor is one that above all the mentioned factors he does not provide students with feedback on a regular basis.

With regards to the second question on what could be done to help students complete their research reports swiftly, several comments were made. For example ST3 is of the opinion that *“from now on, and because the department is trying to change things the research report writing process should start earlier in the course, maybe in year 3 or beginning of year 4”*. He is also of the opinion that the ELT methodology subject needs to be based on a more interactive process between lecturers and students. For ST3, more practice and more discussions are needed.

As for ST5 for example the department is going the right way and according to him one cannot expect more change in such a short period of time. However, he is of the opinion that supervisors need to be supervised, and some lecturers can only teach not supervise; As a concluding remark ST1 explained that the course subject content is quite easy in terms of the activities designed by lecturers and the essays students are asked to write are also simple easy to do; this makes students think that they are making progress but they are not. In his own view point, some lectures look at them as being inferior, when in fact they are also *‘teachers’* and they have some knowledge and understanding of ELT methodology and therefore they can see who is good and who is a bad lecturer.

d) Assessment procedures

In order to check students opinions about the way they were assessed, two main questions were asked. The first question is: What kind of assessment did your teachers use

most? (Tests, essays, group pair and individual work...). Students responded that the most used tool of assessment is the traditional test. Commenting on this, ST5 explained that lecturers use other ways of assessment but the marks from the individual tests are the most important ones. ST2 went further to highlight that even when they did group and individual work the marks that appeared on the board seemed to be the ones from the tests; for the other marks lecturers gave them an average mark resulting from some mental calculation they did but they never told them how they got to get those marks. In going on with the comments ST3 emphasised that they had to write portfolios in the Curriculum Development subject and it was a good experience for them. ST4 mentioned that in the ELT methodology subject they also wrote some papers in response to some classroom problems posed by the lecturers and they had to look for and read some books in order to write their essays.

As a way of trying to conclude what was said by the colleagues, ST5 explained that there is some change in the way lecturers are assessing students these days; however he thinks that what is missing is more responsibility from the students' side and lecturers should keep reminding students that soon or later they will be writing their research reports. ST5 was humble to confess that some of the essays he wrote during course work would have benefited him in writing the research report if he took it seriously during that time. To add to that comment ST4 pointed out that he still remembers some of the lecturers *saying "if you do well this work it can be your topic for the research report"*; however, they never took it seriously. As a remark ST1 pointed out that tests are good but lecturers need to change their "philosophy of teaching", in other words, they need to change the way questions are posed, they need to make students think more and reflect on what they are doing.

Responding to second question (Do you think this kind of assessment prepares students for research report writing?) ST5 is of the opinion that the assessment procedures students are exposed to during the course work does not prepare students that much for writing their research reports because they do not get feedback on time, and when they get it, lectures do not tell them what is wrong and what is right and how to correct things. Sharing the same point of view ST3 is of the opinion that rather than talking about assessment we should go back to the teaching process; he posited that lecturers are assessing students the way they are teaching them; he went further to explain that in ELT methodology classes they learnt that "the way teachers assess their students reflects the way they teach them". Therefore he thinks that some change should take place starting from the lecturing mode being used by

lecturers and then the assessment procedures should conform to that lecturing mode. To sum up, ST4 concluded that *“...only students who joined TTI nr 200 with a good level of knowledge can survive and conclude their research reports. The rest is a joke”*.

e) **Research practices**

Research practices were another aspect that students were asked to comment on. The first question was on which skills students are facing more problems, and they were asked to elaborate a bit more on their comments.

ST5 started explaining that students have problems in all the skills; not because they are bad students but because they weren't taught appropriately how to practice the skills; he explained all the students can read and write, and find information in books; however writing down what they have read, or summarising someone's ideas seems to be the most difficult part at least for him.

ST2 believes that as the process of writing the research report requires the use of all the skills students have learnt, he thinks that the difficulties faced by the students are very much particular and individual. To him, students cannot blame the lecturers for their weaknesses although there are some lecturers who deserve that; *“lecturers are so busy these days that it also becomes difficult for them to cope with all the responsibilities they have”* said ST2; To conclude he posited that *“what is amazing is that the way lecturers perform at public universities is somehow different from the way they teach at private universities”*. Talking about the same issue, ST3 added that *“lecturers know what they do and what they want; they are conscious of their acts; at public schools no one fires them and no one punishes them; this is perhaps the reason they do not care”*.

Concerning possible solutions to improve the teaching of the content subjects, ST3 explained that there should be more practical work; teachers should ask students to do tasks that are similar to research report writing; he asserted that for example, he only learnt how to write bibliography when he was writing his research report; according to him, when they wrote their assignments lecturers never told them how to do so; he said that lecturers only used to say *“check how bibliography is written”*.

Commenting on the same aspect student 5 pointed out that most of the time lecturers gave marks to their work but they never told them how right or wrong they were. In ST2's opinion, lecturers need to provide feedback so that students know what is wrong and what is right. He went further to state that each and every lecturer should take into account that whatever subject they are teaching they are giving their contribution to helping them write their research reports at the end of the course.

f) **Research supervision**

Research supervision was the last aspect to be discussed. For this group of students there are some problems that need to be addressed and they came up with the following points:

- ❖ Bad relationship between supervisor and student;
- ❖ Lack of availability of the supervisor;
- ❖ Lack of knowledge in the area.

f.1) Bad relationship between supervisor and student

Students mentioned the issue of presence of a bad relationship between student and supervisor. ST5 explained that he was forced to change the supervisor because he could tell that the supervisor did not like him and every time he phoned him to know if there was some feedback from his work, the supervisor started shouting on the phone saying that he had many other things to do and not just think about the student's work. ST3 commented that it did not happen to him, but one of his colleagues took 3 years writing his research report just because the supervisor created a bad relationship between him and her; "unfortunately I cannot tell what the problem was...but it was something serious...said ST3. ST2 went on to comment that there are some students who are lucky to have such a good relationship with their supervisors that they concluded their work within the time allocated. "Unfortunately this is not my case, said him".

f.2) Lack of availability from the supervisor

By lack of availability from the supervisor students meant those supervisors who hardly had time to sit with them and provide feedback on their work. As ST1 commented that is so disgusting for a student to be sitting with his/her supervisor and all of sudden hear him saying [look I have to go; we must find another time to talk], said ST1; ST3 went further to explain that he used to meet his supervisor at his place but most of the time he waited for

countless hours. As for ST4 supervisors always set up times that they are not available and they end up postponing meeting after meeting. To some extent it is understandable why supervisors are not always available. For ST2 supervisors lack availability because they are overloaded; they work at many different places and it is difficult to recon ciliate their work in the varied places they work.

f.3) Lack of knowledge in the research area

Students also referred to the problem of the supervisor not being knowledgeable in the research area interest of the student. ST5 pointed out that there are times when students feel that the supervisor does not know very well the area they are researching on, and this is sometimes visible in some the thesis defence that he has attended. And ST3 added that there are times when students start with one topic in mind but because the supervisor does not understand it very well they are forced to change direction; and in his words, this is bad because the student can lose motivation and give up. ST1 made an interesting point by referring to the point that sometimes it is not the supervisor's fault but the department's fault in allocating bad supervisors to students; For ST2, the department cannot just look at the number of students per supervisor but take into consideration the area of interest for each and every student.

In order to improve the supervisory processes students also suggested some solutions that came out of their discussion:

- ❖ There is a need to set up deadlines for both supervisor s and students;
- ❖ There should be a sort of contract between the parts;
- ❖ Meetings should be held at the institution;
- ❖ Supervisors need to be assessed by a group of experts;
- ❖ There is a need for training supervisors.

Students are of the opinion that lack of specific deadlines for the completion of the theses may result in a big constraint. As ST5 posits setting up deadlines can make a big difference and force students to work hard to meet the demands of the department. Following the same line of reasoning ST3 added that a contract should also be signed between the student and the supervisor and the supervisor should report on the students' progress every two or three months. It was also suggested by ST4 that the institution should not allow supervisory meetings to be held anywhere, as there is a danger of meeting at strange places

especially for female student. ST4 went further to state that the department needs to dictate the rules and make all the lecturers aware of them. By doing so supervisors will feel that they are also being supervised and as a result they will do their job better, said ST4. Finally ST1 posited that perhaps what the department needs to do is to select those who can supervise and offer them a training course abroad just to increase their capabilities and raise their motivation; they also need to be well paid to avoid asking for money from students, concluded ST2.

iii. Interview data from Type 3 students

a) Lecture delivery

This is the group of students who could not succeed in writing their research reports or research reports. Some of them finished course work some years ago but they are struggling to put pen to paper. Type 3 students are numbered STU1, STU2, STU3, and so on. For example STU1 commented that he finished in 2008, what means about 5 years ago but has not yet started writing. STU2 finished his course work in 2006 but is finding it difficult to get started. For STU4 as he maintains, he completed the four years of course work with no problems at all. He started in 1995 and finished in 1999. He has had more than three supervisors but none of them has helped him complete the research report. STU5 also completed in 1999 but he started in 1993. It took him six years to finish the course work. STU3 finished in 2002 and the course work took him six years to complete due to some financial and family problems.

Asked about the mode of lecturing that their lecturers use(d) most? Students answered in unison that it was the traditional way with the lecturer in front of the class talking, talking, and talking. Students were only allowed to speak when the lecturer asked some questions or when they were working in a group. But they rarely did group work in the class, said STU4. In the same line of reasoning STU3 explained that apart from the traditional way of teaching by most of the lecturers we also had some debates and discussions in the class. One of students' difficulties was, according to them, the language, because in order for them to discuss something they need to be fluent in the language, in this case in English.

One of the students suggested that students need more practice on speaking if lecturers want them to participate in classes. And STU2 was of the same opinion and reinforced this idea saying,

I agree with my colleague because what makes lecturers speak more time than students is the fact that students never have anything to say; maybe because they don't know enough about the content or maybe because they cannot express themselves in English; and this is my case.

Therefore most of the students are of the opinion that the mostly used teaching method is the expository one, but there are lecturers who use discussions and debates in their classrooms.

Responding to the question on whether the course work prepared them for research report writing, STU3 explained that the course work prepared him for research report writing; however he did not take most of it, the reason why he is still struggling. For STU2 he said that the course work is 'rich' in terms of subjects and the number of qualified lecturers is good too. However, the way lecturers are leading the course needs to be re-examined, even the type of tests they design needs to be revised. In addition, STU1 mentioned lack of feedback as another shortcoming.

STU5 is of the opinion that perhaps lecturers “...did not do *ELT methodology and therefore they need some refreshment on it*”. What he does not understand is that some lecturers say that students' weaknesses come from the previous levels and therefore it is not their responsibility to make them learn. In addition STU4 posited that “*lecturers can say they cannot make us learn, but they can help us learn by choosing the correct method and appropriate ways of interacting with us. There are lecturers who make us feel so afraid that in their classrooms that we just listen...we do not talk*”.

b) Resources availability

With regards to resources availability they all seem to agree that there are more books in the library than ever before. STU1 said the library is now equipped with new furniture, it has new and updated books, and even in English there are many books available. STU3 highlighted that in the past, the English sector did not have a library; today students have a small but rich library where students can seat and read many recent books. However, he was

sorry because students cannot borrow the books because students never return them; therefore, if someone wants to read them it must be in the library. Commenting on the same issue STU4 emphasised that perhaps what is preventing students from succeeding is lack of skills and lack of guidance from the lectures and supervisors.

Students did not talk too much about the computer lab STU3 for example, explained that he has never been there, and when he was studying there was no computer lab in addition STU2 said the computer lab is a recent acquisition of the institution but the access to it is very difficult. And STU5 highlighted that the computer lab is only for ICT students not for all students; the problem is that the room is so small that it could not be possible to accommodate so many students at a time, remarked STU1.

c) Research report writing

As for research report writing, students provided some comments. Asked about the reason why students fail to complete their research reports on time, students came up with the following reasons:

- ❖ Lack of motivation;
- ❖ Lack of time;
- ❖ Family problems;
- ❖ Lack of skills.

STU5 started the discussion by highlighting that motivation is a key element for students to succeed. He stated that if students do not feel motivated to learn they will hardly succeed and if they do not feel motivated to write their research reports they will hardly be able to do so. According to STU4 students' lack of motivation derives from the fact that it is only at this stage that students realise that they did not learn enough to be able to write their research reports.

Following the same way of reasoning, STU3 added that there are also some other factors that can contribute to lack of motivation at the stage of writing the research report; he mentioned for example family problems, social problems, and lack of support from friends and people close to them. And STU2 argued that time is also a big constraint for both supervisors and students. Finding a day and time which is appropriate for both to meet is a big problem; "*and then time flies and doesn't wait for you*"; said him. Finally STU1 rose up the

issue of lack of skills stating that “*Another big problem is lack of skills and knowledge in the area that is being investigated not just from the student’s side but also from the lecturers’ side*”.

In response to what can be done to help students finish their research reports swiftly students commented in various ways depending on their own experience. For example STU5 is of the opinion that special attention should be made to the ‘*old students*’; by old students he meant those who finished their course work some years ago but could not get the research report finished.

STU2 went on to explain that supervisors need to be more patient with students, especially this group of students because after so many years out of the system they need to be encouraged and supported by everyone.

STU3 suggested that the department needs to call these students and encourage them to complete their studies. And in addition he is of the opinion that the department should also organise regular workshop based on research practices to refresh students’ skills. In general the main issues that students came up with are as follows:

- ❖ *Special attention should be made to the ‘old students’;*
- ❖ *Supervisors should be more patient;*
- ❖ *The department needs to call these students and encourage them to complete their studies;*
- ❖ *Workshop to brush the skills up.*

With regards to whether the research report should be kept or taken out from the course, some contributions were made. For example STU5 is of the opinion that “*the research report cannot be taken out from the course; it is an integral part of the course, what lecturers need to do is to reflect on their work and find better methods of teaching*”. In the same way of reasoning STU1 thinks that the responsibility of lack of students’ progress depends on how strict the department is and therefore some action needs to take place in order to get the process under control. And for STU3 the English language subject needs to be well taught because this is the skill those students need in order to express themselves freely.

English is a foreign language and if students do not practise the language they cannot speak read or write it appropriately. In addition to what everyone said STU2 posited that although he is struggling to write his research report he thinks it cannot be taken out from the programme.

d) Assessment procedures

Assessment procedures are determinant factors in any teaching/learning process. To this regard the first question to be asked was: What kind of assessment did your teachers use most? (Tests, essays, group, pair and individual work...). Generally speaking students stated that there is special preference for the lecturers to use the traditional tests with a text and some comprehensive questions, grammar, and composition. In STU3 words, the way lecturers used to test them was not the most appropriate one; they used to memorise the content of the subjects in order to get high marks. Those students who were weak used to cheat from their colleagues in order to get positive marks. In addition to that STU2 pointed out that there are students who have finished course work through cheating from their colleagues. Feedback is another issue that students referred to. For example STU1 raised up the issue of lecturers not providing feedback to students. *“When there is no feedback students can hardly find what is right and what is wrong”*, said him. STU1 also mentioned that they used to do some group and individual work and present it orally. *“That was a good experience”*, said him. And STU3 remarked that lectures should give students more individual work to do on their own at home or in the library and make them get used to working individually and practising the skills they need for research report writing such as Academic Reading and Writing, and Research Methodology. He recognises that tests are also necessary to check the students’ progress, provided there is feedback from the lecturer. To conclude STU4 explained that lecturers are aware of all the assessment procedures they can use; to him, it seems that the problem is that because lecturer are working at more than two Faculties and they do not want too much work; therefore, they set up tests which are easy and fast to correct.

