

**A DIDACTIC INVESTIGATION
INTO THE TEACHING OF
ENGLISH COMPOSITION WRITING
IN ZULU SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

BY

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DURBAN

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father ISRAEL VUSUMUZI, to NOMPUMELELELO, XOLISWA AND KHANYISILE and to my children: SIPHESIHLE, XOLISILE AND THEMBEKA.

May it be a source of inspiration throughout their lifetime.

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DURBAN

SUMMARY

This study investigates the teaching of English composition in Zulu secondary schools which are in the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture. Of special importance in this study is to determine the extent to which insights from composition research have informed classroom practice regarding composition teaching in a sample of secondary schools.

In assessing the current state of composition teaching in KwaZulu, a two-pronged approach is followed: Linguistics and Didactics. The analysis is underpinned by three linguistic theories of composition (current-traditional, expressionistic and social) and five didactic principles: individualisation, socialisation, control, active participation and motivation.

A questionnaire was administered to 68 teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) out of the 100 targeted ESL teachers drawn from three circuits: Umlazi North, Umlazi South and Umbumbulu.

To place the study of composition teaching in didactic context, Chapter 2 contains a formulation and substantiation of the five didactic principles: individualisation, socialisation, control, active participation and motivation. In essence, these principles are used as yardsticks to explain what constitutes effective teaching and learning.

Regarding the linguistic dimension of the study, Chapter 3 outlines three linguistic theories (current-traditional, expressionistic and social). Each of these theories is based on a different epistemological and philosophical orientation. and, consequently, each results in a different composition paradigm or model.

Chapter 4 presents a theoretical discussion of the basic tenets of the process approach to composition writing - an eclectic approach which captures the essential features of both the expressionistic and social composition paradigms. The process approach is presented as a didactically-justifiable approach to composition writing which promotes all strategies, techniques and methods which are in line with the expressionistic and social composition paradigms. In this approach, the current-traditional composition paradigm is negated.

Chapter 5 presents qualitative and quantitative results of the empirical study. The major findings of this study are:-

- the need to teach composition writing using techniques that accommodate individual learner needs, fears and frustrations (and sometimes joy) regarding composing in a second language, e.g., English.
- the need to harness and channel peer pressure positively by making learners work in peer groups during all the stages of the writing process: planning, drafting and revision. In this context, learners are socialised as they collaborate rather than compete to successfully produce composition pieces that communicate effectively.
- the need to abandon the dominant current-traditional composition paradigm in favour of the expressionistic and social paradigms which encompass techniques associated with the process approach - as against the product approach - to composition teaching.
- the need to address composition teaching problems emanating, mainly from the Apartheid education dispensation regarding black schools, e.g., overcrowding and high teacher - pupil ratios which are demotivating factors militating against efficient composition teaching.

Chapter 6 uses the five didactic principles as criteria to assess the didactic efficacy of linguistic theories and current practices regarding the teaching of composition writing. With regards to individualisation and socialisation didactic principles, the results are not promising. Control and motivation presented results which were negative and positive in some respects. The results were positive regarding active participation didactic principle.

Chapter 7 places the empirical results of the study in linguistic context. It uses teachers' responses regarding their use of certain composition techniques to establish the dominant composition paradigm. The analysis shows that the current-traditional paradigm dominates. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the damaging long-term effects of the current-traditional paradigm of composition writing.

Chapter 8 concludes this study with in-depth recommendations to teachers, teacher educators and administrators who have all been identified as agents who frequently act as catalysts to promote educational change.

The five didactic principles are used as a reference framework for the recommendations. In other words, for each of the five didactic principles, there are recommendations for teachers, teacher educators and administrators.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie ondersoek die onderrig van Engelse stelwerk in Zoeloe sekondêre skole binne die KwaZulu Departement van Onderwys en Kultuur. Van besondere belang in hierdie studie is om vas te stel in watter mate insig verwerf deur stelwerknavorsing, in die klaskamer voorkom met betrekking tot stelwerkonderrig in 'n aantal sekondêre skole.

Deur die huidige stand van stelwerkonderrig in KwaZulu te ondersoek, word 'n tweeledige benadering gevolg: Linguistiek en Didaktiek. Die analise word ondersteun deur drie Linguïstiese teorieë oor stelwerk (hedendaags-tradisioneel, ekspressionisties en sosiaal) en vyf didaktiese beginsels: individualisering, sosialisering, kontrole, aktiewe deelname en motivering.

'n Vraelys is gegee aan 68 onderwysers met Engels as Tweede Taal (ETT) uit 'n teikengroep van 100 ETT onderwysers uit drie streke: Umlazi-Noord, Umlazi-Suid en Umbumbulu.

Om die studie van stelwerkonderrig in didaktiese konteks te plaas, bevat hoofstuk 2 'n formulering van vyf didaktiese beginsels: individualisering, sosialisering, kontrole, aktiewe deelname en motivering. Hierdie beginsels word as maatstawwe gebruik om te verduidelik wat effektiewe onderrig en aanleer behels.

Met betrekking tot die linguïstiese omvang van die studie, beskryf hoofstuk 3 drie linguïstiese teorieë (hedendaags-tradisioneel, ekspressionisties en sosiaal). Elkeen van hierdie drie teorieë is gebaseer op 'n ander epistemologiese en filosofiese oriëntasie, en gevolglik lei elkeen tot 'n ander stelwerkpatroon (paradigma).

Hoofstuk 4 gee 'n teoretiese bespreking van die basiese beginsels van die prosesbenadering tot stelwerkskryf - 'n eklektiese uitgangspunt wat die basiese kenmerke

van beide die ekspressionistiese en sosiale stelwerkpatroon aanspreek. Die prosesbenadering word aangebied as 'n didakties-verantwoordbare benadering tot stelwerkskryf wat alle strategieë, tegnieke en metodes bevorder wat ooreenkom met die ekspressionistiese en sosiale stelwerkpatrone. In hierdie benadering word die hedendaagse-tradisionele stelwerkpatroon genegeer.

Hoofstuk 5 toon kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe resultate van die empiriese studie. Die belangrikste bevindinge van hierdie studie is:

- Die behoefte dat stelwerkskryf onderrig moet word deur middel van tegnieke wat die individuele behoeftes, vrese en frustrasies (en soms vreugde) in aanmerking neem, met betrekking tot stelwerkskryf in 'n tweede taal, byvoorbeeld Engels.
- Die behoefte om groepdruk positief aan te wend en te kanaliseer, deur leerlinge in gelyke groepe te laat werk gedurende al die stadiums van die skryfproses: beplanning, ontwerp en hersiening. In hierdie verband sosialiseer leerlinge omdat hulle liever saamwerk as kompeteer wanneer hulle suksesvolle stelwerkstukke produseer.
- Die behoefte om die hedendaags-tradisionele stelwerkpatroon te laat vaar ten gunste van die ekspressionistiese en sosiale patrone wat met die prosesbenadering verband hou.
- Die behoefte om probleme in stelwerkonderrig afkomstig van die apartheidsonderwysbeleid betreffende swart skole aan te spreek, byvoorbeeld oorvol skole en 'n hoë onderwys-leerling verhoudingsgetal, wat demoraliserende faktore is en wat in stryd is met effektiewe stelwerkonderrig.

Hoofstuk 6 gebruik die vyf didaktiese beginsels as kriteria om die didaktiese verantwoordbaarheid van linguïstiese teorieë en aktiwiteite by die onderrig van

stelwerkskryf te bepaal. Ten opsigte van individualisering en sosialisering as didaktiese beginsels lyk die resultate nie belowend nie.

Hoofstuk 7 plaas die empiriese resultate van die studie in linguistiese konteks. Dit is gebaseer op die onderwysers se reaksies ten opsigte van hulle gebruik van sekere stelwerktegnieke om die dominante stelwerkpatroon te bepaal. Die analise wys dat die hedendaags-tradisionele patroon domineer. Die hoofstuk sluit af met 'n bespreking van die skadelike langtermyn-effek van die hedendaags-tradisionele patroon van stelwerkskryf.

Hoofstuk 8 sluit hierdie studie af met diepgaande aanbevelings aan onderwysers, onderwyser-leerkragte en administrateurs, wat almal geïdentifiseer is as agente wat gewoonlik as katalisators optree om onderwysveranderinge teweeg te bring. Die vyf didaktiese beginsels word gebruik as 'n verwysingsraamwerk vir die aanbevelings. Vir elkeen van die vyf didaktiese beginsels is daar aanbevelings vir onderwysers, onderwyser-leerkragte en administrateurs.

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CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 ORIENTATION

During the past decade, composition writing research has been characterised by a shift of focus. Cramer (1988:647) aptly captures the essence of this shift as follows: "Instead of focusing on the end product of writing, the words on the page and their degree of correctness, researchers have become more interested in the process in which the writer is engaged on the way to that end product" (my emphasis). Research involving English as a Second Language (ESL) subjects (e.g., Edelsky, 1982; Lay, 1982; Jones, 1982; Tetroe and Jones, 1983; Zamel, 1983, 1984, 1985; Raimes, 1984) has shown that composition writing is a skill that can be taught. Students who write compositions which effectively communicate and engage readers do not do so because they are necessarily "gifted" writers; rather, they use strategies that can be taught to other student writers who may be less experienced in the art of composing.

The paradigm shift - from product to process - has challenged previously held notions about the teaching of composition writing (Zamel, 1987:698). In other words, the perception of composition writing as a skill that can be taught and mastered has kindled interest in approaches which can be used in teaching composition writing. It has also necessitated a critical assessment of approaches, methods and techniques used in the teaching and learning of composition writing.

Of special importance in this study is the polarised framework of "product" versus "process." In this context the product approach denotes a didactic strategy in which teachers mainly focus on the product, that is, the actual composition piece. When marking, they tend to concentrate on mechanical aspects like spelling, punctuation, stylistic and syntactical features. The major disadvantage of this approach is that it does not allow for teacher intervention at any stage during the composing act. Consequently, there is no "effective accompaniment" by teachers, to use Krüger and Müller's (1988:143) phrase.

The process approach, on the other hand, denotes a didactic strategy in which teachers help students during all the stages of writing (planning, drafting and revision). When the composition topic is assigned, they help with the planning stage (gathering of relevant ideas and information), the drafting stage (structuring of information) and revision stage (text editing). Thus, teachers in the process approach, unlike in the product approach, intervene in the process of writing because they believe that they can significantly influence students' composing processes.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Relating research to current practice is no easy feat. Despite giant strides in research - which ideally should inform and transform classroom practice in significant ways - classroom practice may still remain unaffected. Hairston's (1982) and Burhans' (1983) surveys of the teaching of writing forcefully demonstrate that teachers' classroom practices are not necessarily always informed by current theoretical perspectives gained from research. In fact, teachers may "cling to the traditional model of instruction" (Zamel, 1987:699).

In South Africa, no research regarding the teaching of composition writing in Zulu secondary schools could be traced. Without research, it remains unclear where Zulu secondary schools stand with regards to the polarised framework of "product" and "process"

in composition teaching. Teachers may, consciously or unconsciously, still be clinging to the traditional product approach. This may be so owing to serious constraints which are (in the absence of research) still unknown. On the other hand, teachers may be using classroom practices which are strongly informed by the process approach research. However, even in such cases, teachers may have come across hurdles which may frustrate and thwart their efforts at bridging the gap between research and practice.

Although current didactic practices with regards to composition teaching remain uncertain, the matric results of black students indicate a high failure rate year after year. For example, in 1990 matric results in KwaZulu indicate that 57% failed while only 13% passed with exemption and 28% passed without exemption (Jacobs, 1992:77). This situation is unacceptable.

Many variables contribute to the high failure rate of black matric pupils. However, English, in its pivotal role as a medium of instruction in Zulu secondary schools is by its very nature implicated. Poor command of English could be one of the causes of the high failure rate. Pupils write their examinations in English - a second language to virtually all black pupils in South Africa. The matric results in English as a subject clearly display that Zulu pupils have serious problems with this subject. According to Jacobs (1992:79) the examination results in English show that 27% received an "E" symbol while 23% received an "F" symbol and 17% obtained "FF" symbols. Only 1% received symbol "B" while 4% obtained "C" symbols.

Various possibilities of improving English teaching exist. One could focus on reading, listening, speaking, writing and literature as aspects of English teaching. However, such a study would be unmanageable in scope. The present study, therefore, concentrates on composition teaching as one of the most crucial aspects of English teaching. It proceeds from the assumption that composition teaching plays a pivotal role in the school curriculum because:

1. composition or essay writing serves an epistemic function in that writing results in processing and structuring of data which leads to learning;

2. composition writing makes pupils conversant with various modes of discourse (e.g., persuasion, narrative and description);
3. composition writing teaches pupils modes of argument and acceptable lines of reasoning and evidence (e.g., elaboration and exemplification as strategies of marshalling facts for a given argument);
4. composition writing teaches pupils the process of arranging and structuring ideas (e.g., elimination of irrelevant facts during the drafting stage) for clear presentation;
5. composition writing familiarises pupils with addressing different audiences who require different registers and tone. This corresponds with the dynamic use of language in day-to-day situations; and
6. composition teaching, if approached from a communication point of view, introduces pupils to the dynamics of language - a language which can both clarify or deliberately be used to obscure meanings. Pupils, therefore, learn to appreciate language as a vibrant communication medium.

In the light of the above stated benefits of efficient composition teaching - particularly as it impinges on other subjects - a state of uncertainty about composition teaching in Zulu secondary schools can hardly be justifiable. However, without research into what actually transpires in composition classes we shall remain with the problem of uncertainty as to what extent insights from composition research have informed and transformed classroom practice. Naturally it is difficult to map the way forward if there is no clarity on the current didactic practices.

1.2.1 FORMULATION OF PROBLEM

1.2.1.1 Research Questions

The present study has been designed to explore the following main problem:

How does a selected sample of ESL teachers in KwaZulu secondary schools teach English composition writing?

The above main research problem leads to the following subsidiary problems:

1. Do most teachers in the sample use effective approaches in their teaching of composition writing?
2. What specific techniques do respondents employ in their teaching of composition writing?

3. To what extent have teachers been exposed to ideas about the teaching of composition writing?
4. Which problems do these respondents encounter in their attempts to teach composition writing?
5. Which possible solutions do these respondents feel could address their composition teaching problems?

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 To Evaluate the Approach used by Teachers

As argued in Section 1.2, no evidence exists regarding the approach which informs teachers' classroom practices with regards to composition teaching. Evaluation of the approach used in Zulu secondary schools is of paramount importance. This study presents the process approach to composition writing as didactically justifiable. The product approach, on the other hand, is seen as lacking in effective teacher accompaniment. Teachers using the product approach do not intervene during all the stages of the composing process as they do in the process approach. Clearly, ESL students - in their attempts to grapple with both the linguistic code and composing demands - definitely need teacher intervention. Besides teacher intervention, the process approach promotes effective interactive didactic techniques (e.g. group work) in the execution of learning tasks. In this sense, the process approach helps learners to "swim through the strong currents of composition writing." It also provides teachers with vital feedback on the progress of students. With this approach teachers do not experience a sense of false relief (when students are still writing compositions assigned) only to be overwhelmed by piles and piles of scripts when students submit the final products for marking. They are with the students all the way (i.e., during planning, drafting and revision) and have opportunity to influence the final outcome without having to embarrass pupils.

1.3.2 To Identify Techniques used by Respondents in the Sample

On the surface, most techniques seem practical. However, when subjected to the harsh realities of a given educational setting many may remain desirable ideals rather than practical solutions to problems. It is against this background that this study seeks to explore what specific techniques teachers use in composition teaching. In other words, both the product and process approaches espouse techniques which may be used. However, the peculiar circumstances surrounding black education in general (e.g., crowded classrooms, high teacher - pupil ratio and lack of facilities) may militate against the use of these techniques. Consequently, it is useful to establish which techniques have been adapted or relegated to obsolescence according to the dictates of contextual constraints.

1.3.3 To Establish Effective Ways of Exposing Teachers to Ideas on Composition Teaching

Like all professionals, teachers need to keep abreast of the latest developments in their field. Otherwise, they run the risk of being rendered ineffective and irrelevant to the changing educational needs and challenges. Seen from this perspective, forums like conferences, seminars, symposia, private readings, teacher-education institutions and workshops play a significant role in exposing teachers to current trends in the teaching of their subjects. In this context, the present study will attempt to establish if the respondents have been exposed to ideas about composition teaching through any of the above-stated forums.

1.3.4 To Identify Problems faced by Respondents in Composition Teaching

The aim of all action research is to explain reality with the purpose to improve practice. It is in this context that one of the purposes of this study is to ascertain the nature and scope of the problems that confront English teachers in composition teaching.

Some problems in educational institutions are rooted in the inadequacies of the whole education system. An example of this type of problems can be found in the current educational dispensation for blacks in South Africa which has brought about problems like overcrowding, high teacher-pupil ratio, lack of equipment and library facilities. These common problems affect most black schools.

However, other problems may be peculiar to a given school. For example, a poorly-managed school would have problems which impact negatively on the quality of the teaching and learning. In this context, the problems resulting from the inadequacies of the whole education system would merely add to the problems of that particular school.

