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**Reading Programmes to Encourage Reading: teachers' and learners'  
perceptions and experiences.**

Supervisors:

Professor Mbongeni Malaba and Ansurie Pillay

Submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts (English Studies)

### **Declaration**

I declare that, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in this text, this dissertation is entirely my own work and a representation of my own original ideas and efforts. This dissertation is submitted towards fulfilment of the degree: Master of Arts (English Studies), at the University of KwaZulu- Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus.

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

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Thank you to the Principals for allowing me to conduct my research at their schools. I appreciate all the enthusiasm and support. In particular, thank you to the Principal at School A for meeting with me to discuss and encourage my research.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the English Heads of Department and Librarians at each school that was involved. I realise that all of you are very busy people and I was very thankful that you all participated so willingly and were so open and available. My research would not have been possible without all your co-operation. Thank you.

I would also like to give credit to the English Heads of Department and Librarians at each school for providing me with the materials (worksheets and booklets) that constituted the reading programmes for each grade. Some of the materials have been reproduced within this dissertation with their permission. Should anyone reading this dissertation wish to pursue these reading programmes using the materials that have been discussed within this dissertation please contact me directly and I can put you in touch with the Librarians and Heads of Department who have developed these materials.

Many thanks,

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## **Abstract**

This research project is aimed at investigating the reading programmes, in four schools in KwaZulu- Natal, which serve to encourage learners to read. The schools involved in this research project were single- sex schools that were either private or government funded. My research involved interviewing the Librarians and English Heads of Department (HoDs) at each school to establish their experiences and perceptions of the reading programmes that are run at each school. I also interviewed a group of Grade 10 learners at each school in an effort to gauge their experiences and perceptions of the reading programmes at each particular school. The reading programmes at each school are also described and critiqued within my investigation and offered as examples of what successful reading programmes entail. These reading programmes were defined as successful by the Librarians and English HoDs who collaboratively run these programmes. Many learners who participated in these programmes did not deem them a success and offered suggestions for the Librarians and English teachers to amend these programmes.

The qualitative components of my research (interviews) were complemented by the use of a questionnaire that was randomly distributed to 50 Grade 10 learners at each school. This questionnaire constituted the quantitative aspect of my research as the results were statistically analysed in a bid to validate the results of the interviews. Other strategies employed by the Librarians and English HoDs were also assessed and are offered as suggestions to other teachers or librarians who are struggling to encourage a positive attitude towards reading amongst their learners. Through my research I was able to conclude that the reading programmes that were investigated are generally a successful means of motivating adolescents to read because all the learners involved read more than they normally would. These programmes do not, however, always instil lifelong reading habits in learners because they do not facilitate the promotion of reading as a pleasurable activity that can be enjoyed in one's leisure time.

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## **Chapter One:**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Research Topic**

The topic of my dissertation is: Reading Programmes to Encourage Reading: teachers' and learners' perceptions and experiences.

My study focused on the ways in which reading programmes aim to encourage reading amongst learners at four schools in KwaZulu- Natal. How these reading programmes are perceived and experienced and whether they serve to encourage a lifelong reading habit amongst adolescents supplements the focus of my research. The teachers whose perceptions and experiences I have drawn upon are English Heads of Department (HoDs) and Librarians at the four schools that were involved in my research. The learners whose perceptions and experiences I have drawn upon were in Grade 10 in 2011 at the four schools that participated.

#### **1.2 Rationale for Research**

My study is limited to English teachers because I have studied to be an English teacher and I believe that English teachers are responsible for encouraging reading and modelling positive reading habits. I also believe that to teach English effectively, a passion for reading and literature is a necessity. In my opinion any teacher who is an avid reader is able to positively model the behaviour of a reader and encourage learners to become enthusiastic about reading because "our goal as educators is to create lifelong readers" (Kasten and Wilfong, 2005:657). My research is relevant and useful to any teacher who hopes to encourage reading because this study provides teachers and librarians with information about the reading programmes that are being run in some of the schools, both government and private, that have participated in my study.



My reasons are further motivated by the view that “the researcher’s voice may help to ease the tension between school and student that appears to be at the heart of student resistance to school-based reading” (Lenters, 2006:139). What I am able to interpret and deduce from my research should assist in establishing why learners are not reading and why they resist the encouragement of teachers and librarians to read. Any tension that exists is the product of uncertainty. If I am able to reveal the reasoning behind a learner’s resistance to school-based reading then, I hope, this tension can be alleviated. I trust that the anonymity that the participants in my research were assured encouraged them to reveal how they perceive and experience the reading programmes honestly. Other strategies, outside of these reading programmes, that are employed by teachers and librarians to encourage reading amongst adolescents are also explored.

Much of the research that has been conducted surrounds the teaching of reading (Hart and Moore, 2007) and motivating reading in younger learners (Powell-Brown, 2006 and Moyer, 2007). Strategies to encourage reading amongst adolescents, both boys and girls, in a South African context is a relatively under researched area of expertise (Lenters, 2006 and Powell-Brown, 2006). Many debates surrounding the stereotypes that pertain to reading and gender (Gambell and Hunter, 1999 and Warrican, 2006) are considered in my research as are the arguments that the promotion of reading should be a whole school initiative (Guth and Heaney, 1998) where reading is encouraged across the curriculum (Kasten and Wilfong, 2005). Parental involvement (Elish-Piper, 2008 and 2009) and the role that parents should play in modelling and encouraging positive reading habits are also debated and discussed within my research. My contribution to these topics will be the contextualisation of these debatable issues in four elite, single- sex schools in South Africa. There is still much research to be done on effective strategies to develop and promote reading programmes in under- resourced schools and how these reading programmes, in any school, will serve to instil a lifelong reading habit in learners. The reading programmes that I investigated during my study are resource dependent and would therefore be difficult to institute in an under- resourced school. These programmes could, however, be adapted and activities within these reading programmes could be piloted in

schools that do not have the resources to run the programme in full. These are suggestions and recommendations that are discussed within my concluding chapter.

### 1.3 Research Aims

My research questions developed from the observation that the “literacy needs of adolescents were receiving little attention” (Lenters, 2006:136). My research aimed to establish how the learners in Grade 10 and their teachers perceive and experience the reading programmes that are run in the schools that participated in this study. It was assumed that all the learners involved in this study would already know how to read because they were in Grade 10 and would have needed to be able to read to reach Grade 10. I chose to focus my research on learners in Grade 10 because I believe that by Grade 10 learners should have established interests and genre preferences when determining what literature to read. It is also an important year in high school because learners make subject choices that could dictate what they go on to study after school. Also, some of these Grade 10 learners would have experienced similar reading programmes in Grade 8 and 9 and would be able to reflect upon these experiences. This age of learners is “generally agreed upon as the time when children’s social interests widen, the onset of adolescence is accompanied by the onset of the instructional practice of heavily individualized reading” (Lenters, 2006:143). A lot is expected of learners at this particular age (15-17 years) and very often the encouragement of reading is undermined by activities that appear more relevant and exciting.

Through my research I aimed to determine what is being done by teachers and librarians to encourage reading amongst adolescent learners. Both the teachers’ and learners’ perceptions and experiences in each school were recorded to assess the extent to which these reading programmes encourage or discourage reading.

The experiences and perceptions of the boys are compared with the experiences and perceptions of the girls. Through these comparisons I aim to establish any differences in how boys, as opposed to girls, experience the reading programmes at their schools and perceive reading. This aim was fuelled by the statement made by Gambell and Hunter (1999:11) that:

Historically, literacy has been considered as a female activity, associated in the preschool years with mothers reading to their children and encouraging prewriting and drawing activities. Rarely are fathers associated with such activities even during the school years. The association of literacy with female activity is a role expectancy engendered in the home and well established before children begin formal literacy instruction.

The truth in this statement and the idea that parents should be reading role models for their children further support the aims of my research as the stereotypes surrounding reading attitudes and practices are explored.

#### 1.4 Key questions

- What is being done in schools, by librarians and teachers, to encourage reading amongst learners?
- What are the teachers' perceptions and experiences of the reading programmes run at each school?
- What are the Grade 10 learners' perceptions and experiences of the reading programmes run at each school?

#### 1.5 Research Sites

The schools that were chosen to participate in this study are located in Pietermaritzburg and Hilton. They are single- sex high schools that are either private or subsidised by government funding. These schools were selected because they have well established libraries and are known to have well run English Departments; they have the resources to establish successful reading programmes. These are elite schools and the reading programmes that are successful in these schools might not necessarily be appropriate for under- resourced schools but I believe that certain aspects of these reading programmes could be adapted and successfully utilised in under- resourced schools nonetheless. For this reason I deem my research to be both beneficial and necessary.

Two of the schools that participated are for boys and the other two are for girls. The boys' schools have been labelled as School A and School B whilst the girls' schools have been labelled

as School C and School D. I chose to conduct my research in single- sex schools because I aimed to compare the results attained through my research. These results came from the answers to the questions that were posed during the interview process and the statistical results that emerged as a result of the questionnaire that was given to Grade 10 learners.

### 1.6 Outline of Chapters

In this chapter I have defined the topic for my research project and my motivation for choosing this particular topic. The aims of my research are explored in this chapter and the three key questions that my research sought to answer have been stated. The schools involved in my research, and their locations, have been described. The second chapter of my dissertation consists of my literature review and the theoretical framework of this study.

The methodology that I followed whilst conducting my research is detailed in chapter three. Within chapter four the preliminary questionnaire that was answered by English teachers at a conference in March 2011 is discussed along with my preliminary discussions with the Librarians at each school.

The reading programmes at each school are detailed and interpreted in chapter five and discussions of the interviews that I conducted during my research are included in chapter six. The limitations and the problems that I encountered whilst conducting my interviews are also contained within this chapter.

The results of my research are further explained in chapter seven. Tables depicting the results of the learner questionnaires is included in this chapter along with graphs that display the results that emerged from each school, followed by graphs comparing the results from the boys' and girls' schools. A graph with the results from all four schools supplements this discussion and interpretation. A description of the limitations and problems encountered with administering the questionnaire is included.

My conclusions and recommendations appear in chapter eight of this dissertation. The references and appendices follow chapter eight.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.1 Literature Review**

This study builds on research that has already been undertaken to investigate how positive reading habits can be encouraged amongst adolescents (Mixon Clary, 1991, Sanacore, 1992, Kasten and Wilfong, 2005, Warrican, 2006, Elish-Piper, 2009). Many reading programmes have been developed and initiated by teachers and librarians who have become increasingly aware of the poor reading culture that exists among many adolescents (Guth and Heaney, 1998, Kasten and Wilfong, 2005). My study aims to build upon investigations that have already been undertaken and my research was conducted because “little recent research on reading motivation exists” (Powell-Brown, 2006:84) and in response to the challenge posed by the statement that “the need to address that which creates resistance to reading is of paramount importance and cannot be ignored” (Lenters, 2006:144).

I believe that a positive attitude towards reading should be instilled in children from a young age to ensure that, upon entering high school, they are able to do well and that they will continue to enjoy reading in their free time (Elish-Piper, 2009 and 2011). In my opinion, this should be done initially by the children’s parents as reading should begin at home with parents modelling positive reading habits by reading aloud to their young children (Trelease, 2001). When children go to school this positive attitude should be encouraged further (by the parents and teachers) as their reading skills are developed because:

If children are to become fluent readers, they need to read a lot. Our job as educators is to see to it that children want to read - that they seek new knowledge via the written word and derive satisfaction and joy from the reading process (Nathan and Stanovich, 1991:179).

By the time a child enters high school he/she should be comfortable with reading and know what he/she enjoys reading because, in a similar study it was proven that, “children enjoy being

able to choose what to read” (Nathan and Stanovich, 1991:181). My research seeks to establish whether or not this assertion by Nathan and Stanovich (1991) can be affirmed in the South African context, based on a limited survey of four schools with well stocked libraries and dedicated Librarians and English HoDs. My belief that a poor reading culture has recently evolved amongst adolescents is affirmed by Kasten and Wilfong (2005:657) who comment that:

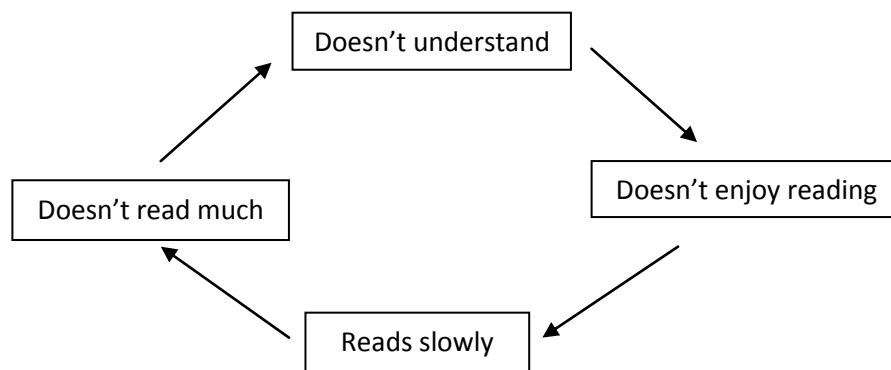
Adolescents are quick to judge things in school as related or unrelated to their lives. Often things associated with school literacy are not seen as relevant by adolescents. As a consequence, more teens are more likely to reject school tasks and reading along with them.

It is vital, in my opinion that a child is taught from an early age to read because “once a child can read, independent, solitary work is possible” (Bernstein, 1990:75). Once a child has reached high school (Grade 8) he/she should be reading independently for both academic purposes and for pleasure. The Librarians and English HoDs who I interviewed, as described in the chapters that follow, pointed out that this is not the case with many of the Grade 8 learners when they arrive at high school. The reasons for this include a lack of parental involvement and modelling of positive reading habits (Elish-Piper, 2008). When children are young their parents should be positive reading role models and once a child has entered school this role is shared and complemented by the child’s teacher (Trelease, 2001). In a bid to encourage parental involvement in the promotion of reading amongst adolescents, Elish-Piper (2008:47) lists a number of suggestions to help parents to create a reading culture at home:

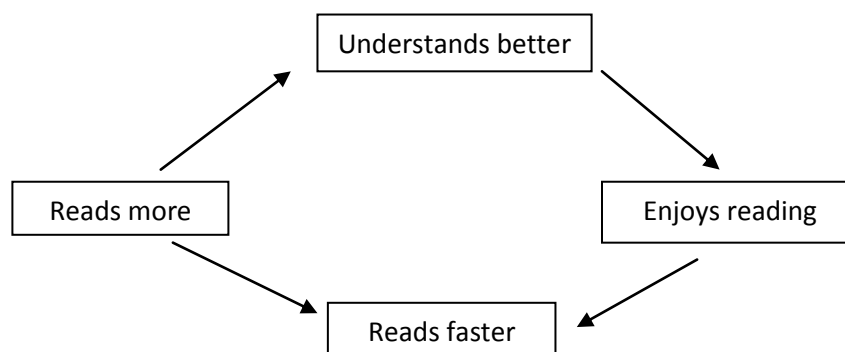
- Let adolescents see you and other adults reading for enjoyment.
- Subscribe to a magazine for your teen.
- Share newspaper stories with your teen and discuss them during dinner or other times.
- Choose a book as a gift for your teen (e.g., think about the teen’s interests such as music, celebrities, sports, humour, fashion, technology, etc.).
- Take your teen to the bookstore and encourage him or her to choose interesting reading materials.
- Encourage the many types of reading your teen does (e.g., school assignments, internet sites, how-to instructions, e-mail, instant messaging, magazines, etc.).
- Encourage your teen to read to younger brothers, sisters, or other children.
- Help your teen choose reading materials about the future (colleges, careers, current issues).
- Avoid arguing with your teen about reading! Keep a positive attitude about reading to help your teen see how important and enjoyable reading can be.

Bearing these suggestions in mind, I was able to establish, through discussions with selected learners, that many parents simply do not have the time to devote to encouraging their children's reading activities. As a result of this lack of involvement and intervention, from both parents and teachers, adolescents who struggle with reading continue to view reading as a chore and avoid any reading tasks and their reading skills never improve because they do not spend any time reading. This cycle results in struggling readers suffering academically as motivated readers continue to read and improve (Elish-Piper, 2011). This idea is termed by Nuttall (1982:167-168) 'the vicious circle of the weak reader' and shows that a learner who does not read much does not understand texts when he/she is asked to read and as a result does not enjoy reading and reads slowly because he/she does not read much. 'The virtuous circle of the good reader' demonstrates that a learner who enjoys reading reads faster and reads more and is able to better understand and comprehend what he/she reads. These cyclical relationships are displayed below:

#### **The vicious circle of the weak reader**



#### **The virtuous circle of the good reader**



In high school (Grades 8-12) the English teachers should be a source of literary knowledge and motivational advice on what to read. An English teacher should be a lifelong learner because a “teacher of literature can never know enough” (Laird, 1968: 4). This idea is supported by research that has revealed that the “voices of adolescents have been marginalised” (Elish-Piper and Tatum, 2006:6) because learners are often not consulted or questioned about their reading choices or preferences. Lenters (2006:136) offers assurance that “an important ongoing research paradigm applied to the study of adolescent resistance to reading has been that of listening to [the] student voice”. The need to offer learners texts that they can identify with, relate to and generate interest in has been pointed out (Brassell, 2006, Elish-Piper and Tatum, 2006, Powell-Brown, 2006, Fisher and Lapp, 2009) and my own research might suggest that, in our context, this should be the first step taken towards motivating adolescents to read and the encouraging a lifelong reading habit.

Within this dissertation independent reading refers to any silent reading that the learner does alone, at school or at home and is informed by the definition that “reading is the process of constructing meaning or making sense while interacting with text” (Elish-Piper and Tatum, 2006:10). Reading for pleasure refers to any reading done by a learner independently, purely for enjoyment and not because he/she is being forced to read. For Mann “reading for pleasure [is] seen as a relaxing and enjoyable activity which could be done in order to provide relief from the requirement to fulfil set tasks” (2000:311), whilst reading for academic purposes normatively serves to “help students to learn and explore new ideas, concepts and information and to examine them on their learning of these new ideas” (Mann, 2000:312). It is necessary to use these definitions because I have found through my research that the “new academic spin on reading has the effect of taking the pleasure out of reading” (Lenters, 2006:143). Sanacore (1992) has also discovered that teachers are not allocating enough time and effort to the promotion of independent reading amongst learners. His solution to this problem comes in the form of a challenge to teachers that: “since our students are not likely to do much pleasure



reading at home, we must accept the challenge of encouraging the lifetime reading habit at school” (1992:475).

Suggestions made by Sanacore (1992) to encourage reading include:

- Cluttering up the classroom with reading materials to ensure that reading is accessible and tempting to learners.
- Providing time in class for learners to read independently and reading with learners in class.
- ‘Book talks’ to introduce learners to new authors and genres that they are not normally exposed to.

These suggestions are in keeping with the six strategies identified by Mixon Clary (1991) that could possibly encourage reading. These strategies are classified as follows: “capitalize on interests, make reading material accessible, build a conducive environment, allow time to read in school, provide significant adult models, and use motivational techniques” (1991: 340). These strategies have been developed through the observations and experiences of other teachers. The success of these strategies was based on the commitment of both learners and teachers. Also noteworthy is the statement that “a room with lots of books obviously houses a teacher who supports reading” (Mixon Clary, 1991:343). This statement serves to illustrate the yardstick by which a teacher’s commitment to the encouragement of reading could be measured. Mixon Clary (1991) concluded that the employment of these strategies would serve to encourage independent reading amongst adolescents. It is hoped that once a learner is reading independently an enthusiasm for reading can be cultivated that will ensure that the learner is able to associate reading with pleasure.

Reading for pleasure during ones free time is an activity that has reportedly become less appealing to adolescents. It has been confirmed that “in competition with electronic media, reading as a leisure activity is losing its appeal” (Baines, 2009:688) and many learners do no longer associate reading with ‘fun’. These truths were investigated in a study that sought to establish “the preferences of older children and young adolescents with respect to reading as a leisure-time activity and its relationship to other free time options that are likely to compete for their attention” (Nippold et al., 2005:95). Through this investigation it emerged that a learner’s

interest in reading declined as the learner got older, adolescent learners preferred spending their free time socializing with their friends as opposed to reading and more girls admitted to spending some of their free time reading for pleasure (Nippold et al., 2005). The results of this study are further validated by the idea that “it is helpful to know where reading fits into the larger picture of free time options for today’s youth, some of whom spend little or no time reading for pleasure” (Nippold et al., 2005). If anything, this knowledge can serve to assist in the promotion of reading by both teachers and parents.

Effective strategies to further encourage independent reading in the classroom context have been suggested by Brassell (2006). These strategies were the result of a scaffold method that was demonstrated by an inspirational teacher at the school that the researcher attended. A tranquil and undisturbed atmosphere that was conducive to learning and a steady supply of books in the classroom that learners could choose from have the ability to improve and further encourage resistant readers to read more according to Brassell’s (2006) observations. An effective reading class routine for teachers, based upon these observations, has been developed by Brassell (2006) and is tabulated below:

Effective Reading Class Routine for Teachers (adapted from Brassell, 2006:93)

1	Provide a huge variety of high-interest books written for different ages, abilities, and interests.
2	Discuss what you, the teacher, are reading. Solicit volunteer feedback about what the students are reading.
3	Allow students to select books and read.
4	You, the teacher, read while students read.
5	When students complete a book, they bring the book to you. Ask the student some general questions about the book. When you are satisfied that the student has read the book, give the student credit for reading.
6	Develop a points system. For example: to get an A students needs 20 points. A book with a 100 pages is worth 1 point, a book with 200 pages is worth 2 points etc.
7	Post the names and point totals of the top five readers in each class.

This routine presents seven steps that can be implemented by teachers who aim to encourage reading using incentives (points) that rely upon the learner's competitiveness; desire to be classified as a top reader in the class.

The reading programmes that were investigated through my research are all resource dependant programmes that are being run in elite single sex schools. These programmes were all initially developed on the premise that "motivating students to read for enjoyment, information, and understanding - of the text and themselves - is necessary" (Guth and Heaney, 1998:34). The acknowledgement that the success of a reading programme is often dependant on the resources available is made because "administrators may know what type of programs are desirable for their students, but often do not have the time, expertise, or resources available to initiate and sustain such programs" (Guth and Heaney, 1998:35). For these reasons many of the reading programmes that are discussed in this dissertation would not be appropriate or viable in an under- resourced school that does not have a library or access to library books. Guth and Heaney (1998) describe four similar reading programmes currently in place in the United States of America. These are the Virginia Young Readers Program, the Accelerated Reader Program, Author Quest and short- term literacy "Sparklers".

The Virginia Young Readers Program is a Virginia State Reading Association programme that involves teachers, students and community members. Each year ten "target" books are chosen by a committee and multiple copies of these books are obtained by the school library. Students are encouraged to read these books by their teachers and adults in their community. They are required to give book talks on each title that is read. Students are acknowledged and rewarded for reading and "these incentives, rewards, and positive interactions with adults combine to provide a strong motivational component- a critical element when dealing with young adolescents" (Guth and Heaney, 1998: 38). This programme resembles the Grade 10 reading programmes that I investigated at School A and School C. The similarities include books being chosen and thereafter reserved in the library for the learners participating in this programme, and more than one copy of each book being bought for the programme. The learners at School A and C are also required to give book talks on the books that they have read. The incentives

offered for each of these programmes ensure that the learners involved are motivated to participate and read. The Librarians and English HoDs who run these programmes have observed that learners are particularly encouraged to read once they are made aware of the public recognition that they will receive for reading; this was the case amongst the girls at School C.

The Accelerated Reader Program (ARP) is a structured literacy initiative that requires teachers to be trained accordingly. “ARP is a computer- based, self- paced, individualized reading management program for seventh graders” (Guth and Heaney, 1998:38). Students read books suggested to them through this programme and then test themselves on the books they have read. These are computer generated tests that allow for competition between students and classes. The competitive nature of this programme has ensured its success as students are also offered incentives and rewards for high test scores.

Author Quest is a programme run amongst Grade eight students. Each student chooses an author and reads a number of books by that particular author. Activities include: book talks and a letter written to the chosen author. This programme is somewhat limiting because the learners are merely encouraged to read within their comfort zones. I believe learners should have to read from other genres to gain exposure.

The short- term literacy “Sparklers” often involve the whole school and are administered once a semester. A “Read In” is an after school activity that involves students staying after school to read. Once again incentives and rewards are offered and students are encouraged to participate by their teachers and community members. This whole school initiative is similar to the reading period that is administered at School D where the whole school is required to read.

The stereotypical ideas surrounding reading and gender have been both confirmed and disproven. The learners that I interviewed believe that in most cases there is no truth to the stereotypes that suggest reading is an activity enjoyed by more girls than boys and that more

girls are readers as opposed to boys. Warrican (2006:37) writes that “boys are not reading” and he suggests that schools ensure that their libraries are stocked with a variety of books that will appeal to a variety of learners with varying genre preferences and reading abilities. He encourages teachers to have their own collection of reading materials in their classrooms and to provide time daily for learners to read leisurely. The importance of learners being able to choose their own reading materials is stressed by Warrican (2006), as is the need for accessibility to reading materials. Gambell and Hunter (1999) were also able to deduce that, in general, males are weaker readers than females, males spend less time reading, and females spend more of their free time reading, in agreement with the stereotypes that are applicable to reading.

Many learners are resistant readers despite being able to read well. These learners are labelled as alliterate because they choose not to read. The distinction between alliterate and illiterate is made by Moore and Hinchman (2006) who describe an alliterate person as being unwilling to read whilst an illiterate person is unable to read. It is further explained that often alliterate learners resist reading at school and are labelled as ‘poor readers’ yet they are avid readers at home, reading magazines, manuals and internet sites (Moore and Hinchman, 2006). In a study conducted by Hamston and Love (2003) at an elite boys school where “the boys are all capable readers and generally academically successful” (2003:162) it emerged that many of these boys are only reluctant to read at school because of the connotations that accompany reading:

This highly situated study of academically capable adolescent males’ reading habits and attitudes reveals that some boys, who present in school as ‘reluctant readers’ are in fact capable readers in domains of importance to themselves at a particular point of their lives (Hamston and Love, 2003:162).

The research I undertook at four elite schools in KwaZulu- Natal ties in with the findings of this study and is in keeping with these conclusions. All the learners who participated in my research are capable readers and many of them are academically successful yet a few still express a resistance to reading because they associated reading at school with academic work.

Many perspectives on reading motivation exist. Baker (2003:88) discusses three categories that effect the motivation to read. These categories are:

**1. Competence and efficacy beliefs**

*Self-efficacy*, the belief that one can be successful at reading; *challenge*, the willingness to take on difficult reading materials; and work *avoidance*, or the desire to avoid reading activities.

**2. Intrinsic and extrinsic goals for reading**

Intrinsic (learning) goals are *curiosity*, the desire to read about a particular topic of interest; *involvement*, the enjoyment experienced from reading certain kinds of literacy or informational texts; and *importance*, the belief that reading is valuable. The extrinsic (performance) goals are *recognition*, the pleasure in receiving a tangible form of recognition for success in reading; reading for *grades*, the desire to out-perform others in reading.

**3. Social aspects of reading**

*Social*, the sharing of the meanings gained from reading with others; and *compliance*, reading to meet the expectations of others.

From these categories it is noted that the learners are challenged to read a certain number of books, they are involved and recognised for reaching their reading goals and assessed for activities that relate to the books they have read. The social aspects of a reading programme enforce the success that they experience because books are shared, meaning is discussed and learners are encouraged to read more in order to meet their teacher's expectations or their own.

The description of libraries; as a haven of books that allow for learners to come and choose an interesting book and sit quietly and comfortably whilst reading that book, is the facilitative idea behind the four libraries that were involved in my research. The need for every school to have a library, however small, is becoming increasingly important because "information literacy and life-long learning are stressed throughout the curriculum" (Jurkowski, 2006:78).