Asked whether they thought that the kind of assessment they had prepared them for research report writing, STU3 explained that this a difficult question to answer because they finished their courses some time ago. STU2 also agrees that this is a difficult question to answer as he does not remember very well what he learnt from the course. STU5 recognises that they learnt something from the course and the course prepared them to write their research reports; however, they did not make the most of it. STU1 explained that some people

look at them as being weak or lazy students; he thinks that people, especially lecturers need to take into consideration the reasons that made them not complete their research reports on time. But he thinks that to some extent, the course work prepared them to write their research reports and the assessment procedures throughout the course also contributed to the acquisition of the skills needed for research report writing.

e) Research practices

Under the item about research practices two questions were asked:

- ❖ In which subjects do or did you have more problems? In academic reading, academic writing, or research methodology? Please elaborate.
- ❖ How can the teaching of these subjects be improved to meet the demands of research report writing?

In response to the first question STU4 explained that he has problems in both reading and writing; because even in Portuguese he feels that he has many difficulties in writing. StTU1 sees the writing skill as the most difficult one. To him, the writing skill has been difficult for him since primary level school. He went on to explain that writing is different from reading because in reading people just read and try to understand what they read but in writing people need to understand what someone wrote. STU2 does not know in which skill he has more problems but he thinks that one cannot separate them. However, according to him, and “academically speaking”, he thinks that he needs to improve his writing skills. For STU3 the situation is almost the same, for throughout the course they never did real academic reading and writing. Thus he assumes that he has problems in both skills.

Responding to the second question on what can be done to improve that teaching of these skills STU3 feels that lecturers need to set up more practical activities to train students in writing in a way which is similar to writing a research proposal or even the research report. In addition STU5 argued that what students need is to be shown how to do things and he went further to exemplify with a recipe book “ *If you pick up a book with recipes in it you can read a recipe and think that you understood the procedure on how to make it. However it is not always that you can cook the recipe read. What I want to say is that as someone said’ practice makes it perfect’. Therefore more practice is needed*”.

f) Research supervision

As for research supervision two questions were posed, namely:

- ❖ What kind of difficulties did you face or are you facing in being supervised?
- ❖ What would you suggest to help improve the supervision practices?

It seems that students are afraid of confessing what difficulties they are facing in their research supervision. STU3 is the only one who referred to lack of availability of the supervisor and late provision of feedback. He explained that he has a good supervisor and their relationship is very good; however, it has been difficult to meet his supervisor because he is a very busy person, and he takes long to read his work; he continued saying that *“feedback is never provided on time and when you get it you do not remember very well where you were and where you are”*. With regards to the second point the same student, pointed out that, in order to improve the process of supervision the department needs to control the supervisors work; according to him, supervisors need to be more responsible and the department should oblige them to report on the students progress; he also posited that students need to be heard, as their voice is also important; by doing so supervisors will feel more responsible for their students’ progress, remarked him. He also said that *“what is happening now is that when a student fails people say that it is the students’ responsibility; they never ask the supervisor about what went wrong.”* In the same line of reasoning STU3 suggested that one of the solutions might be to get students write their research reports from year 3 so that when they finish year 4 they will be ready to defend their thesis.

STU5 remarked that there is already some change happening in the department; for example contrary to what used to happen in the past, students are writing their research proposals in the research methodology subject. However STU4 is of the opinion that this subject should be taught in year 3 so that after writing the research proposal students can be allocated a tutor in year 4 and write it while they are concluding the course work.

g) Summary

After analysing data from the interviews and questionnaires, the following results were found:

❖ Lecture delivery

Concerning this issue, most of the students state that, in general, lecturers have a sound academic understanding of the subject matter they teach, and that high standard of work is expected from these lecturers during the supervision process. They consider, however, that most lecturers cannot supervise students properly and that some lecturers need in-service training. They also believe that the lecturers' qualifications could significantly contribute to the quality of research supervision; however the reality has been different. Furthermore, students who have successfully completed their research reports and those who are now in the process of writing their research reports consider that lecturers are often accessible and available for consultation, whereas students who have failed to complete their research reports disagree with this statement. In general, the majority of the students believe that most lecturers are not committed to the teaching and research supervision job. Lecturers are of the opinions that they have a sound academic understanding of the subject matter they teach, and that high standard of work is expected from them during the supervision process. They also posit that lecturers are often accessible and available for consultation. Both students and lecturers recognize that there is a need for in-service training and refreshment courses and they state that lecturers holding PhD degrees usually refuse to supervise students.

❖ Resources availability

In terms of access to resources, most students claimed that there is a limited amount of resources available in the library (in fact, they state that most of the books they read are borrowed from other places), there are not enough computers in the lab and that access to these is very difficult. Moreover, they believe that librarians are to some extent unhelpful and not well trained; they state that there is a need for a students' writing lab. Only students who succeeded in writing their research reports believe that the library material is adequate for research writing. Concerning resources availability, *lecturers* are of the opinion that there are not enough resources in the library, and the materials available are not adequate for students to do research. They also think that the computer lab is too small to accommodate students

who want to work on their own and they postulate that there is a need for a bigger computer lab or writing centre that would accommodate any student regardless of their speciality.

❖ **Research report writing**

This theme is the one where students differed more in their opinions about their experience in writing their final piece of work. In general, they all agree that writing a research report helps students become independent researchers. However, only students who have successfully completed their research reports believe the course work was well organized to meet the research report writing demands, and that they acquired most of the skills through the experience of writing their research reports. Conversely, students who failed to complete their research reports were mostly the ones who stated they did not learn much from the Academic reading, writing and Research Methodology courses to help them write their research reports. With regard to research report writing *lecturers* are of the opinion that the assessment procedures during course work do not contribute to the process of writing the research reports and the teaching of the academic reading, writing and research methodology need to be improved in order to prepare students for that purpose. In general, lecturers agree that students acquire most of the academic and research practices through research report writing but they feel that writing a research report does not help students become independent researchers.

❖ **Assessment procedures**

Regarding the assessment procedures, the majority of the students agree that they were given enough time for essays and tests and that these were appropriate for their level. However, only students who successfully completed their research reports agree that the assessment criteria were clear and fair. These students along with students who are in the process of writing their research reports consider that feedback on their work was always provided and appropriate and that the essays and tests they wrote prepared them for research report writing. Students, who successfully completed their research reports and those who have failed to do so, agree that the final research report should be a requirement for students to obtain their qualification. Conversely, only students who are currently writing their research reports agree that the final research report should not be a requirement for students to obtain their qualification. Lecturers are of the opinion that the assessment criteria need to be revisited as they do not seem to be clear and fair enough; also, the assessment tasks in the course work according to them do not contribute to the final assessment (research report

writing) and according to them it should not be a requirement for students to obtain their qualifications.

❖ **Research practices**

In relation to research practices, students who have successfully completed their research reports and those who are now in the process of writing their research reports believe they are able to construct an academic argument, to access and select information from different sources, find the author's main arguments and provide counter arguments, and they are also able to quote and paraphrase. Moreover, they claim they are aware of the dangers of practising plagiarism and are also aware of how to structure a research report and what to include in each chapter. Students who failed to complete their research reports disagree with all that has been described above. Furthermore, students who have successfully completed their research reports and those who are now in the process of writing their research reports state they learnt and are learning more in writing their research reports than in the four years it took them to complete the course.

In general lecturers are of the opinion that students do not know how to structure a research report, and what to include in each chapter, that students can hardly analyse texts with a critical eye, and produce texts in different genres. Construct an academic argument is another problem mentioned by the lecturers. Lecturers also believe that students lack awareness on how to paraphrase and quote information from different sources, and they are also of the opinion that students do not learn much in writing their research reports.

❖ **Research supervision**

Concerning research supervision practices, students who have successfully completed their research reports and those who are currently writing, agree that their supervisors have a sound academic knowledge of their research area, that the relationship with their supervisors was relatively good, and research supervision has contributed a lot to their academic and professional development. Students who are currently writing and those who have failed to write their research reports believe that supervisors are not so helpful. In general students are of the opinion that feedback from supervisors is adequate although sometimes it is not sent promptly. Students are also of the opinion that there is a need for supervisors training. Concerning research supervision practices, lecturers share the opinion that research supervision contributes to students' academic and professional development, and the

relationship between lecturers and students is good. However, they think that sometimes supervisors are not so helpful and they do not provide feedback promptly and within reasonable time.

6.3.3 Interview with the Deputy Director of the Academic Affairs Department- (DDAAD)

a) Students' failure to write research projects

Being the Head of the Modern Languages Department where the study is being carried out, we thought it would be useful to interview the Deputy Director of the Academic Affairs Department (DDAAD) in order to get some contribution from him based on his long experience and perceptions about the problem under study. The first question to be asked was about his opinion about so many students failing to produce their research reports after being successful in the four years of course work. Responding to this question the DDAAD explained that in his students failure to produce their research reports comes from lack of engagement in their studies; they all come from different backgrounds, different schools, and the way they are being taught in those schools is very much superficial compared to the demands they find at TTI nr 200; as a result, the level they bring is not sufficient to cope with the academic demands required. He provided an example that in the subject he is teaching Portuguese, students have serious problems to write. If one considers that Portuguese is the mother tongue for most of the students, and the official language of the country. He then went further to add that in most cases students join TTI nr 200 not because they want to but *“because TTI nr 200 is the only higher institution where they could pass the tests and get a place to study.”*

In response to what he would suggest to avoid this problem of enrolling students with no knowledge background to continue studies at TTI nr 200, he posited that the entry exam needs to be revised, for example he is of the opinion that the first thing that needs to be done is to change the type of entry exam being used and implement a new policy for new admissions. For example rather than accepting students from any intermediate level he is of the opinion that priority should be given to students from the Teacher Training college-EFP nr 306, and the second thing would be to introduce a more interactive way of teaching. The

situation can only improve if lecturers change their methodology and assessment procedures too.

b) Research supervision

Asked about research supervision practices the DDAAD commented that some departments are better organised than others. Some people think that to be well organised means to get most of the students completing their research reports, but for him to be organised starts from the teaching process and ends in the supervision process. However he admitted that Heads of Department can be very good and well organised but they cannot do everything alone; lecturers must cooperate and change their behaviour and the way they see the world. He also added that there are lecturers who are not good supervisors and therefore they lack some training in research supervision skills. And he went on to emphasise that holding a Masters or PhD degree does not automatically turn a lecturer into a good lecturer or supervisor. According to him, “Supervision is a sophisticated way of teaching based on a personal relationship between lecturers and students, where mutual respect is needed and knowledge and understanding of the area being researched are key factors.”

c) Resources availability

With regards to the library resources he is of the opinion that things have changed a lot and the library has improved a lot over the last few years. Everyday there are more students sitting in the library and this is a sign of development. However he thinks that librarians need some training to organise the library and help students find materials. He also thinks that a bigger space is needed because there is enough money allocated for the acquisition of books, but there is no space to keep them. He added that “*The type of infrastructures we have does no longer conform to our needs and exigencies*”.

Talking about the computer lab he started calling it a computer classroom and explained that it is supposed to serve only Maths students for the ICT lessons. However he did not want to talk about that and concluded that “there are things I don’t like talking about...we really need to move into a bigger, better place to work properly and increase the number of students finishing their research reports.”

Concerning the issue of whether the 4 years of course work are enough to prepare students to write their research reports he is of the opinion that the four years of course work are enough, but the teaching methodology and assessment procedures that lecturers are using need to be refined; also the Research Methodology lecturers play an important role within the research area and therefore it is their responsibility to equip students with the skills they need to write their research reports.

d) Research report writing

In commenting on whether the research report should be abolished from the course, he maintained that writing the research report is the final piece of assessment that students do and it should not be taken out from the course. Writing the research report is, according to him, helping students to enter the gate that leads to the world of investigation. Therefore he thinks that students gain a lot in writing their research reports. He even went further to emphasise that this process gives them the passport to continue their studies and students learn much more from writing the research report than in the four years of course work. Thus he does not agree that the research report should be abolished, on the contrary he thinks that lecturers and supervisors should be more rigorous in preparing students for that.

Asked to provide some suggestions to improve the situation he said that the teaching process needs to be improved and the supervision process too. He also suggested that there must be deadlines for both students and supervisors to finish the research report; supervisors need some training and joint responsibility should be required from both supervisors and students.

Asked about students who have finished their course work many years ago but have not written their research reports yet he is of the opinion that an opportunity should be given to them to conclude their studies, and all the departments need to start inviting these students to come and finish their studies, but of course within a time limit. "I know that some departments are working on that but things must be reinforced", he said.

e) Summary

From the interview with the Deputy Director of Academic Affairs Department-DDAAD it was understood that the admission of new students' policy, Biggs (1999) Presage

factors need to be revisited. As the DDAAD posits, students' educational background, motivation and level of language proficiency when they join TTI nr 200 is one of the key aspects that seem to be hindering the process. He also states that students' level of engagement is very low. With regards to research supervision he thinks that the Heads of Departments need to control both teaching and supervisory processes. He favours the idea of setting up some in-service teacher and supervisor training to improve the quality of the service provided. Talking about the resources he mentioned that the library is too small to accommodate so many students at the same time, and recognises that the resources in the main library are not enough and some of them need to be updated. With regards to the computer lab he is of the opinion that TTI nr 200 does not have a computer lab as it were; there is just a computer classroom for Maths students.

Therefore a proper computer lab for all the students is needed. Talking about the four years of course work he stated that they are actually enough to prepare students for research report writing, but what is missing is an appropriate way of transmission, the use of various teaching methods depending on the level of the students, the subject being taught and the classroom context. The assessment procedures also need to be improved and correspond to the way students will be assessed at the end of the course. In his words, the approaches to teaching being used are so superficial that they do not encourage deep reflection from students; students do not need to make a mental effort to learn and to do their tests, (surface approaches to teaching and learning). He also suggests that the research methodology lecturers need to be more responsible and serious for the subjects they are delivering. He maintains that the research report should continue as the final assessment for students and deadlines should be set up for both supervisors and students. There is a need for running short in-service courses for both lecturers and supervisors to improve the quality of the service provided and the end of course product.

6.4 Classroom Observation

According to (Wajnryb, 1992: 6), teacher development has been seen as something very different, "*that happens within the classroom and within oneself*". He also posits that in the past teacher development used to be seen as an individual skill and what schools needed to do was to help channel the energies spent in directions that would be meaningful and supportive to the teachers. When we teach we are very much concerned with the content,

purpose, procedures and techniques that we use in order to achieve a specific aim of a given lesson.

“Being in the classroom as an observer opens up a range of experiences and processes which can become part of the raw material of teacher’s professional growth.” (Wajnryb, 1992: 1). Thus classroom observation helps filter the teaching learning process from a different angle and help in the process of professional decision making in which lecturers and students are constantly involved. In fact, as (Wajnryb, 1992: 62), posits, “If all students learnt what they were taught at the time at which it was first taught, and if all of them grasped it equally well and equally quickly, teaching would be much less complex than it is.”, and classroom observation would be unnecessary.