Composition teaching - like all teaching and learning - takes place within a particular context. The dynamics of this context may not be ignored since it impinges on all the facets of the given didactic situation. Thus, problems attendant to composition teaching (which may be common or peculiar to a given school) as part of a contextual reference, have to be identified. Seen from this perspective, therefore, whatever problems exist, being informed about them seems a practical approach towards improvement of practice. If we do not clearly establish which underlying problems exist, we risk frustration when all the didactically sound and best approaches, methods and techniques fail dismally to address composition teaching.

1.3.5 To Elicit Solutions to Composition Problems from Respondents

While the average teacher may not be able to fully comprehend and articulate all the dynamics which impact on his/her given didactic situation, teachers, nonetheless are better poised to identify some of the problems and possible solutions thereof. It is against this background that the present study seeks to elicit possible solutions from respondents.

It would be naive and presumptuous for any researcher to pretend to have all solutions to teachers' problems regarding a given didactic situation, especially because some problems may be so context-embedded that they preclude anyone outside that contextual framework. Therefore, respondents have to be given an opportunity to state what they perceive to be viable and practical solutions which have been tailor-made to fit their peculiar context. However, this does not negate the initiatives of the researcher in proposing guidelines for solutions of problems. In fact, Chapter 8 in this study recommends specific guidelines to address composition teaching.

1.4. DEMARCATIION OF STUDY FIELD

This study is a didactic investigation into the teaching of English composition in Zulu secondary schools. To provide a clear demarcation of the study field, the following terms - as used in this study - have to be clarified:

1.4.1 Didactic Investigation

The present study is a didactic investigation in the sense that it represents an attempt at systematically examining facets of English composition teaching in Zulu secondary schools. As an inquiry which is intricately bound with reality in the teaching and learning realm, the present study is didactic in nature.

Fraser et al. (1990:3) define didactics as "... the science which studies teaching and learning." In this sense, the present study will use well-established and coherent didactic principles (e.g., individualisation, socialisation, control, active participation and motivation) to evaluate and justify the efficacy of methods, approaches and techniques of composition teaching.

Although the interrelatedness of teaching and learning is acknowledged, the present study will not investigate composition teaching from the students' perspective: learning. The emphasis will be on how composition writing is taught and how this practice could be enhanced in a didactically-justifiable manner.

1.4.2 English Composition

In this study English composition means a writing task which requires students to compose in English. It encompasses a form of extended writing which is sometimes called essay writing, particularly in the content-area subjects like History. Although essay writing can reasonably be conceived as synonymous with composition writing - albeit in different contexts - the present project will not investigate essay writing in the context of other subjects. It will be confined to composition writing as it is taught within the context of teaching English as a subject. Therefore, only English teachers will be surveyed.

1.4.3 Zulu Secondary Schools

Although various commonalties exist in black schools (as a result of the common legacy of Apartheid) across the Republic of South Africa, this study will focus on one ethnic group: Zulu secondary students and their teachers. Found predominantly in the KwaZulu Natal Province, these Zulu pupils are second language speakers of English and, therefore, have to grapple with language-related problems as well as problems associated with the actual task of composing.

In this study no distinction will be made between junior secondary schools (Std. 6 - Std. 8) and senior secondary schools (Std. 9 - Std. 10) although this is a current classification for various school levels used by all Departments responsible for black education in South Africa.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Literature Study

The study will have three chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) of literature review.

Chapter 2 is a discussion of the five important didactic principles (individualisation, socialisation, control, active participation and motivation) which have been selected for use in Chapter 6 as criteria against which to assess the didactic efficacy of composition techniques. In this sense, Chapter 2 provides the vital didactic background against which the investigation took place.

Chapter 3 provides a discussion of three linguistic composition paradigms. As an exercise in linguistic expression, albeit in a written form, composition writing has to be viewed against the backdrop of linguistic theories. Three main models or paradigms of composition writing (current-traditional, expressionistic and social) are reviewed. Each of these is informed by a different philosophical and epistemological orientation. Chapter 3, therefore provides an important linguistic grounding for the study.

Chapter 4 presents the process approach as a viable alternative to the ineffective product approach. As indicated earlier (see Section 1.1), the polarised product and process approach framework is of particular importance in the present study. Seen from this perspective, Chapter 4 is significant insofar as it presents an approach to composition teaching which is didactically-accountable.

1.5.2 Survey Questionnaire

1.5.2.1 Rationale for Using Questionnaires

In this study, the questionnaire method will be used. According to Behr (1988:156) the questionnaire as a research tool remains one of the best available instruments of collecting data from a widely spread population. However, Behr warns that questionnaires need to be properly constructed and administered so as to maximise their potential as research tools. Van Dalen (1979) is of a similar view. He eloquently presents the advantages of using questionnaires when he says: "for some studies or certain phases of them, presenting respondents with carefully selected and ordered questions, is the only practical way to obtain data" (Van Dalen, 1979:152). Besides the above stated advantages, Ngcobo (1986:150) reminds us that the questionnaire method "affords a good measure of objectivity in soliciting and coding the responses of the population sample."

The questionnaire method is also best suited for this study which investigates the current position regarding the teaching of English composition. Moufy (1972:234) presents a case of questionnaire survey's relevance in studies of this nature:

Surveys are oriented toward the determination of the status of a given phenomenon. ...they identify present conditions and point to present needs.

1.5.2.2 Preparation of the Covering Letter

The questionnaires were accompanied by a covering letter which, as is standard ethical practice in research projects, served to allay the respondents' fears regarding their right of privacy (Van Dalen, 1979:32-36; Gay, 1987:198). In this connection, the covering letter guaranteed anonymity, confidentiality of the information and voluntary participation (see Appendix A).

Besides allaying respondents' fears regarding their privacy, the covering letter also served to spell out the purpose of the study. Behr (1988:156) argues that respondents have to perceive the purpose of the research project for them to have interest and motivation to respond.

1.5.2.3 Format of the Questionnaire

(a) Layout

A brief and attractively designed questionnaire usually leads to high levels of response (Gay, 1987:196). The importance of brevity and attractiveness as sound criteria in the design of questionnaires is further emphasised by Cohen and Manion (1989) and Behr (1988:157). Cohen and Manion (1989) maintain that:

the appearance of the questionnaire is vitally important. It must look easy and attractive. A compressed layout is uninviting; a larger questionnaire with plenty of space for questions and answers is more encouraging to respondents (Cohen and Manion, 1989:111).

Therefore, brevity and attractiveness of layout were the important considerations (see Appendix B).

(b) Questionnaire Items

The questionnaire had 26 items which were distributed within 5 main sections.

Section A (Items 1-6) solicited background information such as age, sex and qualifications.

Section B (Items 7-18) required respondents to indicate on a scale of 1 - 4 (almost never - almost always) the frequency with which they use some writing techniques.

Section C (Item 19) gave respondents a chance to discuss what they perceive as problem in teaching English composition writing. Respondents were also encouraged to suggest some practical solutions in this regard.

Section D (Items 20 - 25) required respondents to indicate how they have kept informed about ideas on composition teaching. For this section, a list of possible sources of information was provided.

Lastly, **Section E** (Item 26) solicited general comments on composition teaching, in case the questionnaire did not touch some issues which the respondents think are important.

Sections A, B and D had close-ended questions which consisted of a list of alternative responses. Commenting on the advantage of using close-ended questions, Ary and Jacobs (1990:57) say "the closed question is easier and quicker for the subject to respond to." Ary and Jacobs' point is important when viewed in the light that most black teachers usually teach more than one subject and can, therefore, be perceived as busy people. In this sense, a questionnaire which has many open-ended questions may put off some respondents, who otherwise would have responded positively.

Manion and Cohen (1989:109) also corroborate the argument that open-ended questions are time-consuming and therefore off-putting to most respondents.

However, open-ended questions, although time-consuming, have a role to play in research. Researchers do not have to compromise potentially valuable data on the altar of expediency. It is against this background that Sections C and E had open-ended questions.

(c) Collection of Data

The questionnaires were self-administered to Departmental Heads of English in the three circuits (Umbumbulu and Umlazi South and North) targeted for sampling. Heads of Departments were used as "contact persons" to avoid a situation where some potential respondents could become uninterested, and therefore, reluctant to respond. This strategy is upheld by Fraenkel et al (1990) who argue that:

in school-based surveys a higher response rate can be obtained if a questionnaire is sent to persons in authority to administer to potential respondents rather than to respondents themselves (Fraenkel et al, 1990:336).

However, although useful, this strategy may be criticised on the grounds of research ethics. Since authority figures distribute and collect questionnaires, it can reasonably be argued that respondents are compromised in two respects: confidentiality and voluntary participation. Authority figures may be tempted to peruse the questionnaires before they submit them to the researcher. They may also, by virtue of being in authority, exercise undue pressure on potential respondents. In that context, participation ceases to be voluntary. Nonetheless, this strategy was used because it enhances chances of a higher response rate.

1.5.3 Selection of the Sample

Since this study investigates English composition teaching in Zulu secondary schools, its population comprises all English teachers in KwaZulu. Although it would have been desirable to survey all English teachers in KwaZulu, such an undertaking would have been an unrealistic feat. There are approximately 4500 ESL teachers in KwaZulu Natal secondary schools. Time and resources dictated that the study be limited to a more accessible population such as English teachers in three circuits (Umlazi South, Umlazi North and Umbumbulu).

Twenty secondary schools falling within three categories (urban, semi-urban and rural) were used to draw a sample of 68 English teachers. Twenty (29%) teachers were from well-equipped urban schools. Twenty-one (31%) were from day schools which are not-so-well equipped while twenty-seven (40%) were drawn from poorly-equipped rural schools.

Having respondents drawn from urban, semi-urban and rural schools was an attempt to capture data from the three basic types of schools and therefore to make the sample more representative. Gay (1987:103) emphasises that it is important that the sample be representative of the larger population from which it was selected. This makes it possible for the researcher to generalise the findings to a larger population (Ary and Jacobs, 1990:169). The small sample used in this study clearly disqualifies it from being representative (limiting the generalisability of the findings) but the fact that it was drawn from three different geographic areas strengthens the possibility that patterns being identified are indicative of general trends currently prevailing in a proportion of KwaZulu Natal secondary schools.

Each school constituted a cluster, and thus all English teachers in each school were surveyed. According to Cohen and Manion (1989:102) cluster sampling involves "Collecting information from a smaller group or subset of the population."

Elaborating on the concept of cluster sampling, Fraenkel et al. (1990) express a similar view to Cohen and Manion's (1989). They define a cluster sample as:

A sample composed of groups rather than individuals... It is similar to simple random sampling except that groups rather than individuals are randomly selected (Fraenkel et al., 1990:84).

For Fraenkel et al., the main advantage of the cluster sampling is that it can be used when it is difficult or impossible to select a random sample of individuals (ibid: 73).

It is evident that this particular study had a large and widely dispersed population. Cluster sampling, therefore, was chosen. Gay (1987:110) supports the use of cluster sampling in similar circumstances. He argues that "Cluster sampling is more convenient when the population is very large or spread out over a wide geographical area."

Detailed background information (e.g., sex, age and qualifications) on the respondents is presented in tables found in Chapter 5 - a chapter which presents both the qualitative and quantitative results.

1.5.4 Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Data collected were analysed and interpreted according to two frames of reference: didactic principles and linguistic theories of composition writing. Chapter 6 provides an analysis of the results in the context of the five didactic principles (individualisation, socialisation, control, active participation and motivation) which are formulated in Chapter 2. These criteria are presented as yardsticks which constitute didactically-accountable teaching. In that sense, analysing and interpreting the results establish how English composition is taught in the context of these didactic principles.

In Chapter 7, the results are analysed and interpreted in the context of the three linguistic paradigms of composition teaching (current-traditional, expressionistic and social) which are formulated in Chapter 3.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 Geographical Areas of Research

The wide distribution of circuits in the area under the jurisdiction of the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture makes it difficult to sample all circuits. Therefore, the selection of the sample was limited by the extent of geographical distribution of schools. In other words, the use of circuits within easy reach may have compromised the study. However, the inclusion of three school types (urban, semi-urban and rural) in the sample was designed to enhance sample representativeness and counterpoise this shortcoming.

1.6.2 Efficacy of Methodology

Besides the obvious disadvantage of a questionnaire method such as the unwillingness of the respondents to provide information, questionnaires as research tools have a built-in weakness in that "they leave open the question of whether the data reflect what the respondents do, what they think they do, or what they want the researcher to think they do" (Horowitz, 1986:110). Behr (1988) expresses similar reservations regarding questionnaires as research tools. He states that "questionnaires are on the whole instruments that provide information of a subjective nature, the validity and reliability of which are difficult to determine" (Behr, 1988:163).

Therefore, if it were not possible to examine the actual composition pieces written by students of responding teachers and also to survey the students themselves to find out which techniques their teachers use, the research would have been more valid. Unfortunately such a massive investigation would have been unmanageable for a single researcher within a reasonable time-scale. Consequently, only teacher views could be explored in this enquiry, leaving the exploration of student difficulties for future research.

In sum, although the teachers who participated in this study are indicative of some major trends found in selected schools insofar as they represent three school types (except private schools) within the black education system, a larger sample would have yielded a representative sample with generalisable results. As Mulder (1987) explains:

The smaller the sample, the more features of the population are left out of account, and the greater the chances are that it will not be representative of the population. It does not follow, however, that a larger sample will necessarily yield better results - the chances of getting better results are just improved (Mulder, 1987:59).

Thus, the above stated limitations may have distorted some of the findings.

1.7 TERMINOLOGY

The following section provides clarifications of terms as used in this study.

1.7.1 Active Participation

This is a didactic principle which indicates learner participation, engagement or involvement in the didactic situation. This principle will be used mainly to emphasise the polarised framework of learner activity and passivity in a didactic situation.

1.7.2 Approach

An approach, as used in this study, refers to eclecticism as characterised by the use of various techniques from different methodologies without being bound to any one method (Gilfoil and van der Walt, 1989:6). In this sense, the prescriptive nature of methodologies is sharply contrasted with eclecticism which allows for flexibility in incorporating whatever aspects of any method without rigidly following it to the letter.

1.7.3 Audience

Since every composition piece should ideally be designed to communicate a specific message (e.g., to persuade, describe, convince or reprimand), audience in that context means the person(s) to whom the composition piece is addressed.

1.7.4 Composition

The term composition will be used to mean a writing task which requires students to compose in English. The term "composition" encompasses a form of extended writing which

is sometimes called essay writing, particularly in content-area subjects like History (Kilfoil and van Der Walt, 1989:135).

1.7.5 Composition Paradigm

A paradigm refers to a model or pattern (Monkhouse, 1983:244). In this study, three composition paradigms will be presented as models of composition teaching and learning: current-traditional, expressionistic and social.

1.7.6 Current-traditional Composition Paradigm

The current-traditional composition paradigm refers to a composition teaching and learning model which is "based on a positivistic epistemology, asserting that the real is located in the material world" (Berlin, 1987:6), therefore, "only that which is empirically verifiable or which can be grounded in empirically verifiable phenomenon is real" (*Ibid*: 7).

1.7.7 Control Didactic Principle

Control is a didactic principle which refers to the authority which the teacher uses in a didactic situation to monitor or manage didactic events.

1.7.8 Dialogue Journal

Peyton and Reed (1990) define a dialogue journal as:

a conversation between a teacher and an individual student. However, this conversation differs from all others they may have, in or out of the classroom; it is written, it is completely private, and it takes place continually throughout the school year or semester. All that is required is a bound notebook and a teacher who is interested in what the students have to say and committed to writing regularly to each of them (Peyton and Reed, 1990:3).

1.7.9. Didactic Principle

Didactic principle indicates a fundamental truth or law as the basis of didactic reasoning or action. Didactic principles are here used as: (a) universal constructs which form the theoretical and moral foundations on which effective didactic practices and situations rest, and (b) as *criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of didactic actions*.

1.7.10 Didactics

Didactics refers to the scientific study of teaching-learning actions, usually as they function in formal (school) situations. In the words of Duminy and Sohnge (1987:10): "the didactician reflects on the acts of educative teaching to know and on related facets as the latter are connected with the school." The reflection takes place with the help of scientific methods and is influenced by a moral motive according to which reality is understood (ibid:11).

1.7.11 English as Second Language (ESL)

ESL will be used whenever reference is made to learners who do not speak English as their first language, e.g., black South Africans who may have languages like Zulu, Sotho and Swazi etc. as their mothertongue.

1.7.12. Epistemology

Epistemology refers to a theory of knowledge which explores the nature and basis of knowledge, how knowledge is acquired and standards or criteria by which to judge how we can reliably judge the truth or falsity of our knowledge (Popkin and Stroll, 1981:167).

In this study three composition models will be presented and a claim will be made that each is influenced by a different epistemological philosophical orientation.

1.7.13 Expressionism

In this study, expressionism will be used to refer to a philosophical orientation which locates knowledge "either within the individual or within a realm that is accessible only through the individual's internal apprehension, apart from the empirically verifiable sensory world" (Berlin, 1987:11). Thus expressionism favours strong personal interpretations of reality.