Book clubs are a modern and mainstream means of promoting books and reading (Elish-Piper and Tatum, 2006:9). Of the learners that I interviewed for my research many explained that

their mothers belonged to book clubs and would pass on or recommend their 'book club books' to their children. The fact that mothers are members of book clubs entrenches the stereotype that reading is a feminine past time. Book clubs set up between mothers and daughters, and fathers and sons, are suggested as a means to increase parental involvement in the encouragement of reading. This idea, as discussed by Fry (2003), would ensure that parents get to spend more quality time with their children. In households where both parents work this idea could be viable. These book clubs could be run in collaboration with the libraries at the children's schools. The children and their parents would alternatively choose books to read and discuss these books together once they have been read. These discussions would "not only establish and reinforce values and the enjoyment of literature, but also build a stronger communication link between the mothers and daughters" (Fry, 2003:26). Fry mentions that these book clubs have only been sustainable with mothers and daughters. Fathers and sons struggled to find free time to read. It was acknowledged that many of the boys spent their free time playing sport; as a result reading was an extra activity that could not often be accommodated because the boys simply did not have the time to read. This is a noteworthy observation because the same excuses were offered by the boys during my research when questioned about why they do not read or what discourages them from reading. Sport has become more of a priority in the lives of adolescent boys. I believe reading has suffered because of this, and my belief is substantiated by the fact that sport was the main activity that occupied the free time of the majority of boys who were involved in my research. My belief is supported by the results of the study undertaken by Nippold et al. (2005).

In keeping with the idea of a father and son book club the English HoD at School B aims to pilot this approach to encourage the boys to read and their fathers, or any other significant male figure, to be involved and model a positive attitude to reading by also reading the books being read by the boys. Following the independent reading of the books that the HoD will select for this pilot programme a quiz evening will be organised that will allow for father and son to compete as a team against other father and son teams. Her ideas to introduce this programme at School B have developed from the observation that the boys are highly competitive and

motivated to participate and read if they are competing. Her observations are supported by the ideas expressed within the reading programmes that were suggested by Guth and Heaney (1998). Book clubs are further offered as a means to encourage reading by many other researchers (Nippold et al., 2005, Powell-Brown, 2006, and Fisher and Lapp, 2009). Ideally, the “purpose of book clubs is to share ideas about a book or books that everyone has read and to have an opportunity to be social and have a good time” (Powell-Brown, 2006: 86). Elish-Piper and Tatum clarify that “book club conversations mirror the types of discussions that adult readers have about books wherein personal connections, experiences, and insights are the focus rather than the summary of the plot” (2006:9). In light of this clarification I believe the appeal for adolescents to participate in book clubs is made obvious because of the connotations that are associated with book clubs. Adolescents want to be involved in adult activities, hence the requests made by the girls at School C to the Librarian for the books included in their mothers book clubs to be purchased by the library. Therefore, a reading programme is not a book club, despite the similarities (learners reading and discussing a group of pre-selected books) because of the manner in which a reading programme is implemented. The reading programmes that I investigated placed emphasis on reading assessment tasks and were run collaboratively by the English departments and libraries in most schools.

The idea of a “Book Bistro”, as advocated by Kasten and Wilfong (2005), allows for learners to read in a relaxed atmosphere. A “Book Bistro is an independent reading strategy for encouraging students to read books on their own, bring books to class for a scheduled event, and linger over books in a café atmosphere” (Kasten and Wilfong, 2005:657). This practice in encouraging reading relies on learners being able to choose what they want to read and telling their peers about what they have read and enjoyed because:

Someone sharing a book he or she recently enjoyed communicates reading enthusiasm, which is contagious. Discussion amongst peers can change student perceptions of a book, causing students to believe it easier to read or to consider a particular title or new genre (Kasten and Wilfong, 2005:658).

This programme was well received by both learners and teachers and because it resulted in many adolescents being encouraged to read more the developers of the “Book Bistro” idea



believe this programme is a success. Furthermore, the idea of a bistro atmosphere prompted the inclusion of food into the discussions that resulted from the Grade 10 reading programme at School A. This reading programme is discussed in detail in chapter five of this dissertation.

The ideas discussed and drawn upon within this chapter serve to further inform and validate my findings. Much of the research that has already been conducted around the motivation of adolescents and reading (Guth and Heaney, 1998, Baker, 2003, Davis and Guthrie, 2003, Fisher and Lapp, 2009) comes to similar conclusions as those that emerged from my research and express similar ideas about how to motivate adolescents to read more. These similarities include the reviewing of reading programmes instituted by states, libraries and schools to motivate positive reading habits (Guth and Heaney, 1998). A study involving learners in Grade 11 and a book club that allowed learners to choose their own books and relate their reading experiences with others in group discussions allowed Fisher and Lapp to conclude that “for their English classes to be effective, we believe that students need to choose the books that they read” (2009:561). The choices that their book club programme provided ensured the success of their study. Baker was able to conclude through her research that “the same conditions that enhance motivation in classrooms will enhance motivation at home: choice, collaboration, and risk-free environments” (2003:102). Davis and Guthrie (2003), in their study, demonstrated how the Engagement Model of classroom practice could assist in motivating struggling readers. Many of the elements described within this framework were being implemented by the Librarians and English HoDs who I interviewed because this model relies heavily on the modelling of positive reading attitudes and habits and illustrates that “teachers who initiate and sustain this framework can help students gain skills and believe in themselves as readers” (Davis and Guthrie, 2003:83). Despite these similarities the data that I collected is, however, unique and specific to well resourced schools, both private and government funded.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

Theorists working under the assumption that “using adolescents’ preferred reading materials and modes of instruction will lead to increased motivation, and perhaps to improvements in reading outcomes” (Pitcher et al., 2007:378) have developed the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP).

The AMRP was developed from the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) (Gambrell et al., 1996). The MRP was designed to encourage young children to read. Following the revision of the MRP the AMRP was devised to encourage adolescents to read because “teachers need to ask different questions of adolescents than of younger children” (Pitcher et al., 2007:378). The AMRP uses a multiple choice reading survey and conversational interviews to establish how learners and teachers perceive reading. My research also involved conversational interviews and a multiple choice questionnaire that is very similar to the reading survey that accompanies the AMRP. The theories underpinning the AMRP are similar to the theories that I have built upon throughout my study. These theories revolve around the roles of engagement, self-efficacy and purpose for reading when attempting to motivate adolescents. These theories correspond with the three categories that affect motivation as described by Baker (2003:88). Many learners perceive reading as a difficult and unrewarding task and therefore choose not to read. They have the ability to read but no desire to do so. These learners are referred to as *non-readers* (Strommen and Mates, 2004) or alliterate adolescents (Alvermann, 2003). Learners will become motivated to read when they are engaged and interested in the text that they are reading. This interest is often linked to the relevance of the text to the life of the adolescent. Emphasis is placed on establishing and maintaining libraries that are up to date and technologically orientated to motivate adolescents (Pitcher et al., 2007).

Pitcher et al. in their paper, "Assessing Adolescents' Motivation to Read", explain further that "motivation to read is a complex construct that influences readers' choices of reading material, their willingness to engage in reading, and thus their ultimate competence in reading, especially related to academic reading tasks" (Pitcher et al., 2007:379). The differentiation between academic reading and reading for pleasure in the AMRP study has led to the defining of academic reading as the type of reading that is done for academic purposes, whilst reading for pleasure would constitute all voluntary reading done at home or in one's spare time. These definitions are necessary because "school reading is in many cases different from non-school reading" (Bernstein, 1990:75). The results of the AMRP study showed "discrepancies between students' view of themselves as readers in school and out of school" (Pitcher et al., 2007:391) existed. This is considered in my research because learners often associate reading with school and assessment.

Other theories that concern the motivation of adolescents have established that the enthusiasm and organization of the teacher who seeks to motivate adolescents is an important factor to be considered, in accordance with Brassell (2006). Another factor that relates to adolescents being motivated is the relevance of the reading material and how appropriate the reading material is in terms of reading age/ability and genre as discussed by Powell-Brown (2006). When learners are actively involved in choosing and assessing their own reading material motivation is often guaranteed because of the empowerment that accompanies choice, as noted by Lenters (2006). The rapport that exists between teachers and learners is also an important factor to consider when encouraging reading according to Gross Davis (1999). A teacher who reads and actively participates in reading activities is often able to scaffold the motivation of reading to his/her learners more effectively, as Brassell (2006) observed.

When determining the appropriate scaffolding methods to be employed by English teachers in the teaching and promotion of reading, the Vygotskian philosophy is a useful starting block (Tudge, 1990, Alvarez and Del Rio, 2007). The Vygotskian model for development in a child describes a child's current knowledge and skill base as the Zone of Actual Development (ZAD).

Within this Zone of Actual Development a child requires no assistance to complete a task because the child has already acquired the knowledge and skill to complete that task independently. Any task which a child cannot independently complete lies within his/her Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Alvarez and Del Rio, 2007, Hedegaard, 1990). Vygotsky advocated that “we must learn ways of reading and thinking in order to participate fully in our culture and to make meaning within it; these ways have to be passed from experts to novices in the context of meaningful, collaborative activity” (Wilhelm, 2001:9). Teaching within a child’s ZPD requires collaboration between the teacher and learner. For this collaboration to be successful the teacher should have the knowledge and skill to demonstrate the successful completion of the task before allowing the learner to attempt the task. Once the learner has mastered the task it falls within his/her ZAD and is no longer in the child’s ZPD (Wilhelm, 2001).

David Rose discusses the scaffolding technique being used at the Koori Centre, University of Sydney, to teach academic literacy. He describes scaffolding as a term which “refers to the support that a teacher can give learners so that they can work at a much higher level than is possible on their own” (Rose, 2003:42). This technique stems from the Vygotskian theory on the ZPD which illustrates that with guided expertise, a learner is able to progress across his or her own ZPD. Vygotsky explains that the “difference between the child’s actual level of development and the level of performance that he achieves in collaboration with the adult, defines the Zone of Proximal Development” (1978: 209). These are the underlying principles that guide the reading programmes I investigated and encapsulate what the teachers and librarians hope to achieve as a result of their mentorship. This explanation further warrants the use of scaffolding in a classroom situation as the teacher (an adult) guides and collaborates with the learner (a child) to achieve a higher level of competence. This would be unachievable without the assistance of the teacher, hence the need for any teacher to be an expert in his/her field. Furthermore, “the teacher’s role as the more knowledgeable other must be a responsive one: being open to children’s comments/questions and adjusting the pacing of the reading to the level of interaction that children desire and need” (Dixon- Krauss, 1996:32). The theories of Vygotsky and Rose were useful in interpreting the results of my research as I had aimed to

establish both learners' and teachers' perceptions and experiences of reading. The use of scaffolding techniques to encourage reading can assist teachers who are struggling to motivate the learners in their class to read.

Following the metaphor of "a person- as- a- rational- thinker" (Weiner in Borich and Tombari, 1997) comes the self- efficacy theory which is "best explained by reference to conscious cognitive processes involving the ability to anticipate goals and rewards and to the use of judgment, evaluation, and decision making" (Borich and Tombari, 1997). This explanation was demonstrated through the utilisation of the competitive spirit of learners to further promote reading programmes and encourage reading at School B and School C. The learners at these schools are offered incentives to read and rewarded for reading; their anticipation of these rewards motivates them to read. Bandura, the leading theorist to contribute to the self- efficacy theory defines self-efficacy as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of actions required to attain designated types of performance" (Bandura in Borich and Tombari, 1997). According to this definition a person will perform better at a task that he/she perceives him/herself to be good at. A learner who perceives him/herself as a good reader will therefore enjoy reading and be more motivated to read. The teacher plays a pivotal role because "learners who believe that they are not capable of a task, such as [reading], can often be persuaded that they are by a convincing and inspirational teacher" (Borich and Tombari, 1997). Emphasis is largely placed on the positive effect that modelling can have in increasing a learner's self-efficacy because nothing is more reinforcing to a learner than seeing a peer succeed in a task. The success of the peer serves to motivate the learner to attempt the task him/herself. Vygotsky's theories on the ZPD give testament to these statements and validate the self- efficacy theory.

The Engagement Model can be used as a framework for teachers to motivate struggling readers. Davis and Guthrie (2003:61) describe struggling readers as "those who are disengaged from reading activities that are related to schooling". It is proposed through this model that learners are re-engaged and reading motivation is developed through two pathways. The first

pathway “consists of connecting current intrinsic motivation to reading” (Davis and Guthrie, 2003:70) and the second pathway “consists of building stronger intrinsic motivation for reading” (Davis and Guthrie, 2003:70). Basically, “the first pathway seeks to connect an intrinsically motivating activity to reading and generalize the motivation to new texts” (Davis and Guthrie, 2003:70). This method can be explained as the introduction of new topics and texts based on topics and texts that a learner is already interested in and would already be motivated to read about. Through this pathway “the process of reading to learn about one topic transfers to other topics because students have acquired related reading skills and strategies” (Davis and Guthrie, 2003:70). The second pathway relies on the internalization of goals and is based on the self-determination theory of Ryan and Deci (2000). The theory that underlies this pathway is a necessary explanation because “among both children and adolescents, individuals who are unmotivated to read do not value reading, do not believe in its importance, or do not personally identify themselves as readers” (Davis and Guthrie, 2003:71). This pathway relies on an intrinsic motivation for reading to be modelled by an individual (teacher, peer, and/or parent) who is motivated to read. This scaffold technique ensures that learners who do not read for enjoyment or see the value in reading can be influenced by the intrinsic motivation of avid readers who perceive the value in reading.

These theories have been applied to the analysis of the results of my research, and have been used to further explain and validate these results. Many of the recommendations that I have made are an extension of the theory and literature that I have discussed within this chapter.

## **Chapter Three:**

### **Research Design**

#### **3.1 Methodology Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to the research component of this dissertation. It demonstrates the methodology that I followed in attaining the results of my research. This methodology explains what research was done, how the research was conducted, and why (Thomas, 2009). The research paradigm that my research follows is one of Interpretivism (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). In accordance with the framework outlined within this paradigm knowledge is a subjective, social construction that is “interpreted and experienced by people in their interactions with each other and with wider social systems” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). My research findings have been informed by the participants of my research and as a researcher my own subjective experiences and biases are brought into the interpretation of my findings (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). A mixed methods approach, utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, informs my research procedure. My research consisted of interviews with the English Heads of Department (HoDs), Librarians and learners, and a questionnaire which was answered by 178 Grade 10 learners, at the four selected schools. This research was done in a bid to answer the three key questions that were stated in the first chapter of this dissertation.

#### **3.2 Research Approaches**

I mostly used a qualitative method of research because my sample sizes were relatively small, and I drew the bulk of my results and conclusions from interviews and observations that were done during the interview process (Barbour, 2008). The information attained through these interviews cannot be quantified, hence the need for a qualitative approach. I was made aware of the criticism given to qualitative research; that it “lacks reproducibility” (Mays and Pope,

1995:109) and is “strongly subject to researcher bias” (Mays and Pope, 1995:109). As a result I chose to use a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research. The results of the learner questionnaires were analysed statistically and these questionnaires formed the quantitative component of my research. Basically “quantitative research refers to research using numbers, and qualitative research refers to that which does not use number” (Thomas, 2009:83). The individual interviews with the English HoDs and Librarians and the group interviews with learners form the qualitative component of my mixed method approach to research design as “mixed methods represent a social science research approach that encourages integration of two major methodological approaches: ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’” (Symonds and Gorard, 2010: 121).

The use of mixed methods offers a more ‘rounded’ and holistic approach (Davies, 2007). This triangulated approach allows for the use of two complementary methods in exploring the same subject. Although this approach did prove to be more time consuming, the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative analysis served to further validate my findings (Davies, 2007). Triangulation essentially “refers to collecting and comparing different perspectives on a situation” (Stubbs, 1983:234). The different perspectives that were collected in this case were those of the learners, English HoDs and Librarians. Barbour confirms that “mixing methods are often employed in order to compensate for the perceived shortcomings of standalone methods, with the aim of either providing a more complete picture or enhancing coverage” (2008:151). In this case the mixed method approach was useful because the exploratory research done through interviews was substantiated by the statistical results of the questionnaire, and “when elements of the research process are used to construct, transform and influence each other, this is when mixing truly occurs” (Symonds and Gorard, 2010:132).

### 3.3 Preliminary Research

Preliminary discussions with the Librarians at each of the schools were conducted in February and March 2011. These were introductory discussions detailing all the reading programmes that are run collaboratively by the library and the English departments for each grade. These



visits were arranged via email correspondence and allowed me to introduce myself and my research to each Librarian, and included a tour of each library. These informal meetings lasted up to 60 minutes each and were guided by a few premeditated open ended questions, such as:

What books are popular at the moment amongst the boys/girls?

What attracts a boy/girl to a book?

As the Librarian do you work collaboratively with the English Department?

These questions allowed for a discussion between each Librarian and I to be formulated. During these meetings I took notes and later transcribed the meetings in the form of an interview.

A preliminary questionnaire was voluntarily answered by English teachers who attended an English Teachers Conference in March 2011 (see appendix A - Preliminary teacher questionnaire). The teachers who voluntarily completed this questionnaire remained anonymous and were not required to expose any of their personal details. This questionnaire explored the reading habits of the English teachers who attended this conference and consisted of ten questions. My research and the purpose of this questionnaire were briefly outlined on this questionnaire. My contact details were also listed so any teachers who were interested in following up on my research could contact me. This preliminary research enabled me to gauge the situation in many English classrooms before I began conducting my research. This questionnaire provided an initial assessment of English teachers' perceptions and experiences of reading through deliberate and open ended questions. This questionnaire consisted of ten questions and space for each question to be answered was provided on the questionnaire. When analysing these questionnaires common themes were sought through the answers provided in the 46 questionnaires that were completed and returned. This preliminary research amongst teachers and librarians provided baseline information for my actual research project and resulted in the formulation of the three key questions that are stated in chapter one of this dissertation.

### 3.4 Research Procedure

Before engaging in my research I became increasingly aware of the many variables that existed within my research design. Variables are measurable attributes that can, and often do change (Thomas, 2009). One variable that I had control over during the research process were the participants of my study. I decided to interview English HoDs and Librarians as well as Grade 10 learners who were either male or female and between the ages of 15 and 17. Another variable that I was able to control and manipulate was the time spent interviewing each participant. On average each interview took 30 minutes. The variables that I could not control included the social (socio- economic) class to which each participant belonged, the reading age or ability of the learners who participated in the group interviews and the level of school funding devoted to the promotion of reading. Through the analysis of my results I have allowed the relationships that exist between these variables to emerge.

The body of my research was conducted during the third term of the school year, namely July to September 2011. The third term was chosen because there were no examinations during that term and the learners in Grade 10 were not under pressure to study for any examinations and should therefore have had spare time in which to read for pleasure. When the third term commenced in July the Principals of each school participating in this study were approached and consent attained from each (see appendix C - Informed consent documents). A letter was hand delivered to each Principal detailing the study and what would be required of their English HoD, Librarian and Grade 10 learners should they agree to participate (see appendix B - Principal's letter). Signed declarations from each Principal were collected or received before I began conducting my research. All the Principals consented to the request. School B and School D are government funded schools and ethical clearance from the Department of Education (DoE) was applied for in June and granted in July (see appendix I - Approval from DoE to conduct research). The Principal from School A requested to meet with me and discuss my research before giving final consent. The declaration forms were signed, scanned and emailed to me by the secretaries of each Principal.

All the interviews that were conducted were semi-structured because they allowed for the interviewee to respond freely. Questions were posed to each interviewee by me, the interviewer. These were open-ended questions that allowed for individual responses. The answers provided to each question were often interrelated and in line with the topic of this research project. The interviewee was not made to feel constricted by the questions and was encouraged to expand upon ideas or answers that he/she felt strongly about (Thomas, 2009). This technique ensured that themes emerged amongst the answers that were given during each interview. These themes and ideas are included within the discourse analysis of each transcript. Questions that seemed irrelevant to any particular interview were also left out. This was done at my discretion. The transcription and analysis of these interviews was very time consuming and I became aware of the reactive effect of some of the questions that were posed to each interviewee. This effect is recognised as the social desirability bias which results in an interviewee giving the answer to a question that he/she believes is most socially desirable or acceptable. Fernandes and Randall explain that “social desirability is broadly understood as the tendency of individuals to deny socially undesirable traits and behaviours and to admit to socially desirable ones” (1991:805). This effect could have influenced the manner in which each interviewee responded to the questions that I posed during the interview process. Also, I am aware that as a researcher my own personal bias could result in the investigator effect as described by Christensen and Johnson (2004). As a result of this effect my interpretation and selection of which data is included in this dissertation could be effected by my own subjective ideas and therefore distorted.

### 3.5 English Head of Department (HoD) Interviews

Contact was made with the English HoD at each school, via email. Each HoD was asked to complete a consent form before being interviewed (see appendix C - Informed Consent for English HoDs). The HoD in each school was interviewed because he/she has the authority to choose the literature and poetry that is read by each grade. Through these interviews I aimed to establish these teachers’ perceptions of reading and how they experienced the reading programmes instituted by each school (see appendix D - English HoD questions). The

approaches used by each teacher to instil a positive reading culture and promote reading were mentioned during these interviews. The answers obtained during each interview are discussed and compared to ascertain the teachers' perceptions and experiences in the following chapters of this dissertation. This was done through discourse analysis, which is "a research method that focuses solely on verbal systems of communication whether in text or through interview transcripts" (Davies, 2007:235). During these interviews the teachers' enthusiasm for literature and the promotion of reading was assessed through the answers that were given in response to each question. Each English teacher's perceptions and experiences were gauged through the content of the answers that she provided. My understanding and interpretation of each answer formed the basis of the discourse analysis which also included the ways in which interviewees chose to present and conduct themselves. For the purpose of my research the discourse analyses considered the words chosen by the interviewee in response to the questions that were asked. This consideration assisted in the identification of themes and ideas that emerged as a result of the questions in an attempt to determine how reading programmes were perceived and experienced by all the interviewees (Fulcher, 2005). None of the questions posed to any of the interviewees were made available before the interview. This ensured that the answers or responses were not premeditated. I relied on the spontaneity of the interviewee to obtain honest answers. The anonymity of my interviewees, I hope, also assisted in maintaining this honesty.

An interview schedule of 20 open- ended questions was used to establish rapport and guide the discussion that took place during each interview. These questions started simply with background information on each interviewee and developed into more probing questions that could be expanded upon. These interviews were a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Through these interviews the following key questions were answered:

- What is being done in schools, by librarians and teachers, to encourage reading amongst learners?

- What are the teachers' perceptions and experiences of the reading programmes run at each school?

### 3.6 Librarian Interviews

I re-established contact with the Librarians from each school, via email, to arrange formal interviews. Each Librarian was asked to complete a consent form before being interviewed (see appendix C - Informed consent documents). This interview revolved around the reading programmes that are implemented at each particular school (see appendix E - Librarian interview questions). At each of these interviews the Librarians gave me the material that related to each reading programme and agreed to allow me to reproduce copies of some of this material and include it in this dissertation. These reading programmes will be discussed in the following chapter of this dissertation.

I had an interview schedule of 19 questions for these interviews to facilitate and encourage discussion. These interview schedules ensured that each interviewee was asked the same initial questions. The responses varied as did the length of each answer that was orally provided. These answers were noted during the interview and fully transcribed afterwards. These interviews were a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Through these interviews the following key questions were answered:

- What is being done in schools, by librarians and teachers, to encourage reading amongst learners?
- What are the teachers' perceptions and experiences of the reading programmes run at each school?

### 3.7 Learner Group Interviews

Consent was attained from the parents of a small group of learners before a group interview was conducted amongst these selected learners from Grade 10, in each school (see appendix H – Letters to parents). Letters were emailed to the parents of learners that are boarders (School A and School C) and hand delivered to parents by learners that are day scholars (School B and School D). The letters that were emailed were either printed, signed, scanned and returned to

me via email by the parents or an email was sent in reply to my letter detailing that they had given me consent to interview their child. Some learners chosen for this interview were selected randomly by their English HoDs and some volunteered to participate in these interviews. These group interviews were informal and conversational to ensure that the learners did not feel pressured into answering any of the questions that I posed to the group (Davies, 2007). These interviews were audio- recorded. Verbal consent was attained from each of the learners involved before each interview was audio- recorded. Their consent to be audio- recorded was recorded and a copy of these recorded interviews can be made available. The purpose of these group interviews was to ascertain how the learners respond to the reading programmes that they participate in during their Grade 10 year (see appendix G - Learner group interview questions). Also, these learners were asked their personal opinions of these reading programmes and the teachers' and librarians' efforts to get them to read. These interviews were conducted in the libraries of each school either during an English period or after school. The interviews that were conducted during English periods were done so with the support of the English teacher involved. The audio- recording of each group interview allowed me to return to various stages of the interview and discuss each response that was made using discourse analysis. The learners' experiences and perceptions were determined from these interviews. This discussion is included in the following chapters of this dissertation.

An interview schedule of 14 questions was used during these interviews. Many of these questions were very broad and all were open- ended. The language used in these questions was also altered and adapted to suit the interviewees. I did not want the learners who were involved in these interviews to feel intimidated by vocabulary that they were not familiar with. I adapted my responses accordingly and structured these interviews in a conversational manner.

Through these interviews the following key question was answered:

- What are the Grade 10 learners' perceptions and experiences of the reading programmes run at each school?

### 3.8 Learner Questionnaires

Whilst conducting my interviews with the English HoDs at each school I briefly explained my research procedure and the learner questionnaires, what my research entailed and what was required from each HoD. Each English HoD was then left with 50 questionnaires to distribute randomly amongst their Grade 10's (see appendix F - Learner questionnaire). Random sampling was used to ensure that a representative sample of the population was questioned, and because "in a random sample the nature of the population is defined and all members have an equal chance of selection" (Marshall, 1996:522). The Grade 10 learners, who received a questionnaire, in each school were the population that was targeted through this quantitative stage of my research. Since these questionnaires offered multiple choice answers they were close-ended and the learners chose the answers that best suited them. Permission for these questionnaires was given by the English HoDs who distributed them and by the Principals of each school who were made aware of the questionnaires when they were initially approached for consent to conduct research. The consent documents signed by each Principal and English HoD included these questionnaires.

It took, on average, two weeks for these questionnaires to be distributed, completed and collected. School A and School C returned 45 completed questionnaires each and School B and School D returned 44 completed questionnaires each. I systematically counted and recorded the number of answers for each question and the number of questionnaires that were returned with multiple responses. A table summarising and comparing the answers chosen to each question by the learners at each school has been drawn up and an analysis comparing the answers chosen by learners is provided in the chapters that follow. Graphs depicting the answers chosen from each school, comparing the answers chosen by boys and girls and comparing the answers chosen from each boys' school and each girls' school have been drawn up using statistical software. A graph detailing all the answers chosen from all four schools is also included to depict and compare the results attained at all four schools.

Through these questionnaires the following key question was answered:

- What are the Grade 10 learners' perceptions and experiences of the reading programmes run at each school?

### 3.9 Conclusion

The transcripts of all the interviews were used to analyse the discourse and conclusions were drawn from the results of all the interviews that were conducted. The results of the learner group interviews have been compared to the results of the learner questionnaires as the learners' perceptions of reading are examined in a bid to answer one of the key questions identified in chapter one. Also, any discrepancies or contradictions that arose in the learners' answers to the questionnaires as opposed to the answers given orally when the learners were interviewed have been highlighted. The results of the learner questionnaires have been illustrated through comparative graphs, using statistical software, and an interpretation of these graphs is provided in the following chapters of this dissertation. The semi- structured interviews that were conducted constituted the qualitative component of my research whilst the questionnaires belong to the quantitative mode of research. Combining these two methods allowed for the statistical information produced from the questionnaires to complement the discourse analysis of each interview.

All participants in my research will continue to remain anonymous and the schools that participated in this study have not and will not be named. They have been referred to as school A, B, C and D. The HoDs at each school can be labelled as: HoD A, HoD B, HoD C and HoD D. The librarians in each school can be labelled according to which school they work at: Librarian A, Librarian B, Librarian C and Librarian D. The learners who completed the questionnaire can be labelled as learners 1-50 A, 1-50 B, 1-50 C, 1-50 D. The focus groups can be labelled A, B, C or D, according to which school they originated from. The focus groups in this case are the learners



who were involved in the group interviews. Focus group A consisted of eight boys, focus group B consisted of six boys, focus group C consisted of eight girls and focus group D consisted of ten girls.