It is commonly accepted that each and every observation should be based on specific activities that will guide the observer along the process. While lessons were in progress the researcher tried to collect data or information from the actual lesson, such as language used by the teacher, the kind of interaction, the way of giving instructions, the mode of lecturing and so on. Therefore the use of an observation sheet was very important.

- ❖ It limits the scope of what one is being observing and allows one to focus on one or two particular aspects;
- ❖ It provides a convenient means of collecting data that frees the observer from forming an opinion or making an on-the-spot evaluation during the lesson. As (Wajnryb, 1992: 8). For the observation sheet see appendix M.

It must be emphasised that different people bring different backgrounds with them in the classroom. To this end, observers always bring many expectations derived from their own experience in teaching, and the analyses of the observed lessons are based on that personal teaching practice and experience. Thus, the researcher brought in her own expectations and experiences in every lesson that she observed.

a) Academic writing

In this subject students are required to write up essays, reports, book reviews and sit for written tests. The lecturer is using a book entitled “Academic writing” by (Jordan, 1997).

- ❖ **Language:** the lecturer's language seems to be appropriate for the level of students; it is not too technical for the students to understand what the teacher is saying. The lecturer's pace of speaking and pronunciation are also good.
- ❖ **Attitude:** the lecturer's attitude towards the process of teaching can affect either positive or negatively; the relationship between lecturer and the students was good; in the observed lessons there was a friendly atmosphere in the classrooms and students were given opportunities to talk.
- ❖ **Knowledge of the subject matter:** The lecturer showed some confidence in delivering knowledge to students and was able to answer questions that students asked as the lesson went on;
- ❖ **Lesson stages and activities:** With regards to teaching techniques and methods, there were no specific points to highlight as being traces of weaknesses or constraints; the type of activities for practice set up also seemed to match the lessons being taught. However, it was felt that there was a mismatch between those activities and students real context (Biggs, 1999, curriculum alignment).
- ❖ **Teaching approach and materials:** Concerning the teaching approach the lecturer seemed to be using a combination of product and process approaches and the mode of lecturing was based on teacher talk with students listening and not interfering for clarification or questions asking. No teaching aids, both visual and audio-visual were used in the four observed classes; as mentioned before the "Academic Writing" course book, is the only source of information used in the classes and students were given copies from the book due to scarcity in finding the book in the local market. Apart from that, no supplementary materials were provided for further consultation and reading.
- ❖ **Instructions:** In most of the instances, instructions were quite clear with the lecturer briefing students before asking them to perform the learning activities being set up.
- ❖ **Demonstrations:** Demonstrating how students had to do things was something that was missing in the observed lessons. The lecturer did not demonstrate in practice how things were supposed to be done.
- ❖ **Exemplifications:** this includes all the examples given in the classroom, whether they match the students' context in terms of the type of topics, the work structure, layout to meet the demands of research report writing.
- ❖ **Students' level of engagement:** The students' level of engagement was quite low and the tasks performed in the classroom did not seem to prepare students for the writing

of the research proposals and /or reports. Also, the teaching approach being used did not seem to lead students to deep learning.

- ❖ ***Students' participation and interaction types*** Apparently students seemed to be actively involved in the lesson and they were willing to participate in the lesson. However they did not participate to the level of making decisions but just to the level of answering questions from the lecturer and doing what was demanded by the lecturer. In one of the lessons students were asked to work in groups, but most of the time they worked individually.
- ❖ ***Classroom and follow up activities:*** The lecturer set up some follow up activities to help double check students understanding and help them consolidate the knowledge acquired. However, the activities were so simple and easy that in my humble opinion did not contribute to students' preparation for writing their research proposals and reports
- ❖ ***Feedback:*** Feedback plays an important role in any teaching and learning context. The researcher was conscious to the way feedback was provided to students and how long it took for a lecturer to provide feedback to students after handing in an activity. Unfortunately the four lessons that were observed did give me a chance of observing this aspect.
- ❖ ***Oral comments/observation:*** After some of the lessons some informal conversations with the lecturer were set up to try to find out her/his own impression on the lesson taught. Some students were informally approached in order to check their feelings and opinions about the subject being taught.

b) Academic reading

i. About the lecturer

- ❖ ***Language:*** With regards to the teaching of this subject, the lecturer's language was good and appropriate for the level of students; the language was not too technical and students seemed to understand what the lecturer was saying. The lecturer's pace of speaking and pronunciation were also reasonable.
- ❖ ***Attitude:*** the lecturer's attitude towards the process of teaching was positive and there was a good relationship between the lecturer and the students; the lecturer tried to encourage students to ask questions but students did not react positively to that. Apparently students seemed to be afraid of asking questions and it was my impression that they were not used to that kind of practice.

- ❖ ***Knowledge of the subject matter:*** The lecturer's confidence in delivering knowledge to students was quite satisfactory and there was a feeling that the lecturer has a sound knowledge in the subject matter.
- ❖ ***Lesson stages and activities:*** with regards to the lesson stages, the lecturer was able to connect them in a logical sequence and the teaching techniques used were also flexible. The activities set up also seemed to conform to the traditional method being used.
- ❖ ***Teaching approach and materials:*** The lecturing method was mainly the traditional one consisting of a reading passage followed by comprehension questions. Students were also taught about the stages of a reading lesson but there was no interaction as was expected. No the teaching aids were used, both visual and audio-visual, and there was no specific course book in use but some hand outs were given to students.
- ❖ ***Instructions:*** Throughout the lesson the lecturer was careful in giving instructions to students even before and while performing the activities from the reading passages.
- ❖ ***Demonstrations:*** Demonstrating what students had to do and how to do things was something that missed in all the lessons observed.
- ❖ ***Exemplifications:*** By exemplifications it is meant all the examples given in the classroom, whether they match the students' context in terms of the type of the topics being studied, the work structure and layout to meet the demands of research report writing. Unfortunately this happened to be one of the biggest shortcomings in the observed lessons.
- ❖ ***Students' level of engagement:*** Students level of engagement was quite superficial if one takes into account that at this level, students should be exposed to higher order level activities that will help them do the readings they will need to write their research reports.
- ❖ ***Students' participation and interaction types:*** Students seemed to be actively involved in the lesson and they were willing to participate in the lesson; however, the level of engagement they were exposed to did not lead them to a stage of making decisions. Apart from working individually students were asked to do group work but outside the classroom.
- ❖ ***Classroom and follow up activities:*** Perhaps one can consider the group work that was set up as a follow up activity to check students understanding. In our opinion this type of activity does not and should not count as a follow up activity; Just asking students to work in groups on their own without giving them instructions on how to go

about the process does not contribute to students preparation to write their research reports.

- ❖ **Feedback:** Feedback has never been provided in these lessons. What the lecturer did in one lesson was to give back students work without providing any further comments.

Oral comments/observation- there was no opportunity to approach the lecturer and exchange some ideas.

c) Research Methodology

i. About the lecturer

Research methodology was the most problematic subject in observing classes. For the six planned lessons for classroom observation only two were observed for the research methodology course. The lecturer tried to skip the lessons and kept changing the timetable without giving prior notice to the observer.

- ❖ **Language:** For the two observed lessons, the lecture's language seemed to be appropriate for the level of students. Students seemed to understand what the lecturer was saying.
- ❖ **Attitude:** the teacher's attitude towards the process of teaching was quite positive and there was a friendly atmosphere in the classroom. However, there was a feeling that students were feeling afraid to participate in the class. .
- ❖ **Knowledge of the subject matter:** The lecturer seemed to be confident in delivering knowledge to students and showed some sort of authority in the subject matter.
- ❖ **Lesson stages and activities:** identifying each stage in the lesson was a problematic issue as there were no clear boundaries between the lesson stages in terms of what was being done in each stage.
- ❖ **Teaching approach and materials:** Concerning the teaching approach, it was quite difficult to find out what approach was being used by the lecturer. No visual aids were used, and no course book was mentioned or even referred to in the two classes. There was also lack of hand outs.
- ❖ **Instructions:** As there were no activities set up, it was difficult to check if the lecturer briefed students before asking them to perform the activities.
- ❖ **Demonstrations:** The above mentioned point also applies to the provision of demonstrations.
- ❖ **Exemplifications:** During one of the lessons some examples were provided but they were so vague that students seemed to not understand them..

- ❖ ***Students' level of engagement:*** The type of activities set up in the classroom did not engage students to the level of preparing them to write their research proposals and/or reports. Most of the time students were encouraged to adopt a surface approach of learning.
- ❖ ***Students' participation and interaction types:*** Students did not seem to be actively involved in the lesson. Their level of participation was low as they were not encouraged to interact with the lecturer.
- ❖ ***Classroom and follow up activities:*** The lecturer did set up follow up activities but he did not correct them to double check students understanding and help them consolidate the knowledge acquired.
- ❖ ***Feedback:*** Feedback was provided to students but it was done orally as students went to the front of the class and the lecturer read their work loudly providing comments at the same time.
- ❖ ***Oral comments/observation:*** After the lessons I tried to approach the lecturer and talk to him but my effort was in vain.

In all the classes observed special attention was paid to the provision of feedback. Unfortunately the number of classes observed was not sufficient enough to come to terms with definite conclusions about feedback provision. However, I ended up with a feeling that feedback as it is meant in educational contexts and classroom environments was not provided to students properly. Neither oral, nor written feedbacks were practiced in the observed classrooms. What seemed to be happening was some kind of simultaneous feedback as the lecturers read through the students research proposals and work in loud voice commenting on some aspects when and where necessary, pausing from time to time to talk to the students one by one while the rest of class was doing something except listening to the lecturer's comments.

d) Summary

From classroom observation it can be concluded that in general lecturers have a sound knowledge of the subjects they teach and in all the classrooms there was a good relationship and a friendly atmosphere between lecturers and students. The teaching approach being used was in most of the classes the traditional one-way transmission model which was mainly teacher centred with students listening to the lecturer and reacting only when required by the lecturer. It was noticed that in most of the lessons, there was lack of visual aids but some hand

outs were distributed. The provision of feedback, as a tool for learning, was another aspect that could not be identified in the observed lessons. In one of the lessons for example the lecturer told students to “*read the comments and approach [him] if there are any comments or something that [students do not understand]*”. Surprisingly none of the students approached the lecturer with regard to that matter. The students’ level of engagement was quite passive and superficial as in most of the cases no questions were asked to check students’ involvement and level of understanding. To sum it up, there is still a lot of food for thought concerning the lecturers’ approaches to teaching, the students’ level of engagement in the activities set up and provision of feedback.

6.5 Document analysis

As stated in chapter 5 document analyses constitutes another important source of information. Students’ academic writing constitutes the principal concern of educators and lecturers in higher education. By and large, students are assessed mostly by what they write, and not how they write. In other words students are assessed by the product of their writing and not the process of writing. Thus, in order for students to be successful in their studies, they need to learn both general academic conventions as well as disciplinary writing requirements of the academic community they belong to. In assessing students’ writings, lecturers usually focus on the content and the form of the writing, more specifically the language used, the text structure, the construction of argument as well as grammar and punctuation.

Rather than relying on what participants say, document analysis allows researchers to see what participants actually do in their real world. Document analysis is used in this study not with the purpose of answering the research question or testing the hypothesis but to complement the information obtained from the main research instruments which are the interviews. This explains the selection of *Qualitative Content Analysis* for examining the samples of students’ research proposals and reports.

Qualitative data is typically textual, and the qualitative categories used in document analysis are “*not pre-determined but derived inductively*” from the data analysed.

Document analysis has recently become associated with qualitative research and we can therefore easily forget that it actually originates from a

quantitative analytical method of examining written texts that involves the counting of instances of words, phrase, or grammatical structures that fall into specific categories (Dörnyei, 2007: 245)

In *Qualitative Content Analysis* researchers are more interested in the meanings associated with messages than with the number of times message variables occur. As mentioned before, the texts that were analysed consisted of two samples of TES' research proposals, and two research projects.

In order to analyse students' documents it was necessary to set up some criteria. As qualitative content analysis is mainly based on non-numerical data, we applied a content based analytical process. Apart from the content of the documents, the general organisation of the chapters and layout, of students' research proposals and projects were analysed at both the *sentence level* to check the syntactic, morphological and lexical problems that students would have (Kroll, 2001), and at the *discourse level* to check their ability to display features of organisation and coherence. According to (Dörnyei, 2007) one of the serious problems in qualitative research can be too much data collection, which is augmented by the fact that qualitative data are "messy records" (Hyland, 2002: 34) usually consisting of a mixture of field notes, transcripts of various recordings as well as documents of a diverse nature and length. According to Dörnyei, "As qualitative data expands quickly novice researchers often find that the real challenge is not to generate enough data but rather to generate useful data". (Dörnyei, 2007: 125). I therefore thought that analysing the texts at the discourse level was more relevant in providing the information needed to complement the information from other research instruments.

At the sentence level the syntactic, lexical and morphological aspects were taken into account but at a very superficial level. Therefore, there was no grouping of categories such as verb noun collocation (Kroll, 2001) nor was there the counting of the frequency of words within the texts. Errors were identified but not classified under categories. As previously stated, for the specific purposes of this study the analysis at the sentence level was very superficial and the study just concentrated on the discourse level analysis.

At the discourse level the analysis was based on the ability of students to display features of organisation and coherence in their papers. The criteria for analysis were based on Connor's (1996) topic analysis. This analysis is based on two different instances: the global

coherence (what the essay is about) and the local coherence (how sentences build meaning in relation to each other and to the overall topic). This concept was adapted to include Kroll's (2001) scoring guidelines and resulted in the following assessment rubric:

- ❖ *Focus on the topic- the ability to address the essay question;*
- ❖ *Stressing the main idea- the ability to tell the reader what the issue is about;*
- ❖ *Supporting the main ideas- the ability to provide evidence to support the main idea/s;*
- ❖ *Logical sequencing of ideas- in Connor's words,(1990) "local cohesion" (to look at the way sentences build meaning in relation to each other and the overall text);*
- ❖ *Identifiable schematic structure- to check whether the structure of the text is compatible to the genre in use (see Kroll, 2001: 144).*

Based on Kroll's (2001) assessment rubric, the following are the main findings arrived at in analysing students' research proposals and reports. It should be emphasised that due length limitations only a few examples will be provided and the lecturers comments are deleted so as not to affect the layout of the thesis.

a) Subject matter knowledge

One of the most important aspects in writing is having ideas to communicate, and sharing the same language with the audience. This is particularly important in academic settings where a good understanding of the topic and a clear exposition of ideas is required (Perera, 1984; Zamel, 1983; Flower, 1985).

For the analysed documents it seems that students have a good understanding of the topic they are working on. However, there is an apparent lack of originality of ideas and this is probably due to students' dependency on previous classes' knowledge based on an attempt to memorise things see (research proposal 1: 158).

Although some scholars in the process paradigm (e.g. Zamel, 1982, 1983; Flower, 1985; Raimes, 1985) may contend that writing is usually more difficult due to lack of ideas when one sits to write, this may not be true for foreign language contexts such as the one under study where ideas could be remembered from previous classes and readings and preparations for writing.