1.7.14 Expressionistic Composition Paradigm

Expressionistic composition paradigm refers to a model of composition teaching and learning which, in line with expressionistic philosophy, places a high premium on the individual.

1.7.15 Individualisation

Individualisation is a didactic principle which will be used whenever reference is made to "... the consideration and provision for individual differences in pupils" (Avenant, 1990:150).

1.7.16 Linear Versus Recursive

Both linear and recursive have greater currency in Mathematics as a subject than in English. However, they have come to be contrasted in order to clarify one of the fundamental differences between the process and product approaches to composition writing: the different conception with regards to the occurrence of writing stages, that is, planning, drafting and revision (McLeod, 1980:17).

In the product approach the perception is that these writing stages occur in discrete stages (and therefore, are linear in nature). However, in the process approach they are perceived as overlapping (and are, therefore, recursive in nature).

1.7.17 Models Approach

The models approach refers to an approach in composition learning and teaching which claims that texts by professional writers should be used to demonstrate style, sentence paragraph types and other language forms (D' Angelo, 1988:199; Weathers, 1988:188).

1.7.18 Motivation

Motivation is a didactic principle which refers to the process of activating and energising learners to keep them reasonably alert and attentive in a didactic situation (Hamachek, 1968:3).

1.7.19. Peer-editing

Peer-editing is a technique in which students edit one another's written pieces. This technique represents a radical departure from the traditional conception of composition

evaluation as the sole preserve of the English teacher. All the teacher does is to lay down evaluative criteria (Berlin, 1987; McLeod, 1988).

1.7.20 Product and Process Approaches in Composition Writing

The product approach to writing concerns itself with the finished piece of writing i.e., the composition. On the other hand, the process approach concerns itself with all the stages involved in composition writing, beginning with the actual assignment of a topic, moving to treatment (planning, drafting and revision) until the finished product is submitted for evaluation.

1.7.21 Positivism

In this study, positivism will be used to refer to a philosophical orientation which claims that all knowledge is "derived from experience by way of sensation and reflection" (Oxmon and Craver, 1981:51).

1.7.22 Pupil (see "student" below).

Pupil refers to a school learner. In this context, pupils are perceived as individuals who are engaged in gaining new knowledge, skills and attitudes. The terms "pupil" and "student" will be used as synonyms in this thesis.

1.7.23 Purpose of Writing

Purpose of writing refers to what the writer wants to communicate, that is, the actual writing topic. A writer may, for example, write to inform, persuade or rebuke. Ideally, all composition topics should be framed so that the student writer clearly perceives what the purpose or aim of communicating is (O' Hare and Memering, 1980:1; Odell, 1979:130).

1.7.24 Socialisation

Socialisation is a didactic principle which refers to learners' adaptation to their physical, psychological and social environment through the interaction of other people (friends, family members, peer group, teachers, etc.).

1.7.25 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism denotes a philosophy which posits that knowledge is generated and maintained through social collaboration (Trimbur, 1985:94; Bruffee; 1973:634; 1984:641; Wiener, 1988:241). In other words, through social collaboration individuals generate knowledge.

1.7.26 Social Composition Paradigm

Social composition paradigm refers to a model of composition teaching and learning - in line with a social constructionism orientation - sees writing as a "social activity" (Trimbur, 1985:98) and, therefore, encourage collaborative learning techniques such as peer-editing and group writing projects (Bruffee, 1984:646; Trimbur, 1985:94-98).

1.7.27 Student: see "pupil" above

1.7.28 Think-aloud Protocol

Think-aloud refers to a research technique used in composition research to analyse writers' composing processes. When this technique is used, subjects are first assigned a topic and then asked to write down anything which comes to mind as they attempt to compose. As the term think-aloud indicates, subjects verbalise their thoughts on paper.

The researcher then records the statements made. Such records are called think-aloud protocols (Emig, 1977; 1983).

1.7.29 Zulu Secondary School

Land which, according to the Development Trust and Land Act No. 18 of 1936, was reserved for blacks, became known as released areas. With the passing of the National States Constitution Act of 1971, all such areas in Natal were patched together to form KwaZulu. In the context of this study, Zulu secondary schools will mean schools situated in such areas within the Province of Natal. Zulus as an ethnic group are predominantly found in the area designated KwaZulu.

According to the classification for various school levels used by all Departments responsible for black education, there are two levels of secondary schools: Junior secondary (Std. 6 - Std. 8) and Senior Secondary (Std. 9 - Std. 10). However, in this study, no distinction will be made between junior and senior secondary schools.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has given a description of the procedures followed when this research was conducted. It also outlined the analytical methods which will be followed. It stated the problem and purposes of the study. Lastly, it presented a clarification of key terms which are used in the study.

The following chapter places the study in didactic context. It contains a formulation and substantiation of five didactic principles (individualisation, socialisation, control, active participation and motivation) which will be used in Chapter 6 to assess the empirical results presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

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CHAPTER 2

DIDACTIC BACKGROUND: PRINCIPLES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Didactic literature evinces wide and often conflicting opinions regarding the various typologies and classifications of didactic principles. However, for purposes of this study, I shall limit myself to the following didactic principles: individualisation, socialisation, control, active participation and motivation. These didactic principles will also be used in Chapter 6 as criteria to assess the didactic efficacy of linguistic theories and current practices regarding the teaching of composition writing and collaborative learning techniques. They will in particular be used (in Chapter 6) as the context in which the empirical results found in Chapter 5 will be interpreted and analysed.

2.2 INDIVIDUALISATION AS A DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE

2.2.1 Definition

Individualisation is, according to Avenant (1990:150), an "educational principle of consideration of and provision for individual differences in pupils." Duminy and Songhe's (1980:22) conception of the individualisation principle is almost the same as Avenant's. They state that "the principle of individualisation is based on the idea that every child must be assisted to develop according to his own capabilities."

Griessel et al. (1990:44) affirm the need to assist every child to develop his/her maximum potential. They conceive of this assistance within the context of what they call

"supportive individualisation" which is, they argue, "... realised through differentiation of instruction" (1990:44).

In this study I shall use the above-stated Avenant's definition of the individualisation didactic principle. Avenant's definition seems valid because it acknowledges that pupils differ as individuals. Pupils' differences obviously need to be accommodated in any didactically-accountable teaching-learning situation since there is general consensus that pupils as individuals differ in many respects (Cawood and Gibbon, 1981; Du Plooy and Kilian, 1984; Piek, 1984; Duminy and Söhnge, 1980; Du Plooy et al., 1982; Perry, 1988; Avenant, 1990; Mahlangu and Piek, 1990; Griessel et al., 1990).

2.2.2 Individual Differences

In accounting for individual differences, different writers categorise learner differences differently. Avenant (1990:149), contends that environmental factors, school influences and time (in terms of present, past and future expectations) all contribute to individual differences. Perry (1988:148), on the other hand, claims that "...individual differences usually refer to relatively stable characteristics of persons, such as academic ability, special talents or disabilities, or the more esoteric dispositions called 'learning styles.'" Duminy and Söhnge (1980: 23) observe that some researchers have, in their attempts to categorise learner differences, "concentrated on the intelligence distribution," thus grouping students as follows:

1. the abnormal or retarded,
2. the less gifted,
3. the normally gifted and
4. the highly gifted.

Fraser et al. (1990:58), on the other hand, see individual differences in terms of intellectual characteristics, personality traits and investigative traits. However, whatever

categories of learner differences individual writers emphasise, there seems to be a common understanding that learner differences imply the urgency of a concerted effort at meeting the individual needs of learners, bearing in mind the different and peculiar constraints attendant to each and every didactic situation.

2.2.3 Individual Teaching

Individual teaching occurs when a single learner is given full and undivided attention by the teacher. In this context, it means a "one-on-one" teaching-learning situation.

As can be expected, the challenge to assist every child to develop to his/her full potential, in the context of a didactic situation, implies a reassessment of the practice of teaching students in a class, which is what Duminy and Söhnge (1980:23) call "class education." Instead of class education, individual teaching exists as one of the possibilities to accommodate learner differences (Avenant, 1990:150-1; Fraser et al., 1990:59-60; Duminy and Söhnge, 1980:28-33).

2.2.3.1 Criticism of Individual Teaching

While acknowledging the desirability of individual teaching, both Avenant (1990:150) and Duminy and Söhnge (1980:27) point out that it is financially impossible to offer a teacher for every individual student in every subject.

Besides the financial implications inherent in any attempt to implement large-scale individual teaching, this practice might deprive the learner of the stimulation he/she would get from mixing with other students and, consequently, the student might "make slower social progress" (Duminy and Söhnge, 1980:24) and end up being "egocentric" (Fraser et al., 1990:60).

Fraser et al., (1990:60) give two reasons for their misgivings on the issue of individual teaching. First, they argue that individualisation of teaching events requires tremendous organisation on the part of a teacher. Knowledge of each learner - his style of learning, intellectual abilities and limitations and shortcomings - is necessary for effective individualisation.

Piek (1984:92) supports Fraser et al. in this line of criticism of individual teaching.

He then suggests three alternatives:

1. individualised teaching media to make it easier for teachers to provide independent and individualised study;
2. learning centres or places where pupils can study under supervision; and
3. flexible modular schedules which consist of a learning packet, a contract, or a study guide in which independent study is outlined.

Secondly, Fraser et al. (1990:60) argue that the achievement of each learner can be related to the amount of time each person needs and has available for successful mastering of a task. Therefore, it is difficult to stick to a timetable with a large group of pupils, since individual differences between the learners have to be taken into consideration.

2.2.4 Differentiated Teaching

Differentiated teaching occurs when pupils with particular intellectual abilities are grouped and taught together. Like individual teaching, differentiated teaching represents an attempt to address the question of individual pupil differences in a didactic situation.

Van Schalkwyk (1986:32-33) argues for differentiated education for every learner. Avenant (1990:152) also claims that, given the impracticality of individual education in general and in South Africa specifically, differentiated education is a solution. He cites

Section 2 (f) of the Act of the National Education Policy, 1967 (Act 39 of 1967) which has made possible two kinds of differentiation: external and internal.

2.2.4.1 External Differentiation

External differentiation, according to Avenant (1990:152) makes provision for three levels: one for handicapped pupils, one for mentally handicapped pupils who would otherwise not benefit from normal education after Std. 5 and one for normal children who aspire to a senior certificate, with or without matriculation exemption.

2.2.4.2 Internal Differentiation

Internal differentiation, according to Avenant (1990:154) uses the following factors (1) intelligence, (2) scholastic achievement, (3) skill, (4) aptitude, (5) interest, (6) character/personality traits and (7) domestic and environmental factors as criteria to group students into collaborative working units.

However, while Avenant's criteria for internal differentiation are acceptable, some of them may not necessarily be practical for the average teacher, especially in the context of black education in South Africa. Firstly, using intelligence as a criterion implies that all pupils must have accumulative cards where their IQ test results are recorded. As can be expected, teachers with large classes may not have time to use this information or - at worst - they may not even be able to interpret the data in pupils' accumulative cards.

Secondly, for the same reason of overcrowded classes in black education, teachers may not be able to use (1) interest, (2) character personality traits and (3) domestic and environmental factors as criteria to group pupils. Overcrowded classes usually lead to a situation where some pupils are "lost in the crowd."

2.2.5 Synthesis

Individualisation as a didactic principle recognises the premise that individuals are different. To that end, the didactic situation must be characterised by educative events that show a very strong sense of appreciation of individual differences. Two alternatives exist to cater for individual needs: individual teaching and differentiated teaching. Individual teaching, although ideal, was criticised on financial and logistics grounds. Differentiated teaching is seen as a viable alternative, especially in the South African context.

2.3 SOCIALISATION AS A DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE

2.3.1 Definition

Fraser et al. (1991:74) argue that socialisation as a didactic principle becomes meaningful "when socialisation in the didactic situation is defined as the individual's adaptation to her physical, psychological and social environment through the interaction of other people (friends, family members, peer group, teacher, etc.)."

Like Fraser et al., Van Der Stoep and Louw (1984) stress the social interaction inherent in a didactic situation. They claim that:

the didactic situation is essentially a social situation. It is eminently a situation of inter-personal relationships of a social naturethe learning activity of the child progresses in a social climate where certain norms and codes of behaviour are set, and this in turn determines the quality of activities and behaviour (Van Der Stoep and Louw, 1984:52).

This study will use Fraser et al's above definition of the socialisation didactic principle.

2.3.2

The Role of the School as Socialising Agency

Seen in the context of Fraser et al.'s above definition, the school is implicated in the humanising process of learner socialisation. In this regard, Avenant (1990:169) argues that "the principle of socialisation implies that the teacher should organise his daily teaching so that favourable social relationships prevail in the classroom and pupils also learn for and from each other." Seen from this perspective, apart from subject matter learning, school becomes a socialising agency - a forum where educands can learn to relate and coexist with others on a human plane. As Gunter (1982:47) puts it: "Teaching, just as education, is a social affair and the school or teaching situation is a social situation." Gunter defines social, in the didactic context, as "an interpersonal relation and activities between adults and adults-in-the-making" (ibid: 47).

Thus, the school - as an extension of the larger society - cannot afford to operate as though it deals with individuals who do not belong to the larger group: the human race, in all its manifestations. Du Plooy et al. (1982:57) remind us that although the child 'designs his own world,' "He arrives in a world where others already are - in a world full of human beings where culture and the products of culture are present. His presence at a present reality is thus not a world apart but a world by others for someone."

Similarly, Griessel succinctly captures the notion of socialisation as an essential component of learning to coexist with fellowmen which the individual finds in his socio-cultural milieu. Griessel states that:

...man is not at one moment a moral, and at another an intellectual or religious being. He is man-in-community and as such he has all spheres to give due consideration to his fellow men. Only in and through the community can man properly respond to his individual calling and give shape to his humanness. Existence essentially means coexistence. (Griessel, 1991:73)

Thus, education has a humanising potential insofar as it enables the educand to carve his/her special space, taking cognisance of others. In other words, education serves to enhance educands' individuality and then reconciles it with social or community values and norms. Consequently, educands learn to be responsible and accountable to the norms and values that serve to keep the community intact. In essence, therefore, education serves to reconcile individual freedom with social stability. As Schoeman (1985) puts it::

...man is at the same time an individual personality as well as a member of the community. The socially mature person is he who, in his association with people, is well-adapted and one who fits in well in society; who is an accepted member of the community in which he finds himself. He is the person who displays the features of co-operation, tolerance, helpfulness etc. which are necessary for good relations (1985:192- 3).

2.3.2.1 Socialising Learners through Collaborative Learning Activities

Joyce and Weil (1986), in their discussion of the principles of learning and teaching, claim that teachers, through opportunities for classroom interaction and collaborative learning tasks can enhance children's moral development, which they describe (in the Piagetian sense) as movement "...in a general direction away from egocentric and individualised ways of thinking to more socially centred, publicly validated ways of thinking."

They argue that:

Teachers can foster social knowledge by providing many opportunities for students to interact with each other, especially by sharing their views and co-operating on tasks. In addition, teachers themselves must provide structured social feedback ...so that social conventions are observed (Joyce and Wells, 1986:107).

Avenant (1990:169), in support of his argument that effective learning can be "...considered to be the result of not only the development of the innate talent of the child, but also of constant interaction which takes place daily between an individual and his

fellowman," suggests that pupils can be socialised through the following activities and techniques:

1. pupils' group work and discussions,
2. team-work,
3. pupil self-government and
4. pupils' committees

Fraser *et al.* (1991:74-75) agree with Avenant and also stress the impact of the "socialising teaching activities" such as seminars, debates and team games on the socialisation process of pupils.

2.3.3 Advantages of Socialisation Activities

Avenant (1990: 169) contends that the interaction that results from the use of socialising activities like group work has three important advantages. Firstly, the use of socialising activities leads to the cultivation of a more critical approach.

Avenant makes a valid point here. It is clear that participants in any group work situation have to be critical in assessing the validity and authenticity of one another's ideas. Thus group work has a built-in mechanism to enhance the development of critical attitudes.

Secondly, the interaction that results from the use of socialising activities such as group work lead to improved concentration. Since these activities require collaboration, they necessarily demand concentration. Participants need to listen attentively to one another's point of view so as to respond insightfully and creatively.

Thirdly, Avenant cites "a more objective and level-headed attitude towards the subject matter" as one of the advantages of using socialising activities. This is sound argument because, activities which require collaboration militate against the subjective

tendencies of individuals towards a subject under discussion. In other words, these activities allow individuals to transcend their subjective and biased ideas. The pooling of ideas and the resultant negotiations that might lead to consensus encourages the adoption of a clearer and objective attitude towards the subject matter.

Singling out group work as a socialising activity, Fraser *et al.* (1991:75) cite six very important advantages. Firstly, learners learn to respect and appreciate different opinions. It will be recalled that socialisation is mainly about inculcating a sense of learning to coexist. However, without the respect, appreciation and tolerance of one another's ideas and opinions, achieving peaceful coexistence might be impossible. It is in this context, therefore, that Fraser *et al.*'s point can be appreciated.