This methodology allowed me to collect and analyse my data successfully, and begin formulating answers to the three key questions that I had identified before I began my research.

## **Chapter Four:**

### **Discussion of Introductory Research Results**

#### **4.1 Introductory Research Results**

In this chapter the baseline information that I attained through a preliminary questionnaire with English teachers at a conference in March 2011 and introductory discussions with the Librarians at the four schools that were selected to participate in my study are provided and discussed. Following the collection of this baseline information my three key questions were formulated as it became apparent that reading programmes could be an effective means of encouraging reading amongst adolescents.

#### **4.2 Preliminary Teacher Questionnaires (March 2011) - see appendix A**

These teacher questionnaires were a good initial indication of how English teachers perceive reading and what is being done by each of them to further encourage reading amongst their learners. These questionnaires were targeted at English teachers of Grades 8-12 so the results attained apply specifically to adolescents and the encouragement of reading amongst adolescents.

All 46 of the teachers who completed this questionnaire stated that they enjoy reading and 50% of them consider themselves to be well read. This result could have been prompted by the social desirability effect described by Fernandes and Randall (1991:805) because many teachers are aware that their teaching capabilities are judged by their curiosity and desire to read and

learn more. To be well read would require one to read across all genres for varying purposes and with the claims made by the teachers that I interviewed following this preliminary questionnaire that they, as English teachers, do not have enough time to read for leisure I am assuming that the 50% who do not consider themselves to be well read have simply not had the time or curiosity to read more. The teachers were asked questions relating to the set books for each grade, and when asked if they thought the learners actually read and enjoyed these set books the responses were varied. More than half (65%) replied that the learners do read the set books and do enjoy them. This high percentage could be a result of the teachers reading the set books in class with the learners which would mean that the learners do not independently read their set books. Also, teachers would assume that learners enjoyed these set books if they had participated in the reading of each book and the tasks that revolved around each book. I believe a learner would merely participate because he/she would be aware of the mark/assessment that accompanies each task. A few (13%) of the teachers acknowledged that the learners only read the set books because they are read aloud during class, and 13% conceded that their learners do not read their set books. The remaining 9% read the set books very reluctantly and probably did not enjoy them. It was mentioned by 7% of the teachers that girls are often more eager and enthusiastic to read than boys. This perception could be fuelled by the stereotypical ideas that reading is typically a feminine activity that males do not voluntarily participate in (Gambell and Hunter, 1999). Very few (4%) of the teachers said that the younger learners in lower grades (8 and 9) are more eager to read, and read more than older learners. I believe this to be true because once a learner has reached Grade 10 he/she has had to make subject choices. Many learners become overwhelmed by the workload and responsibilities that they are indirectly forced to undertake as a result of 'growing up'.

Teachers were asked what they think discourages learners from reading and 7% answered that academically weak learners find reading tedious, 9% said that the learners' lack of imagination and language skills makes reading difficult and 4% of the teachers replied that learners with learning disabilities are often very despondent about reading. These reasons assume that reading ability can be linked to a learner's desire to read because many learners would read

more if they were good at reading (Powell-Brown, 2006). Alternative media and technology were also identified as being more alluring for learners than reading by 22% of the teachers, and social networking distracts many of the learners and occupies most of their free time. Half (50%) of the teachers also pointed out that many of the learners do not have any free time in which to read. School days are very structured and minimal time is allocated to independent reading in most schools because there is simply not enough time to read and cover the whole curriculum that is set for each subject. Also, many learners associate reading with work and school and therefore they cannot be blamed for not reading during their free time (Lenters, 2006). I believe independent reading needs to be prioritised in schools by allocating time for learners to read for enjoyment. By giving learners the 'free' time to read during school the stigma that is attached to reading could be lessened.

It was stated by one teacher (2%) that boys are often kept very busy with sport and as a result their academic work suffers. Learners' experiences at home with their parents and their reading culture at home are also contributing factors as learners with no positive reading role models are often non-readers (Elish-Piper, 2008). This factor was identified by 13% of the teachers that answered the questionnaire. A few (13%) of the teachers pointed out that many books can be blamed for discouraging learners from reading because if a book has a boring cover, is printed in a small font and is very thick and heavy to carry around many learners are put off and will not be interested in reading that particular book. Also, 20% of the teachers admitted that it is difficult teaching reading when there is a general lack of interest in reading amongst the learners and many learners are too lazy to read. Reading is a time consuming activity that requires concentration and "individual reading requires a person to find a quiet location for careful decoding" (Baines, 2009:687). Many learners, I believe, are so accustomed to the instant gratification that accompanies technology that they are not disciplined enough to sit quietly and read. Language barriers, for second language speakers in schools where English is the medium of instruction, make reading more difficult and learners have a limited knowledge and awareness of what books are available for them to read. School libraries should provide reading materials in more than one language because reading is to be encouraged, not just reading in

one particular language, but reading as an enjoyable activity, as suggested by Jurkowski (2006). Very few (7%) of the teachers recognised that learners need to be exposed to different genres and texts, and I believe that this should be done by the English teacher and Librarian.

More than a quarter (35%) of the teachers encourages reading amongst their learners by giving them time in the library to choose books and read. Unfortunately, through my research it was discovered that many English teachers who take their classes to the library use the lesson to catch up on their marking and administrative work and do not read themselves. This behaviour does not set a good example to learners and I believe teachers should be modelling a positive attitude towards reading by also reading during these lessons. If a teacher can demonstrate that he/she is a reader then the learners in his/her class will be more inclined to follow his/her example (Fisher and Lapp, 2009). Some 9% of the teachers confirmed the idea that positive reading role models encourage reading amongst learners. A personal passion and enthusiasm for books and reading were identified as key characteristics of a good English teacher by 4% of the teachers who answered the questionnaire. One teacher (2%) insists that his/her learners set personal reading goals and certificates are awarded each week for reaching those goals. Reading projects with incentives to read were also listed as a means to encourage reading by 11% of the teachers. Many learners are competitive and reading files are kept by 11% of the teachers. In these files learners complete lists of books that they have read and compete against one another for a prize that goes to the learner who reads the most. Encouraging learners to compete with their peers and with themselves by achieving their own personal goals is an effective means of prompting motivation amongst learners, especially boys. The fact that many boys are competitive is substantiated by the mention that many boys spend their free time playing sport, as was discovered by Nippold et al. (2005) in their investigation. Competition is an inevitable component of team and individual sports and this could explain the popularity of sport amongst boys.

Two teachers (4%) went on to explain a Grade 8 reading programme at their particular school called 'Battle of the Books'. Informal discussions between learners and their teacher on the

books they are reading and what books the teacher is reading were used to introduce learners to new books that they might be interested in reading by 26% of the teachers. This dialogue and interaction between learners and their teachers should be encouraged to ensure a heightened awareness of what is available and what should be made available. These discussions should also therefore be encouraged between learners and librarians because librarians are able to source reading materials. A top 20 book list, which can be adjusted by learners, is also a good idea to create an awareness of what books are worth reading. Some 9% of the teachers explained that they read short extracts aloud from interesting books to the learners to generate an interest amongst the learners, and one teacher (2%) explained that at their school they have Stop- Drop and Read sessions for 15 minutes once a week which include the entire school. During these sessions teachers read with the learners to demonstrate that they are also readers. These are all techniques that have been proven to work by the teachers who have suggested them and would be useful ideas for any teacher who is struggling to motivate his/her learners to read.

#### 4.3 Discussions with Librarians

I initially met the Librarians at the four selected schools to discuss what was being done to encourage the learners to read and visit the school libraries.

##### **School B**

The Librarian has worked at School B for eight years. The library at this school is very centrally located within the school block and is therefore easily accessible to the boys. They have had reading programmes for Grade 8 and 9 at this particular school in the past but did not run a reading programme for Grade 9 this year, and the Grade 8 reading project failed to get going. This reading programmes is discussed in the chapter that follows. The librarian explained to me that the library tests the Grade 8 boys at the beginning of their first year at this particular school, and this test is used to assess their interest in reading and their knowledge of libraries. These tests are a good idea because they give the Librarian insight into what the Grade 8 boys are interested in reading and what their reading habits were like before high school. In Grade 8

these boys are new to this particular school and these tests also allow for the Librarian to make a personal connection with each boy through the answers that are provided to each question. This test is structured like a survey and it has been included below:

## Media Studies : Reading Survey

NAME: .....

CLASS: .....

Which Primary School did you attend? .....

The "best book I've ever read" is .....

5 other books I've enjoyed are: .....

1) .....

2) .....

3) .....

4) .....

5) .....

Tick the box next to the **most accurate** answer for how much you read. Please don't try & impress by saying you read more than you do. Be honest, this isn't a test!

- |              |                              |                          |
|--------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| I READ ..... | MORE THAN 2 BOOKS PER WEEK   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|              | ABOUT 2 BOOKS PER MONTH      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|              | ABOUT 2 BOOKS PER TERM       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|              | ABOUT 2 BOOKS PER YEAR       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|              | I HAVE NEVER FINISHED A BOOK | <input type="checkbox"/> |

What magazines do you read? .....

Explain what you like to read, what you don't like to read and say why.

.....

.....

.....

Do you have Internet access at home? YES ☐ NO ☐

What do you MAINLY use the Internet for? Information ☐ Games ☐ Other ☐

How many hours a day do you spend on the Internet? None ☐

Less than 2 hrs ☐

More than 2 hrs ☐

Why did you choose to attend .....? For the Sport ☐

Old Boys in the family ☐

Other reasons ☐

Reading lessons in the library during English lessons are encouraged and the Librarians actively promote books through displays. These displays revolved around a particular theme and seemed to generate interest amongst the boys as I noticed them approaching and admiring the displays. A recommended reading list for each grade is also provided by the library.

This particular Librarian mentioned that many members of the English department do not collaborate as much as they should or could with the school library and librarians and that some of the English teachers co-operated but many of them preferred not to interact with the library staff, which was a pity in her opinion. I believe that this accusation is justified because of the stereotypical ideas that are claimed to characterise librarians and libraries. Stereotypically librarians are viewed as 'boring' because they spend their day surrounded by books and libraries are places that demand silences. These ideas serve to make libraries and librarians unpopular, especially amongst teenagers, and are further discussed by Alexander and Peresie (2005). The Librarian at School B believes that the knowledge a librarian has of books and sourcing books is an invaluable tool to any English department and the role a librarian plays is invaluable and should be acknowledged. This Librarian has also observed that many of the English teachers are unable to offer the boys any guidance during library lessons because they do not read or are not aware of any of the young adult literature in this particular library that would appeal to the boys. This allegation stems from the observations that many of the English teachers do not borrow books from the school library, collaborate with the librarians or read books that would appeal to adolescent boys. This can be verified through the interview that I conducted with the English HoD at School B and will be discussed in a chapter that follows.

When I questioned the Librarian on what she believes attracts a boy to a book she said that the cover of the book plays a large role in fuelling a boy's desire to read that particular book. She also noted that boys were very visually stimulated and that the first page of a book has to grab their attention immediately because many of the boys have a short attention span. Often boys read books that their friends were reading and have recommended and books seem to become popular by word of mouth. This is a viable solution to the problem that motivating boys to read



presents. Learners need to be encouraged to read and share what they have read with their peers because a boy/girl is more likely to read a book that his/her friend has enjoyed and recommended, as has been suggested by Fisher and Lapp (2009).

### **School C**

The library at School C is very visually impressive. The walls have been painted a bright colour and a comfortable sitting area is provided for the girls to lounge around whilst reading. The Librarian at School C is very passionate about her work in the library and with the girls at this particular school. The Librarian described her library as a space for both teaching and learning and a lot has been done to incorporate technology into the running of the library. The Librarian elaborated that she does work with technology but does not allow technology to remove the personal interaction that a visit to the library entails. At the time of our meeting she was in the process of setting up a media centre blog which learners could read. The blog would contain all information pertaining to the library and would be a space for the girls to review and suggest books to one another. This library institutes a Grade 8 and Grade 10 reading programme in collaboration with the English department. The Librarian believes it is important for librarians to be aware of what set books learners are reading in English classes so that he/she can source materials that relate to and complement these set books.

The reading programmes at School C are run with the co-operation of the English Department and the teachers are required to read the books that feature in each programme. They do not have formal library lessons at this school but this particular Librarian aims to make herself available to both teachers and learners at all times. The Librarian at School C believes that some of the teachers do not read as much as they should because their knowledge of books and the genres that would appeal to young adults is limited. She also observes that some teachers do not borrow books from the school library or approach her for reading ideas and recommendations. She stipulated that to teach English effectively a teacher should be a reader who is passionate about literature and should have a good knowledge of books and genres to enable them to be well informed when suggesting books for the girls to read. The Librarian

credits the English department with being proactive and supportive of the reading programmes that are collaboratively run at this particular school.

### **School A**

The library at School A is very removed from the school block; it appears to be quite isolated. In discussion with this Librarian it was made clear that she believes it is important for an English teacher to model good reading behaviour to the learners. She said that often she sees that when a class comes into the library, if the teacher is reading the whole class will read but if the teacher is using the library lesson to catch up on his/her marking then the learners begin to think that the lesson in the library is a free lesson and they do not read. She also commented that teachers claim that they do not have enough time to read but she believes that if they expect the boys to read then surely they should set a good example and also read. She commented that very few staff members borrow books from the school library. It was also clarified that the English department is very enthusiastic and involved in the Grade 8 and Grade 10 reading programmes that are run at this particular school. This library could afford to buy Kindles for the boys to read electronic books and the boys are able to download e-books onto their cell phones to read. Providing access to technology for these boys to read through any media should serve to further encourage reading as it becomes an easier and more accessible task, according to this Librarian. Not many learners are able to read electronic books from Kindles and download e-books onto their cellphones. In my opinion, these boys are afforded every opportunity at this particular school but a lot is probably expected from them learners because they are provided with every means to succeed.

### **School D**

The library at School D is centrally located within the school block and it is an integral part of school life for the girls at this particular school. The Librarian explained to me that the Readers are Leaders remedial programme is offered at this particular school to weak and resistant readers and to any other learners who would like to practise and improve their reading skills. This remedial programme will be discussed in the chapter that follows.

I saw many displays advertising books in the library and a competition that was being run by the library and that girls from any grade could enter; these initiatives seek to make the library more appealing to the girls. This Librarian believes that the girls should not be restricted in their reading so she tries not to label books according to genre or readability. She also commented that a teacher who is well read is more knowledgeable and able to offer support and guidance to learners in the library and in the classroom. She insists that all teachers should be readers, and I agree with her.

This particular school has a dedicated reading period once a week where the whole school is expected to read. Apparently this period has worked well to encourage and maintain a positive reading culture at School D. The Readers are Leaders programme is also offered during this particular reading period every week. During these reading periods the girls are allowed to read literature in any language. This allows the girls whose mother tongue is not English an opportunity to read in their first language. I approve of the support that this school gives to second language speakers. The girls are required to read English texts during English lessons in the library and in class but may choose to read from any other language during these reading periods. I believe that this choice that the girls at School D are afforded serves to promote reading as an enjoyable activity that can be also be done at leisure. Activities such as these should promote a positive attitude towards reading and a lifelong reading habit.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

To conclude, through the baseline information that these introductory research results provided I was able to draw up interview schedules that detailed relevant questions that would elaborate upon many of the underlying issues that were mentioned by the English teachers and Librarians during this initial stage of my research. I believe that these preliminary discussions were a vital step in establishing the direction of my research and how my research was to be conducted.

## **Chapter Five:**

### **Reading Programmes**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

At the four schools where my research was conducted reading programmes exist or are being planned for next year. These programmes, which are run collaboratively by the library and English department, aim to encourage learners to read. These programmes drive the strategy to promote positive reading habits amongst adolescents. The various programmes at each school are briefly discussed below. In some cases a booklet or worksheets relating to these programmes were provided by the English HoD and Librarian at a particular school. Extracts of these booklets have been reproduced within this chapter with the permission of the respective authors.

#### **5.2 Reading Programmes**

- **School A:**

##### **Passport to Reading (Grade 8)**

In this programme the boys aim to qualify for a reading certificate by reading at least six books from the reading lists provided. Each list of books is specific to a genre and the boys are required to read across the genres. There are also three compulsory genres that the boys should read two books from, these are: Literary fiction, Relationships and For real. These are genres that most specifically appeal to boys because the sports biographies that are read by boys would be classified as 'for real' because they are non-fiction texts. Also, many librarians have observed the boys reading and enjoying popular cult novels that are romantically based (Twilight series). Each boy has a handicap that he is required to read to and each book that is read is worth a specific number of points. The longer books are worth more points which could serve to motivate a learner to read longer books, which are usually more challenging. These handicaps are determined using a test that is administered by the remedial teacher to determine the reading ages of the Grade 8 boys. This school can afford to employ a remedial teacher; in other less fortunate schools the librarians could conduct a survey to ascertain reading habits to determine a handicap for these learners.

From the results of this reading age test the Librarian at School A formulates a handicap for each boy. The boys subtract or add their handicap from their total points before being awarded a certificate. Once a boy has accumulated sixty points he is awarded a gold reading certificate and once he has accumulated ninety points he is awarded a platinum reading certificate. Once a book has been read the boy completes his reading list which entails writing a short comment about each book that he has read. The English teacher, Librarian and academic tutor have to sign these reading lists once they are satisfied that the boy has read the book that he has included on his reading list. Determining whether or not these boys have in fact read these books could be problematic and the decision could be biased, based on the boy's academic record and reading history. The boys have to keep this reading list with them in their English files and they are encouraged to take their reading books with them to all classes. This responsibility should be further encouraged, I believe, by the learners' parents.

### **Read and Feed your Brain (Grade 10)**

This reading programme was run collaboratively by the English department and the library from the 8<sup>th</sup> of March to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 2011. The boys were presented with a list of fifteen books that were chosen by the Librarian and English teachers. They were required to read at least six of the books on this list, the same number of books that the Grade 8 boys are encouraged to read. I believe that by Grade 10 more should be expected of these boys; they should be required to read at least eight books. The boys were required to rate the books that they read using an assessment table. This assessment aimed to determine which book was the best according to the boys at School A. The boys were given the responsibility of determining which books were good and which books they would recommend to their peers. This responsibility, I believe, ensures that the boys read the books before recommending them to their peers because they will be reluctant to recommend books that might not be enjoyable.

Each boy was required to keep a record of the books that he read. This record was handed in at the end of the reading programme. During the reading programme four discussion sessions were held in the library. During these structured group sessions the boys were required to

discuss one of the books that they had read. These discussions are commendable because “allowing authentic discussions about texts is important because adolescents quickly lose interest in school-related reading tasks that do not tap into their own lives” (Elish-Piper and Tatume, 2006:9). Before participating in a book discussion the boys had to complete an assessment and outline of that particular book. This assessment and outline was handed in before each discussion and a mark was awarded out of ten by the teacher running each discussion. The teachers are encouraged to be actively involved in these discussions. Food was provided for the boys during these discussion sessions, hence the title of this reading programme: Read and Feed your Brain. The idea of food was meant to make the programme more appealing to the boys as food is often associated with comfort; the librarian and English teachers had hoped that the boys would feel more comfortable and at ease discussing each book whilst eating. I believe that this is a good idea as long as the boys are not distracted by the food that is provided. The teachers directing each discussion would need to ensure that the boys are kept on track and are not just participating because of the prospect of food.

The assessment table, that is used by the boys to rate the books that they have read, also provides the list of books that were offered to the boys in this reading programme. This assessment table, which would have been completed by the boys in their booklets, is included on the following page.

## WHICH IS THE BEST BOOK IN THE PROGRAMME IN 2011?

## Books for 2011

Apply an evaluation for each of the following categories for the books that you have read.

5=Excellent, 4=Good, 3=OK, 2= Disappointing, 1=Poor

Give a total score (the sum of the individual scores) out of 25.

	<i>Characters: were they believable?</i>	<i>Plot: was it absorbing and engaging?</i>	<i>Style: was it written in a way that engaged you?</i>	<i>Recommended? Would you recommend this book to others?</i>	<i>Suitable: is this book suitable for your age group?</i>	<i>Total Points out of 25</i>
<i>Candy</i>						
<i>War Child</i>						
<i>Open</i>						
<i>Maze Runner</i>						
<i>Elephant Whisperer</i>						
<i>Nothing To Lose</i>						
<i>Kiss Kiss</i>						
<i>The Club</i>						
<i>Jonathan Livingstone Seagull</i>						
<i>Power of One</i>						
<i>Young Blood</i>						
<i>Knife of Never Letting Go</i>						
<i>Captain In The Cauldron</i>						
<i>Lost Symbol</i>						
<i>Angel Collector</i>						

The book outline allowed the boys to give each book a star rating, provide a brief description of the characters in the book, identify a theme in the book and say whether or not they would recommend the book and why.

The book assessment meant that the boys reviewed each book that they read. A list of guidelines was given to assist the boys in writing up the assessment. The guidelines stipulated that the boys explore the characters, plot and style of each book. This exploration included commentary on the development of the characters and the plot, and how the writing style added to their experience of the book. The assessment tasks that the boys were required to complete all depended upon the boys critically analysing and discussing the books that they had read. These requirements should ensure that these 'book reports' are not merely copied and pasted from the internet.

The boys were also encouraged to read during the school holidays. This encouragement implied that they were not allocated extra time in class to read. Class work for formal assessment was done during English classes. This class work included an academic review, a friendly letter to the author and a short blurb on one of the books that they had read, all of which were to be included on the school intranet page.

- School B:

The English HoD is planning to institute a compulsory reading programme next year for Grade 8. This programme will involve the boys and their fathers or any other significant male figure who can be a reading partner and role model for the Grade 8 boy involved. A few of the boys at School B are boarders and in these cases young male teachers can be paired with these boys. Her ideas are similar to the book club ideas that have been suggested by Fry (2003) involving mothers and daughters. The HoD will choose three books that both the boy and his father/male representative will read. Later the teams will participate in a fun quiz evening hosted by the English department. Competition is a huge motivating technique at School B and the HoD believes that the 'Father and Son' combination competing against other teams will surely make



reading enjoyable. Her ideas for this programme are fully supported by the Principal at School B and I believe that this could be an exciting and successful programme that will also serve to encourage parental involvement at school. Another reason why this reading programme is likely to be a success is because of the opportunities for modelling good reading habits that it provides.

The Librarian at School B was invited to join a reading programme for Grade 8 this year using books that were suggested by the Northern Ireland Book Award ([www. nibookaward.org.uk](http://www.nibookaward.org.uk)). Unfortunately the Librarian's attempts to institute the programme were not successful because the school year in Europe starts in September and logistically she could not start a programme so late into the school year with exams looming. The books that were suggested for the reading programme were also suggested to the Grade 8's in an attempt to expose them to award-winning literature that would possibly interest them. This Librarian could use this same list of books and attempt to implement the reading programme next year with the new set of Grade 8 boys at School B in the first or third terms when there are no scheduled exams. Although, if she decides to reattempt the programme next year she will need to collaborate with the English HoD to ensure that both reading programmes that have been discussed are not run simultaneously.

- School C:

#### **Battle of the Bookworms (Grade 8)**

This reading programme was more individualised and age appropriate as the Grade 8 girls were given the opportunity to assess their own reading ability and interests. As a result of this assessment each girl was given a handicap. A copy of this assessment has been included on the following page. Allowing the girls to assess their own reading habits and interests could be influenced by the social desirability bias described by Fernandes and Randall (1991).

## **Bookworm Handicap Master Sheet for teachers' use**

### **Form Two Reading Programme – Battle of the Bookworms 2011**

Answer by writing a b c or d under the appropriate number in the block at the bottom of the page. Please do not write in lower squares.

1. How do you read?
  - a) Fast (a book in about 4 days) 4
  - b) Average (a book in one to two weeks) 3
  - c) Slowly (a book in a month) 2
  - d) Never finish a book 0
  
2. Do you read aloud:
  - a) Fluently and easily 4
  - b) Occasionally stumble over some words 3
  - c) Hesitantly and with difficulty 1
  
3. When choosing books do you:
  - a) Look for new authors 4
  - b) Read what your friends recommend 4
  - c) Stick to what you know 3
  - d) Not know what to choose 1
  
4. Would you describe yourself as:
  - d) a keen reader 5
  - e) one who quite likes reading 3
  - f) a reluctant reader 1
  - g) one who hates reading 0
  
5. When you have finished a book do you:
  - a) tell your friend that she must read it 4
  - b) get to the library for another book 4
  - c) feel relieved that you can get on with something else 2
  - d) don't finish the book because it was boring 0

1	2	3	4	5
18-20	15-17	12-14	9-11	0-8
-20	-10	0	+10	+20

The aim of this reading programme was to encourage the girls to read across the genres as they were presented with lists of books that belonged to specific genres and they were not allowed to read books from one genre list only. These books were all worth different amounts of points and the girls had to accumulate sixty points to be awarded their first gold certificate. Encouraging these girls to read across the genres is a good idea because I believe many girls only read the popular cult novels that their peers are reading or the book club books that their mothers recommend. The girls need to be exposed to other genres to further encourage a positive reading habit.

The girls were required to keep a record of the books that they had read and give a book talk to the other Grade 8 girls about an interesting aspect of a particular book that they had read. Before receiving their first gold certificate the girls had to also read two visual/picture books and analyse them according to the visual literacy lessons that they had been attending with the librarian at School C. The girls could go on to receive many more gold certificates and following the first gold certificate, which is awarded in a small prize giving ceremony, the other gold certificates are awarded in assembly. Making these awards public gives the girls recognition for their reading achievements and I would think that many of these girls would feel proud receiving an award in assembly, in front of the whole school.

### **Young Critics' Award (Grade 10)**

The girls at School C were presented with a booklet detailing their reading programme and containing summaries of twenty books before the programme commenced. This reading programme ran from the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2011 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2011. The girls were required to read a minimum of eight books out of the twenty. A summary on every book was provided in the booklet that the girls were given. The summaries of each book in the information booklet gave the girls an indication of what each book was about, and were meant to assist the girls in choosing what books to read. These reviews, I believe, are helpful to the girls because:

Being able to choose successfully among materials is an important skill that is never directly taught but is learned by readers who teach themselves, beginning in childhood. Each successful book choice makes it more likely that the beginning reader will want to repeat the pleasurable experience by reading something further. Each book read contributes to the bulk of reading experiences that enhances the reader's ability to choose another satisfying book (Sheldrick Ross, 2001:9).

Although the Librarian selects and purchases the books for the reading programme, the girls remain autonomous when deciding which books to read from the pre selected list. This is a justified compromise in my opinion. The list of books that the girls were required to read from is included on the following page.

This reading programme was driven by the English department, and the library worked co-operatively to source the books and fuel the programme. Many copies of each book were bought by the library and each girl was charged R200 to cover these costs. This expense, I believe, is justified by the fact that when the programme finishes each girl is given a book to take home with her.

The girls had to sign off every book that they had read on their class lists because there was a class competition to see which class read the most. For every book that was read a skeleton book review was done to record the outline of the book. The girls were also requested to participate in a minimum of eight discussions and guidelines for these discussions were given. Within these guidelines it was stipulated that the characters, development of the plot, writing style and visual impact of the book were to be discussed. A star rating for each book had to be given and justified. Whilst discussing each book the girls had to take notes and then rewrite these notes neatly and include them in their reading programme portfolio. A lot is required of these girls as a result of this reading programme and the pressure that they would be placed under to read, discuss and write up notes about these novels concerns me because I am lead to believe that high pressure reading activities remove some of the pleasure of reading.

## YCA 2011: TITLES AND AUTHORS

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1. Melly, Mrs Ho and Me by Edyth Bulbring
2. Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte
3. Cowboy & Wills by Monica Holloway
4. Spilt Milk by Kopano Motlwa
5. A Lion Called Christian by Anthony Bourke & John Rendall
6. Sex & Stravinsky by Barbara Trapido
7. No and Me by Delphine de Vigan
8. Reckless by Cornelia Funke
9. Encore Valentine by Adriana Trigiani
10. Impossible by Nancy Werlin
11. Al Capone Shines My Shoes by Gennifer Choldenko
12. The Case of the Missing Servant by Tarquin Hall
13. Ellen's People by Dennis Hamley
14. The Unlikely Secret Agent by Ronnie Kasrils
15. I am Number Four by Pittacus Lore
16. Side Kick by Adeline Radloff
17. Whisper My Name by Jane Eagland
18. Gull Island by Frances Hardinge
19. Dark Goddess by Sarwat Chadda
20. Juliet by Anne Fortier

The girls were also required to design a poster or new book cover for the book of their choice. This task was assessed using an assessment table that was made available to the girls. The best posters and book covers were entered into a competition and a winner was chosen by a member of the Art Department at School C.