Perhaps the major problem lies in the fact that students tend to memorise facts as they appear during the readings and preparation for writing from their own notes and reading materials. As a result students can hardly express their own opinions, their voices and arguments against the existing theorists. In the examined texts it was noticeable the lack of students capacity of provide their own arguments and ideas to the content being discussed. See (research proposal 2: 164)

b) Stressing the main idea

The ability to tell the reader what the topic is about in a coherent manner was something that students did not show in their written pieces of work. In fact students have not been so successful in developing their papers in a coherent and cohesive manner as most of the time what students say does not conform to the essay topic. The way that paragraphs are structured and developed, show that students still lack some writing skills. What follows is an extract from Research Report 2: 158.

It has been seen in the Angolan society and stated by São Domingos-1171 EFL teachers that at every beginning of academic years, the Luanda province education direction through the Angolan Ministry of Education, has been carrying out in almost all the schools, teachers' seminars but unfortunately these seminars have not been specifically at the ELT field, so, it is recommended to the Luanda province education direction, to acknowledge many English teachers lack of this testing technique (and probably many teaching methods), and starting to promote seminars at the ELT field in order to overcome or minimize these difficulties.

Students tend to write long paragraphs rather than explain a clear cut idea in a paragraph way. Therefore, they need more support and guidance with this regard.

c) Supporting the main ideas

The ability to provide evidence, to support the main idea/s is another problematic area for these students. One important quality in writing is a good command of the target language. Therefore aspects such as correct sentence, good grammar and vocabulary use, appropriate phrases and so on, are aspects that need to be taken into account when analysing students' papers, (Kroll, 2001). It appears that from the observed papers, students are limited in terms of the range of vocabulary used and the type of sentences produced See next extract from Research Report 2: 164.

After the students answered the questionnaire and I realized that most of them had this opinion in this question, I asked them the reasons that made them to think like that, they all agreed by saying that as there is always a correct option in multiple-choice tests, it is easier to remember the form whereas gap-filling is more thoughtful.

Generally speaking, there is no logical sequencing of ideas and the language provided sounds to some extent artificial if one has to take the students' voices into account. This leads to the next aspect below.

d) Logical sequencing of ideas

At the university level student writers need to learn how to use aspects of metadiscourse, that is, language that refers to things happening in the text itself (Brandt, 2009) and to 'signpost' their movements through the structure of the whole writing. Students can use signposts such as transitional words or phrases to guide the reader from one section to another. In the examined texts it was noticed some lack of cohesion, that is, students hardly use signposts to locate and keep the reader informed on what is going on. According to Connor's, (1990), "local cohesion", has to do with the way sentences build meaning in relation to each other and the overall text. The organisation of ideas in a logical and coherent manner and the linkage between sentences and paragraphs are areas that need to be seriously addressed to students. In general, it was found that the texts produced by students lack some sort of coherence and cohesion, resulting in texts composed by loose parts with no linkage between them as in the following example from Research Report 1: 209.

This chapter which is number 3 argued important information about the research site, participants, the research instruments in which has a sub point talking about the data collection procedure, followed by the methods of data analysis point. The last but one point is the limitation of the study whereas the last one is the chapter summary. The coming chapter will deal with the data presentation, analysis and interpretation.

e) Identifiable schematic structure

Analysing the text structure was another aspect to be considered at document analysis process. In analysing students' research proposals and reports we could not forget to check whether the structure of the texts was compatible to the genre in use. (Kroll, 2001: 144). Thus it was found that students showed some knowledge about the text structure, more precisely the main headings and subheadings to be included in each type of paper. However, there was

sign of lack of linguistic competence which makes students make a lot of vocabulary and grammar mistakes that make the written products confusing and weak.

The last but not least aspect that was examined was the referencing conventions. Students have major difficulties in writing references not only in the bibliography list but also in the text. See for example Research Proposal 1: 158-160 and research Proposal 2: 162-167. Even at the level of writing the research reports students still show some difficulties in writing references inside or at the end of the work, for example in Research report 1: 173 and Research report 2: 221 one can clearly see the type of difficulties students are facing. From the classroom observation we could notice for example that during the feedback sessions lecturers never referred to the reference writing conventions even though they were wrong.

To put it simply, document analysis helped me better understand the problems faced by TES in academic writing and research literacy practices. Once again it should be emphasised that it is out of the scope of this study to do quantitative content analysis. Therefore further investigation is needed in this field.

6.6 Concluding Summary

This chapter has presented and described the data under the four research instruments namely questionnaires, interviews, classroom observation and document analysis more precisely at the level of qualitative content analysis. What follows is a brief summary of the data obtained from the four research instruments.

Questionnaires:

From the lecturers' questionnaires it was learnt that with regard to the issue of research report writing, the course work is well organized to meet the demands of research report writing, but the core course subjects are not equipping students with the academic literacy skills they need to succeed in writing their research reports (academic reading and writing and research methodology subjects). They are of the opinion that there is a need for implementing a students' writing centre. They were also humble to confess that supervisors are not always helpful in guiding students' work and feedback is not provided adequately and promptly. Most of the lecturers admit that they are not acting as reflective practitioners, and they feel that there is a need for in-service training of both lecturers and supervisors.

From the students' questionnaires the main issues raised were that some lecturers need in-service training and they are of the opinion that the majority of them cannot supervise students properly. All the groups are of the opinion that they did not learn much from the research methodology subject to help them write their research reports but they think that writing a research report helped and helps students become independent researchers. Most of the students are of the opinion that they acquired most of the skills through the experience of writing their research report and therefore they think that the research report should be kept as the final assessment.

Interviews:

From the students' interviews it was learnt that in general they agree that lecturers have a sound academic knowledge of the subject they teach, and the assessment procedures seem to be fair enough during the course work process. They also seem to agree that some feedback has been provided to them but not so promptly. Students think that they are able to write and red academic texts and they are aware of the dangers of practising plagiarism. Students also mentioned some negative points. They state that most of the lecturers are not contributing to the teaching and learning process; they also mentioned the fact that lecturers are not being helpful in the supervisory process and they went further to suggest a training course for supervisors. Students indirectly blame lecturers for not doing their job properly.

From the lecturers' interviews it was found that although they might all have a sound academic knowledge of the subjects they teach, they blame each other for the students' difficulties or failure to produce the research reports. While general subject lecturers-GSL blame content subject lecturers-CSL for not teaching properly the subjects that would help students to write their research reports, content subject lecturers maintain that no matter how much effort they make students will always face problems because general subjects lecturers leave all the burden on them. In addition both CSL and GSL state that students' success or failure depends on their academic background knowledge and it is their own responsibility. Lecturers are aware that the assessment tasks in place do not contribute to the final assessment which is the production of the research reports. They are of the opinion that both the process of teaching and the assessment procedures need to be revisited. However they do not appear to be motivated to do so.

Both students and lecturers are of the opinion that writing a research report helps

students acquire and consolidate most of the language skills. They also favour the idea of keeping this final assessment as a requirement for obtaining the Honours degree.

Classroom observation:

From classroom observation it was observed and concluded that in general lecturers have a sound knowledge of the subjects they teach and in all the classrooms there was a good relationship and a friendly atmosphere between lecturers and students. However, the teaching approach being used was in most of the classes the traditional one-way transmission model which was mainly lecturer centred with students listening to the lecturer and reacting only when required by the lecturer. It was noticed that in most of the lessons, there was lack of visual aids but some hand outs were distributed. The provision of feedback was another aspect that could not be identified in the observed lessons. The students' level of engagement was quite passive and superficial as in most of the cases no questions were asked to check students' involvement and level of understanding. To sum it up, there is still a lot of food for thought concerning the lecturers' approaches to teaching, the students' level of engagement in the activities set up and provision of feedback.

Textual analysis:

From document analysis it was found that although lecturers are aware of the problem and have been trying to help TES to overcome it, TES are facing serious problems in producing both research proposals and research reports. They have problems in organising ideas clearly and logically, they seem to sometimes lack the appropriate vocabulary and phrases, they make a lot of spelling errors, and they show some lack of writing and research practices. Surprisingly, most of the students showed some weaknesses in communicating their ideas properly in English, that is, in writing in English. Therefore it is a fact that these students might have academic writing and research skills problems, as well as language problems. To this end a study is needed in order to spot the level of difficulty in each respective area.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

7.1 Introduction

The focus of the study was to examine TTI nr 200 TES' academic and research literacy practices and interactions within the academic community that promote or impede their success in completing the research reports within the allocated time. The study is based on the very low numbers of students completing their studies for a five year period more precisely from 2006 to 2011. During that period from the 225 students that were enrolled in the English Language teacher training course, only 20% succeeded in writing their research reports and the situation seems to remain the same notwithstanding some improvement that has been put in place such as the increase of the number of subjects taught in English and the delivery of core subject mainly the research methodology subject. As Wajnryb (1992) states, *“If all students learnt what they were taught at the time at which it was first taught, and if all of them grasped it equally well and equally quickly, teaching would be much less complex than it is”* (Wajnryb, 1992: 62), hence the need for this type of study.

At the beginning of this study, a table was drawn to show the relationship between the research questions, aims and data. See Chapter I under the research questions heading, page 4. In order to help discuss the findings we took the same table and added two more sections: key findings and implications to the research knowledge. The discussion of the findings is therefore focused on that table as shown in appendix AE.

The present chapter is organized around the sub-questions that are meant to answer the main research question, that is, *In what ways do academic and research literacy practices contribute to the successful completion of a research report?*. The section culminates in a theory that suggests how TES should be taught in order to acquire academic literacy skills, skills that they will need at the stage of research supervision and research report writing. Before answering the research questions we provide a quick reflection on the problems encountered in this study.

Throughout this study it was noticed that most of the lecturers tend to stick to the traditional approaches to teaching by using minimum effort to transmit and convey information to TES. They also tend to stick to traditional assessment procedures consisting of written tests with questions that require short answers. One of the reasons behind this behaviour might be lack of time, as most of them work in more than one institution, lack of commitment to their job and laziness to work hard. To put it simply, what is missing in these lecturers is positive attitude to the teaching and learning process.

Lecturers' attitude to teaching and learning and the relationship with their classes can have a strong effect on students' attitudes and learning. For lecturers to be good professionals they need to have a variety of personal and professional skills. They also need to develop ways of improving their teaching, in other words they need to be reflective practitioners. Krashen, (1982: 64) defines a good teacher as someone who can make input comprehensible to students, and in order to make input comprehensible to students we need to possess and be able to use specific teaching skills. Teaching skills can be divided into the following groups:

Organisation- organising the classroom to make the best use of space; providing clear rules and routines; keeping students working actively.

Planning- making sure that syllabus is properly covered; thinking about the best way to present your lesson; providing a variety of activities; using and integrating the for language skills and the sub skills.

Management- classroom management; time management; resources management; group, pair and individual management.

Communication- the skill of presenting new language; the skill of giving instructions; the relationship with students; the relationship with other teachers and staff; the relationship with parents when/if applicable Apart from handling the skills of teaching lecturers also have their own view of thinking about teaching. (Biggs & Tang, 2007)

According to Biggs (1999: 16-19), there are three levels of thinking about teaching and learning:

- *Level 1-what the student is;*
- *Level 2-what the teacher does;*
- *Level 3- what the student does.*

Level one- At this level, the aim of the teacher/lecturer is to transmit information to students, and the curriculum is viewed as a list of items that needs to be poured into the students brains. How students receive that information and what their understanding is does not really matter. Within this level teaching assessment is seen as an instrument of sorting good students from bad ones making the learning process very selective.

The main characteristics of this level of thinking are:

- One-way delivery- the teacher/lecturer transmits information and students receive passively with no chance of inquiring;
- The teacher/lecturer is the knower- the teacher is seen as someone who knows everything and therefore students cannot question him/her;
- The students are absorbent sponges- their brain is ready to store all the information from the teacher be it right or wrong;
- Students success and failure lies on themselves: the students success depends on their motivation, ability and personal responsibility; in other words if students do not learn it means they lack something except a good teacher.

Biggs & Tang (2007) posits that Level 1 is based on “quantitative” way of thinking about learning and teaching. Assessment consists of counting points and marking students work with a red pen.

If one looks at some of the statements from lecturers, then one will see that most of them favour this level of thinking about teaching and learning. What follows are some extracts from the interview with lecturers.

- *I think students lack some sort of academic writing and reading skills(CSL8).*
- *I think students were poorly prepared in the previous level (GSLE5).*
- *These students lack suitable research skills and that is not my problem (CSL10).*

The above statements clearly show the apparent excuse from lecturers who do not want to be responsible for the learning and teaching process. In fact, there is a considerable drop off in the students’ results year after year and as a consequence students at higher level institutions are being less academically oriented.

Blame the student is a very comfortable theory of teaching and it posits that if students do not succeed in their learning it is because they are incapable, unmotivated, at a wrong level, or they possess an academic deficiency which is not the teachers' responsibility to correct. Level 1 teaching is totally unreflective. The teacher/lecturer never asks the question:

- *What should be my role with these students?*
- *In which aspects do they need more help?*
- *Why are students not learning?*
- *What can I do help students learn?*
- *How can I increase my students' motivation?*

Level two-This view is based on what the teacher/lecturer does. Teaching is still viewed as a way of transmitting information but the idea of transmission here is also related to transmitting concepts and understandings not just information Prosser & Trigwell (1998). Most of the learning process depends on what the teacher/lecturer does. Learning is seen as more a function of what the teacher/lecturer is doing than what sort of students one is dealing with. In other words, this view advocates that there is always more effective ways of teaching than what the teacher/lecturer is currently doing. Therefore this view is to some extent teacher- centred. It is what the teacher/lecturer does that matters most and not what the students are learning. It also implies a deficit model in that it defines good teachers as those who have appropriate competencies who know what to do, why, when and how to do things. This level sees good management as a means of setting the stage on which good learning is likely to occur and not as an end in itself.

Level three- This level is more concerned with what the student does. The student is seen as the central part of the learning teaching process. Within this level teaching must support learning and mastery of the teaching techniques and skills is very important provided that learning really takes place. The most important aspect for this level of teaching is that content should be understood in the way it is stipulated in the learning outcomes, that is, what levels of understanding teachers/lecturers want when they set up a topic to teach. In order to achieve those stipulated levels of understanding, teachers/lecturers need to be selective in terms of activities: the teaching learning activities must help students achieve the desired levels of understanding.

To sum up, defining levels of understanding is basic to clarifying our intended outcomes; however, it is not enough in itself. We need to get students understand things at the required level and this is where level three departs from the other two levels of teaching, in other words, the way that the teachers/lecturers think about the learning/teaching process is of crucial importance. According to Biggs & Tang (2007: 21) “Education is about conceptual change, not just the acquisition of information.” However, conceptual change can only take place if teachers/lecturers change their attitudes to teaching and learning which constitute the starting point in improving the teaching methodology and assessment procedures at all levels. It is hoped that this study will influence TTI nr 200 lecturers’ level of thinking and performing. What follows is an attempt to answer the research sub questions before responding to the main research question.