Secondly, group work encourages joint decision making and accountability. In this context, group work keeps the selfish, subjective and egocentric nature of individuals in balance. What emerges from a group discussion is not an individual contribution but a collective decision - based on diverse individual contributions - which binds all the participants. Naturally, all participants should be accountable for their choices. Fraser *et al.*'s point is, therefore, very important insofar as true learning should include some of the facts of life, one of them being accountability for one's actions and choices.

Thirdly, group work encourages the development of alternative problem-solving strategies. This is a sound argument. Through group work, alternative problem-solving strategies - strategies which are essentially the brainchild of individual participants - emerge. In fact, the operative premise underlying group work is that the whole is better than its individual parts. Therefore, group work makes possible the development of a variety of alternative problem-solving strategies which would otherwise not be possible within the context of an individualistic approach to learning.

Fourth, group work helps learners to develop skills and abilities to communicate, to argue, to debate a problem and to convince others. The above-mentioned skills and abilities

are vital when viewed against the ultimate goal of socialising learners: inculcation of humanness. Learners need to understand and appreciate the fact that it is wrong to impose one's will on others and still hope that peaceful coexistence will be achieved. Rather, learners need to learn to debate issues and accept the possibilities of being able or unable to convince others. What is even more important is the courage to live with the outcome of such a debate, however uncomfortable for the individual. In this context, the development of humanness necessitates a sacrifice or compromise of individuality. That is a lesson of life which needs to be taught to learners as part of their socialisation.

Fifth, group work helps learners to develop a sense of responsibility, especially in cases of joint projects. As can be expected, the success of any joint project requires the dedication of the individual participants who have to work towards a common goal. In short, each individual member must pull his or her share of the load. Thus, each member has to be responsible for the sake of group success. There is, therefore, little room for selfish motives as group work is by its very nature a collaborative enterprise and not a competition-generating entity.

Lastly, through group work, learners learn to appreciate the fact that one problem may give rise to a variety of other related problems. As can be expected, group discussions are likely to lead to other related problems which were not originally anticipated. Tackling such problems should lead to a deeper awareness of the complexity of issues. Consequently, learners learn to appreciate the desirability and value of "digging deeper" than the surface when confronted with a problem.

2.3.4 Synthesis

Human beings depend on one another. "Live and let live" is a fact of life. Failure to internalise this fact of life is a "recipe for disaster." Consequently, society -through its various socialising agencies (e.g. church, peers, school and family) -tries to teach its young members

that to live well with the larger family (the human race) they need to transcend their individuality and accommodate fellowmen/women. This is one of life's imperatives.

Indeed it is essential that young members be socialised into the accepted code of behaviour, values and mores as approved by society. In this context, social stability and individual freedom are reconciled. This reconciliation is never easy, given the egocentric nature of individuals, particularly children. Nonetheless, socialising agencies often need to speak with one voice and foster humanistic tendencies like collaboration rather than competition. Human beings depend on one another.

It is against this background that socialisation as a didactic principle in the context of the school has relevance. As argued earlier, socialisation as a didactic principle acknowledges that the didactic situation is essentially a social situation where social relations are formed. Pupils have to learn to coexist with fellow human beings, e.g., peers and teachers. Therefore, the school, in its role as a socialising agency has a very important place in society. The school can socialise pupils through a variety of collaborative learning activities (e.g., group work) which foster a sense of working *with* rather than *against* one another.

2.4 CONTROL AS A DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE

2.4.1 Definition

Fraser *et al.* (1990:67) state that "the purpose of control as one the principles of the didactic situation is to monitor the sequence and progress of the didactic events." Thus, control serves as a "regulatory component" of the didactic situation in so far as it involves "structuring of behaviour" (Lieshout, 1987:61). Van Der Stoep and Louw (1984:65) mention three important areas that could be affected if there is no control in a didactic situation. There will be (a) no accounting for teaching activities, (b) no evaluation or basis to identify

the child's problems in the learning situation, (c) no critical assessment of the teacher's teaching competence.

Control, as used in this study refers to the authority which the teacher uses in a didactic situation to monitor or manage the didactic events.

2.4.2 Authority and the Teacher

Control in the context of the didactic situation, implies that the educator has authority (Badenhorst et al., 1987:74; Gunter, 1982). In fact, Gunter points out that:

Without authority in some form or other there cannot be an educational situation and education cannot take place. The educational acts of the adult as a helping and supporting guidance of the child in many ways imply that the educator has authority. (Gunter, 1982:36-37)

According to Landman et al. (1982:8) the teacher is a "bearer of authority and the child is a demander of authority." They argue that when the child has experienced trust during educative encounters he will accept "the teachers' intensive authoritative guidance" (ibid: 8).

In this connection, Du Plooy and Kilian (1984:90) maintain that:

a relationship of authority, constituted by an influential, firmly-rooted educator in the area of norms and values, and an adult-to-be seeking assistance and requiring protection, enrichment (as regards knowledge concerning properliness) and encouragement, aims toward helping the educand to progress towards adulthood (1984:90).

Elaborating on the nature of the relationship of authority, Du Plooy and Kilian stipulate what they call "basic constituents: allowing (oneself) to be told, to be addressed, to be charged (or called upon), obedience and acknowledging authority" (ibid: 90).

In a similar view, Landman *et al.* (1982:8); Gunter (1982:66) and De Vries, (1986:38) argue that the educand should be ready to accept and act upon the authority of the educator who is better equipped to lead the child because of his experience and facility with values and norms.

However, the idea of the educand having to allow himself "to be told," is problematic for De Vries (1986:35) insofar as it implies that the education situation is a monologue, not a dialogue. De Vries contends that "it is not only the educator but also the educand who speaks in the educational situation to give a free answer in obedience, in order to give expression to his responsibility in this way."

While I agree with the writers who argue that adults have authority mainly because they have experienced values and norms, I find De Vries' argument persuasive. In fact, Landman *et al.*'s claim that the child is "... a demander of authority" (1982:8) is problematic. It contradicts the common understanding that human beings tend to resent authority. Therefore, this argument seems to confuse tolerance for authority - given that because of their dependence on adults, children usually have no choice - with genuine acceptance of authority.

2.4.3 Knowledge as Source of Teacher Authority

Mahlangu and Piek (1990:43) and Schoeman (1985:173) maintain that besides norms and values as a source of teacher authority, the teacher derives his authority - which is by no means absolute, but relative - from his academic, professional training and further development. In this connection, therefore, Vrey (1979) warns us that unless teachers take steps to keep being informed, they may be relegated to irrelevance and obsolescence as they would be found wanting in the very source of their authority: knowledge. He notes that:

A dynamic culture means an escalation of knowledge on all fronts, but also enhanced technical and technological aids to improve

teaching methods. The once well-informed teacher must study, formally and informally, just to keep abreast of his subject and method (Vrey, 1979:208).

Entwistle (1987:65) also sees subject matter knowledge as a source of teacher authority. In this regard he argues that "authority derives from hard work, from constant effort to keep abreast of developments in one's own specialism, from seeking new experiences and constantly refining the old." Seen in this context, teachers have to earn authority. Entwistle further argues that "...the authority of most teachers is dependent upon their personal culture and the resources of scholarship and technique which they bring to the classroom" (ibid: 66).

2.4.4 Designing Future-directed Activities for Educands

According to Stuart *et al.* (1987:23) the teacher, in exercising control, has to "anticipate the future of the child" and set out to design learning contents accordingly. He must also "accompany" the child, "...pointing out direction, controlling mistakes, testing insights, and repeating aspects of the unlocking." Griessel (1991:48) also corroborates the idea of teacher support activities as future-directed and driven and sustained by the communal philosophy of life which the educand must comprehend and internalise.

2.4.5 The Use of Authority

Commenting on the issue of teacher authority in classrooms, Hourd (1972) takes a rather cynical view in her observation that:

It seems as though in every classroom there is a rather tricky situation between teacher and child. In general there is a tacit agreement between them that one is to expect obedience and the other is to obey. Yet in each child there lies a certain cunning desire to seize the throne whenever an opportunity presents itself, to triumph if only for a brief time over this kingly being; whilst in each teacher lurks the fear that his *underlings* will usurp his power. Therefore, in spite of the devotion and willingness to

learn which a good teacher receives from his class, he knows all the time that these rebellious forces are present. So a tension develops which if properly regulated provides a most valuable stimulus to learning (Hourd, 1972:22).

Clearly, Hourd's argument, cynical as it may seem, does not operate on the premise that educands want to obey. Instead it suggests that educands obey because they have to, hence "the cunning desire to seize the throne" at the slightest opportunity that presents itself. Griessel (1991:59) also maintains that tension, as an ontic fact of life, "...appears between obedient coexistence and rebelliousness as self-willed existence." Thus, argues Griessel, an education doctrine which advocates practice that is free of tension and confrontation does not take tension as an integral part of being human, that is, the ontological existence of tension inherent in the relationship of educand and educator - a relationship leading the educand from what he/she is to what he/she ought to be.

2.4.6 Authority and Freedom

It seems clear that the validity and authenticity of control as implied in the authority figure of the educator ought to be reconciled with the educand's desire for freedom. Naturally, this calls for a responsible exercise of authority that does not stifle the individuality of the educand, who must be led to adulthood. It is in this context that Du Plooy and Kilian (1984:90) emphasise: "To maintain pedagogic authority when accompanying a child to adulthood does by no means imply force, suppression or punishment." Griessel *et al.* (1990:138) also agree with this idea in their contention that pedagogic authority should not be misconstrued as "oppressive measures," rather, it should be "... defined as norm-oriented assistance in the child's progression towards moral independence" (*ibid*:138).

Emphasising the need for reconciliation of individual learner freedom with teacher authority, Du Plooy *et al.* (1987:52) observe:

As an indispensable reality in the child's humanisation, education exercises authority

without constraining freedom in providing him with the security necessary for overcoming his apprehensions of freedom; for the human being must feel free to venture (1987:52).

Thus, despite the possibility of tension between authority and freedom, both are necessary ingredients in the didactic situation.

Elaborating on the supposed tension between authority and freedom, Schoeman (1985:173-4) argues that modern man is torn between two schools of thought which represent extreme positions. At one extreme we find a school of thought that advocates lack of restraint and authority, namely total freedom. On the other side, another school of thought advocates absolute authority, thus stifling any form of individual initiative by imposing institutionalised authority. Schoeman claims that both positions need to be reconciled and a middle ground found. For Schoeman, the first solution to this apparent contradiction between authority and freedom lies in the conception of institutionalised authority as relative, i.e., not absolute (given that only God has absolute authority). What this means is that "...no human being has total authority in any area" (1985:173). The second solution lies in the conception that all human authority is "related authority," (1985:174) - authority that is typical of the particular societal agency which exercises it. For example, family type of authority differs from ecclesiastical and state authority. Obviously, this argument also serves to relativise human authority in all its manifestations.

However, Gunter's (1982:67) argument on authority and freedom seems to imply that it is not authority *per se* that creates tensions but the manner in which the teacher wields that authority. In that regard, he argues that teachers cannot abdicate the responsibility to exercise authority. However, he suggests that teachers should exercise "authority as a strict authority-in-love, that is, the exercise of firm or strict but sympathetic discipline in a wise, careful, fair and humane manner" (*ibid*: 67).

In a similar view, De Vries (1986:38) argues for the necessity of exercising "sympathetic authority and setting a good example by means of appealing to the educand to

accept the authority of the educator." It is important, however, that a relationship of trust, understanding and obedience must first exist before the educator can effectively exercise authority (Vrey, 1979; Du Plooy and Kilian, 1984; De Vries, 1986).

De Witt (1981:72) supports the idea of humanness in the execution of discipline in his argument that the teacher should be sensitive to human relations in his class. In fact, De Witt sees the teacher as "leader and team builder" who "speaks the language of leadership every time he says 'Let us ...rather than 'I want...!'"

As indicated earlier, teachers need to exercise authority in the didactic situation. However, it is unfortunate that some teachers - in their desire to exert their authority and avoid being "overthrown" - to use Hourd's phrase - may abuse authority by being authoritarian. As can be expected, such teachers will inevitably stifle pupils' sense of initiative and responsibility. Consequently, pupils might end up as "robots" which await to be manipulated mechanically. It is against this background that Griessel (1991), Gunter (1982) and De Witt's (1981) plea for a balanced approach towards reconciliation of freedom and authority is acceptable.

2.4.7 Shared Control

Anderson (1989:29) describes classrooms where control is "shared." In these classrooms, "...teachers and students assume responsibility for the activities that occur within them. When shared control has been properly established, students can behave in an orderly, responsible manner without constantly consulting with the teacher about the appropriateness of each action." Worrell and Nelson (1974:33) discuss the concept of self-management. They argue that teachers should help pupils develop behaviour-management strategies, thus moving "the locus of control gradually away from adults and onto the child."

Fontana (1987), who applies psychological principles and insights to the problems of classroom control, shares the view that students can be taught to assume a measure of control in their classroom, depending on the nature of the classroom organisation. He defines control as "simply the process of running an organised and effective classroom" (1987:3). In such a classroom, argues Fontana, both teacher and students learn to assume responsibility for their own behaviour and participate in the taking of democratic and well-informed decisions. Seen in this context, control becomes a shared responsibility rather than the sole preserve of the teacher.

There is absolutely no doubt about the desirability of shared control. Unfortunately, it is clear that there can be no shared control if the teacher does not inculcate a sense of responsibility in his/her pupils. However, the tough part for the teacher seems to be learning to believe that pupils, if properly guided and motivated, can do things on their own. Some teachers never learn this lesson.

2.4.8 Order and Discipline as forms of Control

Both the notion of self-management and shared control, discussed above, can be related to Cawood and Gibbon's (1981) notion of discipline. They maintain that the difference between order and discipline is fundamentally a matter of control. Order relies on the teacher who maintains it "...by virtue of authority conferred on him" (1981:293). Discipline, on the other hand, does not rely on the teacher. Rather, it is "an inward disposition that grows out of the inner acceptance of the will towards the right action" (ibid: 293). Therefore, it is desirable that pupils should gradually move from the sphere of order to discipline. In other words, it is better to have self-disciplined pupils than pupils who are orderly simply because they are afraid of the authority figure: the teacher.

Mahlangu and Piek (1990) concur with Cawood and Gibbon in their argument that students should cultivate self-control and self-discipline which would make them responsible

individuals. For Mahlangu and Piek, responsibility "implies self-discipline and the voluntary subjection of one's own free will to norms and principles" (Mahlangu and Piek, 1990:43).

The need to encourage learners to assume freedom, control and responsibility in learning is further endorsed by Peters (1983:55) in his paradoxical contention that the teacher should "...learn to be in authority and to be an authority without being authoritarian." In other words, the teacher should exercise the authority of his position in a way that does not stifle student initiative. Rather, he/she should nurture all efforts that promise to lead to student autonomy.

2.4.9 Synthesis

Control in a didactic situation serves to regulate behaviour of participants (educands and educators). It also serves to ensure that instructional events are sequenced accordingly. Control implies that the educator has authority. Educators should exercise authority in a way that does not undermine educands' individual freedom. In fact they should encourage educands to assume responsibility and be self-disciplined and self-controlled. Only then can educands share control with educators.

2.5 ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AS A DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE

2.5.1 Definition

The principle of active participation, as used in this study, means learner participation, engagement or involvement in a didactic situation. This principle implies that learners should be mentally and physically active during teaching.

The principle of active participation in a didactic situation is encapsulated by Jones and Jones (1981:42) who argue that:

regardless of whether one views learning as based upon the reinforcement of appropriate responses, modelling, or reconstruction of cognitive concepts, learning will take place only when a learner is actively involved in attempting new skills.

Piaget and Inhelder's (1958) arguments also underpin the notion of active participation. They argue that learning, particularly for young children, should involve doing rather than hearing and seeing. Richards and Rodgers (1986:100) express a similar view in their contention that the premise of active involvement is succinctly represented in the words of Benjamin Franklin:

Tell me and I forget,
teach me and I remember,
involve me and I learn.

Van Der Stoep and Louw (1984:61), capture the notion pupil involvement in their characterisation of the dynamic didactic situation as "...pre-eminently a situation of movement." They explain dynamism, in didactic terms, as "more concerned with the quality of the attitude, the enthusiasm and the zeal of the participants" (1984:61). Therefore, both teachers and pupils in a didactic situation are seen as imbued with dynamism - a sense of active participation.

Without active pupil participation in a didactic situation, no learning can successfully take place. Learners must want to learn and consequently exert themselves. In essence, therefore, the didactic principle of active participation is one of the main imperatives of a didactic situation. This principle enhances the quality of the didactic situation. In fact, it seems to be the "lifeblood" of the didactic situation.

2.5.2 Intentionality as Precondition for Effective Learning

Van Niekerk (1982:3) argues that:

...every child's educational situation comprises the entire panorama of possible educative contents, but that each element of the content becomes manifest to the child only if and when he intentionally incorporates it into his world of meaning as it is constituted from moment to moment (1982:3).

Van Niekerk's argument above is that the educand himself or herself in a didactic situation has to intentionally want to learn, and consequently participate fully in the learning experience. Seen in this perspective, learning is not an automatic and coincidental experience. Its success depends on the educand's will to participate actively and meaningfully. Krüger and Müller (1988:4) express this view emphatically in their argument that teaching is highly effective if "...the learner can increasingly give meaning, or appropriate meaning to what he is learning." In this sense, learner participation is demonstrated by his or her ability to interact with the subject matter and assign or attribute his or her personal meaning.