The girls also had to deliver a promotional oral to the girls from other classes to promote one of the books in the reading programme. This oral was assessed using a table that was included in the Young Critics' Award (YCA) booklet that each girl received. Lastly, the girls had to complete a feedback form at the end of the programme. These forms were handed in at the final Young Critics' Award (YCA) prize giving.

This programme was aimed at giving the responsibility of critiquing these books to the girls; they were the young critics who decided which books won an award. At the end of the reading programme an awards ceremony was held and each girl left with her own copy of a book that was won through a lucky draw that was held at this prize giving ceremony. Other prizes were awarded to the girls who read the most, had the best poster or book cover design and the best book of the programme was announced. This is a good idea because not just the best readers receive awards at the end of the programme; all the girls' efforts and achievements are recognized and rewarded.

The Young Critics' Award (YCA) files that the girls were required to keep were submitted at the end of the reading programme and assessed using the assessment table that follows. This table could be amended to factor in that a learner could read six very challenging and long books and write up skeletons for each book that are detailed and accurate and would not then be classified as satisfactory. Likewise a learner could read all twenty books but not produce any thorough discussion notes on these particular books because she was disengaged and uninterested during the discussion sessions. The table would generally be applicable to the majority of learners but the few exceptions would also need to be assessed.

# **Young Critics' Award Portfolio 2011** **ASSESSMENT TOOL**

**Name:** .....

**Mark:** ...../ 20

**State the number of novels you have completed:** .....

Your portfolio will be marked according to these criteria:

- ☐ Number of novels completed
- ☐ Quality of discussion records (8/9 required, depending on the graphic novel)
- ☐ Quality of novel skeletons
- ☐ General presentation

<b>19-20</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	16-21 novels completed. Generally more challenging novels attempted. Discussion shows insight and very high level of engagement with novels. Notes will be detailed and thorough. Consistently high quality. Inspires one to read the novel. Novel skeletons complete, specific and informative. Very neat and orderly presentation.
<b>16-18</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	At least 13 novels completed. Mostly attempted more challenging novels. Discussion shows understanding and high level of engagement with novels. Notes will be sound and thoughtful. Consistently high quality. Encourages one to read the novel. Novel skeletons complete, specific and informative. Very neat and orderly presentation.
<b>13-15</b>	<b>Good</b>	At least 11 novels completed. Generally substantial records of discussion. Some fuller than others. Consistent quality with occasional insight. Skeletons complete and convey a strong sense of novels' contents. Neat and orderly presentation.
<b>10-12</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	7-9 novels completed. Discussion records are complete but little depth or sense of personal response. Uneven quality. Some full; some sketchy. Skeletons complete but probably very brief and over generalised. Uneven presentation.
<b>6-9</b>	<b>Poor</b>	Fewer than 6 novels completed. Discussion records either incomplete or very superficial. Thin quality. Skeletons sometimes incomplete – single words and repetition probably used. Scruffy and disorganised presentation.
<b>0-5</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>	Only 1-2 novels attempted. Little sense, if at all, of commitment to the reading programme. Skeletons and discussions omitted or containing many blanks. Virtually no sense of novel/s contents or the reader's response.

My favourite novel was: .....

Teacher's comment on YCA portfolio:

- School D:

### **Readers are Leaders (whole school)**

At this particular school a remedial reading programme called Readers are Leaders is offered to all the girls from Grade 8-12. This is a computer- based programme that the school has paid to subscribe to. The programme is holistically aimed at improving the girls' reading, comprehension, word recognition skills, vocabulary, spelling, memory and grammar. It is offered in English and Afrikaans.

I attended a lesson which was compulsory for the girls who have been identified as 'weak learners with poor reading skills' by the English teaching staff to participate in this reading programme. These lessons are self-directed and individualised as each girl logs onto a computer with her own profile and works through the tasks that constitute this reading programme. I observed the girls completing these tasks and noticed that many of them appeared to be genuinely interested and involved. These compulsory lessons happen once a week and are facilitated by an English teacher who encourages the girls to work silently and at their own pace. The teacher attending the lesson that I observed made herself available to the girls and answered any questions they had whilst completing their tasks.

The level that each girl works at within the programme was determined initially by tests that were done to assess the reading ages of each girl. From these tests the weak learners with poor reading skills were identified. The English teacher who facilitates the reading programme sets the level for each learners profile in the programme and as the learner improves, through practise, the level is increased automatically. This level can be altered at the learner's request or by the English teacher who has recognised that the allocated level is inappropriate.

I was able to complete a few of the tasks within this reading programme as the English teacher at this particular lesson set up a profile for me and allowed me to participate. I found the tasks to be interesting and relevant and I felt challenged during the activities that required memory and recall. A report was provided after each task that I completed. This report detailed my



progress within the programme thus far. Participating in this reading programme allowed me to experience the programme wholly and understand what was expected of each learner who was also involved.

I discussed this remedial reading programme with the English teacher who facilitated this particular lesson. She believes that the programme has both negative and positive aspects to it. She identified outdated grammar activities as a programme flaw. Unfortunately the school cannot alter or update the programme. The programme developers would have to update the programme and they have not yet done so. At this school there is no remedial teacher and this programme serves to fulfil this role to some extent. Also, because this programme is self-directed its success depends on the initiative and enthusiasm of each girl in the programme.

This programme differs from the other programmes offered by School A, B and C but I still consider it to be a reading programme. Despite the girls not reading literary texts they are still required to read computer-based texts and “as they read, [they] practice their reading skills and strategies which leads to improvement in reading” (Elish-Piper, 2006:11). This programme would still encourage learners to read because their reading ability is improved as a result of this programme and this improvement is usually accompanied by a growing confidence that struggling readers need to tackle literary texts.

### 5.3 Conclusion

After investigating these reading programmes it became obvious that many of the programmes are similar and have been adapted to suit their audience. For example, the Grade 10 reading programme at School A includes food because the Librarian and English teachers have observed that the boys were more eager to participate in a discussion about books when they were eating or had been eating and were made to feel comfortable. At School B the boys are competitive and competition-based reading programmes have been successful. At School C the Librarian has observed that the girls enjoy being publicly recognized for their reading efforts and the girls respond well to the planning and prestige that accompanies the final awards

ceremony for their Grade 10 reading programme. I am concerned though that “rewarding reading sends the message that reading is unpleasant or not worth doing without a reward” (Krashen, 2004:117). The remedial programme at School D complements their weekly reading period and I believe that this initiative is a worthwhile programme for any school to invest in.

These programmes are successful because the learners involved are encouraged to read but I am concerned about what happens after these reading programmes have been concluded. Do the learners continue demonstrating a positive attitude to reading or do they stop reading because they are no longer involved in a reading programme? Ideally these reading programmes would promote a lifelong reading habit amongst adolescents but I do not think this is the case because many of the learners said that they do not have the time to read outside of these reading programmes.

As a result of my investigation into these reading programmes several trends became noticeable. Firstly, the reading programmes result in learners associating reading with assessment, incentives and rewards. Whilst participating in these reading programmes the learners are motivated to read for the purpose of completing/fulfilling the requirements of each programme. The enjoyment that reading for pleasure allows is not experienced by many of the learners that participate in these programmes because they feel pressured to read the specific number of books required for each programme. Is it possible then that these reading programmes result in the learners not enjoying reading? The competitive nature of many learners results in competition being a successful means of motivating many learners to read more. Learners compete against themselves and their peers to win recognition and awards. This aspect does not take into consideration that many good readers read slowly or read longer, more sophisticated texts than the more resistant readers who would read shorter ‘easy reads’ and as a result read more books than the slower readers. This question of quantity versus quality should be considered when awarding learners points for reading.

Secondly, it is impossible to choose a list of books that would please and appeal to all the learners in a particular grade. Learners said that they would like to be involved in the selection process because if an interest in reading materials is generated then surely a motivation to read would follow. It has been shown that learners:

“respond favourably to reading tasks in school that are equally purposeful and focused on real-life applications such as conducting research on self-selected topics, reading books of their own choosing, and reading texts to answer questions that pertain to their lives” (Elish-Piper and Tatum, 2006:10).

I believe that the idea of reading and being awarded points for reading in accordance with a reading handicap is a good idea because it allows for the poor readers, whose reading ability is not on a par with the other learners in his/her grade, also to also achieve in terms of reading and be rewarded for their achievements. A reading handicap is used for the Grade 8 reading programs at both School A and School C. Many other similarities between the reading programmes that have been investigated exist as a result of teachers adapting the ideas of other teachers and librarians in a bid to develop reading programmes that are contextually specific to the school in which they are to be implemented. This type of collaboration should also be encouraged because I believe that any successful idea that has been proven to encourage learners to read should be made public to allow for other learners at other schools to also benefit from these ideas.

## **Chapter Six:**

### **Results and Discussion of Interviews**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Within this chapter the four interviews that were conducted with the English Heads of Department (HoDs) at each school are discussed. The four interviews that were conducted with the Librarians at each school that participated are also discussed as are the four group interviews that were conducted with learners at Schools A, B, C and D. Each discussion is based upon the transcripts that were made following each interview and constitutes the results of these interviews. Whilst transcribing these interviews I was able to identify themes that were emerging from each discussion. These discussions comprise the qualitative component of my research and are reviewed through the use of discourse analysis within this chapter. These discussions are grouped according to the themes that arose during each interview. Similar themes were revealed in the interviews with the Librarians and English HoDs whilst the themes that emerged in the interviews with the learners were different and the most significant issues that arose from each interview have been separately discussed. These discussions are grouped according to each school.

#### **6.2 Dates of Interviews**

- **English Heads of Department**

##### **Interview 1: School B**

5<sup>th</sup> August 2011

##### **Interview 2: School A**

8<sup>th</sup> August 2011

##### **Interview 3: School D**

10<sup>th</sup> August 2011

##### **Interview 4: School C**

15<sup>th</sup> August 2011

- **Librarians**

Interview 1: School D

1<sup>st</sup> August 2011

Interview 2: School A

8<sup>th</sup> August 2011

Interview 3: School B

12<sup>th</sup> August 2011

Interview 4: School C

15<sup>th</sup> August 2011

- **Groups of Learners**

Interview 1: School C

8 girls

9<sup>th</sup> September

Interview 2: School A

8 boys

19<sup>th</sup> September 2011

Interview 3: School D

10 girls

27<sup>th</sup> September 2011

Interview 4: School B

6 boys

30<sup>th</sup> September

### 6.3 Discussion of the English Heads of Department (HoD) Interviews

The first four questions, that I posed to each English HoD, and the answers from each teacher have been tabulated below. These four questions were more personal and were used to establish a rapport with the English HoDs before I began questioning them on reading and the programmes used to encourage reading at each school. Please see appendix D - English HoD interview questions, for the full list of questions that were posed to each English HoD.

- Biographical Details of the English Heads of Department

Questions	1. How many years have you taught English for?	2. Do you enjoy reading?	3. What books/genres do you enjoy reading?	4. What discourages you from reading?
<b>School A</b>	19 years	Binge read during school holidays	Non-fiction. The Classics, Historical novels and Drama	Time during the term
<b>School B</b>	15 years	Yes, love reading	Young adult literature for boys, academic articles	I have to discourage myself from reading
<b>School C</b>	Almost 20 years	Yes	I read broadly across the genres. Age specific novels e.g Grade 8	Time and the pressures of juggling work and a family
<b>School D</b>	10 years at this school	Reading addict	Not S.A. literature, fantasy- any novel that removes me from reality	Time constraints and I do a lot of writing

Whilst conducting my interviews with the English HoDs at each school I observed that the English HoDs at both boys' schools appeared to be more relaxed and approachable. This experience may reflect that teaching boys requires that a teacher be flexible and easy going as was suggested by the English HoD at School B, but this observation could also be a result of my subjectivity as a researcher. The English HoDs at both boys' schools commented that when teaching boys you need to 'roll with the punches' and take things as they come. This observation reinforces the stereotypical idea that girls are generally more critical of themselves and their academic capacity, and as a result easier to motivate to read (Gambell and Hunter, 1999, Knoester, 2009).

The HoD interviews were conducted under the presumption that "secondary school English teachers naturally tend to be those who love reading and who have experienced success with it most of their lives" (Lenters, 2006:140). At the four schools that participated in my research this was the case and the results of these interviews clearly demonstrated that a love of literature was an essential ingredient to being a successful English teacher. I am basing my assumption that the four English HoDs who I interviewed are successful teachers on the years of experience they have teaching English and the fact that they are the Heads of Department in these

particular schools. Their promotion to these positions, I believe, is indicative of their leadership and teaching capability.

- Reading ability

When discussing the promotion of reading, a learner's ability to read was a theme that was identified as being largely influential. The HoD at School B stated that she believes a boy's enjoyment of reading is linked to his reading ability. Her view is supported by Powell-Brown who notes that "children who struggle to read often have little confidence in their ability to read, and they may avoid reading because it produces more discomfort than pleasure" (2006:84). At School B the HoD contends that as soon as teachers are able to improve a learner's reading ability the learner will enjoy reading more because he/she would be more confident, and I agree with her. She insisted she could encourage the boys in her classes to read because she knew first hand that they would enjoy the books she suggested because she had read all these books. This is a credible statement because her desk was full of adolescent literature that she had either read or was planning on reading.

The reading ages of boys who arrive at School B in Grade 8 are measured at the beginning of the year. The boys are thereafter grouped according to their reading age. The bottom 50 boys, the boys with the lowest reading ages, in Grade 8 are grouped into two 'remedial reading classes'. The boys are not made aware of this label. These classes received extra and more specific attention in terms of reading and the improvement of their reading because it was recognised at this school that these boys can only begin to enjoy reading once they have mastered the skills necessary to read competently. I believe that as long as the boys remain unaware of the labels attached to their English classes these remedial classes are a good idea because the extra attention that these boys receive should allow them to catch up to the rest of the boys in their grade.

The remedial reading programme at School D: Readers are Leaders, allows girls to challenge, test and improve their reading comprehension skills and as a result their reading ability improves and they are able to move up a level on the programme. This promotion encourages

the girls to continue with the programme and their confidence as readers can also improve. The girls who participate in this reading programme have poor reading abilities and their involvement in this programme ensures that they are able to enjoy reading more because they are better equipped to read. The English HoD at School D pointed out the benefits of this remedial reading programme and she agrees that the programme is a worthwhile initiative because the school cannot afford to employ a remedial teacher, unlike School A and School C.

The high expectations placed on the girls at School C during the reading programme: Young Critics Award, illustrates the confidence that the English HoD, Librarian and other English teachers have in the reading abilities of the girls at School C. Although the book selection for the Grade 10 reading programmes at both School A and School C were criticised, by the learners involved in my group interviews at each school, the teachers involved can be commended for providing a range of books that are appropriate for a range of interests and reading abilities.

At School A the boys who do not read are alliterate i.e. they choose not to read, as defined by Moore and Hinchman (2006). They exemplify the statement that “children from high-income families are “deluged” with books” (Krashen, 2004:68). The majority of the boys at this elite private school come from wealthy backgrounds and as a result of this excess of reading materials, the boys at School A could be, in my opinion, disadvantaged because they take books for granted and could therefore devalue reading.

- Strategies to encourage reading

Various methods were identified by each HoD to promote reading in and outside of the classroom. The English department at School B has invested in sets of readers which the teachers take out for their classes and which the boys enjoy reading independently. The HoD has observed that, after the acquisition of these readers, reading has become infectious because if a boy enjoyed reading the first book in the set he proceeds to the second book then the third book, and the more he reads the more confident he becomes as a reader. This



succession is described by Trelease (2001) in his discussion of serialized books. The school aims to invest in more readers next year. Also, at School B they speed read the most common words that appear in texts. This is an individual task and the boys time themselves whilst reading these words and aim at improving their time. The competitive nature of this task has meant that it has been hugely successful amongst the boys.

The HoD at School A does discuss the books she has read or is reading with the boys that she teaches but unfortunately most of the books she enjoys do not appeal to them and they are not motivated to read many of the books she discusses. She reads young adult literature, which would appeal to the boys, only under much duress. I believe that her resistance to reading 'teenage fiction' puts her learners at a disadvantage because "capitalizing on interests and making books accessible demand that the teacher have at least a basic knowledge of books that are available and criteria that should be used to select the for adolescents" (Mixon Clary, 1991:343). The HoD explained that recently she had also been discussing books and what she was reading with her tutor group and that this was a successful activity because the learners showed an interest and enthusiasm for also discussing the books they were reading. A tutor group is a mixed group of learners who meet with a particular teacher, most specifically for administrative purposes. Many of the learners in her tutor group were young and she noted that the boys seemed to be more enthusiastic about reading when they were younger (Grade 8 and 9). This noteworthy comment correlates with the reasoning why School B does not institute a reading programme for Grade 10. It has been observed that the boys are more responsive and willing to read in Grades 8 and 9 and by Grade 10 the boys are too busy with sport, homework and other extra mural activities to be interested in participating in a reading programme. This observation was confirmed by the Grade 10 boys at School B that I interviewed. I do, however, believe that a reading programme for Grade 10 at School B would be a worthwhile and appreciated project that could be undertaken by either the library or English department, or both. The boys who participated in my learner group interview at School B were insightful and acknowledged that many resistant readers could be encouraged to read if

they had a prescribed list of books to read from because many of these boys come to the library and are unsure of what book to choose and as a result often leave empty handed.

The English HoD at School A has taught both boys and girls and she concluded that teaching girls was easier because girls got on with the task at hand. Boys need a lot more persuasion and negotiation and it is harder to motivate boys, according to her. She acknowledged that motivating adolescents was an uphill battle because adolescents were used to receiving instant gratification and they often do not perceive any value in reading. This is in keeping with the findings of Mixon Clary (1991). The HoD advises other teachers that to keep your learners motivated you need motivation and enthusiasm yourself. Her advice is supported by the ideas of Brassell who reminds teachers to demonstrate “that reading [can] be fun” (2006:94). I believe that a teacher’s enthusiasm for books and reading can be a means to share the pleasure that reading brings with learners because if a teacher is able to demonstrate a positive attitude towards reading and share the benefits of reading with learners it can be made obvious “that reading [does] not always mean studying for a book report” (Brassell, 2006:94).

The HoD at School D said that she chats about books with the girls that she teaches but that she does not recommend or suggest books to the girls. If a girl asks her about a book she is familiar with she discusses it with her but she believes in allowing the girl to decide for herself whether she is going to read the book or not. Book choice and preferred authors are personal and the girls should be able to choose what they read for pleasure, according to this English HoD. When questioned about how to encourage girls to read and what advice she had to offer other teachers this HoD confirmed that incentives go a long way when motivating adolescents. Her view echoes what was said by Guth and Heaney (1998) and their description of the Virginia Young Readers Program which offered learners incentives and rewards for participating and as a means to motivate further involvement in the programme. The HoD also mentioned that verbal encouragement and acknowledgement are powerful tools of motivation (Krashen, 2004). She says teachers should encourage their learners to compete with themselves and set goals. She also recommends that teachers be aware of what is on offer for adolescents to read, and that teachers and librarians expose learners to what is available. She concluded by saying one

should not underestimate the power of peer recommendations amongst adolescents. Her opinions are shared by Kasten and Wilfong who state that “someone sharing a book he or she recently enjoyed communicates reading enthusiasm, which is contagious. Discussion among peers can change student perceptions of a book, causing students to believe it is easier to read or to consider a particular title or new genre” (2005:658).

A dialogue between learners and their English teachers on what books are read and critically discussing these books further encourages reading. This scaffold method is effective because “students have to interact with one another and the teacher about texts they are reading. They have to be challenged, supported, and encouraged but at the end of the day, they need to have their say about the text” (Fisher and Lapp, 2009:561). The HoD at School C reiterated that it is important as a teacher to get to know your learners and their interests so you can offer them reading material that will engage them. She mentioned that she speaks about books with her learners and probes them on what they are reading whilst she discusses what she is reading. She acknowledged that “these transactions are critical if students are to accomplish a major goal of English education - to be changed by literature and continue to read long after they have left [the] classroom” (Fisher and Lapp, 2009:561). Outside her classroom this HoD has also set up a notice board that is updated regularly with articles from newspapers and magazines that will/might be of interest to the girls at the school. She insists that the girls read relevant information that allows them to be kept up to date with what is happening in and around South Africa and the world. I think this is a good idea because the board is an eye-catching feature outside her classroom. I felt compelled to stop and read these articles before continuing.

- Collaboration

The relationship between the English department and the library at each school was explored through various questions that were posed to each HoD. A co-operative and collaborative relationship between the library and the English department is highly beneficial because of the resources contained within the library. These resources can and should assist the English teachers to promote and encourage reading because “the school environment is different

today than it was in the past. Collaboration and group work are valued more than they used to be, and the use of social learning and interactivity in a constructivist environment results in a much more dynamic and changing atmosphere” (Jurkowski, 2006:80). Reading programmes are a method of encouraging reading that involves both social learning and silent or individual reading (Baker, 2003).

The HoD at School B acknowledged that they are lucky because management is very willing to spend money on books and that has meant huge support for the encouragement of reading. When questioned about the relationship the English department has with the library she answered that the English department and the library collaborate a lot when encouraging reading. There is a strong support system in the school and the librarians worked tirelessly to source new reading material that will appeal to adolescent boys, according to her. The librarians and English teachers have discovered that the boys are discouraged from taking books out of the library for fear of a library fine when the book is returned late; so as a department the various teachers schedule library sessions on the day when most of the books are due so as to avoid the boys being fined. She admitted that this method of encouraging boys to borrow books from the library could be seen as ‘spoon feeding’ them but she pointed out that the boys were at least taking books out and possibly reading them. I believe that if this strategy is working then it should not be devalued just because it is simple.

The HoD at School A believes that the boys need to be allocated more time to read and that reading should be made a priority. She explained that at School A a lot of time is devoted to sport and she thinks sport should only supplement other activities because a school is primarily an academic institution. This devotion to sport could be linked to the male hormone, testosterone. Martino affirms that “testosterone is often mentioned as a factor impacting on boys’ rejection of reading and writing as passive literacy practices” (2003:13). If this is the case then English teachers need to adopt more active and ‘hands- on’ activities to encourage reading because boys are “constructed as having short attention spans which necessitates a pedagogy designed to provide fast paced tasks punctuated with frequent games and physical outdoor

activities” (Martino, 2003:16). I agree with the HoD at School A and believe that a balance between sports and academic work needs to be achieved in sports- oriented schools such as School A and School B.

The HoD at School A acknowledges that the promotion of reading should be a whole school activity and this is not the case at School A despite the collaboration between the English department and the library, and the abundance of resources that are made available to the teaching staff and boys. Ultimately, as Warrican (2006:41) states:

If creating interest in reading is a goal of educators, then it becomes incumbent on the school to ensure that their students are fed a steady diet of a variety of literature. Even where the students are so turned off that they themselves refuse to read, teachers could read aloud to them to provide them with the opportunity to experience the joys of reading, even though only vicariously.

The value of reading aloud to learners, I believe, should not be dismissed, especially when reading aloud to learners with a poor reading ability or a disinterest in reading. I agree with the assertion that “by reading aloud to adolescent students from meaningful, rich texts, we provide access to ideas, language and experiences, and content that they will not have or may not be able to read on their own” (Elish-Piper and Tatum, 2006:8).

The English department at School C collaborates with and relies on the library and Librarian to assist in the facilitation of both reading programmes at this school. Whilst the library is a source of reading materials for School D I was not made aware of any collaboration in terms of reading programmes. If School D were to institute reading programs that were grade specific, collaboration between the English department and library would be advisable.

- Reading role models

The idea that English teachers should be reading role models for their learners was pivotal in my motivation to conduct this research because “ teachers should be reading role models as well- especially for those children whose parents cannot or will not do the job” (Trelease, 2001:135). Many parents do not read simply because they do not have the time (Elish-Piper, 2008, 2009). This sad truth, I believe, is because of the pressure that many parents are under to pay school fees; these parents work to pay for their children’s schooling and are left with very

little time or energy to read. For these reasons the role of the teacher as a reading role model is highlighted and in most cases was acknowledged by the four English HoDs who I interviewed.

The HoD at School B considers herself to be a good reading role model and she continues to encourage the other English teachers to also effectively model good reading behaviour. She noted that in a boys' school teachers are faced with the challenge of overcoming the stereotype that reading is a girls' activity because reading books is not seen as a male past-time (Love and Hamston, 2003). To challenge these stereotypes she suggests that strong young male role models, who the boys could look up to, are needed. They have a few young male members of staff who are avid readers and who do just that at School B because they are known to discuss books and advertise the books they are reading. This has had a positive effect on many of the boys who are taught by these young male teachers and I believe this type of behaviour should be further encouraged and recognised by other male teachers. This HoD insists that when the English teachers have a reading lesson with their classes they also sit down and read. This behaviour demonstrates to the boys that the teachers practise what they preach because "students will consider their reading immersion to be more important if they see [teachers] demonstrating the joy of reading too" (Sanacore, 1992:475).

The English HoD at School D has only ever taught girls and she believes that to be a good English teacher you need to love literature and all aspects of the English language because enthusiasm will always be the key to being a good role model. She does not allow her girls to read magazines during their library and reading periods as she believes that magazines are a visual text not a literary one (Trelease, 2001, Baines, 2005). I understand why she does not allow the girls to read magazines; they could spend the whole reading period aimlessly flipping through the pages looking at the pictures and not reading, but the value of these visual texts should not be dismissed. Magazines are appealing to adolescents and a topical article from a magazine could generate good discussion amongst the learners. Krashen affirms this idea with the observation that "magazine reading appears to promote reading" (2004:114). This HoD visits the library every two weeks with her English classes and commented that as a school, on

the whole, they have done well in encouraging reading. She has had parents commenting to her that since being immersed in the positive reading culture that this particular school projects their daughters have become more interested in and enthusiastic about reading.

The HoD at School C affirmed that although she does not force the English teachers within her department to read she expects them to do so and to encourage the girls in their classes to read. I believe it is the professional responsibility of an English teacher to read and be well read. This HoD recommends that teachers discuss what interests the learners in their classes, not what interests them personally. Sanacore, an educator himself, confirms that “our roles include securing a wide diversity of materials for our students and, upon request, providing guidance with book selection and with comprehension” (1992:475). The same sentiments are shared by the English HoD at School A who also believes that teachers should read aloud to their learners. Whilst reading aloud, an English teacher is able to model pronunciation and register whilst demonstrating his/her positive attitude towards reading, this is important because “reading to students on a daily basis sends the message that reading is important, valued, and meaningful” (Elish-Piper and Tatum, 2006:8).

#### 6.4 Discussion of the Librarian Interviews

The second set of interviews that were conducted involved the four Librarians at each school. These interviews were easier to organise because I had already visited each library and spoken to each Librarian during my preliminary discussions. Reconnecting with each Librarian was a relatively easy task. The Librarians at the schools were also very enthusiastic about my research and eager to see the results. All the Librarians appeared to be very proud of their libraries and the work that they do. I believe that this enthusiasm is a great indication that these Librarians enjoy their jobs and find their work as librarians to be both rewarding and fulfilling. Please see appendix E - Librarian interview questions, for a full list of the questions that I posed to each Librarian.

The first four questions I posed to the Librarians were designed to establish a rapport, and were of a more personal nature than the remaining questions that were asked. The answers provided to these first four questions, by each Librarian, have been tabulated below.