7.2 Acquiring Academic and Research Literacy Skills

From the information gathered it was noticed that students are acquiring academic and research literacy skills under inadequate conditions such as lack of an updated library and a proper computer lab. Although lecturers might have a sound academic of the subjects they teach, it was noticed that they are making very little effort to improve the quality of teaching; in most of the lessons observed, they are using the one way transmission model, where students are expected to just listen to the lecturer and react only when required by the lecturers. This fact is confirmed by the participants who state that very few lecturers use discussion in their classrooms and pair and group work activities are rarely set up. The teaching of the core subjects is also another problematic issue that participants discussed; lecturers tend to teach rules, to teach theory instead of presenting students with practical activities. From the observed lessons for instance I noticed that students were not encouraged to become active makers of meaning, to think critically, to argue, to compare, to develop their own positions and value different points of view.

With regards to teaching writing, the kind of tasks that were set up in the observed lessons did not engage students in tasks that required more analysis, synthesis, research, and critical thinking skills to extend their writing abilities. All in all lecturers seem to be stuck to an approach of teaching based on the dictation of ‘formulas’ or concepts to students such as,

in the introduction you do this, in the body of the paper you do this and in the conclusion you write x number of sentences.

Writing as a skill is listless, endless and flat. Therefore, students need to be engaged in tasks that require synthesis and analysis in order for them to understand the language features of academic language. Students need to learn the differences between spoken and written English and move from what Cummins (1996) calls less cognitively demanding tasks to high cognitively demanding ones. The other problem that was found in both interviews and questionnaires was the provision of feedback. The provision of feedback on students writing is central to the teaching methodology in higher education. Feedback practices may take the form of oral or written feedback but as stated before, feedback practices of the kind of corrective feedback were quite scant and in all the lectures observed and it was noticed that lecturers did not provide proper feedback to students. Feedback plays an important role in the teaching and learning process and it has been proved through research that it enables students to assess their performances, modify their behaviour, build and develop critical thinking skills and transfer their understandings to the various facts they see in the World around them. perhaps because they do not know about the role of feedback in teaching or may be because they think they are doing the right thing (Brinko, 1993).

For learning to take place students need to receive feedback on their language problems and be allowed time to reflect and correct their mistakes either in pairs or individually. Reflection and feedback go hand by hand and they are the key features in education especially at higher levels of education.

At Higher level Education, feedback can play many different roles, the mostly known being:

- ❖ To support students development;
- ❖ To teach or reinforce a particular aspect of disciplinary content;
- ❖ To teach specific academic writing conventions;
- ❖ To indicate strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing;
- ❖ To explain or justify a grade;
- ❖ To suggest how a student may improve in their next piece of writing.

(Coffin, et al., 2005: 104).

Thus, the role of lecturers would be to give students opportunities to develop not only their writing skills but also critical awareness of good writing and effective expression in several genres. This is only possible through the use of corrective feedback and peer learning. (Brinko, 1993). In most of the lessons observed it was noticed that the feedback did not play any of the above mentioned roles.

7.3 Deploying Academic and Research Literacy Skills in the Production of Research Reports

In higher education what matters most is not what students can reproduce but what they can produce and construct by themselves. Looking at the samples of students' research proposals and research reports it was noticed that students have great difficulties in deploying academic and research literacy skills. Actually it has to be admitted that students have serious difficulties with academic writing, more precisely in critical thinking and it can be inferred that it is their weak writing skills that are preventing them from writing their research proposals and/or reports.

As can be seen in appendices AI and AJ, students show great weaknesses in writing an academic piece of paper; for example they have problems in selecting the correct vocabulary, they have problems in using correct grammar and punctuation, and they also have serious problems in spelling. Summarising ideas or information from other sources is something that they hardly can do and they also have problems in structuring their work in a logical sequence. Quoting and paraphrasing are also other signs of weaknesses in writing and they do not seem to be aware of the dangers of practising plagiarism; they copy chunks of texts from several sources without referencing to them. Apart from the above mentioned aspects it was felt that critical thinking skills need to be introduced in the academic and research literacy practices of these TES. Students need to know what constitutes plagiarism, what is common knowledge, when to use quotations, when to paraphrase, and how to cite sources appropriately. Lea & Street, (2006) maintain that the problem for many students in different areas of professionalization is lack of knowledge of how to argue and how to support their arguments with evidence and not properly lack of general knowledge in essay or research report writing techniques. According to Lave & Wenger, (1991) learning should not be seen as matter of replicating the performance of others or acquiring knowledge through instruction

and reproducing it as it was delivered; to them, learning should occur through a process of active participation in the ‘communities of practice’, where students are encouraged to do some peer-feedback, ‘through centripetal participation in the learning curriculum of the ambient community’.

The teaching of writing should therefore focus not only on text production processes and language forms and structure (genre), aspects that students lack already, but also focus on the requirements of an academic community of practice which are beyond knowledge and individual text production of a particular genre. As we discussed before, there is a need to differentiate between ‘*learning objectives*’ (LO) and ‘*intended learning outcomes*’ (ILOs) (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 70). The ‘intended learning outcomes’ in a course programme carry a broader meaning than the ‘*learning objectives*’ because they place more value on what the student learns and not what the teacher has to teach. Intended learning outcomes refer to what students are able to perform after the teaching that they could not perform before it; it also has to do with what students can do after teaching even though it was not intended in the outcomes. Therefore rather than just looking at the behavioural objectives, ILOs are seen from the students’ perspectives, skills and abilities acquired from the learning process. Apparently the teaching and learning programme seems to be placing more attention on the learning objectives rather than on the intended learning outcomes as it is translated in the students difficulties to produce their research reports. Once again, it should be emphasised that lack of a writing centre or even a students’ club where students would go and socialise, are, among many factors, some of the main hindrances that are preventing students from completing their studies.

7.4 Curriculum Alignment and the Production of the Research Reports

As stated before, the term curriculum is a very broad concept and in this study it refers to the whole content that students are acquiring from the coursework. Curriculum design includes processes that are used to determine the students needs and develop aims and objectives for a programme to address those needs; also it determines the type of syllabus to be used, the course structure and content, the teaching methods and materials, as well as it evaluates the results from the whole process. To paraphrase White et al. (1991), a curriculum covers not only the content but also the goals of the teaching programme as well as the

activities which will form part of the learning experiences and practices of a given group of students.

As previously stated, the course components (the curriculum, the objectives, methods, the learning activities and the assessment procedures) that constitute the teaching and learning system at TTI nr 200 are not yet aligned (Biggs, 1999). For instance, the exit assessment of the course is a research report comprising between 45 to 65 pages while students would have been assessed during the entire course mostly through short form individual tests and a few short essays (2-5 pages).

In other words there is no alignment between the formative assessment and the final assessment which is writing the research report. In the case of TTI nr 200 one can probably speculate that as most students join TTI nr 200 courses with very limited background knowledge, and although there might be some lecturers who adopt deep approaches to teaching, students will unlikely use deep approaches to learning, and as a result most students adopt rote learning. Rote learning can help students get good marks in the tests but it does not help in succeeding in other forms of assessment, for example writing essays or book reports. Rote learning can help students complete the four years of course work but it will not help them write their research reports. That is probably one of the reasons that makes students succeed in the four years of course work and fail in the production of their research reports.

Therefore, curriculum alignment is needed in order to enhance the teaching/learning process and empower students with the academic skills they need to write their research reports. However, apart from curriculum alignment lecturers need to change their attitudes to teaching and regard the weaknesses of students in writing their research reports as a joint responsibility and not only of the students. Surprisingly there is a tendency of lecturers/supervisors blaming teachers from the previous academic levels as if they did not belong to the group. In the observed lessons, lecturers seemed to be more concerned with turning students into academic writers, regardless the type and content of texts they wrote, then simply support them produce reasonably better academic texts.

7.5 Supervision Practices and the Successful Completion of Research Reports

How do supervision practices enable and/or constrain the successful completion of research reports? As was stated in Chapter 3, research supervision is an integral part of any higher teaching context and it has to do with critical thinking and the transference of the academic reading and writing skills into the research. Research supervision is an area that was not so deeply explored in this study although it constitutes the main topic in this investigation. The process of training scholars in any research area of knowledge is central to research supervision and this requires more demanding researcher skills from our students. Barnett (2000) posits that in this world of fast development and complexity of facts and events where frames of reference change rapidly, an interdisciplinary response to the complex problems that the society presents is required and the most probable tool that we can give our students to confront those challenges is knowledge on how to investigate, conceptualise and find possible solutions to the problems they will encounter on a daily basis. However, research supervision seems to be a neglected area at TTI nr 200.

In the introductory chapter, one of the main concerns of this investigation was the high drop-out rates of students resulting in the non-completion of their final research reports. Additionally many students are taking a relatively long time to get their work completed. Prior to this study it was thought that one of the major problems with research supervision was, perhaps, the fact that it is considered as an aspect of research rather than of teaching. It was also thought that some of the reasons for students' failure to produce their research reports included challenges such as under-prepared students, non-qualified or non-motivated supervisors, and lack of students' motivation among others. These pre-investigation assumptions were confirmed but after collecting and presenting data some other reasons were found. It was found that some of the reasons for students failure to produce their research reports are, poor background knowledge, poor working and learning conditions, lack and/or shortage of resources, lack of a good library and computer lab, lack of good and knowledgeable supervisors, lack of academic and research literacy skills, bad relationship between lecturers and students, long periods of retention of students' work. All these aspects are contributing to the students' failure to produce their research reports and they are addressed and discussed in answering the main question that led the whole research.

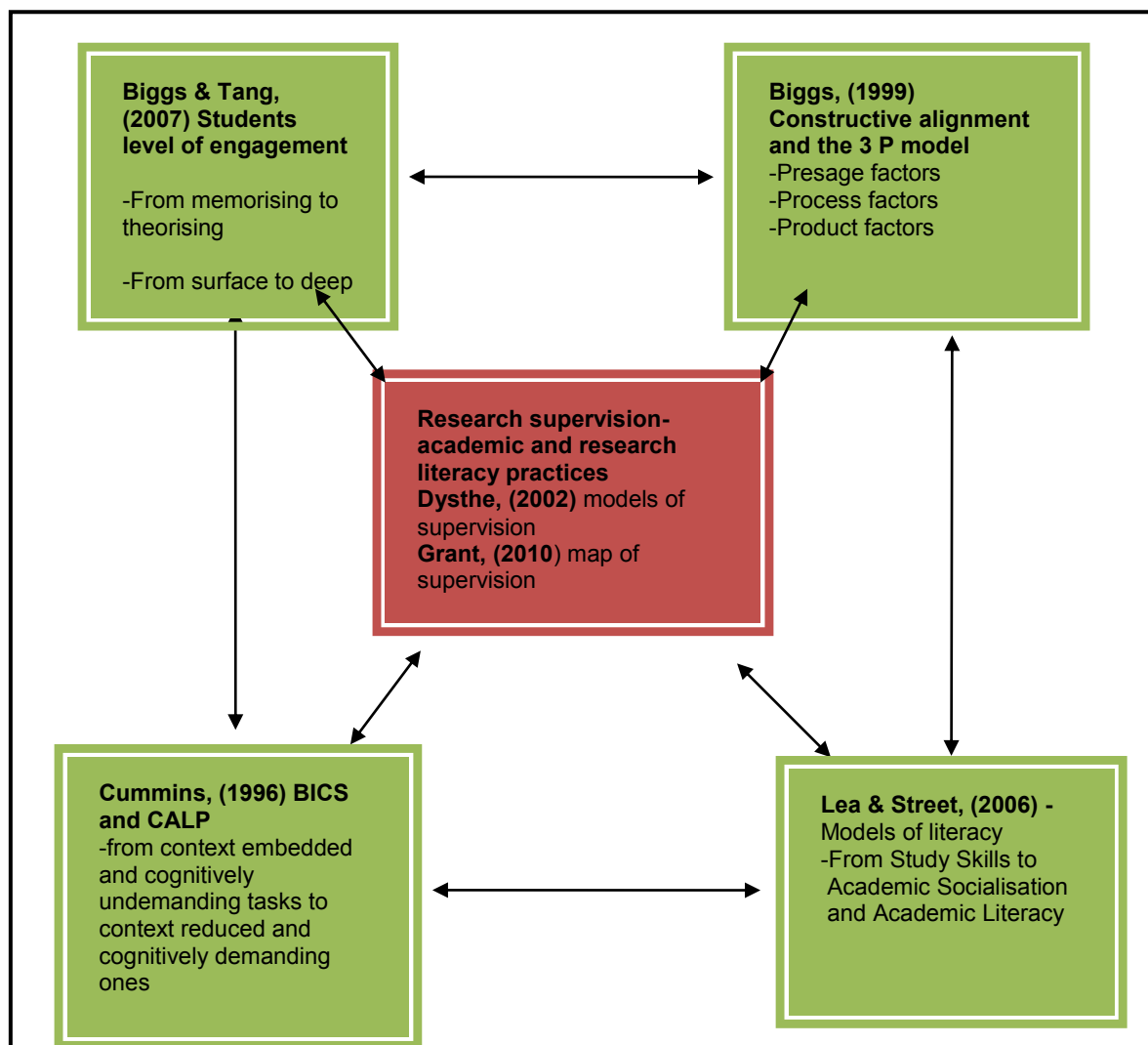
7.6 The Role of Academic and Research Literacy Practices in the Successful Completion of Research Reports

So far we have been discussing the findings and answering the research sub-questions. We now return to the main research question in order to integrate what has emerged from the findings:

- ❖ *In what ways do academic and research literacy practices contribute to the successful completion of a research report?*

In order to answer the main research question it was thought that an interactive model between the research supervision and the four conceptual orientations suggested in the conceptual framework chapter would help explain and answer this question. The table below shows the interconnectivity between the four orientations and research supervision. Research supervision is in the centre because it constitutes the main topic for this research.

Table 7.1 An interactive model between the conceptual orientations, and research supervision¹⁸



Starting from Biggs' (1999) constructive alignment and the 3P Model it was found that there are some factors hindering the system at the level of the 3 Ps namely, *Presage* (before learning takes place), *Process* (during the process of learning) and *Product* (the outcome of learning). With regards to Presage factors, it was found that from the students' side, the relevant prior knowledge and motives that they bring to the new environment of study as well as ability, interest and commitment to study at a higher level are not the desired ones. Students are joining the English course with a very low language competence and they are driven by extrinsic motivation that is not oriented towards the goal of becoming 'teachers' of English.

¹⁸ Adapted from Maxwell (2005: 9).

Also, the learning environment which is an important factor in helping students to perform the learning activities at a higher level of thinking is not contributing to this end. In other words the kind of facilities provided is not of good quality. On the other hand, the lecturing mode being used by most of the lecturers especially the content subject lecturers is not contributing to students' development and acquisition of knowledge; some lecturers' level of knowledge of the discipline they are teaching and their ability to teach, posits some doubts about their competence. The classroom atmosphere and the relationship between lecturers and students is also another aspect that seems to be contributing to students' impediments to learn.