The notion of intentionality as a precondition for effective learning is further elucidated by Fraser *et al.* (1990:62) who argue that "the activity principle as a condition for effective instruction and learning, emphasises that instruction will be effective only if the learner is given the opportunity to become actively involved in the teaching events." De Vries (1986:41); Avenant (1990:117) and Mahlangu and Piek (1990:21) also contend that learner involvement is a necessary precondition for effective instruction and learning, particularly in the context of educative teaching. De Vries (1986:26-27) stresses the need to acknowledge the educand's role as a "thinking, willing and acting subject who needs to be helped and guided to have an active share in his own becoming." Dreyer and Duminy (1983:89) also stress the idea of intentionality and willingness on the part of the educand to participate fully in his becoming.

The best teachers and teaching-learning materials are not a magic wand that could mysteriously bring about successful learning. Learners must want to learn. They must have an intention to interact and internalise the subject matter. After all, as in all successful endeavours, the intention to succeed rests with individual who must perform the action.

2.5.3 Active Learner Participation and Discovery Learning

Learner participation is crucial to the point that no meaningful learning can take place without learner participation and active involvement (Vrey, 1979; Cawood and Gibbon, 1981; Avenant, 1988; Bourd, 1988). Vrey (1979:209-210) goes so far as to assert that "Only by personal involvement can the learner understand or discover meanings, because these have to be correlated with relevant anchoring ideas in the existing cognitive structure, which forms the learners' unique functional knowledge." Vrey's argument extols what Jerome Bruner calls "discovery learning" (Bruner 1966:83) - learning which belongs to a "tradition that views learning as a problem-solving, creative, discovery activity, in which the learner is a principal actor rather than a bench-bound listener" (Richards and Rodgers, 1986:100). In this regard, Van Der Stoep and Louw (1984:56) argue that "the didactic situation is aimed at helping the child towards self-discovery in reality so that he can establish his own position regarding reality." The teacher's task, therefore, is "...eminently to aid, support and help the child in his self-discovery to enable him to reach what he can and to become what he ought to be" (ibid: 57).

Joyce and Weil (1986:107), in their discussion of the principles of learning and teaching, make a similar point in their argument that "the students' role in the learning experience must be an active, self-discovery one" They argue that their Nondirective Teaching Model - a model which puts the teacher in a "facilitator" role - could be used to promote learner engagement in a didactic situation. Not only does this model of teaching help students to "explore new ideas about their lives, their school work, and their relations with others," it allows teachers to develop a "personal relationship" with their students (ibid: 143).

Du Plooy and Killian (1984:82) call this "personal relationship" a relationship of trust. They see this relationship manifesting itself in an educative encounter where the educator senses the helplessness of the educand and then creates a "tending space" (*ibid*: 82) or what De Vries (1986:42) calls "safe protective space" in which the educand feels he/she is accepted completely.

Like explorers, learners should be seen in the context of a journey of discovery. Consequently, there must be a reassessment of the teacher and learner roles in a didactic situation. In other words, teachers must be prepared to "sacrifice" their traditional (and comfortable?) role of telling the ignorant learners. Learners have to actively participate in learning.

2.5.4 Self-exertion as Implied in Active Learner Participation

Avenant corroborates the idea that learning is facilitated when learners become principal actors in the learning experience. Naturally, this implies learner self-exertion and effort as Avenant argues below:

No one can actually teach someone else something. One can supply the educational material, make the learning circumstances as ideal as possible and provide the necessary verbal, visual or auditory stimuli, but it remains the learner's responsibility to form his own concepts. ...Furthermore, no one can remember that which has been taught for him. He must succeed in remembering the subject matter by self-exertion, exercises and repetition (Avenant, 1990: 117).

Gunter (1982:41) echoes Avenant in his argument that the learner "himself has to assimilate, interpret, reconstruct, appropriate and apply" what the educator presents and transmits to him. For Gunter, "pupil participation through self-activity" is an important pedagogic-didactic criterion.

The quality of teaching is often judged by the success of learning. Therefore, both Avenant and Gunter present a convincing argument when they imply that without learner self-exertion there can be no successful learning. Clearly, teaching learners who do not want to exert themselves is an exercise in futility. Because of its inherent purposelessness, it might frustrate teachers.

2.5.5 Periodic non-intervention as a condition for active participation

It would be a contradiction in terms to expect active participation from learners who are never given an opportunity to take initiative and control (subject to teacher guidance) of their own learning in a didactic situation. In this context, Gunter argues that since an educand is an "open potentiality towards the future" who "can and wills of himself to be different, to become self-dependent, to become somebody" (*ibid*: 58), educators need not intervene all the time.

Du Plooy *et al.* (1982:46) corroborate the idea of "the child as open potentiality." They further argue that the child needs the educator in order to maximise his or her potential. However, the child, argues Du Plooy *et al.*, establishes his own will within the framework of the educator's support and understanding. The child:

accepts education as a means of attaining independence. The child is not only eager to take part in his education, he is fully able to do so if he is granted the necessary opportunity" (*ibid*: 49).

In this connection, Hough and Duncan (1970:247) warn that teachers should avoid intrusion in the independent activities of educands. Rather, teachers should "enter the child's world as helpers" if they genuinely want to promote student autonomy and success.

De Vries (1986:39) makes the same point in his argument that there must be periods of "breaking away" in which the educand "...has opportunity to assimilate the intervention he

has experienced, which will make further intervention either superfluous or essential." Thus, both uninterrupted tending and permanent association of educand and educator are undesirable because they operate at cross purposes with the principle of active pupil participation in a didactic situation (Griessel, 1991:49).

As argued above, the ideal situation is to intervene occasionally as the situation demands thus allowing the educand to increasingly gain confidence in his/her facility to tackle learning in all its forms.

2.5.6 Deep and Surface Approaches to Learning and Learner Participation

Active learner participation reveals itself in the way the learner approaches the learning task (Entwistle, 1987:75). According to Entwistle, learners adopt either a deep or a surface approach to learning depending on their intention in learning. If learners want to exert themselves through personal engagement with subject matter, they adopt a deep approach. However, if learners merely want to do the least to satisfy what they perceive to be the teacher's requirements, they adopt a surface approach. Elaborating on the deep and surface approach, Entwistle says:

A deep approach involves the intention to understand, and attempts to relate incoming information to previous knowledge and experience in order to extract personal meaning. In a surface approach, the intention is to fulfil the task requirements, which leads to memorization of only what is thought to be required by the teacher (Entwistle, 1987:75).

It seems that teachers have a vital role to play in influencing learners to adopt either a deep or surface approach to learning. As can be expected, if learners have not been motivated to an extent of seeing the relevance of learning a particular subject matter, they will most likely adopt a surface approach. This line of argument will be pursued further in the section that discusses motivation as a didactic principle.

2.5.7

Klafki's Double Unlocking Theory and Active Participation

Klafki's double unlocking theory (1970) encapsulates the principle of learner active participation in a didactic situation. In essence, this theory states that:

teaching is essentially a two-sided "unlocking" of reality. On the one hand the teacher unlocks the essence of the world for the child, and on the other hand he is obliged to appeal to the child to "unlock" himself in that the latter must be open towards content with which he is confronted" (Viljoen and Pienaar, 1971:23-24).

Van Der Stoep and Louw (1984) put the case of pupil and teacher involvement in unlocking or unfolding of reality clearly:

The teacher's major role in the teaching situation is surely the unlocking or unfolding of reality for the child. However, if the child does not learn, then the adult's contribution to the child's change of his relationship to reality will be meaningless (Van Der Stoep and Louw, 1984:48).

According to Van Niekerk et al. (1987:15) the educand has a responsibility of "conquering" the content which the educator unlocks. Du Plooy and Kilian (1984:81) express a similar idea when they argue that "the aim of any pedagogic activity is to assist the child on his way to attain adulthood. The child is also actively engaged to attain this end."

Seen in this perspective, the theory of double unlocking encompasses the idea of active learner participation insofar as it states clearly that although the educator may unlock reality, the educand still has to open up to reality and do the conquering part.

2.5.8 The Pedagogic Negativism and Pedagogic Activism Schools of Thought and Active Learner Participation

Du Plooy and Kilian (1984:81) warn that support for active learner participation does not necessarily mean the adoption of the extreme position espoused in the "pedagogic negativism" camp. Furthermore, Du Plooy and Kilian see a possibility of a compromise between what they call the "pedagogic activism" camp - a camp that puts a high premium on the educator's role - and the "pedagogic negativism" camp - a camp that stresses the educand's role. They argue that:

over- and underestimation of "roles," whether it is the educator's or the educand's, leads to a distorted view of pedagogic activity in the education relationship (Du Plooy and Kilian, 1984:81).

Griessel (1991:72) also rejects both overestimation and underestimation, be it that of educand's or educator's role. Essentially, Du Plooy and Killian seem to imply that the educand and educator are partners, albeit unequal, in the pedagogic encounter.

Teaching and learning are two sides of the same coin. In this context, overestimation and underestimation of roles become an irrelevant issue since teaching and learning compliment each other. Teachers have a responsibility to guide learners towards independent learning. Learners need teachers on their journey of self-discovery. Thus, teachers should act as "sympathetic tour guides" in a didactic situation.

2.5.9 Student Activities

As stated in the above section, student self-activity is of paramount importance in a didactic situation. Walklin (1990:31) sees learner participation in the context of what he calls "student-centred learning" which he defines as:

...learning situations in which learners are expected, within reasonable limits, to take responsibility for identifying and agreeing on objectives, planning and implementing their own learning activities and appraising learning outcomes with a tutor (Walkin, 1990:31).

Flanders (1970:310), in his Interaction Analysis Model, discusses student activities in the context of classroom interaction and lists four dimensions of classroom interaction. These are (1) goal orientation, (2) authority in use, (3) social contacts and (4) range of ideas. Flanders allocates a central place to pupil activity in his model. He argues that pupil talk in a didactic situation takes two forms: pupil talk-response and initiation. In the former category, pupil talk is in response to the teacher's questions. Thus, the teacher dominates insofar as he/she structures the situation and pupil freedom to express own ideas is limited. In the latter category, pupils initiate talk. They ask perceptive questions and therefore dominate the direction and content of the talk. Clearly, the latter category is desirable in classroom interaction. It empowers the learners to meaningfully interact with the subject matter and direct forms of teacher intervention.

Becker et al. (1975:2) discuss "the open classroom" as a model of instruction which is characterised, among other things, by:

1. A variety of activities progressing simultaneously;
2. flexible scheduling, so that children can engage in different activities for varying periods of time;
3. creative activities valued as part of the curriculum; and
4. freedom for children to move about, converse, work together, and seek help from one another.

Avenant (1988), as translated by Fraser et al. (1990:63), stipulate certain requirements for pupil activities:

1. The activity should pursue a clearly formulated objective.

2. Pupils should be motivated to become actively involved.
3. A clear problem to be solved through active learner participation should be formulated.
4. Sufficient opportunity should be given for the development of the learners' creative abilities during activities.
5. Individual differences should be taken into consideration during the planning of learning activities.
6. Pupil activities should take place within the social climate of the classroom to allow for the development of understanding of others' points of view.

2.5.10 Synthesis

According to the principle of active participation learners should be actively involved in their learning. However, as argued, effective learning depends on the fulfilment of the following imperatives:

- learner intentionality,
- view of learning as self-discovery,
- learner self-exertion,
- teacher willingness to allow learners freedom to explore,
- choosing the deep rather than surface approach to learning,
- learner acceptance of their responsibility in double unlocking of reality,
- balancing pedagogic negativism and pedagogic activism schools of thought,
- engaging learners in stimulating and challenging activities.

It is against the dynamics of the above stated imperatives that the principle of active participation in a didactic situation finds its relevance. The discussions on the principle of active participation all seem to imply a greater emphasis on learning rather than teaching. Therefore, learners' willpower to learn and their efforts at self-exertion and willingness to accept all the responsibilities and challenges inherent in learning are of vital importance.

2.6 MOTIVATION AS A DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE

2.6.1 Definition

Brown (1987:114) defines the construct motivation as "...an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one to a particular action." Fraser et al. (1990:55) give a somewhat similar definition when they "view motivation as a particular mental or internal condition of man" which is "an urge which mobilizes and directs the intensity of man's involvement in a specific activity." Entwistle (1987:72) sees motivation, in the context of school learning, as an indicator of "...the strength and the direction of the effort being applied to learning activities." Like Entwistle, Hamachek's definition of motivation (as quoted by Cawood and Gibbon, 1981:181) is within the context of school learning. Hamachek (1968:3) defines motivation as a process that can (a) lead students into experiences in which learning can occur; (b) energise and activate students and keep them reasonably alert; (c) keep their attention focused on one direction at a time.

In this study, the operative definition of motivation will be the broad definition provided by Hamachek.

2.6.2 Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation

In discussions about motivation in the didactic situation context, there is a traditional distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Duminy and Söhnge, 1980:29; Stuart et al., 1987:29-30; Avenant, 1990:197; Fraser et al., 1990:55 and others).

2.6.2.1 Extrinsic Motivation

According to Duminy and Söhnge (1980: 29), extrinsic motivation is "derived from factors outside the learning situation, such as granting of marks, credits, free lesson hours,

diplomas, certificates and prizes." Fraser et al., (1990:55) corroborate this idea in their argument that "extrinsic motivation is supplied by stimuli external to the learner" and is sustained by "incentives" such as "...certificates, medals commendation, etc." Avenant (1990:23) also states that incentives are sometimes used by teachers to motivate pupils towards co-operation and self-exertion. Worrell and Nelson (1974) advance a similar argument in their claim that "the periodic use of motivational incentives" (1974:3) promotes the learning process.

However, the desirability of extrinsic motivation in successful learning is sometimes disputed. Duminy and Söhnge (1980:29) contend that if purposes and goals are sufficiently motivating, "extrinsic motives are hardly necessary, and learning and the reward become one and the same thing." However, Duminy and Söhnge do not dismiss extrinsic motivation in all its forms. Although Stuart et al., (1987:30) do not advance a reason, they also state that extrinsic motivation "is generally not essential."

However, I do not think that we should dismiss extrinsic motivation altogether. Extrinsic motivation is sometimes helpful, provided it is not overdone. Intrinsic motivation remains the ideal. It is, therefore, realistic to concede that some pupils do not have intrinsic motivation. Under these circumstances, the teacher has to start with extrinsic motivation and strive for attainment of intrinsic motivation.

Thus, the essence of the above argument is that while extrinsic motivation is important, it is unfortunate that it can be counterproductive to intrinsic motivation. Pupils may become "hooked" on incentives such as marks, thus losing their sense of learning for the sake of the joy which learning itself brings. In this sense, the learning curiosity that should be kindled in pupils may inadvertently be killed through extrinsic motivation.

Additionally, extrinsic motivation seems less likely to promote attainment of self-control and self-discipline. In other words, because extrinsic motivation relies on external forces to drive the learner, it might inculcate a perpetual sense of dependence on

incentives. This would not be a desirable state of affairs. We need learners who are self-driven. We also need learners whose approach to learning tasks is not necessarily driven by incentives. Rather, learners should be motivated by the sheer pleasure of successful learning. In this context, the subject matter itself should, because of its relevance, appeal to the learner. The didactic situation should also be so managed that it arouses and sustains learner interest.

2.6.2.2 Intrinsic Motivation

In intrinsic motivation the "pupil is appealed to directly by the subject matter and everything that belongs to the teaching-learning situation so that he shows a spontaneous interest without the need of any outside encouragement" (Duminy and Söhnge, 1980:29). Stuart et al., (1987:29-30) also maintain the learning situation itself can lead to the arousal of spontaneous learner interest.

In a nutshell, Stuart et al. and Duminy and Söhnge claim that a didactic situation which is conducive to learning encourages the inculcation of intrinsic motivation. I find this argument quite convincing. Indeed, it would be a contradiction in terms to expect learners to acquire a sense of autonomy and responsibility for their own learning if they continually have to seek outside approval in the form of incentives. By its very nature the demand of extrinsic motivation can be seen as a declaration of a "vote of no confidence" in one's ability to succeed independently. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation implies attainment of self-control and self-discipline which are all inward dispositions.

It is, therefore, imperative that the didactic situation be made conducive to learning so as to impact positively on intrinsic motivation. Thus, teachers - as classroom managers - have a responsibility of managing the didactic situation in such a manner that optimal intrinsic motivation should occur.

(a) Subject matter and Intrinsic Motivation

According to Vrey (1979:212), the teacher's problem with regards to subject matter and learner motivation lies in bringing "...the child and subject matter into active dialogue." Under these circumstances, issues like subject matter relevance, as perceived by learners themselves, assume great importance in determining learner engagement in the 'dialogue' that Vrey suggests.

Curzon (1990:199) argues that "Where the content of a unit is regarded by the student as irrelevant, i.e. outside his self-constructed boundaries marking out and separating the useful from the non-useful, there will be little motive to participate in the process of instruction." The crux of Curzon's argument is the relevance of the subject matter as perceived by the learner himself/herself, not the teacher.