- Biographical Details of the Librarians

Questions	How many years have you been the librarian at this school?	Were you an English teacher before you became a Librarian?	Do you enjoy reading?	What discourages you from reading?
<b><u>School A</u></b>	4 years at this school. Worked as the librarian at School D before coming to this school.	Yes, a second language English teacher	Yes, thrillers, book club books and young adult literature	Time. As a librarian I am not allocated time to read as part of my job. I should be.
<b><u>School B</u></b>	8 years	Taught Afrikaans and Geography, not English	Yes, realistic novels, travel books and teenage fiction	Time and the sense that I should be doing something else.
<b><u>School C</u></b>	Almost 3 years, taught at this school before though	Yes, English and History	I read A LOT, fiction and non-fiction	Conscious that my job should include reading so I make time to read
<b><u>School D</u></b>	Almost 5 years	Yes, and a remedial teacher	Yes, young adult literature for girls, S.A novels, thrillers	Being tired and time constraints

- Collaboration

The Librarians were asked how they perceived and experienced the collaboration that does and should exist between the English department and library at each school. The Librarian at School D maintained that there is a good reading culture at this particular school because reading is an activity that is supported by all the staff, management included. Malaba defines “a ‘reading culture’ as the ‘cultivation of an ability to read and evaluate a range of literature’, including fiction, poetry, drama, non-fiction, magazines, journals and essays” (2007:2). In light of this definition and the idea that reading be supported as a whole school initiative I believe that all teachers should seek to encourage reading, from any text, amongst their learners in order to maintain or establish a reading culture.



The Librarian at School A stated that the library and the English department at this particular school should collaborate more to encourage reading. She also contends that more time should be set aside in the school day for the boys to read and that the promotion of reading needs to be prioritised throughout the school. She concluded that the attitude that a reading period is a free period, that can be used to catch up on marking and administrative work, undermines reading as a worthwhile activity. English teachers at all the schools involved in my research were guilty of this practice. I acknowledge that most of these teachers are under time constraints and pressure to produce marked work, teaching aids, mark sheets, reports, amongst other duties. But their behaviour demonstrates to learners that they do not perceive the value in reading themselves and this could result in the learners asking why they should be reading if their teacher does not read.

Despite the Librarian's considerable efforts at School A to encourage reading she admits that there are both advantages and disadvantages to having an abundance of resources. An advantage identified by Krashen is that "school libraries in high-income area schools are more likely to have what children want to read" (2004:74). This is the case at both School A and School C. The isolated location of the library at School A was also provided as a reason, by the Librarian and learners, which could possibly discourage boys from coming to the library to borrow books. The costs involved in downloading books and maintaining the Kindles that are borrowed by the boys at School A are a disadvantage of being able to afford this technology. The boys who enjoy reading from these electronic devices are further disadvantaged by the boys who have 'unintentionally' broken a few of these Kindles because the library cannot afford to pay for them to be repaired or replaced.

The Librarian at School B made it clear that the English HoD at School B plays a significant role in the facilitation of this collaborative relationship. The Librarian affirmed that the HoD is an avid reader whose support ensures that that library provides access to books that the boys would enjoy reading. She explained that they often discuss issues and support one another and that most of the English teachers are very involved in the library. It was noted that a teacher's

enthusiasm enhances the reading culture in his/her classroom and this observation relates to the effective reading class routine for teachers that is described by Brassell (2006:93). Unfortunately many of the other teachers do not come to the librarians to ask for advice on books and what to read and many of the teachers at School B do not enjoy reading adolescent fiction, which is understandable.

The Librarian at School C plays a large role in the running of reading programmes, in collaboration with the English department. She discussed the role the learner's peers and teachers plays in the promotion of reading: if a book is talked about a hype to read that book is created. As the Librarian she needs to ensure that when this hype becomes apparent the book is readily available to be read. This discussion brings to mind the third category identified by Baker (2003) which links reading motivation to the social aspects of reading and sharing what has been read because I agree that as an adolescent you are more motivated to be seen reading what everyone else is reading. This third category is discussed in more detail below.

- Reading role models

The Librarian at School D was asked for her views on how important it is for a child to be brought up in a home where books are easily available and reading is encouraged by the child's parents as is suggested by Hamston and Love (2003). She believes it is important but acknowledges that it is not the case in many of the homes that the girls at School D come from. She has learnt that adolescents cannot be forced to read, they can merely be encouraged to read. Influences outside of the home are also acknowledged as powerful tools of encouragement that should be utilised. She has observed that the girls are very aware of what their peer group are reading and talking about and books become popular through word of mouth advertising. This observation aligns with the categories that Baker (2003) says effect the motivation to read. The third category pertains to the "social aspects of reading" (Baker, 2003:88) and I believe it could be used to explain why learners are motivated to read the books their peers have read. In order to be included in the social discussions and commentary that

accompany the reading of a book a learner has to read the book him/herself. Krashen confirms that “young people’s reading choices are influenced by their peers” (2004:90).

The Librarian at School A has observed that many teachers bring the boys in their class to the library and use the lesson to catch up on their marking. When this is done the majority of the boys in these particular classes do not spend the lesson constructively searching for a book or reading. Instead these lessons are noisy as the boys spend much of the lesson socialising. The teachers who come to the library and read set a good example and these lessons are significantly quieter and more constructively utilised. This observation reveals that the English teachers who consider themselves to be readers and who demonstrate the value of reading through modelling positive reading habits are possibly more productive teachers because “reading itself promotes reading” (Krashen, 2004:81).

The Librarian at School B believes that it is advantageous for all language teachers, not just English teachers, to be readers themselves because the boys at School B need reading role models and for many of the boys at School B English is not their home language. She commented that not many fathers read and that this fact has had a negative influence on the boys because reading is most stereotypically an activity associated with girls and nerds according to the boys at this school. This comment is in keeping with the gender related study that was carried out by Warrican (2006). The boys who have been identified as readers are a minority and many of them are bullied. The Librarian, however, is of the opinion that many of these ‘readers’ are bullied because they are shy, introverts, not because they are ‘readers’. If the Librarian is wrong and the boys who read are bullied because they read and not because they are shy then I think the issue of bullying needs to be tackled before any reading programme can be successfully implemented at School B. If any reading programme put into place at School B is compulsory the stigma that is associated with reading might be lessened and all the boys will be involved.

At School C the Librarian identified curiosity as a trait that should be fostered in teachers. She believes that a curious nature will result in reading to satisfy one's curiosity. I agree with her because curiosity is an intrinsic goal as described by Baker (2003) in her discussion of the three categories that effect the motivation to read. If teachers are able to demonstrate their curiosity for books and reading then they can effectively model positive reading habits because "children read more when they see other people reading" (Krashen, 2004:85).

- Strategies to promote reading

The Librarian at School D ensures that there are displays around the library that advertise books. She has also organised book talks to promote new novels and competitions have, in the past, encouraged the girls to get involved and read. The library also has movie tie-ins and when a movie that is based on the book is due to be released the Librarian promotes both the movie and book to encourage the girls to read the book before going to watch the movie. At this particular school they have a set reading period across the whole school. During this period all the staff, teachers and learners are required to read. This period demonstrates to the girls the importance of reading. These initiatives to encourage reading are deemed to be successful because they are supported by the whole school and positive feedback has been provided by both learners and teachers to indicate this. The Librarian at School D also mentioned that because their library is centrally located it is an important aspect of school life for all the girls and is regarded as a "neutral, welcoming territory in what is for some often overwhelming busyness and complexity of the entire school" (Jurkowski, 2006:81). The lady Principal at School D, a former English teacher herself, is also very supportive of reading activities and strategies to encourage reading and this support helps promote reading as a whole school initiative.

Interestingly the Librarian at School A was the Librarian at School D prior to moving to School A four years ago. The transition from working at a girls' school to a boys' school, she admitted, was not an easy one for her. She observed that reading was an activity that learners were not judged for enjoying at a girls school and that there was no stigma attached to being a reader amongst girls. Her observations substantiate the claims made by the Librarian at School B that

readers are bullied by boys. She also confirmed that sport is a major priority at School A. As a Librarian she has worked hard to gain recognition within this particular school and to raise the reading profile and the profile of her job. The Principal at School A is very supportive of the research that the Librarian has conducted around reading on cellphones and e-books. This support afforded her the opportunity to present her research at an international conference earlier this year and she was recognised for the work she has done thus far in the library at School A.

As the Librarian, at School A, she has noticed that there are public perceptions that books are no longer needed because of technology. She admitted that this perception could be linked to the high socio- economic class that many of the learners at School A are drawn from. When prospective learners are brought to the library many of the parents remark that they are surprised the library still has books; books are viewed as out- dated by many of these parents and learners. I do not agree with the perception that technology is replacing books because nothing compares to the experience of paging through and reading a book in my opinion. There is a place for technology to be incorporated into libraries in a bid to increase accessibility and further encourage reading but “the electronic book cannot be used in the same way as the traditional book and, consequently, will probably never completely replace it” (Shiflett, 2001:47).

The library budget at School A enables them to buy Kindles for the boys to read electronically downloaded books but a few of these Kindles have already been broken. The boys are also able to download e-books onto their cellphones in a bid to make reading more accessible but many of the boys complain that their cellphone screens are too small for them to read comfortably off. Despite this complaint some of the boys have still been caught reading from their cellphones after lights out so it is obvious that they want to read, they just do not have the time to read and resort to reading when they should be sleeping. The Librarian had also resorted to pasting flyers that advertise new books in the library above the boys’ urinals to encourage the boys to visit the library and borrow these new books. This is an ingenious idea that I believe is

guaranteed to capture the attention of the boys at School A because they would not expect a book to be advertised in a bathroom.

The Librarian's efforts at School C illustrate her belief that reading should be encouraged across the curriculum so as to involve all the teachers at a particular school. She acknowledged that many teachers are busy and complain that they do not have the time to read and most of the learners voiced similar complaints but she insists that time be made available for reading. This Librarian recommends that books and reading be included in classroom conversations, across the curriculum. Teachers should be encouraging their learners to read by talking about books and this should not be a chore, there should be a dialogue about books and reading between teachers and learners. These recommendations lend to the inclusion of hidden curriculum as a means of ensuring that reading is encouraged by teachers. The hidden curriculum is used to describe what is indirectly taught to learners by teachers in the classroom. It is described by Sambell and McDowell (1998:391-392) as:

An apposite metaphor to describe the shadowy, ill defined and amorphous nature of that which is implicit and embedded in educational experiences in contrast with the formal statements about curricula and the surface features of educational interaction.

In accordance with this description the curriculum is understood to be what is meant to be learnt by learners and the hidden curriculum "arises as a result of students' direct response to what teachers do" (Sambell and McDowell, 1998:392). I believe that the hidden curriculum is a useful tool and the acknowledgement of its existence ensures that teachers are made aware of how their actions also influence their learners. The Librarian went on and explained that many of the girls at School C are influenced by what their mothers read because many of the mothers belong to book clubs. Girls would often come and request a book that their mother had recommended from book club and in these cases efforts are made to source and buy these particular books for the girls. Such efforts cannot be made in a school that is under- resourced, in comparison to School C. The privilege that the girls at School C are therefore afforded could be responsible for ensuring that these girls are kept motivated to read.

At School B displays to advertise new books are set up and a board situated at the library door ensures that when the boys walk in their attention is caught by advertisements of new books. A few of the libraries that I visited had also been painted in bright colours that demonstrate how important it is to “make the library comfortable and inviting so that students will want to spend time there” (Jurkowski, 2006:81). A variety of seating arrangements further serve to ensure that learners can choose to sit quietly and comfortably in a corner and read independently or sit in a group with their friends or classmates and work and read collaboratively. Maximising choice for learners has positively been seen as a means to guarantee interaction and participation as learners are made to feel empowered by the responsibility that they assume in making their own choices (Powell-Brown, 2006).

At School D there are also reading lists in the library for every grade. It is not compulsory for the girls to read from these lists but rather, these lists are made available as suggestions of what the girls should read. For example: in Grade 10 the reading list is designed to encourage the girls to read across the genres during their Grade 10 year. These reading lists serve to further encourage reading at this particular school.

### 6.5 Discussion of the Learner Group Interviews

The third set of interviews that I conducted involved a small group of Grade 10 learners at each school. These learners were either selected by their English HoD or volunteered to participate. Consent from each learner’s parents/guardians was attained before these four group interviews were conducted. Please see appendix G - Learner group interview questions, for a full list of the questions that I posed to each group of learners.

None of the learners that participated in these four group interviews had a problem with being recorded and I explained to them that, after the interview, I would be transcribing what had been said. All the learners were made aware that they would remain anonymous and their names have not been mentioned in any of the transcriptions. These transcriptions and recorded interviews can be made available.

Whilst conducting my interviews with the learners I noticed that at the beginning of each interview the groups were all quite nervous and unsure about what the interview would entail. As I began questioning the learners they appeared to relax as they realised that the questions were not too personal, and that they were not going to be pressured into answering any of them. By the seventh question all the groups were chatting openly and freely to me and appeared to be comfortable with the interview process. I noticed during these interviews that the quieter learners often had a lot to say and were just waiting for the platform to speak. By directing a question at one of these learners an answer was guaranteed because the other learners did show enough respect to allow the other members of the group to speak. Often some of the learners did not agree with what had been said. These contrasting ideas were interesting to explore and discuss and often well argued by the learners who obviously felt quite strongly about many of the answers that were given.

The learners were all very curious about my research and each group questioned me about what my research consisted of and what I had learnt thus far. In particular the girls questioned me about the reading habits at the boys' schools and the boys were interested in girls' reading habits and excuses for not reading. I was inspired by the interest that my research generated amongst these learners and motivated to continue with my data collection and analysis.

- **School C**

Through my interview with the girls at School C it was established that the reading programme for Grade 10, The Young Critics Awards, is generally perceived as successful and enjoyed by the majority of the girls. The girls said they liked the reading programme because it allowed them to read from many genres and they were exposed to books that they would not have otherwise read. The book discussions allowed the girls to critique the authors and books. It was mentioned that the girls' English teacher placed a lot of pressure on them to read at least 16 books during the course of the reading programme. This pressure made it difficult, especially for slower readers, because many of the girls explained that they rushed through books and did



not read them thoroughly because their English teacher's expectations were so high and that they did not want to disappoint her. An increased reading pace does not result in reading being a pleasurable activity (Mann, 2003) and the high expectations of this HoD may have resulted in the girls not enjoying the books they read but reading them nonetheless. The girls said they preferred being able to read at their own pace, although many of them found that choosing a book was a daunting task, and therefore enjoyed having a list of books to select from. The girls thought that learners who did not enjoy reading often battled with knowing what to read. One girl, who does not enjoy reading, nevertheless enjoyed the reading programme because she was told what to read. Many of the girls mentioned that they do not like having to pick a book; they preferred being referred to a good book. It emerged that the librarian at School C was most often the source of a good book.

- **School A**

The boys at School A confirmed that the remote location of the library made returning books inconvenient. One boy did however mention that when he visited the library he felt as though he was escaping the reality of school because the library is so removed from the school block. This brings to mind Jurkowski's comment that "the library is often viewed as a quiet and safe haven, a refuge within the sometimes chaotic school environment" (2006:80). The related responses about the reading programme for Grade 10, Read and Feed your Brain, were mixed and many of the boys believed that the books that had been chosen for the reading programme were mundane and tedious. Their views were not shared by the English HoD and Librarian at School A who both expressed positive remarks about the Grade 10 reading programme. It was suggested by the boys that they be approached before the reading programme commenced and asked what books they thought should be included.

At School A sport is compulsory and many of the boys admitted that if they did not have to participate in sport they would probably read more but were resolute in the notion that boys should all play sport. It was highlighted that the boys are not left with much free time in which to read independently because their days are so well structured. All the boys at this school are

boarders and all their activities have dedicated time slots. There is no time left to be allocated to reading but a few of the boys have made time to read during their 'prep' sessions after they have completed all their homework for that day. The boys acknowledge the importance of reading and mentioned that reading improves their vocabulary and general knowledge and they felt better equipped to converse and positively participate in intellectual tasks after having read. I do not believe that they were merely saying this because they knew it was the right answer; they related their answer to the interview process and claimed reading more allowed them to be better prepared for situations such as these.

- **School D**

The girls at School D expressed a wish that their teachers would follow the homework timetable that had been developed for Grade 10. The girls agreed that many of their teachers overload them with homework and do not follow this timetable. Instead they give them homework every day for a particular subject and not only on the days that are allocated to that subject. As a result the girls have very little free time in which to read independently. It was stressed by the girls that not much emphasis was placed on reading for pleasure by the English teachers and the girls have all begun to associate reading with work and an eventual mark allocation; which call to mind Lenters (2006:143) warning that "the greater the emphasis that is placed on performance and grades the less students are motivated to read". But I do believe the girls were exaggerating because School D is the only school that has a dedicated reading period that allows for the learners to read for pleasure. Mention was also made of the waiting list that accompanied many of the popular books at School D because the library had only a few copies of each book. The girls were distressed that they had to wait to read a particular book and said that in this case it would be useful to be able to download that particular e-book on their cellphones to read. The accessibility of books and reading materials is therefore a major factor that should be considered when attempting to motivate teenagers to read because "adolescents must be able to get to books and periodicals quickly when they decide to read" (Mixon Clary, 1991:342). It would obviously be easier to access books and reading materials at a

school that is well resourced. School D has a large library and is amply resourced yet issues related to accessibility still exist.

- **School B**

The boys at School B acknowledged the value of reading and the majority of them stated that they enjoy reading; they know that “those who read more, know more” (Krashen, 2004:35). This group said that boys get lazier about their academic work as they get older, which reinforces the idea that motivating younger learners to read is easier and a worthwhile investment. School B is a very sports- oriented school and this means that many of the boys are not left with enough free time in which to read. It was suggested that if the boys were forced to read more the ‘non-readers’ would begin to enjoy reading. Often these ‘non-readers’ enjoyed the reading programmes that were compulsory in Grades 8 and 9 because they did not feel intimidated by having to choose a book; books had already been chosen for them.

#### 6.6 Research Problems and Limitations

Many problems and setbacks arose while I was conducting my research. The problems often resulted in my research being limited in scope but did not prevent me from being able to effectively conduct my research. Many of the problems that arose were resolved and I was able to successfully collect all the data that would be needed to answer the three key questions that motivated me to conduct the research.

When approaching Principals for consent to conduct research (see appendix B - Letters to Principals requesting permission to conduct research) at their particular schools the response from the Principal of School C was delayed and I was unable to begin my research at this school until consent had been received. The Principal at School A was the only Principal who requested to meet with me before I began conducting my research. I appreciated this meeting because I was received with great enthusiasm and encouraged to conduct my research. With hindsight I should have requested an interview with each Principal to explain my research. If I had met

with the Principal from School C it might not have taken so long to receive consent to conduct research at this particular school.

Time constraints were a problematic and limiting factor for my research as I had restricted my research to the third term of the school year. This was a deliberate choice because I was aware of the pressure that learners and teachers would face during terms with scheduled exams. There are no exams in the third term and I was hopeful that teachers and learners would have more time and be open to participating in my research. The teachers' time constraints meant that my interviews had to be kept short and were often restricted to the duration of a lesson. The interviews with the Librarians were not as restricted by time but the group interviews with the learners had to be kept within a specific time frame to ensure that the learners did not miss any school or sporting commitments.

Parental consent for the learner group interviews was a time- consuming requirement (see appendix H - Letters to Parents/Guardians). The learners at Schools A and C were mostly boarders and at Schools B and D there were many day scholars who were involved in the group interviews. It was less problematic to collect consent forms from the parents/guardians of learners who were day scholars because they could take the letters requesting consent home for their parents to read and sign. Letters requesting consent were emailed to the parents/guardians of the learners who were boarders. Many of the parents/guardians were unable to print, scan and sign the letter and sent an email giving their consent instead. These emails and signed consent letters can be provided.

The learner group interview at School B had to be rescheduled because the two teachers from whose classes I was interviewing learners had forgotten to send their boys to the library during the original agreed- upon time slot. I met with these teachers and a new time slot was arranged for the following week. When this interview did eventually take place the boys from the one class were unable to attend because they had to write a test during that particular lesson. This meant that my interview with the boys from School B was limited because the six boys who participated in the interview were from the same class.

## 6.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the 12 interviews that were conducted during the third term of 2011 enabled me to answer the three key questions that I had identified before I began conducting my research.

The first question was:

- What is being done in schools, by librarians and teachers, to encourage reading amongst learners?

From the interviews that I conducted with the English HoDs and Librarians I was able to establish that the Librarians and English department at each school work collaboratively to encourage reading amongst the learners. This collaboration involves reading programmes that allow for the Librarians' expertise to be effectively utilised during the planning process of each programme, as the Librarians are responsible for choosing and sourcing the books that will be read during each reading programme.

The libraries are made available to the English teaching staff and their learners and English teachers are encouraged to bring their learners to the library and guide them in selecting a book to read before sitting down and reading it. The English teachers are also encouraged to read during these visits to the library. This behaviour demonstrated to the learners that reading is important and that these particular lessons in the library should be taken seriously.

In all four of the libraries displays were set up to advertise books and information about books was displayed because "visibility of new books is the key to increasing circulation" (Moyer, 2007:12). In both boys schools these displays were sports related because they were targeted at what interests the boys. Displays are a successful means of promoting reading because "students are more likely to checkout new books that are attractively displayed and easily located" (Moyer, 2007:12). A book is more accessible to a learner if it is displayed and if the learner does not have to actively search for the book there is less chance that he/she will give up trying to find that book and leave the library empty handed. Book reviews were also on offer to allow learners to read about the book they were interested in before borrowing the book from the library. Librarians do their best to ensure that technology is utilised in each library.

The libraries advertise new books on the school intranet and the girls at School C are encouraged to post reviews and comment on these new books on the intranet, in the hope that these comments will persuade other girls to read these new books.

All the teachers who were involved in these interviews reiterated the importance of involving the whole school in encouraging reading and explained that being supported by the managerial staff of the school was highly beneficial. School D is the only school that has a specific lesson scheduled within its weekly cycle that allowed for reading. A few of the other teachers mentioned that they would often set aside ten minutes at the start of a lesson to allow the learners to settle and read before beginning the English lesson. Learners were also encouraged to carry their reading books with them for these particular instances and to read during any lesson that they were able to finish their work early.

The second key question that was answered was:

- What are the teachers' perceptions and experiences of the reading programmes run at each school?

The Librarians put a huge amount of effort into the choosing of books for each reading programme. They acknowledged the difficulty in choosing books that would appeal to all the learners but agreed that the time and effort was well spent. The Librarian at School C perceived the Grade 8 and 10 reading programmes to be highly successful because the girls enjoyed the public recognition of prizes and certificates for their reading accomplishments. The competitive nature of the boys at School B was also utilised to encourage these boys to read by the English HoD. This teacher has experienced great difficulty in motivating boys to read and believes that it is easier to encourage girls to read. Her experiences contributed to those of the HoD and Librarian at School A.

At School A food was used as an incentive to encourage discussion in the library about books that had been included in the Grade 10 reading programme. The inclusion of food into this reading programme, as an incentive for the boys, brings to mind the idea of a "Book Bistro", as advocated by Kasten and Wilfong (2005). The Librarian perceived that if the boys were made to

feel comfortable and satisfied through food they would be more inclined to discuss the books that they had been reading within the reading programme openly. This idea is somewhat repeated by the library during the afternoons because the boys mentioned that there were often coffee and tea making facilities available for the boys. Unfortunately these comforts can only be afforded by an affluent school such as School A.

And finally the third key question that I was able to answer was:

- What are the Grade 10 learners' perceptions and experiences of the reading programmes run at each school?

The learners responded with mixed emotions to my enquiries about the reading programmes that they had experienced. The learners suggested that the teachers and librarians involve them in the process of choosing books for each reading programme because, they explained that the books selected for the reading programmes were of no interest to them, they were too thick or had boring covers and first chapters. As a result of this explanation I believe that it is necessary for English teachers to read the set books for English with learners, during class, because many learners would give up reading these set books after the first chapter and put themselves at a huge disadvantage. The four English HoDs who I interviewed can be commended for reading the English set books with their classes and for setting homework tasks that necessitate the reading of each set book.

Basically, learners "will read if the book is a good book, if the book is accessible, and if they can have some ownership in the selection" (Fisher and Lapp, 2009:559). The learners do, however, perceive the benefits of a reading programme and it was mentioned that many learners who would not normally read or enjoy reading did read and enjoy what they read because they were participating in a reading programme. The experience of being told what to read was appreciated by the many learners who considered themselves to be mediocre readers. The strong readers, who read fast, often perceived the reading programmes as a 'waste of time' because they have already established genre preferences and did not need to be encouraged to read since they read a lot.

The pressure associated with these reading programmes and the expectation that they should read a specific number of books did, however, mean that the learners would either start and not finish a book because of time constraints, or skim read the book for the gist and not read it thoroughly for enjoyment. This comment can be linked to the idea that adolescents have become accustomed to instant gratification. These experiences are compounded by the complaint at each school that the learners are not provided with enough time to read. The learners perceived that being forced to read could create resentment amongst learners who do not enjoy reading, but nonetheless they mentioned that even the learners who were considered to be 'non-readers' read during the reading programmes and often enjoyed at least one of the books that they had read.

In conclusion, the reading programmes at each school offer ideas that can be utilised in other schools that have not established reading programmes. The similarities between these programmes substantiates that what has been done has been tried and tested and found to be successful by both the Librarians and English teachers who promote these reading programmes.



## **Chapter Seven:**

### **Results and Discussion of the Learner Questionnaire**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The quantitative component of my research involved a multiple-choice questionnaire (see appendix F - Learner questionnaires) that was distributed to 50 Grade 10 learners at each school. The completed questionnaires were returned to me approximately two weeks after they had been distributed. Both private schools (A and C) returned 90% of the questionnaires and from the government schools (B and D) 88% of the questionnaires were returned. In total 172 questionnaires were completed and returned. The results of this questionnaire were counted and tabulated and this table is presented and discussed within this chapter. Following this discussion 10 graphs that were made using statistical software are provided and discussed. These graphs visually represent the results of the questionnaires at each school.

#### **7.2 Tabulated Results of the Questionnaire**

This questionnaire consisted of eleven questions. For each question the learners were instructed to choose either option A, B, C or D as the answer to the question. The number of learners that chose each option for questions one to eleven was counted and is visually presented in the tables below. Each school has its own table to represent the results attained through this questionnaire. For some questions more than one option was chosen and some learners left certain questions blank. For questions one, five, eight and eleven learners could only choose option A or B. For questions six and nine learners could only choose from options A, B or C. For questions two, three, four, seven and ten learners chose from all four options: A, B, C or D.

### School A

45 questionnaires returned. 90%

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
A	31	10	37	24	41	20	20	42	41	22	21
B	14	25	4	32	4	1	12	3	2	19	23
C		9	34	6		24	7		2	4	
D		1	14	6			8			3	

At School A 31 boys chose option A: yes, 14 boys chose option B: no, in response to question one: Do you enjoy reading?

For question two: How many books do you read in a term? 10 boys chose option A: 0, 25 boys chose option B: 2-3, 9 boys chose option C: 4-6, and 1 boy chose option D: 7+.

Question three asked: what do you enjoy doing in your free time? 37 boys chose option A: sport, 4 boys chose option B: reading, 34 chose option C: hanging out with friends, and 14 boys chose option D: games (Playstation, Xbox, Nintendo).

For question four: what do you enjoy reading? 24 boys chose option A: popular novels, 32 boys chose option B: magazines, 6 chose option C: comics and graphic novels, and 6 chose option D: e-books.

Question five asked: does your English teacher encourage you to read? 41 boys option A: yes and 4 chose option B: no.

For question six: do you read the set books that you get examined on in English? 20 boys chose option A: yes, 1 boy chose option B: no, and 24 boys chose option C: only when we read them in class together with our English teacher.

Question seven asked: do you take books out of the library and read them in your free time? 20 boys chose option A: yes, 12 boys chose option B: no, 7 boys chose option C: I would if I had more time, and 8 boys chose option D: I take books out but do not always read them.

Question eight asked: do your parents or siblings read books? 42 chose option A: yes, and 3 chose option B: no.

For question nine: do you think it is important to read and be well read? 41 boys chose option A: yes, 2 boys chose option B: no, and 2 boys chose option C: it depends on what job you want to do when you finish school.

For question ten: would you read more if you were able to? 22 boys chose option A: yes, I like reading I just do not have enough time to read. 19 boys chose option B: yes, if I were able to find more books that I like I would read more, 4 boys chose option C: yes, if I could read e-books on my cellphone I would read more. 3 boys chose option D: no, reading is boring, for question ten.