Process factors are teaching based and they include the lecturers 'teaching methodology', the learning-focused activities that students are asked to perform throughout the course, and the type of approach lecturers and students adopt to teach and learn. In other words, the type of approach students adopt to learning is directly influenced by the type of approach lecturers adopt to teaching. It was found that the type of learning activities that students are asked to perform as well as the level of engagement required from them does not encourage deep approaches to learning, as a result students are taking the easiest way to survive throughout the four years of coursework which is surface learning. Surface learning is an approach that does not allow students to think critically and make their own meanings from the content learnt. Unfortunately both lecturers and students in general seem to favour surface approaches. Thus the need to change lecturers attitudes to teaching and learning and implement better practices that would facilitate the attainment of better results not just in terms of quantity but also in terms of quality.

Product factors are translated in the intended learning outcomes (ILOs), in this specific case, the quantity and quality of students one gets at the end of each academic year and at the end of the four years of coursework. The ILOs should be translated into the academic level achieved after four years of coursework as well as the ability to write the research proposal and the final research report. After all the students' intended learning outcomes, should enable them to embark in a new teaching/learning phase, which is the writing of their research reports. It was found that the number of students finishing their course work is quite reasonable, about 90%, although the quality might be not so good; this is translated in the fact that very few of those students can manage to complete their research reports on time and some others even give up writing the same research reports.

Another aspect that needs special consideration in this discussion is the alignment in the system. Biggs & Tang (2007: 53) postulate that in most of the outcomes- based models, the alignment exists only between the ILOs and the assessment tasks -ATs, not additionally between the ILOs and the teaching and learning activities-TLAs. Although the system at TTI nr 200 may not be based on an outcomes based model, the problem at TTI nr 200 seems to more critical as although the ILOs might be well specified and might seem to be clear, there is no clear connection between the ILOs and the TLAs and additionally to the ATs. The ATs need to be aligned with the content of the lessons and the lecturers' approach to teaching, in other words, assessment has to be aligned with what students have been taught and learnt and the activities they are engaged in.

As the above mentioned components are not corroborating with each other, the whole system is unbalanced. As a result, the teaching and learning situation is resulting in poor teaching and surface learning (Biggs & Tang, 2007: 14). In the lessons observed, it was noticed that students were adopting surface approaches to learning; the majority of them tried to get the tasks done with minimum effort, using low cognitive levels of engagement; they only reacted when required by the lecturers and they hardly initiated a talk or asked questions.

As mentioned before, constructive alignment is primarily concerned with what students do with what they learn and how well they do that, rather than with what students learn. The main difference between a constructively aligned system and other outcomes-based approaches lies in the fact that the connections between the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) the teaching/learning activities (TLAs) and assessment tasks (ATs) are so intrinsically aligned that the missing of one makes a gap in the system and change the intended outcomes. At some point in this study we posed the question whether writing a research report was just an academic writing and research problem or perhaps a language problem also. According to the researcher's own experience and being a foreign language student, lecturer and researcher, we suppose that these students, apart from the academic and research literacy problems they have, also have some language problems which are translated into the 'poor texts' they are producing. In fact some lecturers and students confirmed my pre-conceived assumption and they mentioned the fact that these students also have language problems.

The DDAAD also confirmed this finding by stating that even in Portuguese, the subject he is teaching, students have serious problems in writing academic texts. At this point,

it is perhaps useful to recall Cummins' useful distinction (1996) between conversational and academic aspects of language proficiency which states that just because a student is a fluent speaker in a given language it does not necessarily mean that the same student is good in writing. Actually there are some students who can express themselves in English very well; however, when it comes to producing academic papers, they find problems in writing their tasks which are by their nature de-contextualized (absence of interpersonal or contextual clues) and therefore more cognitively demanding (Cummins, 1996).

Most of the short form tests that students write are generally contextualised exercises based on short answer forms. These types of tests require relatively less cognitive effort for students to answer them. This is one of the reasons that make students go through the whole course without actually developing the academic aspects of language proficiency. In addition, there are some parallel issues such as identifying a problem, reading, gathering and analysing information, designing the research proposal and /or project, and writing up the whole research report.

In Higher Education, learning involves adopting new ways of understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge; in Lea & Street's, words (2006: 158), it involves engaging students in academic literacy practices. From a holistic point of view academic literacy encompasses the skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking, critical thinking, use of technology, and habits of mind that foster academic success (Lea & Street, 2006). However, the teaching of these skills is still quite superficial in TTI nr 200 from the very few lessons observed, we noticed that the reading and writing skills are not being addressed to students in a way that would enable them to activate their critical thinking skills.

Critical thinking as a skill is one of the most neglected skills by the majority of the lecturers at TTI nr 200. Quite often, lecturers do not engage students in tasks which are context reduced and cognitively demanding, which require, identifying sources, describing facts and processes, comparing, contrasting, analysing, interpreting and evaluating, abilities that require higher order mental processes. Lecturers tend to adopt surface approaches to teaching where students are asked to perform tasks that require lower order cognitive challenges such as memorising and describing (Biggs & Tang, 2007). As a result students are hardly able to apply critical thinking skills in their academic practices. Lea & Street (2006) suggest a possible solution to the problem. They posit that students should be exposed and

helped to move from independent study skills to a stage of academic socialisation and finally to an academic literacy's stage.

It is worth recalling what each stage is all about; The study skills model focuses on the surface approaches to learning (Biggs, 1999) as well as the transfer of knowledge from one context to another, similar to Cummins' (1996) context-embedded and cognitively-undemanding tasks such as memorising and note-taking.

The academic socialisation model is concerned with students' acculturation into disciplinary and subject based discourses and genres. This model helps students move to a stage of acquiring new ways of talking, writing, thinking and using literacy that typify members of specific disciplinary or community area. Students are expected to recognise, relate, and apply, (Biggs, 1999) the rules of using the language within a specific community. In so doing they are moving from less context-embedded and undemanding tasks, to more context-reduced and demanding ones (Cummins, 1996).

As stated before, academic literacy is based on meaning-making, power, identity and authority and what counts as knowledge in a particular academic context and views the processes involved in acquiring effective and appropriate uses of literacy as more dynamic, complex and situated (Lea & Street, 2006: 369). Thus, academic literacy requires the adoption of deep approaches to learning, (Biggs, 1999), and highly cognitively-demanding tasks, (Cummins, 1996).

Moving to the central part of this discussion, research supervision practices, it was learnt that the practice of the traditional five-paragraph essay which discourages critical thinking is not contributing to the writing of the final research reports. Students are not being encouraged to express their personal opinions in what they write, and position themselves within the academic field they are entering and belong to. Another important aspect regarding students' academic skills attainment and development is the provision of feedback. Students are not receiving corrective feedback on their language problems, they are not being told what is right and what is wrong. On the top of all these aspects, students and supervisors relationship is also not contributing very much to the production of the research reports.

Also, the retention of the student's drafts for an unlimited period of time is preventing students to do further work and making them forget about the content. Students hardly complain about this as they most of the time feel that a complaint will do more harm than good, and as most of the time the lecturer/supervisor is the only person with a sound knowledge in the students' area of work the student has no alternative but to wait until feedback is provided. Good supervision should start from a good relationship. The relationship between supervisors and students is one of the key elements in research supervision. Sayed, Kruss & Badat (1998: 16) state that in general, most of supervision problems have their origin in the supervisory relationship rather than in the research topic itself. As In addition to that, Mouton (2001: 16) holds that when the relationship between a supervisor and a student gets spoilt, the student feels unattended and insecure. As a result there are always delays and in more critical cases students' withdrawal from the studies.

Most of the time, the relationship between students and supervisors is affected by what Grant (2010) calls the unconscious desires which derive from the relative intensity and privacy of supervision, where both parties make unconscious responses to each other based on mutual respect and humbleness. Both supervisors and students need to work together to accomplishment of a general and common aim which is the production of a document which is formal, original and academically acceptable.

The relationship between 'real' people is a complex process whereby individuals always try to impose their power on each other. That power can take both directions (supervisor/student or student/supervisor). When the student feels more powerful than the supervisor, it can lead to other intricacies such as delay in producing the research report or at some extremes the change of a supervisor.

In order to prepare students for universities courses students need to be exposed to teaching and learning practices which are conducive to the attainment of the academic literacy skills that they are going to find at that level. It can be inferred that academic literacy is an obligation at higher level institutions. Thus, greater coordination of literacy education among subject lecturers in high schools is needed. Just as the focus of teaching at TTI nr 200 is shifting from amassing knowledge to learning how to find and apply knowledge, academic literacy can also be progressively introduced as an experiential learning process and gradually find its place within the teaching/learning process at TTI nr 200 and not only (Lea & Street,

2006). In so doing lecturers will be preparing students to read, write, think critically, and communicate not just in their learning community but also in the larger world for which they are being prepared to become educated citizens and problem solving agents.

7.7 Contribution to the research knowledge

After presenting and discussing the findings of the study we went through a process of reflection on what might still be missing in the academic and research literacy practices at TTI nr 200 and we posed the following questions:

- ❖ *Is the curriculum at TTI nr 200 achieving its goals?*
- ❖ *Are classroom practices conducive to the teaching of writing the research reports?*
- ❖ *Are the teaching methods in use contributing to students development of academic and research skills?*
- ❖ *What is missing in the system that is preventing students from completing their research reports?*

We ended up with an idea that apart from the whole discussion and suggestions provided, Biggs (1999) 3P Model needed to be improved to accommodate the teaching context in which the investigation took place. To us, Biggs (1999) 3P Model fails to address the teacher/lecturer as Presage factors. Teachers and lecturers are the active agents of change in any educational context. They are the ones who directly interact with the students and dictate to some extent the kind of Product (students' academic level) at the end of a specific course or level of studies. As one of the lecturers wrote in the questionnaires' follow-up comments, "*Students are what lecturers want them to be, all depends on us*". To put it simply, the quality and quantity of students completing their studies every year depends first of all on the kind of teaching methods used by lecturers, the type of interaction between students and lecturers and students among themselves, the tasks and activities set up and the assessment procedures. In one word, the lecturers attitude towards the process of training trainees will determine, to some extent, the outcomes of the course. Biggs & Tang (2007) argues that, in many parts of the world, teachers and lecturers are not recognised as direct agents of change. Teachers and lecturers have a strong role to play within the education system in general and the teaching learning process in particular, for they are the implementers of the

programme to be taught and the changes to be made. Therefore it has to be taken into consideration that without teachers and lecturers' collaboration change or even improvement of the teaching learning process cannot take place. They are the ones directly involved in the process of either change or implementation of new approaches or methods. Thus the need to include the teachers/lecturers factors in Biggs (1999) Model.

To this end, those courses were apart from formative (checking students progress) and summative assessment (checking students level of achievement in a specific subject), students need to undergo an a phase of "individual performance" , characterised by the independent application of the acquired academic and research literacy skills, for the production of the research reports. Summative assessment should prepare and lead students to the final assessment which is normally an end of course examination; that end-of-course examination determines whether a student has passed or not. For the this teacher training course, apart from summative assessment in the form of final exams, there is supposed to be an extended type of assessment which is the production of the research reports. Research reports are produced by students with some level of independence, although under the guidance and orientation from a tutor or supervisor.

In order for students to produce their research reports, they need to perform highly academic demanding tasks and therefore undergo another learning process which is research supervision. Research supervision can therefore be considered as a sophisticated way of teaching based on one-to-one tuition and they consist of putting into practice the academic and research skills acquired from the course during the teaching/learning process. Thus, the process needs to be addressed almost separately and privately. In order for students to be considered as a "Product", at this level, they need to get their research reports concluded. Therefore, there is a need for a fourth P-Performance, which would comprise the design and production of the research report. Like at the Presage level, the Performance level is characterised by the supervision context, the student/supervisee factors and the lecturer/supervisor factors. At this level the final Product would therefore be a student with a Honours degree. Figure 7.1 below represents an improved version of Biggs (1999) 3P Model which is the 4P Model.

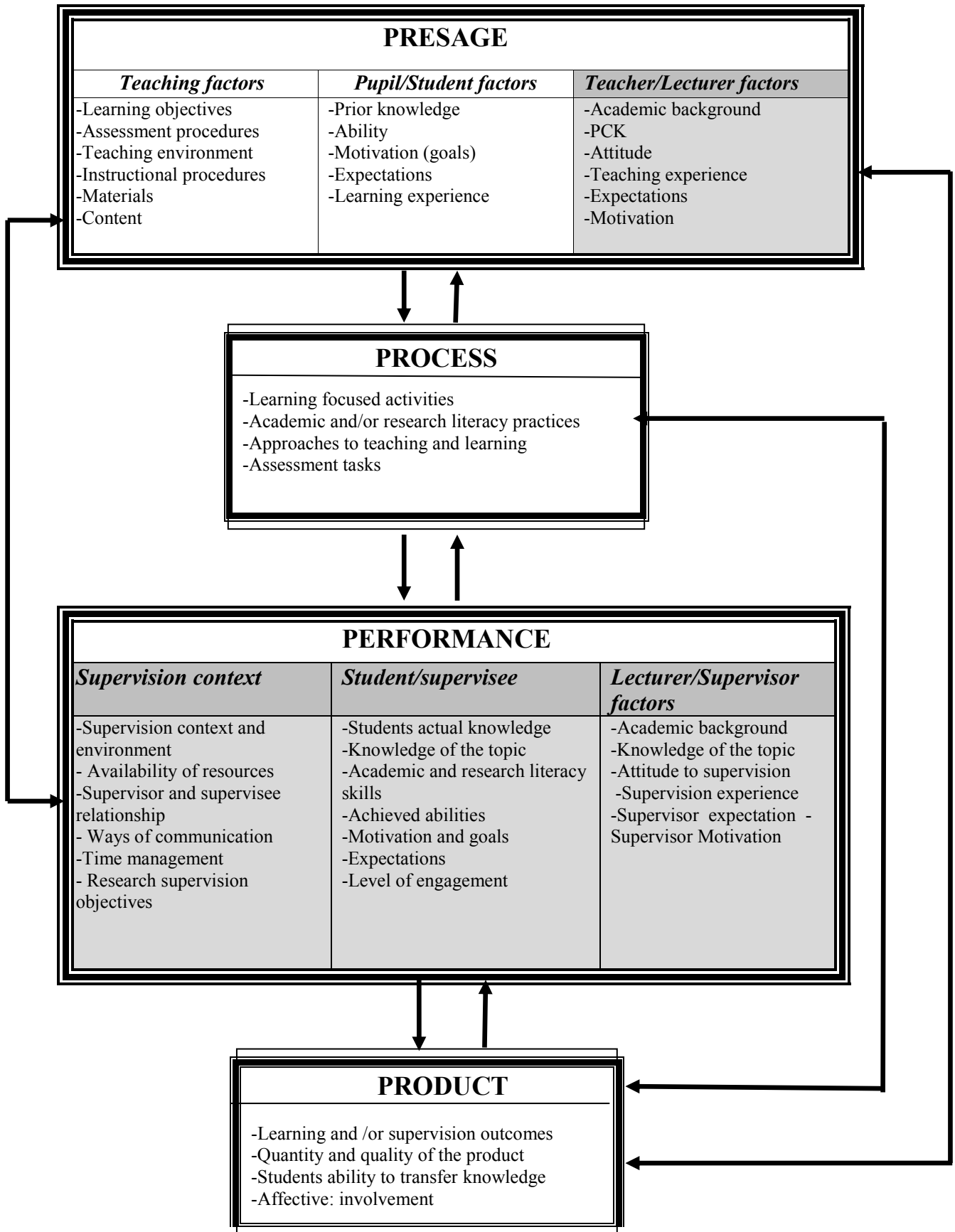


Figure 7.1 Constructive alignment and the 4P Model

i. PRESAGE (when the student joins the course)

As the table shows, Presage factors are divided into *students factors*, the *teaching context* and the *teachers/lecturers factors*.