Presenting a case for the importance of student perception of subject matter relevance, Kroll, a composition researcher, writes:

...I do not think it is difficult to motivate students to perform writing tasks which they feel have some practical applications to their lives. What has always been difficult has been motivating them to perform writing tasks they consider far removed from the reality of other courses, to say nothing of their lives (Kroll, 1979:127).

Jones and Jones (1981:44) express a similar view in their argument that students who are subjected to subject matter which is both outside their realm of experience and ability to master may feel impotent and frustrated. Consequently, their motivation will diminish.

Van Schaikwyk (1986) echoes Kroll as well as Jones and Jones in his assertion that educational content must be relevant to the learner's situation. He warns that "obsolete and

outdated learning matter, teaching methods and structures cannot equip the learner for modern situations" (ibid: 37).

Similarly, Avenant (1990:197) contends that "When something which must be learnt is related to a certain urge which is strongly present in the learner, he usually learns it more easily." In this regard, Avenant suggests linking up the subject-matter with the following pupil needs:

- (i) need for success,
- (ii) need for love and security,
- (iii) need for acceptance and
- (iv) need for sympathy.

Mahlangu and Piek (1990) contend that subject-matter relevance plays a pivotal role in enhancing and sustaining learner interest. They indicate that "It is a basic truth that pupils learn faster, remember longer, and make better use of what they learn when they have a sense of purpose about what they are learning" (1990:27). They further argue that subjects such as, Typing and Computer Science have an innate purposefulness while subjects like History can be hard "to sell." In the case of subjects such as History, they suggest that the teacher and students should spell out the objectives as early and as clearly as possible, thus creating a sense of purpose and direction. Fraser et al. (1990:55) also agree that "the formulation of clear and achievable objectives" can influence learner motivation. Vrey (1979) too is of the opinion that motivation can greatly be enhanced by clear goal formulation. Consequently, Vrey emphasises that the child's will to attain goals must be activated and intensified.

Because of the importance of subject matter in determining the degree of learner motivation, and consequently engagement, Griessel et al. (1990:30) claim that "...a great deal of hard thinking will have to be done about the nature of learning content, the choice and quantity of learning content as well as the arrangement."

In sum, the importance of the subject matter as a driving force that sustains learner motivation can hardly be overemphasised. Krüger and Müller (1988:181) eloquently present this case: "Although it does happen that the pupil initially enters the learning situation on the authority of the teacher, the ideal is rather that the pupil should act on the authority of the learning content itself."

(b) The Teacher and Intrinsic Motivation

Establishing motivation as major determinant of pupil failure or success in a pedagogic activity implicates the teacher. Teachers themselves should be intrinsically motivated to learn and to teach. Landman *et al.* (1988:56) claim that "the most important and indeed the most essential part of a teacher's work in any school is to arouse the pupil's interest and to awaken in him a desire to learn." Thus, teachers, in the words of Avenant (1990:197), have to "...encourage the will to learn in their pupils." In this regard, Duminy and Söhnge (1980:30) suggest "...the creation of learning situations which would stimulate the child's desire to learn," and this, argues Duminy and Söhnge, entails presenting the subject matter "in such a way that interest in it is kept up and reinforced where possible" (*ibid*: 30).

Similarly, Fraser *et al.* (1990:55-6) argue that the teacher has to influence student motivation. They suggest the following:

1. setting realistic and achievable tasks,
2. use of striking teaching media,
3. formulation of clear objectives,
4. didactic clarity,
5. active involvement,
6. establishing of relationships,
7. cognitive conflict and
8. reward and punishment.

It must be indicated that Fraser et al. have raised valid points above. However, they have wrongly included reward and punishment which to a certain extent contradict intrinsic motivation.

2.6.3 Synthesis

Motivation, in the context of the didactic situation has to do with arousing and keeping learner interest in learning. To that end, both the subject matter and teacher - components of the didactic situation - are important. If the subject matter is perceived as relevant to learner needs (present and future needs) and therefore appealing, the learner is likely to be motivated to learn. The teacher's role is important insofar as he/she is seen as classroom manager responsible for all the classroom organisation that makes learning possible. Naturally, proper organisation can go a long way in enhancing learner motivation.

Both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation have a role to play in learning. However, intrinsic motivation is more desirable since its attainment implies attainment of self-control and self-realisation.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The five didactic principles (individualisation, socialisation, control, active participation and motivation) will be used as criteria (in Chapter 6) to evaluate the teaching of composition. To summarise - according to the five didactic principles discussed - effective teaching and learning means that:

- (a) provision must be made for individual differences in children;
- (b) opportunities should exist for pupils to adapt to the social environment through interaction with other people;
- (c) teachers as classroom managers should control the teaching-learning situation;

- (d) pupils should take responsibility for their own learning by actively participating in all learning activities; and
- (e) provision must be made for arousing and sustaining motivation in children.

The following Chapter discusses linguistic theories of composition writing. It places the study of composition writing in linguistic context.

CHAPTER 3

LINGUISTIC THEORIES ON COMPOSITION WRITING

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CHAPTER 3

LINGUISTIC THEORIES ON COMPOSITION WRITING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a theoretical discussion of the three major composition paradigms: current-traditional, expressionistic and social. Each of the three paradigms is discussed under three subheadings: theoretical background, classroom implications and critique.

3.2 CURRENT-TRADITIONAL COMPOSITION PARADIGM

3.2.1 Theoretical Background

The current-traditional paradigm is strongly informed by objective theories which "are based on a positivistic epistemology, asserting that the real is located in the material world" (Berlin, 1987:7), therefore, "only that which is empirically verifiable or which can be grounded in empirically verifiable phenomenon is real" (*ibid.*: 7).

Within the context of the positivism philosophical stance, language is always suspect. "Language is regarded at worst as a distorting medium that alters the original perception, and at best as a transparent device that captures the original experience so that it might be reproduced in the faculties of one's audience" (Berlin, 1987:8).

Seen in this perspective, composition writing in the current-traditional paradigm demands attention to detail and precision of language usage so as to avoid the possibility of distorting what is to be communicated in writing.

3.2.2 Classroom Implications

The current-traditional paradigm of composition teaching has classroom practices which demonstrate control of language usage. This control is clearly discernible in the following classroom practices: treatment of error, focus on product and the use of the models approach. These practices will be discussed in greater detail below.

3.2.2.1 Treatment of Error

Because of the objective stance taken in the current-traditional paradigm, it insists on precision and correctness of language in "transcribing" experience. Therefore, the writer, *audience and language do not play such powerful roles as in the expressionistic and social paradigms*. After all, the duty of the writer, as conceived from this paradigm, is to record truth as it is and not as interpreted to suit herself or the audience.

Teachers who subscribe to the current-traditional paradigm which views reality in purely objective terms, tend to focus more on mechanical aspects of compositions, correcting every grammar mistake (Fulwiler, 1981:59).

3.2.2.2 Focus on Product

The current-traditional paradigm concentrates on the finished product at a time when much current thinking in second language composition research favours the whole process of composing i.e., the process approach (Gebhardt, 1973; Faigley, 1986; Berlin, 1988; McLeod, 1988).

In other words, this paradigm allows a "sink or swim attitude" (Kilfoil and van Der Walt, 1989:153) which characterises classes in which "pupils are told to select a topic and hand in the essay at a specific time. This is marked and handed back to the pupils" (ibid: 153). At no stage during the process of writing does the teacher intervene. He/she only marks the finished composition, that is, the product.

3.2.2.3 The Use of the Models Approach

As indicated earlier, the current-traditional paradigm views precision, correctness and form of language as very important in both speech and writing. Therefore, every possible step is taken to ensure that students learn to be accurate in articulating any experience.

This view of language has encouraged the use of the controversial models approach. According to the models approach, texts by professional writers should be used in teaching composition writing (both in the first and second language context) so as to demonstrate, among other things, style, sentence and paragraph types (D' Angelo, 1988:199; Weathers, 1988:188). This demonstration is done in the belief that errors in composition writing should be avoided at all costs.

Arguing for the teaching of style through the models approach, D' Angelo (1988:199) claims that "imitation exists for the sake of variation. The student writer will become more original as he engages in creative imitation." For D' Angelo, the student writer engages in imitation so as to cultivate "a mature style through creative imitation ... to nurture his garden of eloquence" (ibid: 200).

Weathers argues that the teaching of style through models is an important undertaking. Such an undertaking, he argues, involves three tasks: (1) making the teaching of style significant and relevant for students, (2) revealing style as measurable and viable subject, and (3) making style believable and real as a result of the teacher's stylistic practices (Weathers, 1988:187).

However, the use of the models approach has been criticised in the ESL context - the context of this study - for various reasons which will be discussed in the next section (3.2.3.3).

3.2.3 Critique

None of the three classroom practices (discussed above) of the current-traditional composition paradigm has escaped criticism, especially when viewed from an ESL context. The following discussion presents some arguments that militate against the use of the classroom practices of the current-traditional paradigm.

3.2.3.1 Treatment of Error

As mentioned earlier, teachers who subscribe to the current-traditional paradigm emphasise precision and correctness of language. Therefore, they expect flawless compositions from students.

However, while flawless composition may be desirable, emphasis on correctness tends to create anxiety which in turn makes students "choke up." In other words, because of fear that they might fail (as they often do) to produce flawless composition pieces, students end up too afraid to write anything. "Choking up" becomes self-evident when one considers the fact that when ESL learners are asked to compose in English they face a dual task: the linguistic task of grappling with a foreign language and the composing task itself.

To ease the anxiety produced by over-attention to correctness and precision, Judy argues that since becoming "conscious and deliberate about style is a gradual process, schools should not rush to solve every young person's problems of form instantly" (Judy, 1980:40). Rather, teachers should pose as facilitators in the composing process

(MacNamara, 1973:661; Harris, 1980:25), rather than posing as "faultfinders" (Trimbur, 1985:96). As Zamel puts it :

It seems that ESL writing teachers view themselves primarily as language teachers, that they attend to surface-level features of writing, and that they seem to read and react to a text as a series of separate pieces at the sentence level or even clause level, rather than as a whole unit of discourse. In fact, they are so distracted by language-related problems that they often correct without realising that there is a much larger, meaning-related problem that they have failed to address (1985:700).

Emig (1983:90) concurs with Zamel. She argues that while important, surface-level features like spelling, punctuation and penmanship should not be the overriding concern of English teachers when they approach composition writing.

Graves (1988:193) succinctly captures the futility of confusing surface-level features of writing (spelling, punctuation, etc.) with the actual task of composing. He says that "For years we have taught grammar and usage, thinking that we were teaching composition, but the kind of mental activity required for grammatical analysis is not the same as that required for composing a sentence. Although the two processes appear to be related in complex ways not yet fully understood, they nevertheless represent different mental activities" (1988:193).

While acknowledging student errors as "the most exasperating aspect of student writing" (Horning, 1987:32) in the day-to-day teaching of composition, Horning laments the futility of teachers' obsession with surface-level errors which persist despite "classroom exercises, scolding, low marks, even logic and analysis" (1987:32).

In fact, Horning goes so far as to assert that errors are a necessary and desirable feature of learning. She bases this argument on one of the second language hypotheses: *interlanguage*. According to this hypothesis, "second language learners pass through a stage

of language ability in which systematic errors of various kinds occur [indicating] ... the existence of a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from the learners' attempted production of a target language norm" (Selinker and Douglas, 1985:191). Thus, errors are necessary insofar as they inform the teacher of the current level of students' development.

3.2.3.2 Focus on Product

It was indicated that the current-traditional paradigm puts more emphasis on the finished product and no attempt is made to get the teacher to intervene during the process of composing. It was further argued that *concentrating on the finished product is tantamount to adopting a "swim or sink" attitude to composition writing.*

Therefore, critics (e.g., Berlin, 1987; Faigley, 1986; McLeod, 1988; Zamel, 1982) of the current-traditional paradigm of composition writing argue that it fails to accommodate ESL learners, who, when called upon to compose in second language have to grapple with both the linguistic code and composing demands. ESL students definitely need teacher's intervention at ALL stages, e.g., when drafting, pre-writing, planning and revising their compositions.

Stages involved in writing as process will be outlined in more detail in Chapter 8 which provides a practical application of the theoretical tenets of the process approach to composition writing found in Chapter 4.

3.2.3.3 The Use of the Models Approach

As pointed out in the section on the models approach (3.3.2.3), although composition writers in the first language context (e.g., Weathers, 1988; D' Angelo, 1988 and Graves, 1988) have argued eloquently for the use of the models approach, it has been criticised in the ESL context.

Pica (1982) criticises the models approach on the grounds that it is not in line with current thinking in second language acquisition. She argues that this approach tends to insist on accuracy (by presenting fine prose of capable writers) and, therefore, "deny the learner access to error production as a strategy for testing hypothesis about rules and constructions in the target language" (1982:6).

Homing (1987), in her book *Teaching Writing as a Second Language* - a book whose central thesis is that second language acquisition is in many respects similar to writing acquisition - also corroborates the argument that hypothesis testing is a necessary condition of acquisition. She asserts that "successful acquisition requires forming and testing hypotheses or guesses about the ways in which language functions. In reading and writing, as well as in first and second language acquisition, learners employ the hypothesis procedure" (Homing, 1987:23). Therefore, the models approach is ill-suited ESL learners since it presents them with fine prose of professional writers and consequently deprive them of the opportunity to form their own hypotheses as they learn to write.

Zamel (1982) expresses misgivings on the grounds that the models approach "can be misleading because it may give the students the impression that the linear straightforward writing they are supposed to imitate is the result of a process that was itself linear. It fails to show students that the thinking and writing that preceded these models may have been chaotic and disorganised and that their own attempts to write may involve this disorder" (Zamel, 1982:206).

Linear, as used in the context of the process approach to the teaching of writing, means that the stages of writing (e.g., prewriting, planning, drafting and revision) follow one another in discrete steps. However, ESL composition writers (e.g., Perl, 1980:114; McLeod, 1980:17) have argued that the composing process is recursive. In other words, the stages of writing overlap rather than following one another in discrete steps.

Both Emig (1977:125; 1983:74) and Faigley (1986) also comment on the idea that writing as seen from a process approach is not linear. Faigley argues that:

If writing is to unfold with organic spontaneity, then it ought to expose the writer's false starts and confused preliminary explorations of the topic. In other words, the writing should proceed obliquely as a "striving towards" - a mimetic of the writer's actual thought processes - and only hint at the goal of such striving. The resultant piece of writing would then seem fragmentary and unfinished, but would reveal what Coleridge calls a progressive method, a psychological rather than rhetorical organisation, unifying its outwardly disparate parts (1986:530).

Raimes's (1983) criticises the models approach on the grounds that "models encourage students to think that form comes first. They (students) tend to see the organisational plan of the model as a predetermined mold (like a cake pan or a dessert mold) into which they pour their content" (1983:126-7). As Raimes argues, writers first find content and then form to fit their content.

However, Raimes does not dismiss the models approach altogether. She sees it as a "resource rather than an ideal" (Raimes, 1983:127). She argues for the importance of the models, particularly in demonstrating ways of organising ideas within paragraphs. ESL students may need this skill, given that rhetorical thought patterns may be culture specific - a view enhanced by Kaplan's 1967 study which offered the models approach a theoretical base in that it concluded that thought patterns are culture-specific (Zamel, 1982:205-6; Raimes, 1983:116).

Seen from that perspective, not teaching the English organisational patterns may result in the production of "un-English texts" (Raimes, 1983:116). In other words, Raimes argument is that ESL students may need the models of professional writers since such models demonstrate English organisational patterns which are unique to native speakers of English.

Elaborating on organisational patterns in English, Raimes writes:

In written English, we state our topic (our main idea, point of view), and we usually elaborate on our statement by adding supporting details, such as facts, examples, descriptions, illustrations, reasons, causes, effects, comparisons and contrasts. In short, we show our reader that there is a basis for the statement we made. Our reader's expectations, our own purpose, and our content lead us to choose the way we will present our ideas. Organisation, that is, does not occur to us first. Ideas do (Raimes, 1983:116).

In sum, while the use of models in the teaching of composition to first language speakers seems to have met with a measure of success, it has received more criticism than praise in the ESL context. This may hardly be surprising, given that first language speakers can afford the luxury to "polish" their style while ESL speakers have to start from scratch learning the language before even contemplating to "polish" it.

3.2.4 Concluding Remarks on the Current-traditional Paradigm

Given that this study is largely informed by insights drawn from ESL language acquisition research, and that the study focuses on the ESL composition writing context, the current-traditional paradigm is considered unacceptable. The argument against this paradigm is more a matter of overemphasis (of product, errors and models approach) rather than emphasis per se. In other words, one would expect a balanced view of the writing process rather than a view which sees the product as the main thing. Similarly, one would expect a more sympathetic attitude to students' writing errors (which must be pointed out) rather than an approach where teachers merely "bleed" with their red pens on student paper.