Lastly, 21 boys chose option A: yes, I read and enjoy most of the books in the programme, and 23 boys chose option B: no, I do not enjoy the Grade 10 reading programme. These options were made in response to question eleven: do you enjoy the Grade 10 reading programme that is run by your library?

### School B

44 questionnaires returned. 88%

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
A	34	7	23	29	42	33	22	36	36	18	9
B	10	22	6	19	2	3	8	7	3	17	21
C		8	22	5		9	5		3	5	
D		7	10	4			11			6	

At School B 34 boys chose option A: yes, 10 boys chose option B: no, in response to question one: Do you enjoy reading?

For question two: How many books do you read in a term? 7 boys chose option A: 0, 22 boys chose option B: 2-3, 8 boys chose option C: 4-6, and 7 boys chose option D: 7+.

Question three asked: what do you enjoy doing in your free time? 23 boys chose option A: sport, 6 boys chose option B: reading, 22 chose option C: hanging out with friends, and 10 boys chose option D: games (Playstation, Xbox, Nintendo).

For question four: what do you enjoy reading? 29 boys chose option A: popular novels, 19 boys chose option B: magazines, 5 chose option C: comics and graphic novels, and 4 chose option D: e-books.

Question five asked: does your English teacher encourage you to read? 42 boys option A: yes and 2 chose option B: no.

For question six: do you read the set books that you get examined on in English? 33 boys chose option A: yes, 3 boys chose option B: no, and 9 boys chose option C: only when we read them in class together with our English teacher.

Question seven asked: do you take books out of the library and read them in your free time? 22 boys chose option A: yes, 8 boys chose option B: no, 5 boys chose option C: I would if I had more time, and 11 boys chose option D: I take books out but do not always read them.

Question eight asked: do your parents or siblings read books? 36 chose option A: yes, and 7 chose option B: no.

For question nine: do you think it is important to read and be well read? 36 boys chose option A: yes, 3 boys chose option B: no, and 3 boys chose option C: it depends on what job you want to do when you finish school.

For question ten: would you read more if you were able to? 18 boys chose option A: yes, I like reading I just do not have enough time to read. 17 boys chose option B: yes, if I were able to find more books that I like I would read more, 5 boys chose option C: yes, if I could read e-books on my cellphone I would read more. 6 boys chose option D: no, reading is boring, for question ten.

School B does not have a specific reading programme for Grade 10 so I have chosen to ignore the results of question eleven for School B.

### School C

45 questionnaires returned. 90%

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
A	35	4	23	34	43	35	24	40	41	36	29
B	10	23	12	23	1	1	3	6	2	5	16
C		15	34			11	13		2	1	
D		3	1				6			5	

At School A 35 girls chose option A: yes, 10 girls chose option B: no, in response to question one: Do you enjoy reading?

For question two: How many books do you read in a term? 4 girls chose option A: 0, 23 girls chose option B: 2-3, 15 girls chose option C: 4-6, and 3 girls chose option D: 7+.

Question three asked: what do you enjoy doing in your free time? 23 girls chose option A: sport, 12 girls chose option B: reading, 34 chose option C: hanging out with friends, and 1 girl chose option D: games (Playstation, Xbox, Nintendo).

For question four: what do you enjoy reading? 34 girls chose option A: popular novels, 23 girls chose option B: magazines, no girls chose option C: comics and graphic novels or option D: e-books.

Question five asked: does your English teacher encourage you to read? 43 girls option A: yes and 1 chose option B: no.

For question six: do you read the set books that you get examined on in English? 35 girls chose option A: yes, 1 girl chose option B: no, and 11 girls chose option C: only when we read them in class together with our English teacher.

Question seven asked: do you take books out of the library and read them in your free time? 24 girls chose option A: yes, 3 girls chose option B: no, 13 girls chose option C: I would if I had more time, and 6 girls chose option D: I take books out but do not always read them.

Question eight asked: do your parents or siblings read books? 40 chose option A: yes, and 6 chose option B: no.

For question nine: do you think it is important to read and be well read? 41 girls chose option A: yes, 2 girls chose option B: no, and 2 girls chose option C: it depends on what job you want to do when you finish school.

For question ten: would you read more if you were able to? 36 girls chose option A: yes, I like reading I just do not have enough time to read. 5 girls chose option B: yes, if I were able to find more books that I like I would read more, 1 girl chose option C: yes, if I could read e-books on my cellphone I would read more. 5 girls chose option D: no, reading is boring, for question ten.

Lastly, 29 girls chose option A: yes, I read and enjoy most of the books in the programme, and 16 girls chose option B: no, I do not enjoy the Grade 10 reading programme. These options were made in response to question eleven: do you enjoy the Grade 10 reading programme that is run by your library?

### School D

44 questionnaires returned. 88%

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
A	30	9	16	25	40	16	22	28	39	19	24
B	13	20	7	22	3	2	8	15		21	17
C		10	26	4		26	5		3	2	
D		4	5				8			1	

At School A 30 girls chose option A: yes, 13 girls chose option B: no, in response to question one: Do you enjoy reading?

For question two: How many books do you read in a term? 9 girls chose option A: 0, 20 girls chose option B: 2-3, 10 girls chose option C: 4-6, and 4 girls chose option D: 7+.

Question three asked: what do you enjoy doing in your free time? 16 girls chose option A: sport, 7 girls chose option B: reading, 26 chose option C: hanging out with friends, and 5 girls chose option D: games (Playstation, Xbox, Nintendo).

For question four: what do you enjoy reading? 25 girls chose option A: popular novels, 22 girls chose option B: magazines, 4 chose option C: comics and graphic novels, and none of the girls chose option D: e-books.

Question five asked: does your English teacher encourage you to read? 40 girls option A: yes and 3 chose option B: no.

For question six: do you read the set books that you get examined on in English? 16 girls chose option A: yes, 2 girls chose option B: no, and 26 girls chose option C: only when we read them in class together with our English teacher.



Question seven asked: do you take books out of the library and read them in your free time? 22 girls chose option A: yes, 8 girls chose option B: no, 5 girls chose option C: I would if I had more time, and 8 girls chose option D: I take books out but do not always read them.

Question eight asked: do your parents or siblings read books? 28 chose option A: yes, and 15 chose option B: no.

For question nine: do you think it is important to read and be well read? 39 girls chose option A: yes, no girls chose option B: no, and 3 girls chose option C: it depends on what job you want to do when you finish school.

For question ten: would you read more if you were able to? 19 girls chose option A: yes, I like reading I just do not have enough time to read. 21 girls chose option B: yes, if I were able to find more books that I like I would read more, 2 girls chose option C: yes, if I could read e-books on my cellphone I would read more. 1 girls chose option D: no, reading is boring, for question ten.

School D does not have a specific reading programme for Grade 10 so I have chosen to ignore the results of question eleven for School D.

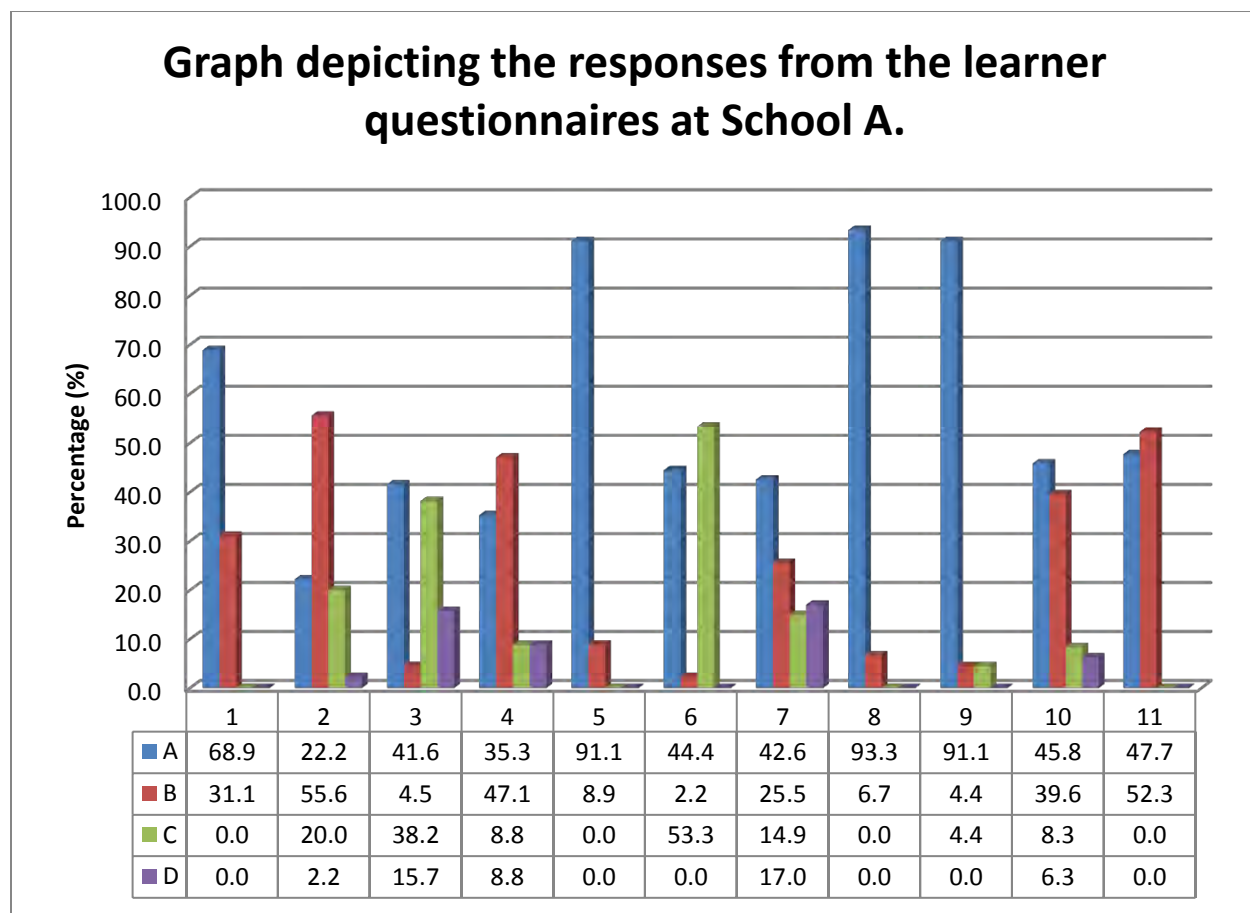
### 7.3 Results of the Learner Questionnaire

Following the tabulation of the data captured through the learner questionnaire, graphs that visually depict this data were formulated. These graphs are presented below and accompanied by a discussion of each graph.

The first 4 graphs presented below each visually represent the results of the learner questionnaire at each school. Accompanying these 4 graphs is a table, situated below the graph that acts as a key for the graph above. There were 11 questions in this questionnaire and the answers were presented themselves as either option A, B, C or D. The number of learners who chose option A for each question is represented by the colour blue. Option B is presented as red, option C as green and option D as purple. The numbers included in the table are percentages of learners that chose each option for each question. These percentages include one decimal place and are rounded off to the nearest whole number when discussed.

Graph 5 visually represents the results from all four schools whilst Graphs 6 and 7 compare the results at boys' schools and at both girls' schools. Graphs 8 and 9 represent the average responses from all the girls and all the boys who answered the questionnaire. These graphs are also accompanied by a table that serves as a key to the graph and offers the results to each question as a percentage. During the discussion of these two graphs the percentages have also been rounded off to the nearest whole number. Finally, Graph 10 compares the results from the boys with the answers given by the girls.

**Graph 1**



At school A 69% of the boys said they enjoy reading in response to question one. Despite this large percentage who claims to enjoy reading only 2% of the boys read seven or more books in a term for question two: “How many books do you read in a term?” The majority of the boys claimed to read 2-3 books in a term. The 22% who admitted to not reading any books in question two corresponds with the 31% who do not enjoy reading. The boys had multiple responses for question three: “What do you enjoy doing in your free time?” These responses served to indicate and confirm how busy these boys are kept at a full time boarding school. As I anticipated, the majority of the boys (42%) were kept occupied with sport. This anticipation was fuelled by the data obtained through my interviews with the English HoDs and Librarians. Option C: “Hanging out with friends”, was also a popular choice for question three as reflected in the 38% of the boys answering that their free time was spent hanging out with their friends. Almost half (47%) of the boys acknowledged that they enjoy reading magazines for question

four: "What do you enjoy reading?" The library at school A stocks a wide selection of magazines that would appeal to boys, most of these magazines are sports related. E-books are a reality at this particular school and I was surprised that only 9% of the boys answered that they enjoy reading e-books. This result, I believe, corresponds to the comment made by the English HoD at School A that technology has gimmick value. This comment implies that initially e-books would have been a novel idea for the boys but over time the interest has lessened and as a result they are not as popular as they would have been when they were a new development.

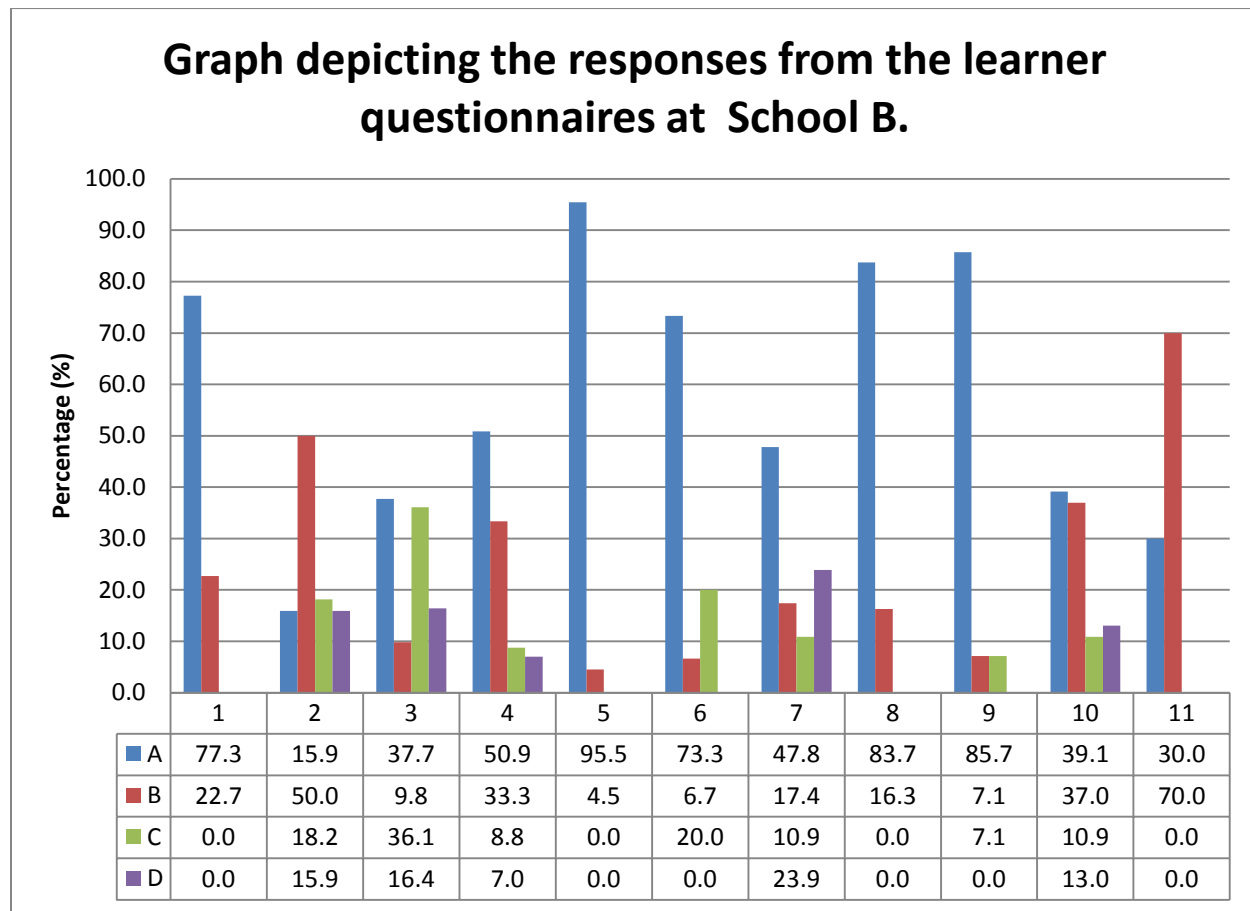
I was very pleased by the 91% who acknowledged that their English teacher encourages them to read for question five: "Does your English teacher encourage you to read?" This large percentage correlated with the results of question six: "Do you read the set books that you get examined on in English?" More than half (53%) of the boys admitted that they only read their English set books when they were read in class with their English teachers. This result implies that over half of the boys questioned do not or would not read their set books if their English teacher did not read these books with them in class. A praiseworthy result was the 43% of the boys who answered that they do take books out of the library and read them in response to question seven. The 4% who said they read during their free time in question three confirmed that 15% of the boys would take books out of the library and read them if they had more time. Some 17% of the boys admitted that they take books out of the library but do not always read them, and an obvious reason for this could be a lack of time. If the boys were allocated more time to read the results of question three would possibly be altered.

I was surprised by the large percentage (93%) of boys who said that their parents or siblings read in response to question eight. This confirms that many of these boys have unrestricted access to reading materials; yet only 9% of these boys read e-books. The majority of these boys appear to have been brought up in homes where there was a strong reading culture and one would think that more of these boys would enjoy reading given their backgrounds. One boy during the group interview at School A mentioned that his parents and siblings all read on Kindles and there were not many books in their house. This fact, as mentioned by the learner, illustrates that many of these boys come from high-income backgrounds and this further

substantiates the likelihood that reading materials are highly accessible to these boys. This information also leads to the larger question: are electronic reading devices replacing books?

Almost all (91%) of the boys answered that it was important to read and be well read in response to question nine. I would have hoped that more boys would read and enjoy reading if they are able to acknowledge how beneficial reading is. I was motivated by the 40% who replied that they would read more if they were able to find books that they would enjoy reading in response to question ten. This result is positive and can easily be addressed by both librarians and English teachers. The question regarding the Grade 10 reading programme for School A was met with relatively equal responses; 48% of the boys said they enjoyed the reading programme whilst 52% admitted to not enjoying the Grade 10 reading programme.

Graph 2



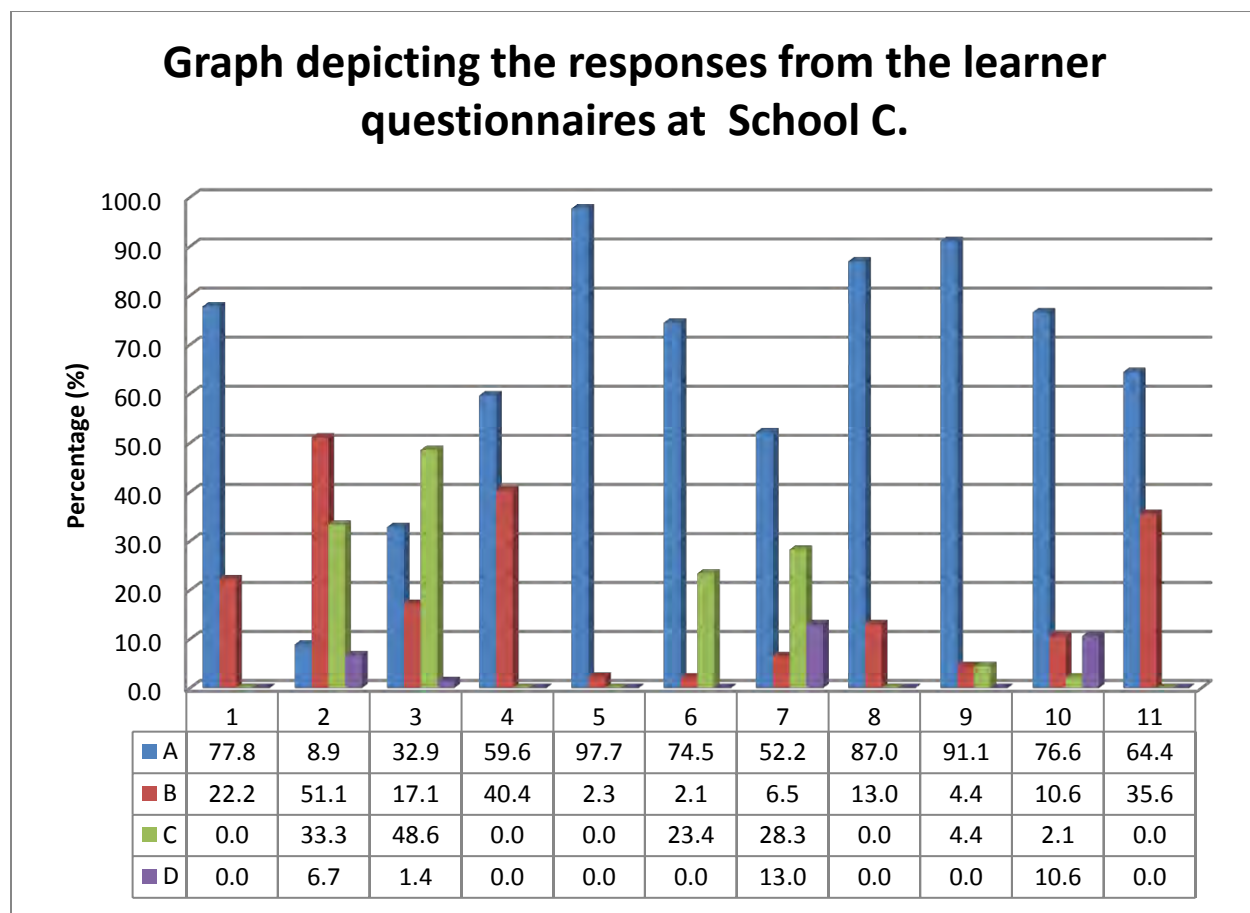
At school B 77% of the boys answered that they enjoyed reading in response to question one. To confirm this large percentage 16% of the boys claimed to read more than seven books in a term whilst the most popular answer for question two: “How many books do you read in a term?” was option B with 50% of the boys answering that they read 2 or 3 books in a term. Option A: “Sport”, and C: “Hanging out with friends”, were again popular choices for question three: “What do you enjoy doing in your free time?” As expected the most popular option was sport. At School B the boys are expected to participate in sporting activities, thus it is not surprising that only 10% of the boys acknowledged that they enjoy reading in their free time for question three. The majority (51%) answered that they enjoy reading popular novels whilst magazines came in second with 33% in response to question four: “What do you enjoy reading?” I was surprised that comic books and graphic novels are not the preferred choice in this particular school because the boys who attend School B come from varying socio-economic

backgrounds. School B is a government school and comic books are often cheap and easily accessible texts, they are also quick-reads and I would think that for these reasons they would appeal to boys who are under time constraints.

The 95% who agreed that their English teachers motivated them to read in response to question five: "Does your English teacher encourage you to read?" was an encouraging and believable statistic because the English HoD at this particular school is a very hands-on teacher who reads young adult literature herself, as was demonstrated in my interview with her. I was impressed by the 73% who said they read their English set books in response to question six. I do suspect, though, that a large number of the boys who said they read the set books meant that they read them in class with their teachers and not on their own. Whilst only 10% of the boys said they read during their free time 48% of the boys who answered the questionnaire replied to question seven: "Do you take books out of the library and read them in your free time?" positively and agreed that they take books out of the library and read them. If only 10% admit to reading in their free time then when do the remaining 38% who take books out the library manage to read them? This result does illustrate that if the boys who are taking books out the library and reading them they are making time during school to read because only 10% read during their free time. This was a significant disparity and it leads me to suspect that although 48% of the boys do take books out of the library many of these books remain unread, despite their good intentions.

Many (84%) of the boys attested to their parents or siblings reading books, this was a comforting result to question eight. I was disheartened that although 86% of the boys agreed that reading is important, it is still an unpopular choice of activity for the boys during their free time in response to question three. Their highly structured school day prevents many of these boys from reading more because they simply do not have the time to do so. This was demonstrated through the results relating to question ten: "Would you read more if you were able to?" as 39% of the boys answered that they would read more if they had more time. Another variable that discourages boys from reading is not being able to find suitable books to read.

**Graph 3**



At School C 78% of the girls said they enjoyed reading and 22% said they did not enjoy reading for question one. Only 9% of the girls admitted that they do not read any books in a term whilst the majority claimed that they read between 2-3 books in a term. I was alarmed that only 17% of the girls answered that they read during their free time. I had expected this number to be higher at an all girls' school because of the stereotypes that had been identified in the English HoD and Librarian interviews. Nearly half (49%) of the girls spend their free time with their friends and 33% spend their time playing sport. As I expected this percentage was lower than the percentages for the same question at both boys' schools. This result substantiates the assumption that more time is dedicated to sport in a boys' school. A large proportion (60%) of the girls answered that they read popular novels in response to question four: "What do you enjoy reading?" Magazines are the other popular choice of reading material (40%) whilst comic books, graphic novels and e-books did not feature at all. I was surprised by this result because



School C is a private school and many of the girls who attend this school have cellphones with the capacity to download e-books. The Librarian at School C is also very technologically competent and aims to incorporate technology into most aspects of the library in accordance with the idea that a school library should be “a hub for collaboration, leadership, and technology” (Jurkowski, 2006:78).

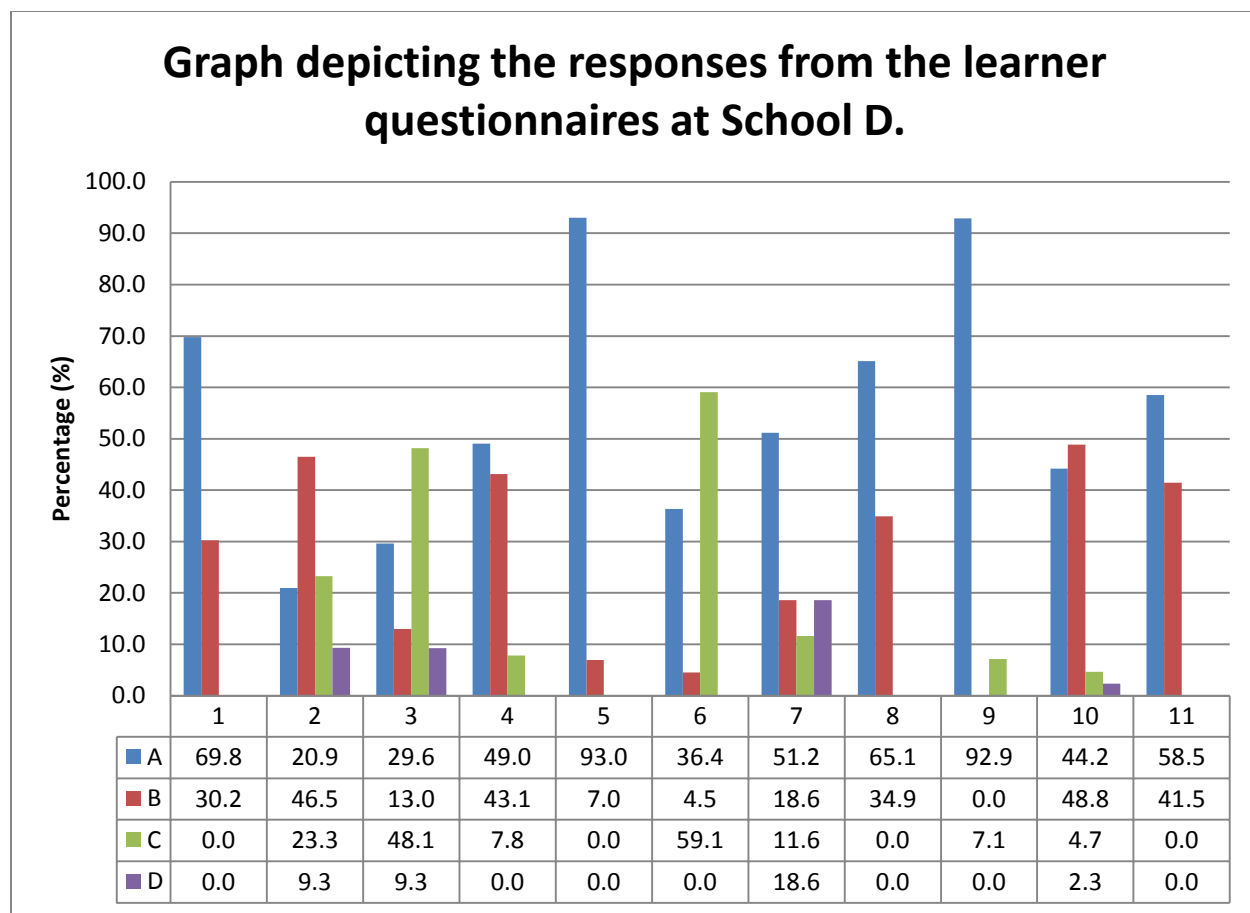
Nearly all (98%) of the girls confirmed that their English teachers encouraged them to read in response to question five. This answer correlates with the 74% that said they take books out of the library and read them in response to question seven. None of the girls admitted to taking books out and not reading them and only 23% said they would take books out and read them if they had more time. It was obvious that in this school more time is dedicated to reading and this school prides itself on having a strong reading culture and high academic standards, as revealed in the discussions with the English HoD and Librarian.