❖ *The teaching context* relates to the teaching environment, what is intended to be taught, how it will be taught and assessed, the quality of the teaching environment, the classroom, the extent to which a programme is being implemented appropriately; the instructional procedures, the expertise of the teacher/lecturer, the materials to be used and the content of the subjects. The extent to which students are provided with a responsive environment in terms of their educational needs; the type of administrative support provided, the available resources, and the communication networks employed;

❖ *Pupil/Student factors* are related to the students background knowledge, the knowledge about the topic to be learnt, student's ability, goals and expectations, and past learning experience. Student's factors are also related to what they are supposed to learn from the programme, their perceptions of it, and how they will participate in it and finally their commitment to university. For this specific group, students factors also include the academic and research literacy skills they come up with when entering University.

❖ *Teacher/lecturer factors* are primarily concerned, first of all, with the Pedagogical Content Knowledge- PCK of the teachers/lecturers, their background and academic qualifications, their attitude to teaching, their teaching experience, expectations and motivation to do the job. Teacher/lecturer factors are also related to the way they conduct their teaching, what their perceptions are of the programme, what and how they teach and assess students; their effectiveness in aiding students to achieve goals and objectives of the programme, and the extent to which the school system provides the staff opportunities to increase. These factors interact at the process level and together determine the students immediate learning-related activities, in other words, the approaches to learning.

ii. PROCESS (the teaching/learning process)

Learning focused activities: This stage is about the act of teaching and learning, the kind of interaction between teachers/lecturers and students, the tasks and activities set up, as well as the assessment procedures; whether specific materials are aiding student learning; the cognitive processes the students are likely to use. How relevant and engaging teaching is, the teaching methods employed by teacher/lecturer; how successful tests and assessment

procedures are. Depending on the demands of the task to be done students will preferably select deep or surface approaches to learning. Thus, it is inappropriate to designate particular students as surface or deep learners.

iii. PERFORMANCE (Student ability to apply theory in practice)

The quality of the student one gets at the end of the four years course work, will determine TES actual knowledge accumulated during the course of training. The actual knowledge is the result of the experience they have gone through, and it will determine their motivation to write the research reports and their own expectations and goals in writing the research reports. The student capacity to undergo research and research supervision will, in its turn dictate the level of difficulty faced by the students. Those difficulties will determine the necessary time to write the research project and the quality of the work produced.

Supervision context: the supervision context is another key factor in the supervisory practices and the production of the research reports. At this level one needs to take into account the availability of resources, the relationship between supervisors and students, the different channels of communication they have at their disposal, the way they manage their time and the general environment in which supervision is going to take place. The objectives of the research supervision process and students and supervisors attitude towards supervisory practices are also aspects that should be considered.

Students/supervisee's factors: (the student as a novice researcher): at this stage students are supposed to produce their research reports by applying theory into practice. Students' actual knowledge when they start writing their research reports constitutes a determinant factor in the production of the research reports, their achieved abilities through the teaching process and willingness to complete their studies are very important factors at this stage. Students have their own expectations and learning experiences which will affect the kind of effort they will employ and the length of time they will need to produce their research reports.

Lecturer/Supervisor factors: the academic background of the lecturer/supervisor, knowledge of the topic and experience in supervising students are key elements for lecturers/supervisor' success in the supervisory practices. Also the supervisors expectations and motivation to help students do the job will play an important role on the quality of paper

produced. The supervisor' style is also very important in that depending on the type of student being supervised , supervisors will select the best role(s) to play in guiding their students.

iv. PRODUCT (the student after attending and completing a course programme)

The learning outcomes: the quantity and quality of students finishing the coursework. Product factors jointly determine the approach to writing to be used by students and that in its turn determines the outcomes to be achieved. Consequently, the achieved outcomes will determine students' feelings and opinions about those learning outcomes. The learning outcomes of a given course might be characterised by a big quantity and quality of students finishing their courses; a big quantity and low quality of students completing their studies; a low quantity and big quality of students finishing their studies; or a low quantity and quality of students finishing their studies. Learning outcomes are difficult to predict but they are highly influenced by the teacher/lecturer. The quantity and quality of students one gets at the end of an academic programme depends very much on the quality of teaching provided by the lecturers , the teaching approaches and methodology employed by them.

As Biggs, (1999) maintains a system is a set of components that interact to produce a common outcome in service to a common goal. The common goal is learning, and the immediate system is the TTI nr 200 classrooms. The components in this system derive from the TES, the teacher/lecturer and the teaching/supervision contexts. All together determine the level of engagement of students and their turn will determine the detail and structure inherent in the learning outcomes and students own feelings and opinions about the outcome.

This system feature explains why no two classes are ever the same although they might have the same lecturer. The teacher/lecturer might be the same but students are not. Even though the teacher/lecturer might be the same the kind of interaction with the groups will be different because the teacher/lecturer will need to adjust and adapt to the level of the students, creating in this way different systems and therefore different results. In the same way of reasoning, this system feature explains why no two students or more are ever to complete their research reports at the same time, although they might have had the same classes and the same supervisor. Even though the lecturer/supervisor might be the same the kind of interaction with individual students will be different because the lecturer/supervisor will need to adjust and adapt to the level of the students, creating in this way different supervision systems and therefore different results. Thus, all the components have to be

considered because they affect each other; even the classroom or the place where supervision meeting are held have be considered as they also affect the other elements in the system.

Biggs (1999) did not address the issue of supervision in his 3P Model, perhaps because, by that time, he had in mind another group of students. However, it should be recognised that his Model helped us explore, understand and explain the problem under investigation in such a way that we ended up with reasonable conclusions and recommendations and some suggestions to improve the Model and adapt it to these students' level.

7.8 Summary

This chapter has examined TTI nr 200 TES' academic and research literacy practices and interactions within the academic community that promote or impede their success in completing the research reports within the allocated time.

The chapter is organized around the sub-questions that are meant to answer the main research question, which is, *In what ways do academic and research literacy practices contribute to the successful completion of a research report?*. The chapter culminates in some suggestions on how TES should be taught in order to acquire academic literacy skills, skills that they will need at the stage of research supervision and research report writing.

First it was found that the course components (the curriculum, the objectives, methods, the learning activities and the assessment procedures) that constitute the teaching and learning system at TTI nr 200 do not seem to be aligned (Biggs, 1999) and there are some aspects missing in the system.

It was also found that some of the reasons for students failure to produce their research reports are, poor background knowledge, poor working and learning conditions, lack and/or shortage of resources, lack of a good library and computer lab, lack of good and knowledgeable supervisors, lack of academic and research literacy skills, bad relationship between lecturers and students, long periods of retention of students' work. Another finding of the study is that there is a need for an alignment between the ongoing assessment and the final assessment which is writing the research report. Apart from the above mentioned aspects it was felt that critical thinking skills need to be introduced in the academic and

research literacy practices of these TES. In higher education what matters most is not what students can reproduce but what they can produce and construct by themselves.

Another relevant finding was that although the Intended Learning Outcomes-ILOs might be well specified and might seem to be clear, there is no clear connection between the ILOs and the Teaching and Learning Activities-TLAs and additionally to the Assessment Tasks-ATs. The ATs need to be aligned with the content of the lessons and the lecturers' approach to teaching, in other words, the assessment procedures have to be aligned with what students have been taught and learnt and the activities they are engaged in.

It was also noticed from the classroom observation that students have great difficulties in deploying academic and research literacy skills most of the time due to lack of proper feedback provision from the lecturers. Good feedback can play an important role in the students' levels of performance and engagement in the tasks set up. Good feedback can also improve the critical thinking skills and the academic and research literacy skills. Good feedback is a synonym of new ways of teaching, new ways of contributing to students' academic and professional development. As a way of contributing to the research knowledge, the chapter ends with a improved version of Biggs (1999) 3P Model that should be addressed as the 4P Model. Next chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This study has attempted to explore and understand issues related to the academic and research literacy practices of TES at TTI nr 200 with regard to the completion of their research reports. The study has also tried to uncover the reasons why some students, although very few, succeed in producing their research reports within or before the time limit whilst others do not. Special attention was devoted to the writing process, perceptions of writing as well as the academic and research literacy practices of students.

Additionally, an examination of course content and course material was conducted to verify the connection between coursework and research report production. Thus, the main intention of this study was to uncover the reasons for students' failure to produce their research reports and also to raise content subject teachers' awareness for the need expose students to more dynamic academic tasks based on problem-solving situations.

8.2 Conclusions

From the results of the present study it was found that there are different types of problems students face in producing their research reports and in this respect the results show that then main reasons for students failure to meet their own and their lecturers' expectations are lack of or weak academic and research literacy skills and also a good command of the target language in carrying out the tasks successfully.

It appears that there is a gap between students' level of academic proficiency when they enter the course, what they actually do throughout the course and what is expected from them at the end of the course. Students academic background knowledge constitutes a determinant factor in coping with the demands of the course and reaching an expected level of Performance. As most of the students have missed 'the basics of academic and research literacy skills' in the previous levels, lecturers do not seem to be contributing to the bridging of the gap, and help them acquire and develop their academic and research literacy skills. If

one departs from the view that success in university studies depends primarily and is closely linked to academic and research literacy skills then one can conclude that lecturers at TTI nr 200 have great responsibility in helping TES reach the desired level of proficiency to successfully complete their studies.

At TTI nr 200, students writing experiences are not an integral part of their programme and the long research report seems the only long piece of extended writing they are required to work independently. They are frequently asked to write short essays but with very little guidance and support from their lecturers and lecturers hardly provided students with feedback on their writings.

There is also lack of co-operation and collaboration among lecturers, especially the Academic Reading and Writing and the research Methodology I and II lecturers. Another relevant result from the study was that most of the lecturers are using the traditional approaches to teaching writing which are preventing students from developing their academic and research literacy skills which in turn are not facilitating the process of research report writing.

In order to improve the teaching of all the subjects some improvement needs to be put in place; for example a better and bigger equipped library, a computer and writing centre are needed and students should have free access to them; better research resources are also a key aspect for students academic growth and development and some training is needed for the librarians to perform their job adequately.

Agar (1992: 99) states that, “Understanding student needs and understanding the range of complexity and the interrelated nature of problems experienced by students, go a long way towards explaining the disproportionately high failure rates of African students at all tertiary educational institution”. Agar’s statement reflects the graduation and the drop-out rates of our students at TTI nr 200, and lecturers and decision makers cannot close their eyes to it. From this study it was also learnt that much of the TES’ failure in completing their research reports is avoidable provided that they receive adequate support from the beginning of the course. It is expected that students at this level have attained to some degree all the elements of academic literacy- reading, writing, listening, speaking, critical thinking, use of technology, and habits of mind that contribute to academic success. However, it was found that most of

the students are still far from reaching this level. The academic literacy skills are expressed in the curriculum and they are supposed to be taught and learned throughout the course work; however, this is not the case yet, they seem to be an integral part of the curriculum just in theory but not in practice.

Unless progressive changes are introduced to align the teaching/learning system with regards to the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) the teaching and learning activities and (TLAs) the assessment tasks (ATs) in the educational teaching practices at TTI nr 200, the situation will remain the same or even worse as the time goes on. Students should be given *'truly effective support'* and avoid waste of human resources. They should be helped to adopt *deep approaches* to learning instead of *surface approaches*; by so doing they will be moving from non-academic to academic ways of reading and writing and therefore succeed in the production of their research proposals and/or reports. It is hoped that the study will benefit, first, the Modern Languages Department, especially the lecturers who participated in the study and secondly the whole institution at the level of all the other departments. It is believed that through this study lecturers may not only review their teaching and supervisory practices, but may also question their long held assumptions about their role in both the teaching and supervision practices.

8.3 Limitations of the study

As with any other study, the present one has some limitations. Those limitations derive primarily from the qualitative paradigm that led the study. Hofstee, (2006: 112) posits that all research methods have limitations. Hamel, (1995) contends that qualitative studies have always been faulted for two main aspects:

- ❖ Lack of representativity as a point of observation for a social phenomenon
- ❖ Lack of rigor in the collection, construction, and analysis of the empirical materials that give rise to the study.

The first point is based on a view that generalizations cannot be made on the basis of a small sample size and the second is related to the problem of bias, as a result of the subjectivity of the researcher and that of the participants on whom the researcher relies to get an

understanding of phenomenon under study. The main argument is that no matter the context, personal experiences, beliefs and narratives are always biased and subjective. Being the Head of the Department of Modern Languages, and one of the lecturers in the English Department, we believe that there was some sort of cooperation from both lecturers and TES to provide the information needed but that co-operation did not affect the results of the study due to the fact that different research instruments and different participants took place in the study. In my humble opinion, both students and lecturers looked at me as a researcher and not as a stakeholder within the institution. However, we were concerned with the truthfulness and accuracy of the data gathered as some participants, especially lecturers, tried to provide unreal information. Lecturers are the main agents of change. As soon as they realise that their practices are being investigated, they passively try to resist the process by not participating or providing incorrect information. This is one of the reasons that made me use various methods of data collection in this study, (Brown & Rodgers, 2002: 243).

For the post-modern qualitative researchers, subjectivity provides strength because truth is always relative. To that extent “no story can have more credibility than any other” (All about Philosophy Series, 2009). Thus, what counts is the validation of the story by the community that lives by it. Nieuwenhuis, (2007: 52) contends that “qualitative researchers accept value laden narratives as true for those who have lived through the experiences.” The main focus was therefore on the depth and quality of information provided by participants regarding their own experiences in academic and research literacy practices. In addition, Zientek (2007: 962) postulates that “of course such samples are not without limitation but can yield some insights when sample characteristics reasonably well match those of a targeted population.” Hence for qualitative studies generalizability is determined by the strength of the description and not the size of the sample.

However, in this study, compared to the whole population from where the sample was taken, the number of participants seems to be reasonable and sufficient enough to provide the information needed. The number and structure of the questionnaires and interviews can be considered insufficient, but for the purpose of the study the number of the research instruments and the amount of information gathered from them was sufficient enough to provide answers for the research questions.

While it is obvious the danger of drawing generalisations on the basis of very few students, it can be argued that the insight gained from the critical analyses of this study as well as the lecturers and students accounts, is likely to enhance other lecturers' sensitivity to other students' perceptions about the usefulness of a different approach to teaching writing academically and research methodology among other subjects. Patton & Appelbaum, (2003: 64) posit and share the same opinion that if you have a good descriptive or analytic language by means of which you can truly grasp the important parts of a system and the interaction between various parts within that system, the possibilities to generalize from very small samples, or even one single case, may be reasonably good. Yin, (1984) also argues that within qualitative research the researcher's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). In qualitative studies the descriptions made are one of the cornerstones of the study and they allow the reader to determine the level of correspondence between a particular group and context to other similar groups and contexts.