3.3 EXPRESSIONISTIC COMPOSITION PARADIGM

3.3.1 Theoretical Background

The expressionistic paradigm is largely informed by subjective theories which "locate truth either within the individual or within a realm that is accessible only through the individual's internal apprehension, apart from the empirically verifiable sensory world" (Berlin, 1987:11). This paradigm empowers the individual writer whose composition is judged according to the following criteria:

1. integrity,
2. spontaneity and
3. originality (Faigley, 1986:529).

In fact, theorists in the expressionistic paradigm are "interested in the structure of language-learning and thinking processes in their earliest state, prior to social influence" (Bizzell, 1982:213). Thus, this school of theorists is "inner-directed" (*ibid.*: 214) insofar as it extols individual creative genius and originality of thought and expression.

Elaborating on the originality criterion, Berlin (1987:14) points out that students and teachers who embrace the expressionistic paradigm should always strive for what he calls an "original metaphor." The notion of original metaphor and individual vision in writing is akin to what Stewart (1972:20) calls "the authentic voice."

In other words, the writer within the context of the expressionistic paradigm should always stay true to his/her feelings and attitude towards his/her subject. Emphasising the centrality of the writer in this paradigm, Kelly says "the content of composition is the writer - as he reveals his self, thoughtfully and feelingly, in his own language, with his own voice" (Kelly, 1972:3).

3.3.2 Classroom Implications

As indicated previously, the expressionistic paradigm places the individual at the centre of the writing experience. However, the success or failure of the individual writer to use an authentic voice and original metaphor depends on the following:

1. the existence of peer-editors (mainly other students) who have to act as "watch dogs";
2. a classroom atmosphere that is so relaxed that individual student writers are assured of moral support; and
3. the use of journals to act as learning tools and forum to explore personal meanings and interpretations.

3.3.2.1 Peer-editing

In keeping with the demand for original metaphor in writing, classrooms informed by the expressionistic paradigm make use of peer-editing groups, that is, other students edit written pieces of other students. Peer-editors (other students) "serve ...as friendly critics, pointing out when the writer has been inauthentic ... trying in this way to lead the writer to authenticity in voice and vision" (Berlin, 1987:14).

Seen from this perspective, peer editing groups have an enabling effect resulting from being sounding boards which the writer uses to test authenticity in expression and originality of thought. However, McLeod (1988:18) argues that peer-editing groups need to be equipped with specific criteria so that they respond creatively and critically to one another's papers.

Emphasis on the original metaphor assumes a dynamic view of language. Language in this context is constantly being "renovated" as individuals articulate reality they have apprehended. However, the power to create language that is appropriate for the intended meaning rests with the individual.

3.3.2.2 Classroom Atmosphere

All writing, within the context of the expressionistic paradigm, is art. Therefore, the teacher cannot teach writing although students can learn to write. That being the case, the only strategy left is to provide an anxiety-free atmosphere conducive to learning what cannot be taught (Berlin, 1987:74).

Concern with a relaxed environment in writing classrooms is dealt with in the writings of other scholars. MacNamara (1973:661) argues that some students who are capable of expressing themselves vividly in conversation "choke up" when asked to put their ideas on paper because teacher-student relationships are not smooth. Murray (1988) also describes an environment which leads to successful student engagement and involvement in mastering the art of writing as process - a process which, among other things, entails drafting and conferring with the teacher. He claims that the teacher has to "establish the climate, the structure, the attitude" (Murray, 1988:233).

Drawing heavily on insights from second language acquisition research, Horning (1987:67) corroborates the argument that there is need for class environments which do not stifle students in any way. She bases her argument on Krashen's (1982:31) "affective filter" hypothesis which states that affective variables such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety have a bearing on the success or failure of second language acquisition process. Thus, if anxiety, for example, is high, the learner's affective filter will be high and that will result in input (learning content) not filtering through. Consequently, for maximum learning to occur, students' affective filters need to be lowered. Anxiety-free and relaxed classrooms are therefore a "pedagogical must."

3.3.2.3 The Use of Dialogue Journals

A dialogue journal is a written private conversation between a teacher and an individual student. This "conversation" requires a bound notebook (called the journal) and the teacher's willingness to respond regularly to the student's messages, questions or comments in the notebook or journal. In this sense, the teacher sustains the dialogue and students get practice in exploring and developing their ideas in writing (Peyton and Reed, 1990:3).

Teachers who believe in the expressionistic paradigm of composition writing, among other classroom practices, encourage the use of journals as learning tools, that is, to help student writers practise writing, explore and develop ideas.

There exist many research studies (e.g., Newell, Suszynski and Weingart, 1989; Selfe and Arbabi, 1983; Wason-Ellam, 1987, and Weiss and Walters, 1979; Lindfors, 1988; Moon, 1991) that were conducted to test the efficacy of "journal writing as learning tools" (Yinger, 1985:21).

Newell, Suszynski and Weingart (1989) found that responding to literary texts through essay writing in a personal mode (reader-based) led to better quality essays than responding in a formal (text-based) mode. They had their subjects read two short stories and respond to two sets of questions: those in the reader-based mode and those in the text-based mode. Questions in the reader-based mode were framed in such a way that compelled subjects to bring personal experience and feeling into the interpretation of the text. In other words, the students were expected to respond by giving their personal points of view. Questions in the text-based mode demanded students to give factual or "academic" responses that mainly deal with the content of the text rather than students' personal points of view. In other words, they had to rely on the text as the sole source for any inference or conclusion they might reach.

According to Newell, Suszynski and Weingart, a writing task that encourages students to "apply personal frames of reference in interpreting literary texts provides opportunity to elaborate upon meanings they have tentatively created in their reading" (*ibid*: 38). In this sense, writing becomes a tool for exploration of personal meaning (Wason-Ellam, 1987; Odell, 1980).

Selfe and Arbabi (1983) also provide support and proof that journals, as tools for reflection in the form of expressive writing, play a major role in learning. Selfe and Arbabi asked 35 engineering students to use journals which were to be submitted (three times a week) and responded to by the teacher. In their journal entries, subjects were at liberty to explain their interest in the course, react to topics discussed in class, comment on the way the course was presented and explore any issue/s relating to the course content or format. Results of this study showed that subjects who used journals benefited in three important ways:

- a. They used journals as learning tools; journals became tools for analysing important points, questions that arose from readings and lectures, and problems stemming from course presentation;
- b. Journals helped subjects communicate with the teacher; subjects sought clarification on points that were not clear; and
- c. The experience of keeping a journal gave subjects a positive attitude towards writing although they had started with a negative attitude.

The results of this study seem to point to the value of expressive journal writing in learning. Learners, given encouragement to reflect on concepts (in any subject), end up learning in a very personal way. Learners "acquire personal ownership of ideas" (Connolly, 1989:97) and learn to "give voice to their ideas - a voice that others can share" (Silberman, 1989: xvi).

In a study which used college students drawn from five subject areas (History, Statistics, Psychology, Physical Science and Reading Theory and Practice), Weiss and Walters (1979) hypothesised that:

1. more subject- area writing will produce better writing;
2. more subject-area writing will reduce writing apprehension;
3. the frequency and amount of learner-centred writing about a subject will increase learning of that subject; and
4. concepts students write about will be clearer to them than the concepts they do not write about.

Weiss and Walters asked teachers in the experimental group to assign regular learning-centred writing assignments which "could be quite brief, as short as two to three minutes' worth of writing; could be expressive or personal; could be speculative or communicative; could interrupt or close a class or be done out of class; could be preceded or followed by a discussion of their content and /or form; could be kept in a journal;..." (Weiss and Walters, 1979:8).

Results supported hypotheses three and four. Expressive learner-centered writing did indeed lead to better concept clarity and subject learning. As Wason-Ellam (1987:3) puts it: "Expressive writing is best used for exploration and discovery; it has a feeling-thinking aspect to it which may or may not be present in other writing modes. Students can use expressive writing to record or react to what they are learning."

Probably encouraged by research findings abroad, two studies have been conducted in South Africa on the efficacy of journal writing as a learning tool. In a study which involved a class of Zulu Std. 6 pupils at KwaMashu, Lindfors (1988) the American scholar, argues that journal writing exercises that began as merely "talking together" (students and teacher) progressed to a level where it became a process of "being together in talk." She attributes this change to the written interaction (journal entries) that went on between her and the students. This interaction allowed both teacher and students to realise that:- it's in our (their) genuine interest to know one another as fellow beings - even as friends - not as "roles" ("teacher" and "student," "American" and "Zulu," "adult" and "adolescent."

- it's in our (their) readiness to reveal our -SELVES

- it's in our sensitivity to matters of interest and importance to others (Lindfors, 1988:141).

From Lindfors' conclusions we can deduce that:

1. journal writing has a capacity of bringing humanism in class - a sense of caring for one another as human beings;
2. students "open up" if they communicate something of genuine interest to them; and
3. when focus falls on meaning rather than error students' writing apprehension may be reduced.

In another study, conducted at Umlazi, also using Std. 6 students, Moon (1991) set out to investigate the extent to which dialogue journal writing can indeed be shown to increase the students' willingness to take risks" (Moon, 1991:1). She found that the more she abstained from focusing on mechanical errors in students' journal entries and focused on meanings which students were attempting to convey, the more students took risks, thus, even trying harder to communicate (*ibid*: 1).

3.3.3 Critique

The main criticism of the expressionistic paradigm of composition writing is that it extols the individual above society - a position which may not be acceptable given that individuals are mere parts of the whole: society (Fulkerson, 1990:412). Any attempts to validate and legitimise individual experience without taking the larger societal forces as contextual reference, is suspect.

While the expressionistic paradigm seems to come up with personalised meanings in writing, it fails to account for the fact that the individual cannot be divorced from society. That is, individuals relate to the social world, a world where "social practices situated in issues of class, gender and race shape everyday experience" (Giroux, (1983:219). Giroux's argument, therefore, is that the expressionistic paradigm encourages a fallacious notion of

"private" self which obscures the social nature of language and ignores how writing works in the world.

However, the above criticism does not entirely negate personal experience as contextual reference in writing. Rather, it implies that writing should be taught in such way that **both** personal experience and the larger social forces are accommodated. Berlin (1987:176) explains the nature of this balanced approach to personal and social experience in writing clearly. He contends that students can be taught to be "...active agents who shape the world in which they live, calling on language to structure new social arrangements - not simply personal ones divorced from the larger social context."

3.3.4 Concluding Remarks on the Expressionistic Paradigm of Composition Writing

When considered against the background of ESL composition writing, the *expressionistic paradigm of composition writing seems ideal*. Firstly, through its *emphasis on a relaxed classroom atmosphere*, it allows ESL students an opportunity to explore ideas and *develop their writing abilities without any undue stress*. *Learning requires a relaxed state of mind*.

Secondly, the use of dialogue journals as learning tools is commendable. These *dialogue journals play a significant role in improving teacher-student relationships* (see section 3.3.2.3) and helping students develop and explore ideas in writing.

However, as indicated previously (see section 3.3.3), the expressionistic paradigm of composition writing fails to adequately address the individual-society dichotomy. It tends to focus on the individual to the total exclusion of other people. Consequently, it creates a false notion of existence without coexistence. As was argued in Chapter 2 (see sections 2.3.2.1 and 2.3.3) and in this chapter (see section 3.4.2.3), the use of collaborative learning

techniques is in line with efforts aimed at socialising learners by instilling a sense of *community rather individualism*. In essence, such techniques inculcate the notion of coexistence.

3.4 SOCIAL COMPOSITION PARADIGM

3.4.1 Theoretical Background

Strongly informed by social constructionism, the *social paradigm of composition writing* posits that knowledge is a social artefact created and generated through collaboration (Trimbur, 1985; Bruffee, 1973, 1984; Wiener, 1988). Seen in this context, the individual writer does not discover self through language as the expressionistic paradigm of composition writing would have us believe. He/she also does not construct reality through language. Rather, the writer's efforts to write about self or reality is always seen in the context of previous texts (Faigley, 1986:535).

For Faigley, the central assumption of social constructionism is that:

...human language (including writing) can be understood only from the perspective of a society rather than a single individual. Thus, taking a social view requires a great deal more than simply paying more attention to the context surrounding discourse. It rejects the assumption that writing is the act of a private consciousness and that everything else - readers, subjects and texts - is "out there" in the world. The focus of the social view of writing, therefore is not on how the situation influences the individual, but on how the individual is a constituent of a culture (Faigley, 1986:535).

Bruffee (1984:639) expresses a similar view in his argument that what the individual says (in both speech and in writing) is not a reflection of the individual consciousness. Rather, it is the reflection of the collective societal consciousness merely echoed through the

individual. Fish (1980:14) sustains this line of argument in his claim that the thoughts we "can think and the mental operations we can perform have their source in some or other interpretative community."

Having argued that thought and conversation are causally related, Bruffee (1984) concludes that:

*if thought is internalised public and social talk,
then writing of all kinds is internalised social talk
made public and social again. If thought is
internalised conversation, then writing is internalised
conversation re-externalised (1984:641).*

Clearly this argument plays down the importance of the individual in grappling and interpreting reality. It extols and thrives on socially-determined forces that shape reality and human experience. As Bizzell argues, theorists in the social paradigm school of thought are "more interested in the social processes whereby language-learning and thinking capabilities are shaped and used in particular communities" (Bizzell, 1982:220).

3.4.2 Classroom Implications

Composition classes which follow a social paradigm of composition writing tend to be characterised by:

1. composition topics that relate to social, political and issues of the day;
2. an awareness of the complexity and richness of language as a medium of communication; and
3. the use of collaborative techniques in teaching composition writing.

The following section elaborates on the above three issues.

3.4.2.1 Topic Selection

In line with the view of "writing as a social activity, growing within a social context and carrying social consequences..." (Berlin, 1987: 81), classes informed by the social paradigm encourage composition topics that address social, political and economic issues of the day that affect the students. Thus, the composition writing class, through careful topic selection, engages in what Peirce, (1989:402-3) calls "... a pedagogy that opens up possibilities for students and teachers of English, not only in terms of materials advancement, but in terms of the way they perceive themselves, their role in society and the potential for change in their society." Thus, English composition, through its topic focus, becomes an instrument of conscientisation - indeed an instrument of student empowerment.

Elaborating on the social nature of topics used in classes informed by the social paradigm of composition writing, Berlin, (1987:81), discusses what he calls "a rhetoric of public discourse." This rhetoric, he claims, "can prepare students for a comprehensive response to varied rhetorical situations, involving a consideration of the writer's and audience's role and the definition of issues and exigencies" (*ibid*: 81). He then gives examples of writing programmes (e.g., at the University of California) where students were given topics that related to the pressing political and social issues of those times. Berlin argues that the purpose of introducing political topics was to "train the individual to assume the responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy" (1987:82).

However, Berlin is quick to observe that some teachers may feel compromised in introducing social topics about which they know very little - most of which tend to be controversial. This aspect will be dealt with in the critique section (3.4.3).

3.4.2.2 Role of Language

Besides using exciting topics which are drawn from day-to-day social affairs (e.g., politics, economics) as contextual reference, language in the social paradigm of composition

writing plays a vital role. It is seen in terms of social constructionism theory, which has, as one of its tenets, that "language and reality are dependent on one another" (Brodkey, 1989:598). That being the case, "we construct and constitute a world in our words" (ibid: 598).

Viewed from this perspective, a writer has power to present reality in any way. Accordingly, readers ought to be able to see through a writer's hidden motives. In teaching composition writing teachers should realise that "...the content of a writing course is language and how it works" (Hairston, 1985:277). For Taylor (1938), as quoted by Berlin (1987:86), it is important to make students realise that "behind advertisement, editorial, newsreel, radio speech, article or book there are motives which language may obscure or hide altogether."

Hairston (1985) also comments on the elusiveness and complexity of language. She sees writing teachers as "... engaged in a dynamic and loosely-structured activity that involves intensive interaction with people. It is an activity that is tied to a living language, that shifting and ambiguous medium that won't stand still to be examined and is never pure..." (1985:278).

3.4.2.3 Use of Collaborative Techniques

As noted earlier, the central premise of the social paradigm of composition writing is that knowledge is a social construct which, in the words of Bruffee, (1984:646) is "maintained and established by communities of knowledgeable peers." Thus, in their interaction, members of discourse communities negotiate what is to be regarded as knowledge at a given point in time.

Classes informed by a social paradigm of composition writing use collaborative learning techniques. Collaborative learning is "a generic term, covering a range of techniques...such as reader response, peer critiques, small writing groups, joint writing

projects and peer tutoring in writing centres and classrooms" (Trimbur, 1985:87). Therefore, *in using collaborative learning techniques, the teacher "models how knowledge is generated, how it changes and grows" (Bruffee, 1984:647).* In other words, both knowledge-generation process and collaborative learning share the same principles: social interaction and consensus.

3.4.3 Critique

As can be expected, the practices of teachers who believe in the social paradigm of composition writing have been subjected to close scrutiny. Consequently, the following *criticism has been levelled at this paradigm:*

3.4.3.1 Political, social and economic topics

It was noted in 3.4.2.1 that teachers who believe in the social paradigm of composition writing use topics that relate to political, social and economic issues. The use of such topics might compromise teachers who feel uncomfortable in handling controversial topics about which they might know very little (Berlin, 1987:81). Berlin argues that the social paradigm might place the teacher in an uncomfortable position where he/she is expected to be an "expert" - or pretend to be one - in other fields of study (e.g., religion, politics, sociology, economics etc.). Since it is unlikely that the English teacher can be an expert in all fields of study, the claim that controversial topics might be difficult to handle seems justified.