Many (87%) of the girls replied that their parents or siblings read books in response to question eight. Another promising statistic was the 91% who know it is important to read and be well read in response to question nine. The Grade 10 reading programme at School C was well received by 64% of the girls who said that they enjoyed the programme and read most of the books that were included in the programme. This result for question eleven corresponds to what was discussed by the girls in their group interview because the majority involved in the interview reassured me that they had enjoyed the reading programme. Just over a third (36%) of the girls who answered the questionnaire responded negatively to the reading programme. This negative result can be linked to the suggestions that were made by the girls during the group interview, including choosing books with more appealing book covers and allowing the girls to be involved in the process of selecting these books.

My learner group interview with the girls from School C reiterated many of the answers gathered from the questionnaires that were distributed at School C and served to further validate the results of my study. An English teacher at School C handed twelve questionnaires to 12 girls in Grade 11 instead of Grade 10 girls. These girls were able to reflect on their Grade 10 reading programme and 11 of the 12 girls (92%) said that they enjoyed reading. The girl who

said she did not enjoy reading answered that she would read more if she could find more books that she enjoyed reading and that she would take books out the library and read them if she had more time. This girl also stated that she had enjoyed the Grade 10 reading programme despite not enjoying reading. From this declaration I can assume that the reading programmes at this particular school can be commended for alerting resistant readers to the benefits and necessity of reading. This group of Grade 11 girls all said that their English teacher still encourages them to read which was expected because English teachers should model their passion for literature as a means of encouraging reading (Powell-Brown, 2006).

**Graph 4**

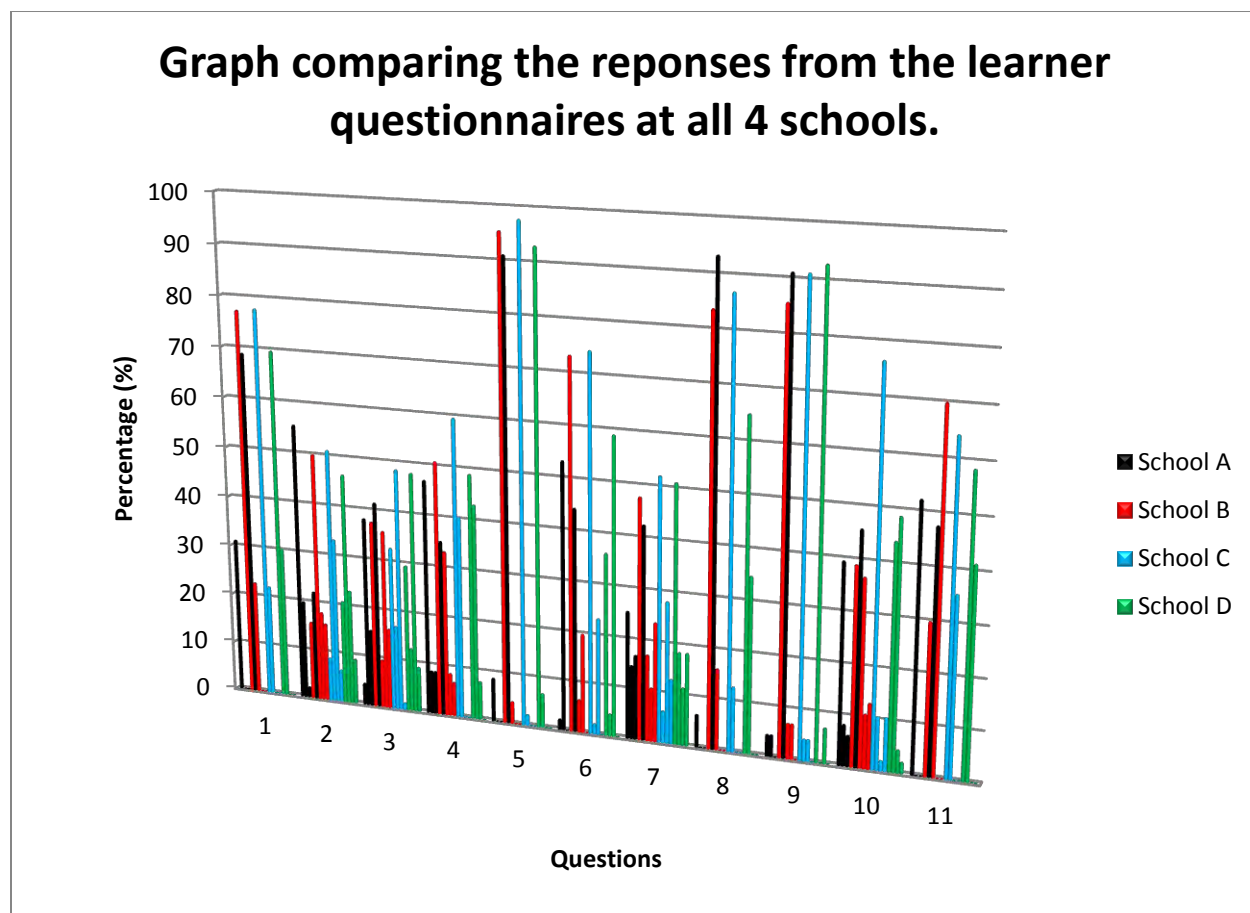


At School D 70% of the girls responded positively to question one by stating that they enjoyed reading. Nearly half (47%) of the girls chose option B for question two reflecting that they read 2-3 books in a term for question two. Only 9% said that they read 7 or more books in a term. Option C: “Hanging out with friends”, was the most popular choice for question three: “What do you enjoy doing in your free time?” with 48% of the girls agreeing that they spent their free time with their friends. Sport was the second most appealing option for the girls with 30% acknowledging that they spend their free time playing sport. Popular novels were read by 49% of the girls and magazines are read by 43% of the girls for question four. The English HoD at School D does not encourage or allow the girls to read magazines during their reading periods and lessons in the library. I was impressed by the 93% who said their English teacher encouraged them to read in response to question five. The 36% who claimed that they read their English set books was another praiseworthy result for question six: “Do you read the set

books that you get examined on in English?” More than half (59%) of the girls answered that they only read the set books when they are read in class with their English teacher and 5% said they did not read their English set books, at all, in response to question six.

Nearly two thirds (65%) of the girls replied that their parents or siblings read and 35% said they did not in response to question eight. The 70% who affirmed their enjoyment of reading could be as a result of answers attained in response to question eight because these percentages are similar. Both the English HoD and Librarian at the school acknowledged the influence that positive reading role models have on the girls and that a girl who came from a home with a positive reading culture was often a reader herself. I am, however, concerned that despite 70% of the girls replying that they enjoy reading only 59% of them read their English set books and this reading is not done independently, it is done in class with the teacher. This implies that the girls do not enjoy reading their set books but do enjoy reading other books. Most (93%) of the girls think it is important to be well read. This answer could be a result of the fact that 93% of the girls said their English teachers encourages them to read. These percentages are the same and this is noteworthy because the encouragement given to the girls to read allows them to acknowledge the importance of reading, their English teachers have obviously reiterated this importance. The answers to question ten: “Would you read more if you were able to?” revealed that 44% of the girl like to read but do not have the time to read and 49% of the girls would read more if they were able to find books to read that are more appealing. These are positive answers that can be addressed by the English teachers and Librarian at School D.

**Graph 5**



Certain trends can be deduced from this graph which displays the results to the questionnaire from all four schools. The most notable result is that of the responses to question five. At all four schools over 90% of the learners declared that their English teachers encourage them to read. This reassuring statistic shows that many English teachers do participate, encourage and interact with their learners in terms of reading. This result also corresponds to the enthusiastic answers I received from learners during the group interviews as each group explained the efforts undertaken by their English teachers in a bid to encourage them to read. Despite this encouragement a significant number of learners from each school admitted to not enjoying reading during the interviews. Another statistic that is worth mentioning were the responses from question one. The average response for question one, which examined the learners' enjoyment of reading, was 74%. Half (50%) of the learners from all four schools had multiple responses for many of the questions because they were instructed to choose the answers that

best suited them. Question three: “What do you enjoy doing in your free time?” yielded the most responses, 274, at each school and these responses indicated that many learners have more than one interest outside of school. The most popular of these activities being option C: “Hanging out with friends”, for both girls’ schools, and option A: “Sport”, for both boys’ schools. This response from the boys justifies what had been said by both librarians and English HoDs at each school about the popularity of and priority given to sport at each school. I believe that this response was to be expected from a group of learners who are between the ages of 15 and 17. My belief is confirmed by Powell-Brown who explains that “the lure of friends and outdoor activities leaves barely enough time for homework, let alone recreational reading” (2006:85). Recreational reading can be defined as the reading that a learner can do independently in his/her free time. Reading was option B for question three and on average only 11% answered that they would spend their free time reading, which is interesting given that 74% said they enjoy reading. They obviously do not enjoy reading enough for it to be an activity that they would devote their free time to. Also, if the percentage is this low from four elite and well-resourced schools then I am concerned to think of what the percentage would be from an under- resourced school.

Of the 47 learners who do not enjoy reading, both boys and girls, 16 answered that they read no books in a term and 5 answered that they read 1 book; the rest read 2-3 books despite not enjoying reading. 96 of the learners, both boys and girls, admitted to reading magazines. As anticipated mostly boys, 11, answered that they read comic books and graphic novels and only 4 girls said they read comics and graphic novels. These results confirmed the assertion that boys are more stimulated by visual texts as was explored by Gambell and Hunter (1999).

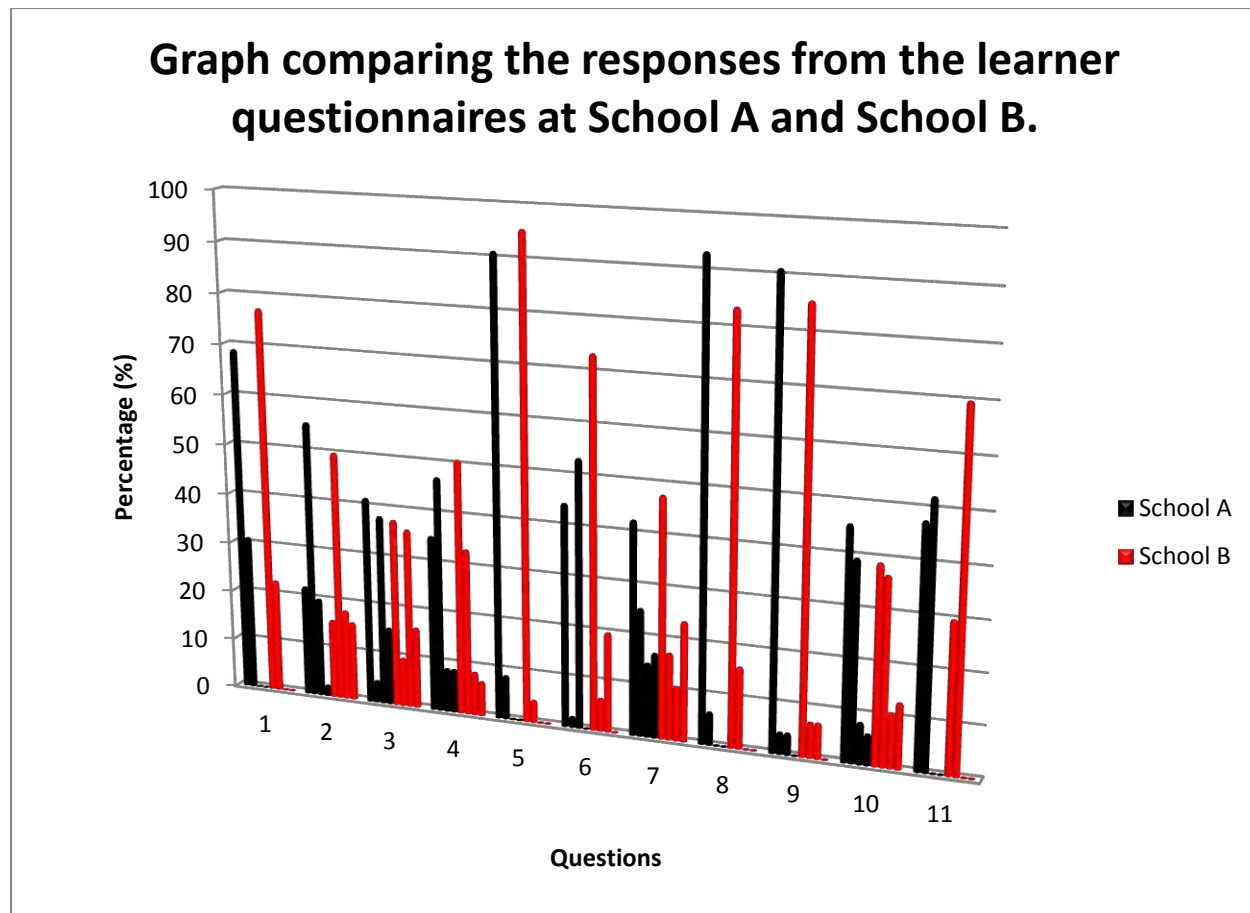
Question nine: “Do you think it is important to read and be well read?” yielded an encouraging result with the most popular choice at all four schools being option A: “Yes”. 157 learners were able to recognise and acknowledge the value of reading but 149 learners were still hesitant to spend their free time reading. Interestingly, 157 of the learners at all four schools answered question ten: “Would you read more if you were able to?” positively. These answers were a

good indication that the learners are interested and willing to read more provided that more time is made available to do so and they are able to find books that appeal to them or have been recommended by the teachers, librarian or peers. Unfortunately 21 learners feel that they do not have enough time to read, and are not exposed to enough literature that they enjoy reading. In the group interviews that I conducted with learners from each school it clearly emerged that the learners wanted to read, but lacked the time to do so. Learners want to be able to choose what they read and they want to choose from reading materials that interests them personally. The tension that I was able to discern through these interviews brought to mind Lenter's observation that:

Just as students are entering a time of life when increased autonomy is their desire, they simultaneously enter an instructional space where they have little or no choice in their school-based reading. When twin adolescent desires for agency (tied to identity) and social interaction come up against secondary school pedagogy, the burgeoning of resistance to in-school reading may not be coincidental (2006:139).

Question eleven asked: "Do you enjoy the Grade 10 reading programme that is run by your library?" At school A 21 boys admitted to enjoying the reading programme that is currently in place and 23 said they did not enjoy the reading programme. This result corresponds to the stereotypical ideas that reading programmes are unappealing to many boys (Gambell and Hunter, 1999). This stereotype was confirmed by the Librarian and HoD at School A. Furthermore, in an investigation conducted by Gambell and Hunter (1999) it was found that "more female than male students reported being good or very good readers. Similarly, more females than males indicated that they enjoy, or sometimes enjoy, reading and writing" (1999:3). These findings were compounded by the result that "more females than males read for enjoyment out of school; males were more apt to read for information or to learn how to do something" (Gambell and Hunter, 1999:4). It is not surprising that this stereotype exists given the research that has been done. The learners were only in partial agreement with this stereotype when I mentioned it during the group interviews. They argued that reading is a personal choice and not gender based. Many of the girls in each interview confirmed that some of their brothers read and the boys were quick to mention that not all their sisters read.

**Graph 6**



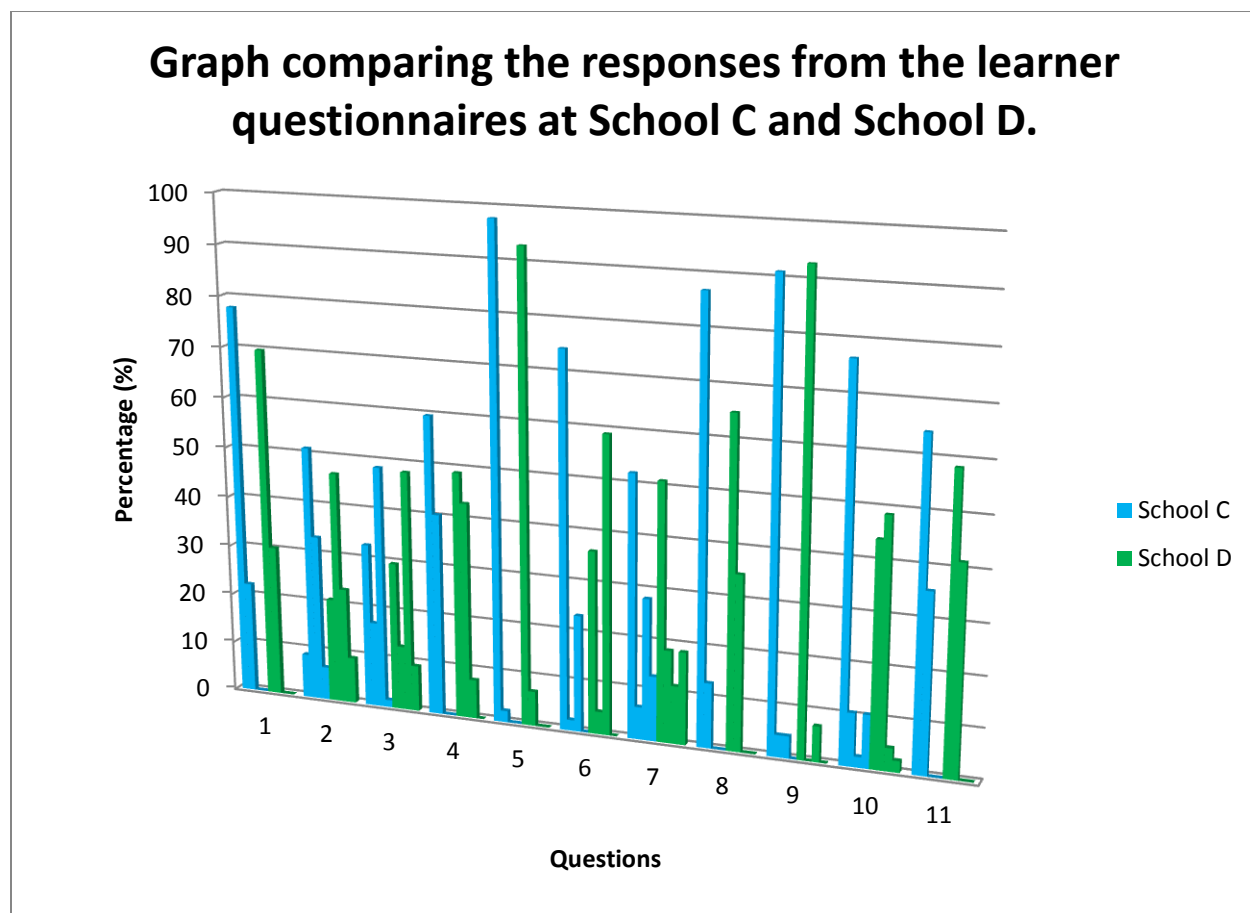
This graph compares the results from both boys' schools. It can be seen that more boys at School B enjoy reading. The results for question three: "What do you enjoy doing in your free time?" were very similar with boys from both schools choosing option A: "Sport", and option C: "Hanging out with friends", as the most popular answers. More boys (51%) at School A enjoyed reading popular novels and more boys (47%) at School B enjoyed reading magazines, as indicated by the answers to question four: "What do you enjoy reading?" Some 73% of the boys at School B said they read their set books whilst the majority (53%) at School A read their set books in class with their English teachers. The responses to question seven: "Do you take books out of the library and read them in your free time?" were again quite similar with 43% at School A and 48% at School B answering positively. Only 17% at School B said they do not take books out of the library to read compared to the 26% at School A that conceded they do not take books out of the library. This means that a quarter of the boys that answered this questionnaire



do not utilise their school library, illustrating that School A needs to foreground library- related activities. With regard to question eight most boys (93%) answered that their parents or siblings read in comparison to the 84% at School B. Option D: “No, reading is boring”, was chosen by 13% at School B and 6% at School A when the boys were questioned on whether they would read more if they were able to. Reading e-books was surprisingly not a popular answer for question ten with 8% at School A and 11% at School B replying that they would read more if they could read e-books on their cellphones. The boys at School A were not questioned about their usage of the Kindles in their library and this low percentage could be accounted for by the boys who read electronic books on the Kindle instead of their cellphones

School A is a private school whilst School B is a government school. When the results from both schools are compared it becomes obvious that the boys at School A are afforded more luxuries at school and have greater access to technology and other resources. The boys at School A are not competitive like the boys at School B and therefore competitions to encourage reading were less effective. Also, boarding is compulsory at School A whereas it was not at School B, even though there were many boarders at this particular school. At a full- time boarding school the teaching staff are required to assume more holistic roles as the learners’ parents are absent in these situations. Many of the boys from both schools believe that more guidance should be given or suggestions made to the boys by both the librarians and English teachers about what books to read. This belief could be the result of a lack of guidance offered to these boys by their parents.

**Graph 7**



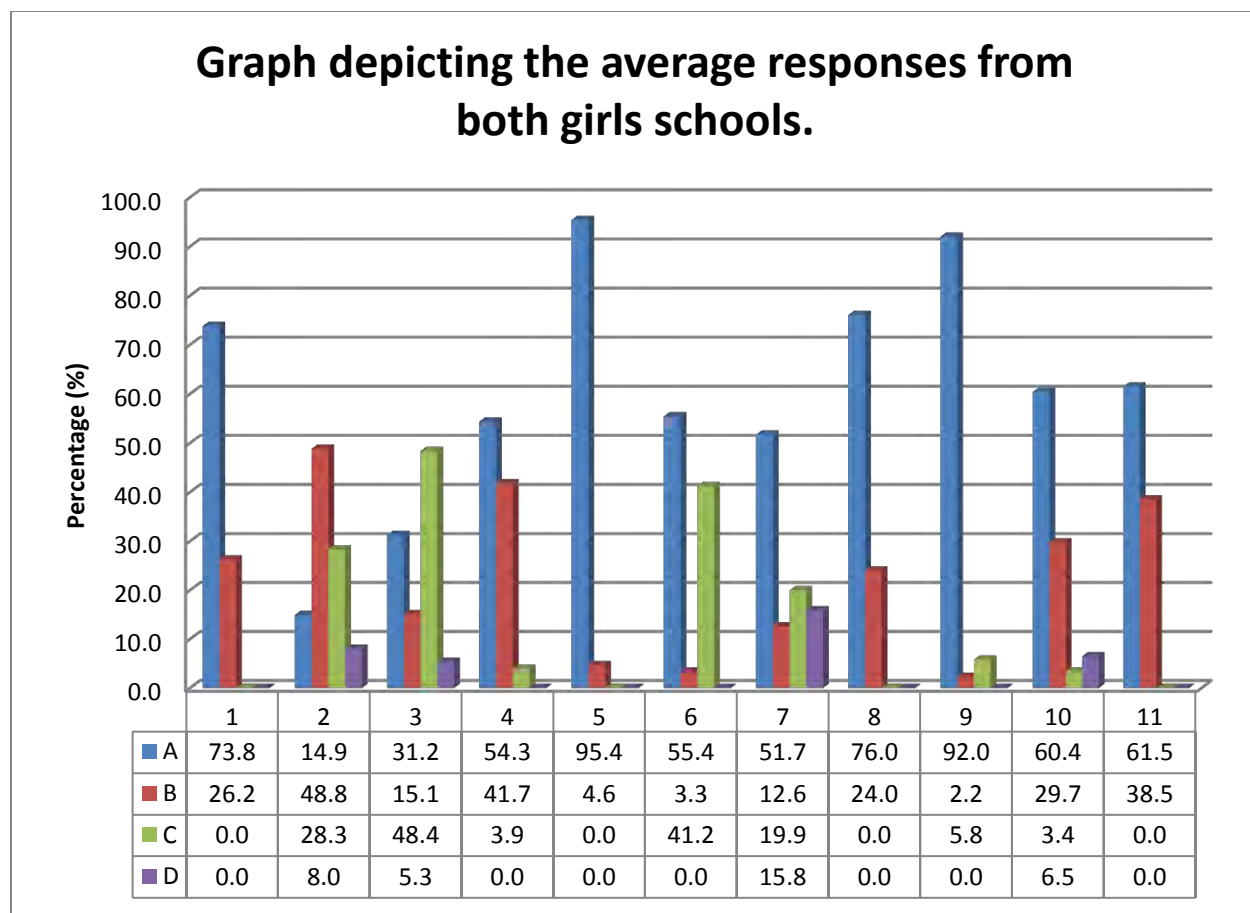
This graph compares the results from both girls' schools. It can be seen that more girls (78%) in School C enjoyed reading. Over a fifth (21%) of the girls at School D admitted that they did not read any books in a term, whilst only 9% of the girls said they do not read any books in a term for question two. At both schools option B: "2-3", was the preferred answer to question two with 51% at School C and 47% at School D. The results for question three were relatively similar at both schools. These responses indicated that girls at private and government schools share common interests and spend the majority of their free time with their friends. For question four: "What do you enjoy reading?" none of the girls said they enjoyed reading e-books on their cellphones and option A: "popular novels" was the most widely chosen answer with 60% at School C and 49% at School D. The replies to question six: "Do you read the set books that you get examined on in English?" were alarmingly different with 74% of the girls at School C confirming that they read their English set books, whilst only 36% at School D chose this option

for question six. At school D more girls (59%) said that they read their set books with their English teachers in class. Fewer girls (7%) at School C answered that they did not take books out of the library to read in comparison with the 19% at School D. Significantly more girls (87%) at School C revealed that their parents or siblings read as opposed to the 65% at School D. None of the girls at School D thought it was not important to read and be well read for question nine but 4% of the girls at School C chose this option for question nine. For question ten: "Would you read more if you were able to?" more girls (77%) at School C confirmed that they enjoyed reading but did not have enough time to read whilst more girls (49%) at School D said that they enjoyed reading but were unable to find more books that they would enjoyed reading. A few (11%) of the girls at School D chose option D: "No, reading is boring" for question ten and only 2% at School D chose this option.

School C is a private school whilst School D is a government school and when the results from each school were compared it became apparent that the girls at School C could afford to pay the R200 for the Grade 10 reading programme. The girls at School D came from varying socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and many of their parents would not be able to afford to pay any extra money for a reading programme. This places the girls at School D in a disadvantaged position despite the large, well- stocked library at their school.

My learner group interviews with the girls from School C and School D reiterated many of the answers gathered from the questionnaires that were distributed at these schools and served to further validate the results of my study.