Throughout the study we tried to stick to Dörnyei's (2007: 67) principles that educational researchers need to take into account when conducting research, especially at their work place:

- ❖ *Education researchers must not fabricate, falsify, or misrepresent authorship, evidence, data, findings or conclusions;*
- ❖ *Educational researchers must not knowingly or negligently use their professional roles for fraudulent purposes;*
- ❖ *Educational researchers should attempt to report their findings to all relevant stakeholders, and should refrain from keeping secret or selectively communicating their findings.*

In the light of this, one can argue that my findings are worthwhile as before we took my time to meticulously describe the life world of participants in the study we elaborated on the quantitative data from the questionnaires as a way of giving me a guiding light to help me analyse and interpret the qualitative data. The use of methodological and data triangulation helped increase the validity and reliability of the results obtained. In other words, rather than just relying on what participants said during the interviews the use of other research instruments such as questionnaires and classroom observation helped me analyse and see the problem from a different angle. Regarding classroom observation sessions, for some lecturers

they felt that their work was being tested or judged and they tried to skip the lessons or set up revision for all the classes to be observed. However, triangulation of data and approaches helped offset research bias and analyse and interpret data in a more profound way. Because of the shared characteristics, “With such detailed description, the researcher enables readers to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred” (Creswell, 1998: 203). Therefore the conclusions from this study must be seen as limited and suggestive to this group of students, and they can be applied to similar groups and contexts.

8.4 Recommendations

It is hoped that this research will provide readers with insight for developing and improving their own academic and research literacy practices within Departments. According to Hyland (2007), writing is learnt not taught; and the teachers/lecturers best methods should be support and flexibility. Thus, lecturers should first of all take into consideration the particular context in which they are teaching, the students age, their first language, the language experience and practices, their community of practice and the writing purpose. They should provide extensive encouragement in the form of community belonging, peer involvement, useful and corrective feedback, and most of all corrective feedback throughout of the process of writing. Writing needs to be regarded as a culturally based activity whereby lecturers and TES bring their own sets of culturally defined and prescribed criteria to writing classrooms, even in cases when they belong to the same culture (Leki, 1992). It should be recognised that just like any other students, TES have their own ideas of what means good writing based on their previous learning social and cultural experiences and they are likely to transfer those writing patterns to new teaching contexts. Therefore it is not enough to determine what is expected of ESL/EFL students in University and give them models of what lecturers want them to produce; According to Biggs & Tang (2007: 21) “Education is about conceptual change, not just the acquisition of information.” Students prior learning experiences are a key factor in determining which approach to teaching should be selected. Successful writing instruction departs from an awareness of the importance of cognitive and motivational factors (Leki, 2007) and students should be provided with cooperation with peers in planning and writing tasks as well as providing feedback. Peer support is of great importance as it provides opportunities for students to talk about their writing in progress with more skilled and attentive colleagues promoting in this way academic writing development.

The recommendations from the present study are not intended to act as an all-encompassing list of “to-do’s” for educators, lecturers, and administrators in higher education institutions such as TTI nr 200. Rather, these recommendations may serve as a starting point for further research or action in the following areas: improvement of lecture delivery and assessment practices; teaching skills development; staff development issues; and research supervisory practices, as a way of enhancing of quality of teacher training pedagogy. Thus, as with any qualitative study, the recommendations made in here may vary in pertinence based on specific contexts. The recommendations are grouped into four categories, namely recommendations for a) the Institution; b) the lecturers; c) the Educational Departments and d) the TES.

8.4.1 The Institution:

From the institutional point of view, we recommend the following:

- ❖ The Institution should work together with the Educational Departments to update the existing curriculum to meet the current demands of the New Angolan Educational System as well as the assessment procedures;
- ❖ There is an urgent need to re-examine the policy for the entry exam and put in place a policy that will govern the students entry exams, in terms of their educational orientation and academic background;
- ❖ As the institution is primarily focused on the training of teachers, the entry exam should be structured in a way that it will assess students level of proficiency in not just basic academic and research literacy skills as well as in teacher training matters.

There is a need to align the teaching/learning system with regards to the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) the teaching and learning activities and (TLAs) the assessment tasks (ATs) in the educational teaching practices. There is a need to shift emphasis from teaching to learning; what Barr & Tagg, (1995: 14) refer to as a shift from an instruction paradigm to a learning paradigm. Students must be active discoverers and constructors of their own knowledge. McLeod & Reynolds (2007) postulate that in the learning paradigm knowledge is not seen as cumulative and linear like a wall of bricks, but as a nesting and interacting of frameworks. To this end, learning environments should be challenging, cooperative, collaborative and supportive.

The actual curriculum should be revisited to conform with the new education system. As mentioned before, once a curriculum is in place, before we start looking at the assessment procedures, a number of important questions need to be asked:

- ❖ *Is the curriculum achieving its goals?*
- ❖ *What is happening in the classrooms?*
- ❖ *What kind of teaching methods are being used?*

Curriculum evaluation is concerned with answering questions such as the above mentioned, and it focuses on collecting information about different aspects of a language program so as to understand how the programme works, how productive it is, leading to a stage of decision making. Issues such as whether the programme is responding to the learners' needs, if further teacher training is needed for those who are involved in the process and the overall students' outcomes are also addressed in curriculum evaluation and they constitute and are translated in the above improved version of Biggs 3P Model which from this study will be referred to as the 4P Model.

- ❖ The Academic Department should provide information to students about their progress timeously, and at the beginning of each academic year there should be a meeting where new students will be introduced in the new community of learning and practice, and old students will be informed about their progress and academic status in the new year. This information should be provided on paper. At the beginning of each academic year students should also be introduced to the librarians through a visit to the premises where they will be informed about the organisation, the policy of borrowing books and the working hours.
- ❖ There should be a well equipped Writing Centre for students to practice and develop their academic and research literacy skills.
- ❖ More attention needs to be paid to the research literacy practices which should be organised and controlled by a committee of members and short in-service training courses should be organised by the department to raise lecturers awareness for the need to change their pedagogies not just for teaching but also for supervising students.
- ❖ The Institution should provide students technological opportunities for students' research and presentation purposes. All students should have access to the computer centre. Technology is not in itself critical thinking or writing or research, but it is

definitely a means to critical thinking and writing and research that is engaging and important.

8.4.2 Lecturers:

Teachers and lecturers are key agents to unlocking the future and promoting change. Therefore if one wants to implement some change then they must put some pressure and try to persuade local Education authorities, governors, and other decision-makers. What is needed is to show the courage and commitment to implement that change. However, it should be emphasised that Educational change does not happen overnight; educational change is a very slow, social, hard and never-ending process (Head & Pauline, 2007). Taking into account the new Model here suggested on constructive alignment, the following recommendations for lecturers were proposed:

- Students can change their learning styles and strategies if given motivation and support to do so. It is therefore lecturers responsibility to promote that change among students by getting closer to students and engaging them in written tasks that would lead them to the acquisition of the academic and research literacy skills, skills they need to become academically ‘good writers’ and write their research proposals with ease (Head & Pauline, 2007).
- Lectures in general and content subject lecturers in particular must help students develop effective critical thinking strategies to improve their critical reading competencies by setting up tasks that require students over time to re-read, review, reconsider, reformulate, reorder their work and the work of their peers (peer-feedback) and revise it rather than make small editorial changes. Writing and learning are social processes and collaborative peer feedback helps students engage in a community of learning where they respond to each other’s work, creating therefore an authentic social context for interaction and learning, (Hyland, 2000).
- Lecturers must work as a team and integrate other subjects content in the content of the subjects they are teaching; they should also set up an atmosphere whereby constant communication should exist among them with regard to students progress;
- There is a need to raise lecturers’ awareness for the need to improve their teaching methodology and set up activities and tasks that are conducive to the process of writing a research report. They need to be more supportive and commutative with their students not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.

- Lecturers need to revisit their assessment procedures in way that they would contribute to the final assessment which is the research report writing.
- Lecturers need to be aware of the role that corrective feedback plays in teaching contexts and see it as a way of teaching and learning. Feedback needs to be provided on time and promptly and practiced at different levels.

As Brookfield (1995) puts it,

What we do as teachers makes a difference in the world. In our classrooms, students learn democratic or manipulative behaviour. They learn whether independence of thought is really valued or whether everything depends on pleasing the teacher. They learn that success depends either on beating someone to the prize using every available advantage or on working collectively. Standing above the fray and saying that our practice is apolitical is not an option for a teacher. Even if we profess to have no political stance, and to be concerned purely with furthering enquiry into a discrete body of objective ideas or practices, what we do counts. The ways we encourage or inhibit students' questions, the kinds of reward systems we create, and the degree of attention we pay to students' concerns all create a moral tone and a political culture. Brookfield, (1995: 25).

- Therefore lecturers need to become researchers of their students' perceptions, designers of multifaceted assessment strategies, managers of the assessment processes and consultants assisting students in the interpretation of the world around them and the rich information acquired from learning (Ramsden, 1987).

8.4.3 Educational Departments:

According to Ramsden (1987: 39), "Students must leave University equipped to engage in self-assessment throughout their professional lives. They need to be able to make reliable judgements about what they do and do not know and what they can and cannot do". With regards to TES the situation is the same, they must leave University with an ability to act and react to world around them and make fair judgements about their practices. Thus, Departments have an important role to play not just concerning administrative matters but also educational and instructional matters. After all, departments are the direct managers of TES' academic and professional matters.

Thus the following recommendations were set up for the Heads of Departments.

- ❖ Departments need to assess lecturers engagement in the work they do. To this end, some classroom observation between lecturers teaching the same subject in different areas , and not only, should be implemented.

- ❖ Departments should educate their students about the structure, function and development of their disciplines.
- ❖ TES programmes should help prospective teachers improve and use their Pedagogic Content Knowledge-PCK.
- ❖ Even prospective teachers with “high majors” in their disciplines often enter education programmes with “highly developed low literacy” in the writers words. They know about lots of facts, definitions, but not very much about the relationships that they will need to master in order to teach well.
- ❖ Departments should follow-up students progression by selecting a student or two from each class who will represent the group and report on students progress and lecturers performance.
- ❖ Supervisory processes should be monitored by the Heads of department with a group of selected lecturers.
- ❖ Supervision is only one part of the lecturers academic life and the balance between teaching, administrative duties, research and supervision is not an easy task to achieve. Therefore lecturers must use a number of personal strategies to help maintain the balance that will help in the management of the students academic life.
- ❖ There should be a deadline for students and supervisors to conclude the research report, and supervisors should report on the students progress at specific times.

8.4.4 Teacher Education Students- TES:

Teaching and learning in Higher Education constitutes a complex phenomenon. According to Ramsden (1987), in the process of teaching and learning in higher education, assessment constitutes the single most influential factor on students learning. To him, placing some responsibility of assessment to students constitutes the most feasible means of enhancing learning. Falchikov (1988) also posits that students’ involvement in their own assessment can lead them in more modern ways of assessment like self-assessment, peer assessment and collaborative assessment and these in their turn will very much depend on the type of feedback provided by lecturers. Following are some recommendations for TES:

- ❖ TES need more practice in academic and research literacy skills and greater exposure to the models of reading and writing that they will encounter during the research supervision practices. They need to be taught how to make meaning out of what they

have read, and be trained how to think critically, to argue, to compare, and to express their own ideas and so on.

- ❖ TES should be made aware of the governing rules of the Institution at the beginning of each academic year. They should also be made aware of the dos and don'ts of their Departments.
- ❖ TES must feel the responsibility they have within the academic community they belong to and feel free to report or any problems be them economic, social or personal. To this end there should report to the representatives of their classes.
- ❖ In order to be successful in their studies, TES must enter TTI nr 200 with basic technological skills that include word-processing, e-mail use, and basic knowledge in Web-based research, aspects which were purposefully left out as they need separate attention.
- ❖ There is a need for academic skills development, e.g. study skills, note-taking and making, critical thinking, essay writing, leading to research reports writing. In order to achieve that goal the institution should set up a Writing Centre where students could go and exercise the above mentioned skills.

It is hoped that by putting these recommendations in practice lecturers in particular and educators in general, will promote academic growth among students and encourage successful teaching and learning based on the Vygotskian notion of scaffolding whereby a more informed person or lecturer helps a less experienced one to learn to do a specific task, and become independent to do the task alone at some point in future.

8.5 Future Research

A great deal of research has been conducted with regard to academic and research literacy practices within different teaching and learning contexts. This study has been an attempt to understand Angolan TES difficulties in producing their final research reports. Because one cannot discuss the research literacy practices without addressing the issue the teaching and learning, in order to determine what is happening and what still needs to be done, the first step that the study went through was to analyse and understand the academic and research literacy practices as well as the kind of assessment tasks TES are exposed to.

The next step was to look at the supervision practices and see which aspects constitute the main hindrances to the system. The research supervision practices constitute a hidden agenda within the teaching learning process, and although they were presented and discussed in this work, we think that they deserve a thorough investigation to help uncover the main hindrances that are preventing lecturers and students from doing their job properly. Because teaching contexts are different in a number of aspects, there is still considerable opportunities for further research in both academic and research literacy domains. The study therefore indicates a number of areas for further investigation.

In particular there is still much to learn about what supervisors and students do in different contexts of supervision, the influence of power relationships, the cultural background and the type of feedback provided. There is also a great need to know about the effectiveness of particular teaching approaches and the use that students make of various kind of feedback (whether in the classroom or during supervisory sessions).

A study based on research supervision practices alone should be carried out with a larger number of TES and lecturers from different departments at the institution so as to get a broader view of the problem and a more generalisable solution. Another set of studies in this particular context would be focused on the curriculum. Here researchers will have to focus on what kind of materials students read independently, what materials they are asked to read, when, where, and how. The curriculum plays an important role in helping students acquire and develop higher levels of language proficiency.

The 4P Model here suggested constitutes a starting point in contributing to the research knowledge, and should be seen as an incomplete Model. It should therefore be extended and improved to better fit all educational levels. Therefore, more research is needed in this specific area.

The data obtained from the research instruments in this study has produced far more information than was needed and could be included in this thesis. Therefore the extra data can be used in future research. Researchers who wish to use, explore or review the additional or extra information not reported herein are very welcome to do so.

8.6 Summary

This chapter provides a summary of the findings and focuses on how the research question was answered. From the results of the present study it was learnt that students academic writing experiences are not an integral part of their programme and the final research report is the only long piece of extended writing ever required for students to work independently. Another important finding was that most of the lecturers are using the traditional approaches to teaching writing which seem to not be contributing to students development of academic and research literacy skills and therefore to the production of their research reports.

Data also suggested that an alignment in the new 4P Model suggested in this study needs to be put in place, and the academic and research literacy practices need to be improved with regards to the teaching approaches being used, the assessment procedures and the whole process of supervision practices. An improved version of Biggs (1999) 3P Model is suggested to help analyse and understand the issue of constructive alignment within any system and level of education. In this study, the 4P Model constitutes the beginning of the development of a theory that dates from 1999 and as previously stated it should be viewed just as a small contribution to the research knowledge.

A brief conclusion of the whole study was made, followed by a brief revisit to some of the major constraints that seem to be hindering the process. In light of the findings, recommendations were made in the areas of teaching and learning with regards to academic and research literacy practices, assessment procedures, feedback and possible areas for future research were addressed.

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