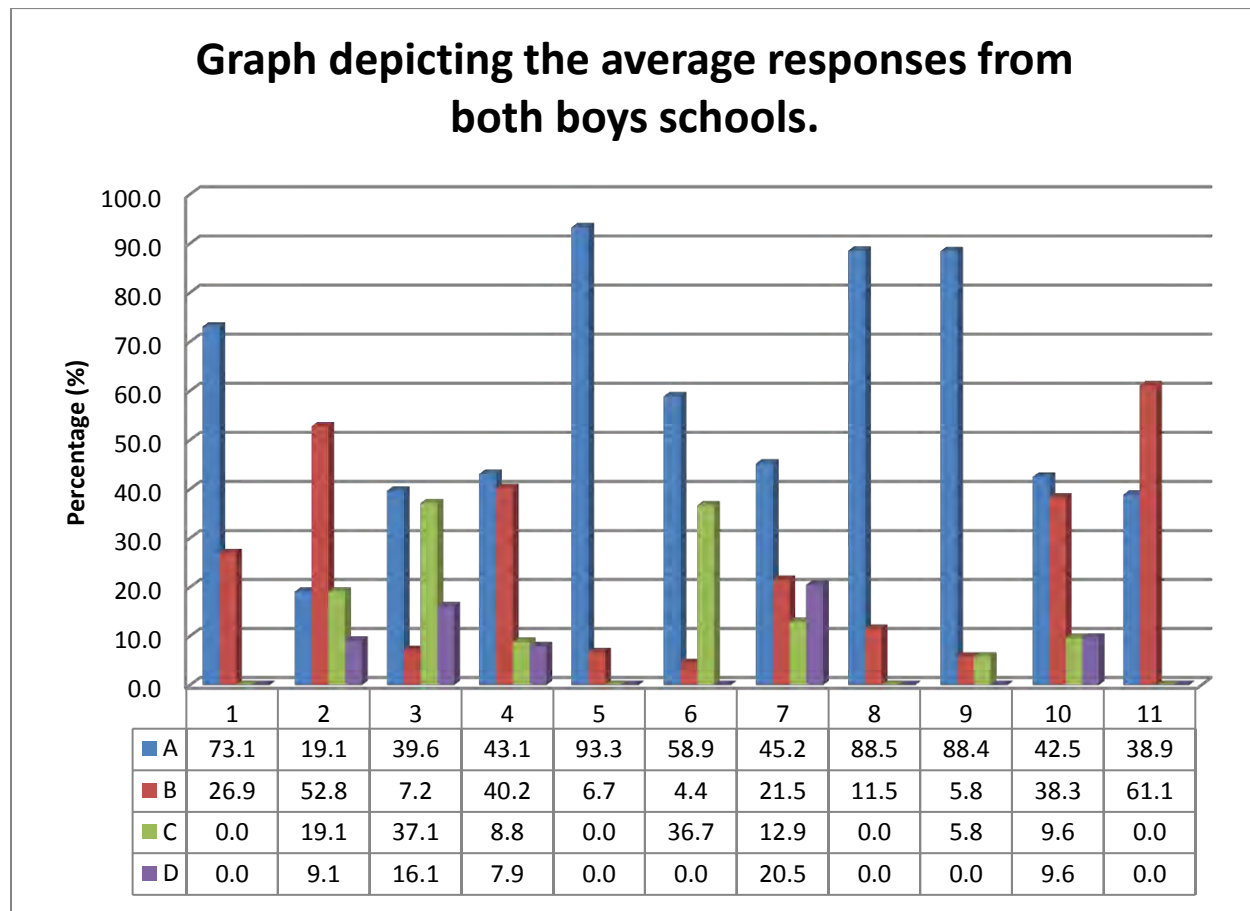
**Graph 8**



On average 74% of the girls who answered the questionnaire answered that they enjoyed reading. Close to half (49%) of the girls read 2-3 books in a term and 48% of them spent their free time with their friends. Popular novels were the most attractive option for question four: “What do you enjoy reading?” whilst 95% of the girls overall said that their English teachers encouraged them to read in response to question five. On average only 3% did not read their English set books as indicated by question six: “Do you read the set books that you are examined on in English?” and 52% confirmed that they did take books out of the library and read them for question seven: “Do you take books out of the school library and read them in your free time?” Only 16% admitted to taking books out of the library and not reading them whilst 20% would take out books if they had more time to read and 13% did not take books out at all. About three quarters (76%) of the girls came from homes where their parents or siblings read as shown by the results of question eight and 92% of the girls acknowledged that it was

important to read and be well read in response to question nine. On average more girls (60%) said they would read more if they had time and 30% answered that they would read more if they were exposed to more appealing books. Both these responses are still positive and encouraging. The reading programmes were an overall success with 61% confirming that they enjoyed the reading programmes at each school in response to question eleven.

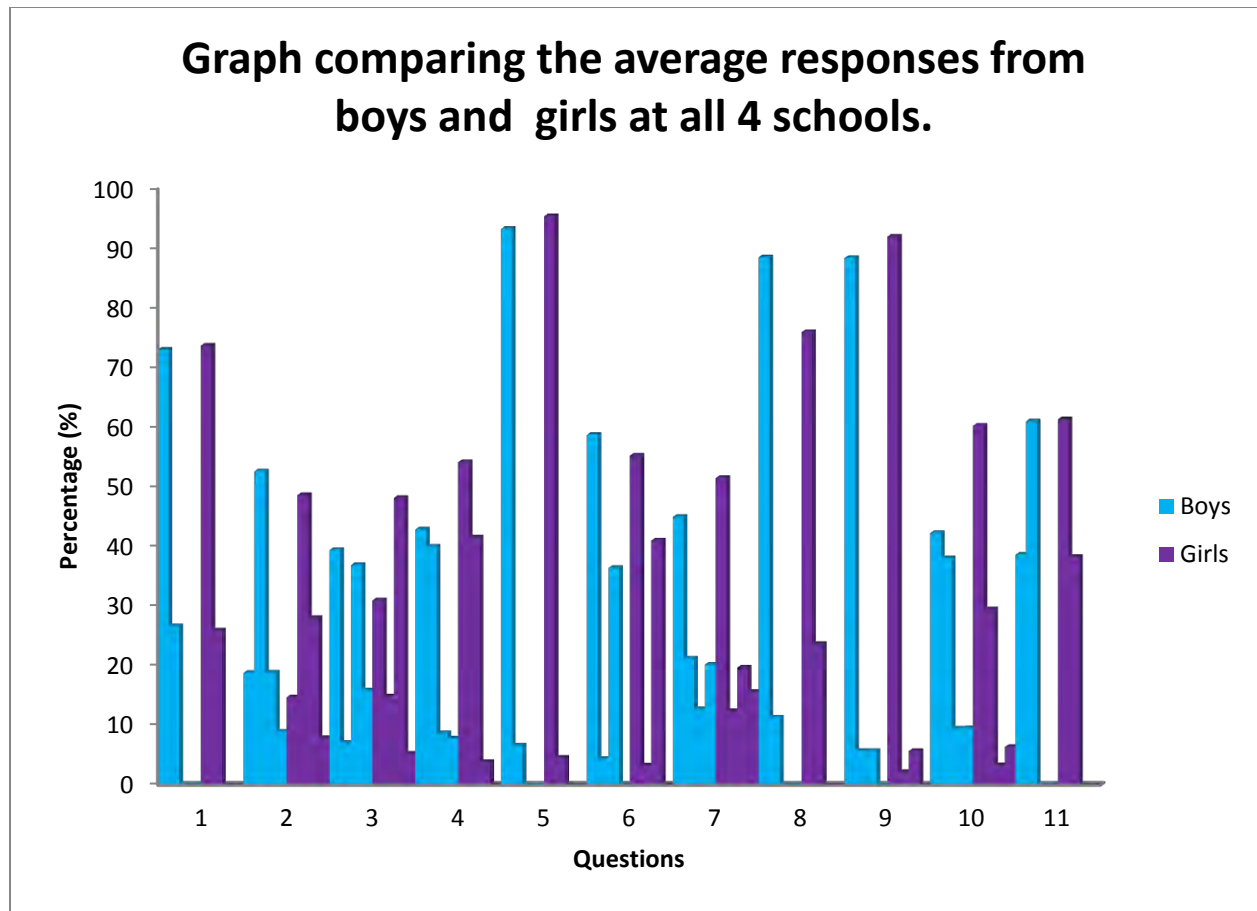
Graph 9



On average 73% of the boys answered that they enjoyed reading for question one. In response to question two: “How many books do you read in a term? 19% admitted that they did not read any books in a term whilst the majority (53%) claimed that they read 2-3 books in a term. 40% of the boys spent their free time playing sport and 37% chose option C: “Hanging out with friends”, for question three: “What do you enjoy doing in your free time?” Only 7% of the boys answered that they read during their free time. Most (93%) of the boys agreed that their English teachers encouraged them to read and for question six: “Do you read the set books that you get examined on in English?” the results indicated that 59% of the boys did whilst 4% did not. On average 37% said that they read their set books in class with their English teachers. Nearly half (45%) of the boys confirmed that they took books out of the library and read them for question seven. A few (13%) answered that they would take books out and read them if they had more time and 22% said they did not borrow library books. On average 89% of the

answers were positive for question eight: “Do your parents or siblings read books?” Likewise, 88% said yes to question nine: “Do you think it is important to read and be well read?” Question ten asked: “Would you read more if you were able to?” and 43% of the boys said yes; they would if they had more time whilst 38% said yes; they would if they found books that appealed to them. Only 10% chose option D: “No, reading is boring”. This result for question ten could serve to dispel the stereotype that reading is an activity that girls primarily engage in.

**Graph 10**



From this graph it is easy to establish which questions yielded similar responses from the boys and girls. The results of question one appear to be very similar as do the results for questions two, five, six, seven and nine. For question three it is obvious on the graph that sport was the most popular activity for boys during their free time and spending time with their friends was the most chosen answer for question three: “What do you enjoy doing in your free time?” for the girls. For question four: “What do you enjoy reading?” option A: “Popular novels”, and option B: “Magazines”, were the most favoured choices for both the boys and girls. For question eight: “Do your parents or siblings read books?” more boys said yes and more girls said no. Similarly, for question eleven: “Do you enjoy the Grade 10 reading programme that is run by your library?” more girls said yes and more boys said no. This result reinforces the stereotype that reading programmes are more appealing and successful amongst girls.



#### 7.4 Research Limitations and Problems

As a result of my involvement and interaction with the Principals, English HoDs, Librarians and learners at each school I am aware that many of my opinions may be biased. I have attempted to be objective in the discussion and analysis of my data. The quantitative data gleaned from the questionnaire mitigate, I hope, the subjectivity that might have been involved in the interviews and their transcription process. These statistical results complement the themes that emerged through the discourse analysis that was used to interpret the data collected through my interviews. These validate my choice to use a mixed methods approach which is a “social science research approach that encourages integration of two major methodological approaches: ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’” (Symonds and Gorard, 2010:121).

Each English HoD was left with 50 questionnaires that they distributed randomly and at their own discretion. Two of the HoD explained that the collection of these questionnaires was a relatively difficult process, particularly amongst the boys. Many of the boys forgot to answer the questionnaire or lost the questionnaire and had to be constantly reminded to return the questionnaire. This could have been avoided if the boys had been allocated five minutes within an English lesson to quickly complete and return the questionnaire but I did not give instructions for the completion of these questionnaires. I was aware of the many time constraints that the English teachers would be dealing with at this particular time and I trust the teachers were able to objectively distribute the questionnaires to ensure a varied sample. My study could be limited if these English teachers merely distributed the questionnaire to their most accessible learners.

Counting the questionnaires and the answers that had been selected for each question was a tedious job that required accuracy. Checking and tabulating the results were also time-consuming activities. The formulation of the graphs presented in this chapter meant that I had to be taught how to use statistical software. Grappling with this computer programme was a frustrating experience. The final outcome was worthwhile as I believe that the results of this questionnaire and the visual representation of these results validate my decision to use a mixed

method approach to research. The questionnaire (quantitative) complements the answers that were verbally expressed through the interviews (qualitative) and in most cases reiterates what was established and further substantiates the themes that emerged as a result of my research.

### 7.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, my data collection and analysis have revealed that this component of my research allowed me to substantiate and further justify my answers for the third key question that I had identified before conducting my research. This question was: What were the Grade 10 learners' perceptions and experiences of the reading programmes run at each school?

In answering this question mention must be made of the fact that the girls experienced the reading programmes differently to the boys and in most case the boys were "pragmatic readers; their purposes were functional" (Gambell and Hunter, 1999:6). The HoD at School A explained that the boys were motivated to read books that offered advice and expertise on careers, earning money and being successful in business. I believe that these boys immersed themselves in this type of literature because many of their parents would be successful business men or women. Parents are role models for their teenagers and their behaviour indirectly affects many of the choices and decisions that these adolescents make. Ultimately, "parent involvement makes a difference for student learning, attitudes, and engagement during the middle and high school years" (Elish-Piper, 2008:49). Parents who are able to model a positive attitude towards reading for pleasure ensure that their children will observe and mimic this behaviour because of the role that parents play in determining what to read (Elish-Piper and Elish-Piper, 2009).

From the statistical results of question eleven which referred specifically to the Grade 10 reading programme it can be proven that the girls enjoyed the reading programme more than the boys did (see graph ten). All the learners expressed a desire to participate in the process of selecting the books to be included in these reading programmes. This inclusion would serve to empower the learners as they assumed responsibility for choosing appropriate books. It has

been observed that through inclusion “students were intrinsically motivated to read and participate in these readings and subsequent discussions because their voices and interests were driving the text selections and conversations” (Fisher and Lapp, 2009:560). The Librarians at each school must be commended for their efforts in locating and purchasing books that the learners come and specifically request to read outside of the reading programmes.

## **Chapter Eight:**

### **Conclusion**

#### **8.1 Concluding Comments**

I am able to conclude, from my research, that despite being encouraged to read learners will only begin or choose to continue reading if they enjoy what they are reading. Many of the learners who were involved in my research associate reading with assessment, studying and school work. The negative implications that accompany this association serve to further discourage adolescents from reading. Not much time is dedicated to reading independently and for pleasure as the learners are only encouraged to read for specific purposes in most of the reading programmes that I investigated. Many of the activities that accompanied these reading programmes were assessed and the learners were compelled to read in order to get a mark allocation. These reading programmes are successful, but many learners felt forced to read and rushed their reading because of the pressure they were subjected to.

Reading programmes that are collaboratively run by the English department and library are an effective means of ensuring that all the learners involved are reading. Even the resistant readers get involved and read and discuss at least one book. There is the hope that these resistant readers will be exposed to a genre or author that they enjoy reading and they will continue to read after the reading programme has finished. I believe that encouraging a lifelong reading habit in adolescents should be a goal of any librarian, English teacher or parent. At schools the English department and library should guide and facilitate the promotion of reading. The whole school needs to be involved to ensure that adolescents from Grades 8 to 12 are encouraged to read throughout the year, not just when they are involved in a reading programme. I believe that reading resources that allow learners to read independently and for pleasure in their own mother tongue should be incorporated into school libraries. I am aware that not all schools have libraries. I also acknowledge the fact that my research involved four elite schools in KwaZulu- Natal and that many under- resourced and poverty- stricken schools cannot afford to institute the reading programmes that have been investigated through in this

study. My research was undertaken with this fact in mind and I do hope that any teacher or librarian at a school who is struggling to encourage learners to read is able to borrow at least a few of the ideas that are incorporated within each reading programme or strategy to promote reading. Some strategies that are not resource dependant and that could be employed at schools that do not have the finances to fund a reading programme such as the ones that are run at Schools A and C include:

- **Collaboration with a local, municipal library.**

Learners can be issued with free library cards that would enable them to borrow books from any municipal library for free. English teachers can borrow books for their classes. These books can be read independently in class or aloud by learners.

- **Collection of old newspapers and magazines.**

English teachers can approach a municipal library and ask for any old copies of newspapers and magazines that they no longer keep on their shelves. The teacher can also collect magazines, free pamphlets, brochures and newspapers. Other staff members can be asked to do the same.

- **Book swaps amongst learners.**

Learners with any of their own books or comics at home that they have already read can bring them to class and swap them with a friend/peer. The learners are then given the opportunity to read other texts that interest their friends/peers and possibly be exposed to a genre that they would not previously have considered.

I believe that the reading programmes being run at the four schools that were involved in my research are successful because they do encourage learners to read more than they would normally. Even the resistant readers read as a result of these programmes. I was impressed by the time and effort that the English HoDs and Librarians dedicated to these programmes. I am aware that the teachers' and learners' perceptions of these reading programmes differ. The teachers all believed these programmes to be a success for the same reasons that I have stated above but the learners pointed out that they felt pressured into reading as a result of these programmes. They felt forced to read and many reluctant readers resented that fact. However,

the positive aspects outweigh the learners' perception of the negative. The choice of books for many of the programmes was also questioned and the learners suggested that they be involved in the selection process before the start of each programme. The accommodation of these recommendations, I believe, would serve to further illustrate the success of the programmes.

For the majority of learners who attend rural schools English is not their mother tongue, despite it being the medium of instruction. If learners are given the opportunity to engage with literature written in their mother tongue I believe a love for literature and reading will be established. Once a learner is able to master reading in his/her mother tongue a reading programme run by the English department that involves learners reading texts written in English should be successful because learners would have had positive experiences with reading.

Despite the confinement of this to the promotion of reading for pleasure it is acknowledged that the importance of the relationship between well developed reading habits and epistemological access and academic success have not been explored as they are not central to the main objectives of this study.

Interestingly, all the Librarians and English HoDs involved in my study were female. This fact perpetuates the nurturing role that many female teachers assume. The majority of these female teachers are also mothers and many mothers "take direct responsibility for their [children's] reading" (Hamston and Love, 2003:52). Through reading many mothers are able to establish and maintain relationships with their children (Hamston and Love, 2003) and often children think of reading as an activity that is encouraged by mothers because mothers are most typically the parent who reads aloud to a child when he/she is young (Trelease, 2001). These statements illustrate the subjectivity that these Librarians and English HoDs brought to my study as females and mothers. As a result of my study I have also come to believe that the parents of children who are at boarding schools should not assume that because their children are no longer living at home during school term they can be less involved in the promotion of a

positive attitude towards reading. These parents need to do more to remain involved and to be aware of what their children are reading in class and in their free time.

The majority of the Librarians that I interviewed were English teachers before they became Librarians. I believe that this is a noteworthy trend and many of these Librarians are able to take their experiences in the classroom with them into their daily interactions with learners in the library. The collaboration that should exist between the English department and the library at every school is essential because “school librarians have the opportunity to connect with students in ways that classroom teachers do not because librarians tend to work with students in a one-on-one supportive relationship, helping them find and use information on a variety of topics, both academic and personal” (Jurkowski, 2006:81). I believe that every school should have a library, however small, and a competent librarian. I recommend that schools that cannot afford to employ a full- time librarian then employ a part- time librarian who serves a cluster of schools. English teachers could also be trained as assistant librarians to help run the library. This recommendation would mean that more learners could benefit from having a library; a “safe environment, monitored yet free of pressure, and access to resources that may be of use” (Jurkowski, 2006:81). A small collection of books in a classroom would also serve as a library that learners could borrow and read books from. I suggest that language teachers begin collecting literature that would appeal to the learners that they teach and display this collection in their classrooms.

Through my research I have been able to examine the relationships between the variables that determine the development and promotion of a positive reading culture amongst adolescents. The variables that discourage adolescents from reading emerged throughout my research and include:

- Parents who do not read independently and who do not read to their children are not reading role models for their children and do not encourage their children to read by demonstrating positive reading habits. This points to the teachers as being the next best role model.

- A lack of access to books and reading materials that would appeal to adolescents' results in learners being uninterested and despondent as was discussed in the learner group interview with the girls at School D.
- If books are selected by the English teachers or librarians, especially during reading programmes and learners are unable to select their own books and other reading materials a lack of agency will result and discourage reading.
- A lack of time devoted to independent reading at school is apparent despite classes still being taken to the library to read. Reading needs to be prioritised, especially in boys' schools that focus heavily on sport.
- English teachers who do not demonstrate positive reading habits and do not scaffold reading as an enjoyable activity are not good role models to their learners. English teachers who do not read independently during reading periods when learners are expected to read undermine the purpose of having reading lessons.
- Too much emphasis is being placed on reading for academic purposes and no effort is made by the learners to read for pleasure because they do not associate reading with enjoyment.

I agree that "the need to address that which creates resistance to reading is of paramount importance and cannot be ignored" (Lenters, 2006:144). Parents, teachers and librarians need to be aware of what discourages learners from reading and work collaboratively to ensure that learners are provided with time to read and with reading material that interests them. Learners do not associate reading with enjoyment; reading is not an activity that many adolescents would voluntarily spend their leisure doing. I believe this is because of the pressure that learners are placed under to read for purpose. Reading is associated with assessment because learners are only instructed to read when they need to prepare to write a book review, complete comprehension questions or give a book oral. The pleasure that reading brings needs to be modelled by parents, teachers and librarians to ensure that learners are exposed to positive reading habits that could influence their attitude towards and perceptions of reading.



Reading programmes are not offered as the solution to the problem that many adolescents do not read. There are a few teenagers who simply do not enjoy reading, and probably never will, but they are the minority. Solutions have been offered by many before me and my research reinforces what they have suggested. One such suggestion came from Sanacore, who contends that “cluttering up the classroom with a wide variety of interesting materials, providing major blocks of time for independent reading, and encouraging the reading habit during the entire school year are three school-wide approaches for promoting lifetime readers” (1992:477). Another suggestion comes from Powell-Brown (2006:88) who mentions that:

Teachers who read aloud to their students enthrall them and teach them to love the sounds of spoken language. This tradition of reading should be carried throughout the school experience. Those adults fortunate enough to have had high school teachers who read to them with great diction and emotion never seem to forget the experience.

In accordance with this suggestion I believe that an English teacher should have enough passion and expressive competency to be able to facilitate an enthusiasm for literature amongst his/her learners. The six strategies that have been identified by Mixon Clary in a bid to provide teachers with advice on how to encourage reading include: “capitalize on interests, make reading material accessible, build a conducive environment, allow time to read in school, provide significant adult models, and use motivational techniques” (1991:340). Teachers should find out what interests their learners and introduce reading materials that would capture these interests and the learners’ curiosity. Reading materials should be readily available so learners are able to spend any spare moment engrossed in a book, magazine or even a newspaper. A comfortable classroom is conducive to reading, learning and sharing. Teachers should set aside time in class for learners to read their own books and provide alternate seating that would allow for learners to get comfortable whilst reading. The teacher and school librarian should model positive reading habits and read whilst the learners read to ensure that the value of reading is demonstrated.

My research was conducted in line with Vygotsky’s theory on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the notion that “the Zone of Proximal Development implies that literacy development is not an individualistic, biological maturational phenomenon, but a

constructivist and social one, wherein a student's development depends on his or her interaction with others in different learning environments" (Gambell and Hunter, 1999:7). In this context the role that an English teacher or librarian has in developing and further motivating a learner's reading habits is crucial. An English teacher or librarian with experience and a good knowledge of authors, books and other reading materials that would appeal to adolescents is able to assist a learner to cross his/her ZPD (Daniels, 2007, 2008). Peer recommendations and interaction with peers serve to assist as learners are often able to socially construct meaning through stimulating discussion. These suggestions and the success of the recommendations that have been made depend upon the affective filter in the classroom. By definition "the affective filter is a mental block that prevents acquirers from fully utilizing the comprehensible input they receive" (Krashen, 1985:3). According to the affective filter hypothesis when the learner's affective filter is up he/she is nonresponsive as a result of a lack of motivation and self-confidence. When a learner's affective filter is down he/she is responsive because he/she feels comfortable and included and therefore motivated. If a learner's affective filter is up he/she will resist all efforts made by any teacher or librarian to be encouraged to read. It is therefore necessary that any teacher is aware of and actively attempt to lower the affective filter of any learner.

The stereotypical ideas surrounding reading and gender have been both reinforced and dispelled during my research. Many of the learners, teachers and librarians confirmed that reading is not an activity associated with adolescent boys and that girls are easier to encourage to read because they are excited by the ideas behind each reading programme. It was also mentioned in the learner interviews that many of the boys involved in the interviews read and their sisters do not and many of the girls involved in the interviews read and their brothers also read. It can therefore be deduced that "reading across the curriculum and writing across the curriculum are concepts that need to be brought to the attention of all educators, so gender issues around literacy that arise from provincial, national and international studies can be dealt with" (Gambell and Hunter, 1999:14). Encouraging reading across the curriculum was mentioned by an English HoD and a Librarian. Both advocated that all teachers, not just English

teachers, but especially all language teachers actively promote reading and make time for learners to read in each of their classes, no matter what language they read in.

My research provided answers to the three key questions that I had identified before I began conducting it. These questions were:

- What is being done in schools, by librarians and teachers, to encourage reading amongst learners?
- What are the teachers' perceptions and experiences of the reading programmes run at each school?
- What are the Grade 10 learners' perceptions and experiences of the reading programmes run at each school?

In response to the first question it was established that most of the English departments work collaboratively with Librarians to encourage reading. Reading programmes are run collaboratively to ensure success and the Librarians are able to keep the English teachers up to date with popular literature that could appeal to adolescents. Lessons in the library during English periods allow for learners to borrow, return and read books in a comfortable environment. The most effective strategy that teachers and librarians noted is talking to learners about books and what they enjoy reading. Teachers are also encouraged to share what books they have read and enjoyed with learners and peer recommendations ensure that popular books are kept in circulation. Through these activities teachers, librarians and peers are able to demonstrate a positive attitude towards reading and assist in fostering a positive reading culture in a resistant reader.

The English HoDs who were involved in my research perceived the value in establishing and maintaining a reading programme to encourage reading amongst the learners. The difficulties that exist in motivating adolescents should not discourage any teacher or librarian from attempting to encourage a resistant reader to borrow a book from the library and read. Teachers disclosed that they have had more positive experiences encouraging reading amongst girls than they have had with boys. English teachers who read young adult literature are able to recommend appropriate books to learners who do not know what to read. The knowledge and experience that accompanies the activity of reading books that would appeal to adolescents

enables teachers and librarians to question a learner on what his/her interests are and suggest a book that would satisfy these interests and, it is hoped, spark an interest in reading. The dialogue involved in discussing books should allow for teachers and librarians to further assess a learner's interests and whether he or she read the book that was suggested. Many English teachers have acknowledged that they should be reading role models for their learners and the perceived responsibility that accompanies this role serves to encourage teachers to read more themselves.

The learners have had both positive and negative experiences with reading programmes. They are able to perceive and acknowledge why a reading programme is beneficial and they are quick to admit that although resistant readers do resent being forced to read, because these programmes are compulsory, they are able to successfully ensure that every learner reads at least one book for the duration of the reading programme. The experience of reading and finishing a book is one of achievement and many learners are encouraged to continue reading once they have experienced the joy involved in reading a book that interests them. A large number of learners feel overwhelmed in a library because there are so many books to choose from. This daunting experience serves to further discourage resistant readers from visiting a library. Learners expressed a need to be guided in the library and assisted in choosing a book. Reading from a list of pre-chosen books was less of a daunting experience but many avid readers explained that they would appreciate being involved in the selection process that precedes any reading programme.

Through my research it emerged that many learners associate reading programmes with 'work'. Whilst being involved in a reading programme does encourage the learners to read more than they usually would, it does not promote reading as a pleasurable activity. The learners read for purpose (to complete book discussions and reviews) and for a mark allocation (assessments done on book orals, book reviews, and reading portfolios). Furthermore, these reading programmes, in most cases, are also compulsory. The danger posed by this situation is that it

can lead to a resistance to reading that I believe can be associated with teenage rebellion, which can have long term consequences.

With these three key questions in mind I must clarify that the learners and teachers (English HoDs and Librarians) had conflicting ideas with regards to the reading programmes. The teachers all perceive the reading programmes to be successful whilst the learners admit that, although for the most part they enjoy these programmes, they believe that they should be more involved in the selection process that precedes these programmes. Despite their ideas about wanting to choose the books that are read during these programmes it was acknowledged by the majority of the learners that they enjoyed the security of reading from a prescribed list. If learners were to be given more agency in terms of these reading programmes I believe that their perceptions would match those of the teachers and all be positive.

My concluding thoughts of the learner group interviews that I conducted are supported by Elish-Piper and Tatum who note that:

Our conversations with students continue to inform us that they are a rich data source that is often untapped. Listening to their voices indicates that they want to read text that matters, engage in authentic discussion about important questions, in supportive classroom environments, and receive instruction in caring and support environments (2006:11).

In consideration of these noteworthy statements I would like to re- emphasise the importance of modelling positive reading habits and discussing books with learners. It is clear that reading programmes may be a successful strategy to encourage adolescents to read. English teachers and librarians should acknowledge the positive and negative aspects of these programmes and work to minimise the latter. Furthermore, they should attempt to encourage reading outside of these programmes as well in a bid to foster a lifelong reading habit amongst adolescents.

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