However, it seems that uneasiness with controversial topics may be lessened if the teacher believes in a participatory and collaborative learning-teaching style. In other words, teachers who believe that they may learn from their students are unlikely to feel *uncomfortable when they are not very sure of the topic.* In essence, the argument here is that teachers who see themselves as embodiments of knowledge - indeed knowledge

personified - are likely to feel more uncomfortable since they do not regard their students as legitimate partners in the learning-teaching process. They parade as "know-it-all" models.

Secondly, while it is true that English teachers cannot be expected to be experts in all fields of study, it is equally true that such an argument misses the vital resource available to teachers in schools: colleagues. An English teacher might benefit from utilising information from fellow colleagues.

Nonetheless, teachers who fail to utilise their colleagues and students as a learning resource may have been influenced by their teacher training colleges. Teacher training centres may have failed to equip teachers with collaborative learning techniques, thus making it extremely difficult for these teachers to teach English composition within the framework of the social paradigm of composition writing.

3.4.3.2 Consensus Inherent in Collaborative Learning Techniques

The notion of consensus in collaborative learning has drawn criticism from certain circles (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1984). Trimbur summarises this limitation as follows: "consensus in collaborative learning is inherently a dangerous and potentially totalitarian practice that stifles individual voice and creativity, suppresses differences, and enforces conformity" (Trimbur, 1985:602). In his response, he acknowledges the fears evinced in this criticism and urges the critics to appreciate what Bruffee, one of the advocates of collaborative learning, had learnt from Dewey: "a strong appreciation of the generativity of group life and its promise for classroom teaching. Consensus represents the potentiality of social agency inherent in group life - the capacity for self organisation, co-operation, shared decision-making and common action" (1985:604).

3.4.4 Concluding Remarks on the Social Paradigm of Composition Writing

The use of the social paradigm of composition writing would benefit ESL learners significantly. Firstly, this paradigm presents language as a dynamic and potent medium of communication whose intricate subtleties need students' attention. Consequently, students learn to appreciate the subtle nuances of meaning that language is capable of highlighting or hiding, as the case may be.

Secondly, the social paradigm of composition writing - through its emphasis on current political, economic and social issues as composition topics - relates learning to students' socio-cultural milieu. In this sense, composition writing becomes relevant to students' life. It ceases to be one of those school-sponsored, purposeless and prescribed activities which are meant to be tolerated until one leaves school. There can be no motivation to learn without student perception of the relevance of a given subject matter [see Chapter 2, section 2.6.2.2 (a)]. In fact, negative attitudes to composition writing also emanate from student perception of composition writing as an irrelevant activity (see Chapter 5, section 5.5.4).

Thirdly, through the use of collaborative learning techniques, the social paradigm of composition writing promotes humanness. As was mentioned in section 3.3.4, the use of collaborative learning techniques nourishes and nurtures the notion of coexistence. Students - who as individuals may be inclined to be egocentric - learn to accommodate others' opinions, ideas and points of view during collaborative learning situations (see Chapter 2, section 2.3.3).

However, the use of the social paradigm of composition militates against traditional and entrenched attitudes to knowledge and teaching-learning situations. Teachers who see their role as partners - albeit unequal - with students are apt to be more comfortable in this paradigm. They will further utilise their colleagues to compensate for their lack of

knowledge in other disciplines (as when they use the socio-political topics in composition writing). On the other hand, teachers who see their role as "owners" of knowledge may not be comfortable in this paradigm.

3.5 CONCLUSION

All three paradigms - current-traditional, expressionistic and social - are important although each has its shortcomings. However, the current-traditional paradigm is considered unacceptable in the ESL context - the context of this study. Since the benefits of the expressionistic and social paradigms seem to overshadow the limitations of these paradigms, a balanced approach in their use would be acceptable.

The process approach to the teaching of composition writing represents an attempt to capture the essence of both the expressionistic and social paradigms while negating the current-traditional paradigm. The following chapter, therefore, presents a theoretical discussion of the basic tenets of the process approach to composition writing. As will become evident in Chapter 4, while militating against the current-traditional paradigm, the process approach encapsulates the theoretical underpinnings of both the expressionistic and social paradigms of composition writing. In other words, the process approach to composition writing represents an attempt to utilise all strategies, techniques and methods which are in line with both the expressionistic and social paradigm of composition writing while refuting those which are in line with the current-traditional paradigm. In this sense, the process approach is eclectic in nature.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROCESS APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION WRITING

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CHAPTER 4

THE PROCESS APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION WRITING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The process approach to writing has revolutionised composition pedagogy. Rather than focusing on the product - the finished composition - focus has now shifted to the process. In other words, focus is on the various stages of writing (e.g., planning, drafting and revising) that constitute processes that lead to a finished text or product. In this context, composing is seen as a "complex, recursive and non-linear activity" (Zamel, 1987:698) which involves juggling constraints such as (1) the demand for integrated knowledge, (2) linguistic conventions of written language and (3) the rhetorical problem itself (Flower and Hayes, 1980:33). This chapter presents the process approach to writing.

4.2 THE PROCESS APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF WRITING

4.2.1 Orientation

In any discussion of the process approach to writing it is important to keep in mind that one is essentially dealing with an approach. In other words, the process approach is not "one consolidated approach, but rather a whole series of approaches based on the perception of writing as a process" (Pratt, 1987:4).

The following section, therefore, presents a discussion of the basic tenets of the process approach to composition writing. It will be followed by a critique of the process approach.

4.2.2 Basic Tenets of the Process Approach

McLeod (1980) summarises the basic tenets of the process approach to writing as follows:

1. it teaches that the writing process is recursive rather than linear; the various dimensions of the process (prewriting, writing, revising) do not occur in discrete stages but overlap;
2. focuses on the writing process rather than the final written product; teachers intervene in the process as students write, rather than correcting the final products;
3. stresses strategies for prewriting and discovery; teachers ask students to generate content and to discover their purposes as they write;
4. assumes a rhetorical context - teachers and texts specify audience and purpose in writing assignments;
5. makes use of peer response; students share their writing in groups;
6. is based on research in other disciplines, especially developmental and cognitive psychology (McLeod, 1980:17).

4.2.3 Writing is Recursive

Interest in students' composing processes, kindled largely by Emig's (1971) seminal and ovarial study of "The Composing Processes of Twelfth-Graders," ushered in a new wave of research that focused on what individual writers do (be they students or ordinary people in various walks of life) when they compose, e.g., second language speakers (Perf, 1980; Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1983; 1985), children (Graves, 1983; Calkins, 1983) and skilled

writers (Perl, 1988; Berkenkotter, 1988). Rather than focusing on how best to evaluate finished products, Emig's study concentrated on the actual process of composing, that is, how do people compose.

As Reither (1988) puts it: "The goal has been to replace a prescriptive pedagogy (select a subject, formulate a thesis, outline, write, proof-read) with a descriptive discipline whose members study and teach "process not product" (Reither, 1988: 140). In other words, Reither argues that teachers intervene in the process as students write, rather than correcting the final products or finished compositions. Perl (1988) also echoes Reither in her argument that it is fallacious to argue that "writing is a linear process with a strict plan-write-revise sequence" (Perl, 1988:114). Instead, argues Reither and Perl (using Emig's 1971 metaphor), writing is "recursive."

Elaborating on the notion of recursiveness of writing, Perl explains that "...recursiveness in writing implies that there is a forward-moving action that exists by virtue of a backward-moving action" (Perl, 1980:114). She then gives examples of the "backward-moving" action - an action which sustains writing.

The examples of "backward-moving" action are as follows:

1. Rereading of "little bits of discourse" as one writes, even before one finishes;
2. rereading phrases, clauses or chunks of information to reprocess and gain focus and direction; and
3. suspension of writing to appeal to what Perl calls "felt sense" (ibid: 114).

In a nutshell, Perl's argument is that writing does not proceed in a straightforward lockstep fashion. Writers have to constantly reassess what they are writing against the background of what they intended to say in the first place.

4.2.4 Writing as Discovery of Meaning

Zamel (1982), basing her argument on Emig's (1971) study which used think-aloud protocols and a case study approach, captures the notion of recursiveness in writing and introduces the idea of writing as discovery as follows:

writing involves a continuing attempt to discover what it is one wanted to say...and while this process entails several stages such as "rehearsing," "drafting" and "revising" (Murray, 1980: 4-5), these stages interact together and repeatedly in order to discover meaning. Writing viewed from this perspective is the process of exploring one's thoughts and learning from the act of writing itself what these thoughts are. Rather than being the development of some preconceived and well-formed idea, writing is the record of an idea developing. [It] is a process whereby an initial idea gets extended and refined (Zamel, 1982:197).

As noted above, the notion of writing as a process of meaning discovery implies that the writer has to constantly revise thoughts and expressions to arrive at the ideal or intended meaning. Thus, writing, in the words of Carl Bereiter (1980:87), "always plays an epistemic function in that our knowledge gets modified in the process of being written down."

4.2.4.1 Misgivings about the Use of the Discovery Metaphor

Although the "discovery of meaning" metaphor has been used extensively to explain how writing as process aids learning, Perl (1988) warns us against possible misinterpretation of this metaphor. She states that:

...the term discovery ought not to lead us to think that meaning exists fully formed inside of us and that all we need do is dig deep enough to release it. In writing, meaning cannot be discovered the way we discover an object on an archaeological dig. It involves us in a process of coming-into-being. Once we have worked at shaping, through language, what is there inchoately, we can look at what we have written to see if it adequately captures what we intended. Often at this moment discovery occurs (Perl, 1988:117).

Flower and Hayes (1988) echo Perl's reservations about the use of the "discovery" metaphor. They argue that this metaphor "obscures the fact that writers don't find meanings, they make them. A writer in the act of discovery is hard at work searching memory, forming concepts, and forging a new structure of ideas, while at the time trying to juggle all the constraints imposed by his or her purpose, audience and language itself" (Flower and Hayes, 1988:92). Thus, the discovery of meaning implies an interactive process between writer and text. There are no ready-made meanings. Writers make meanings in composition writing.

4.2.4.5 Writing as a Means of Establishing Connections

The notion of writing as a process of meaning discovery has received considerable attention in composition scholarship. There has been arguments that as one writes, one gets to discover connections and relationships between ideas and facts and consequently discover meanings. Writing, according to Emig (1977:126), calls upon the writer to establish "systematic connections and relationships." Establishing such connections and relationships leads to clear writing which Emig defines as "writing which signals without ambiguity the nature of conceptual relationships, whether they be co-ordinate, subordinate, superordinate, causal, or something other" (*ibid*: 125).

Nostrand (1979) also sees the potential of writing in meaning discovery. He states that "composing consists of joining bits of information into relationships, many of which have never existed until the composer utters them. Simply by writing - that is, by composing information - you become aware of the connections you make, and you thereby know more than you knew before starting to write" (Nostrand, 1979:178).

Vygotsky (1962) expresses the view that composition writing involves the learner in a process of structuring meaning. For Vygotsky, the writing process helps thinking as one transforms thought through inner speech to written language. Vygotsky contends: "The change from maximally compact inner speech to maximally detailed written speech requires

what might be called deliberate semantics - deliberate structuring of the web of meaning" (Vygotsky, 1962:100).

4.2.4.6 The Teacher's Role in the Writing Process

Writing as a process requires teachers to go beyond merely assigning a topic and specifying a time when finished compositions will be due. It requires teachers to assign topics and help students as they sort out their ideas. Teachers are therefore with the students every step of the way i.e. from the first draft to finished product.

Teacher intervention in the process of writing can take many forms. First, teachers can set up meetings with groups or individual students. Such meetings are what Murray (1988:232) calls "conferencing." Secondly, they can set up peer editing groups which are discussed extensively in Bruffee (1984:638-9), Trimbur (1985:97), Wiener (1988:241), Berkenkotter (1984:313-4) and Newkirk (1984:301). Thirdly, depending on the level of sophistication of the school, computers may be used to provide feedback (both peer and teacher feedback) on student writing (Kinkead, 1988; Cooper and Selfe, 1990; Hawisher and Selfe, 1991). Students themselves are encouraged to write multiple drafts before submitting the final product.

4.2.4.7 The Rhetorical Approach to Writing

Oral discourse of a persuasive nature is referred to as rhetorical. The same applies to written discourse, given that such discourse is always addressed to a particular reader (audience) and it communicates something (message). In other words, writers always have an intention which justifies why and how they compose. The choice of words, phrases and clauses in writing is intricately bound with the intended meaning. The following section will discuss the notions of purpose and audience as elements of a rhetorical approach to writing.

Purpose

It is difficult to conceive of a composition piece which does not have a purpose. In other words, each given topic has a purpose insofar as it requires the writer to do something specific, (e.g., describe something, persuade an audience, present a case for a given view etc.). Seen in this context, purpose is "the unifying principle of any written work: not only what the writer is attempting, but what the composition is attempting" (O' Hare and Memering, 1990:1).

Odell (1979) agrees with O' Hare and Memering that purpose lends unity to a piece of discourse be it oral or written. He cites Kinneavy's (1971) "*A Theory of Discourse*" which states that "the aim of a discourse determines everything else in the process of discourse. What is talked about, the oral or written medium which is chosen, the words and grammatical patterns used - all of these are determined by the purpose of the discourse." (Kinneavy, 1971:2).

Commenting on the importance of purpose in a piece of discourse, Tibbets (1980), whose article is a review of Booth's (1970) famous article "The Rhetorical Stance," quotes Booth's story of an "advanced graduate student, bright, energetic, well-informed, whose papers were almost unreadable" (Tibbets, 1980:67). His papers tended to be dull, obscure, pretentious and disorganised. One day, however, all this changed. The student challenged Booth on an issue he had raised in class. Because of limited time available, Booth asked the student to write down his objections. He did. The resultant piece of writing was very different from what the student used to write. Booth attributes this change to the nature of the writing assignment which clearly indicated the reader (audience) and the purpose (i.e., to convince Booth that he was wrong). Booth concludes that "this student could not write a decent sentence, paragraph, or paper until his rhetorical problem was solved - until, that is, he had found a definition of his audience, his argument, and his own proper tone of voice" (Tibbets, 1970:67).

Audience

Audience, in the context of writing means the readers of a given piece of writing. These could be the teacher (as in the traditional classroom), other students (peer editors) or members of the public.

Extending Audience beyond the Teacher

The importance of audience in writing was highlighted by Britton *et. al's* (1975) study of audience in the school writings of 11 - 18 year olds in British schools. Britton and his associates devised a classification of audience on a continuum from private to public: writing for oneself, for the teacher, for the wider known audience and for an unknown public audience. Analysing students' writings with this broad classification of audience, they found that most school writing was for the teacher as examiner.

These researchers argued that the teacher could assume other roles in responding to students' writing: she could be a partner in a dialogic relationship with the students; a trusted adult, therefore receptive to students' thoughts and feelings. Further, these researchers were not happy that students wrote only for the teacher, given their belief that writing for a variety of audiences is likely to make students effective writers. They presented a case of extension of audience, as the proposed audience classification indicates.

Judy (1980:39) concurs with Britton and his associates in her claim that "the teacher should be the reader of student writing, but not the only reader. Students' comments to one another can be at least as helpful as the teacher's, while at the same time being less threatening. When students write for "real" readers - their classmates or people outside class - they pay more than usual attention to matters of form, style and correctness."

Kilfoil and van Der Walt (1989:155) also express a similar view on the issue of extending audience beyond the teacher. They list the following as possible audiences for writing tasks:

- ◆ the teacher; not only as a judge but sometimes just as a reader;
- ◆ another pupil or pupils in class;
- ◆ other people who are not connected with the school, such as penfriends or relatives who may be mother-tongue speakers;
- ◆ institutions or companies to whom formal letters of application, complaint or request are addressed;
- ◆ imaginary people or institutions, though in this case the real audience will still be the teacher.

Accommodating Audience (readers) in Writing

Concern with audience as a crucial factor in composing is evident in the writings of many scholars in the field of composition. Perl (1988:118) calls audience accommodation in writing "projective structuring." She contends that "...projective structuring asks writers to attempt to become readers and to imagine what someone other than themselves will need before a writer's particular piece of writing can become intelligible and compelling" (*ibid*: 118).

Refuting the "think/say it" model of composing, Flower (1979) argues that "effective writers do not simply express thought but transform it in certain complex but describable ways for the needs of a reader" (Flower, 1979:268). For Flower, the ability to transform thought in which the reader's needs are accommodated, distinguishes easily between beginning writers (whose prose is writer-based) and effective writers (whose prose is reader-based).

Put simply, in the writer-based prose writers merely say what they think or feel as it comes without making any effort to present their ideas such that they take the reader along. On the other hand, in the reader-based prose writers make concerted efforts to

accommodate readers by presenting ideas in a way that makes it easy for the readers to follow their train of thought.

Flower's distinction between beginning writers and effective writers implies that maturity in writing is epitomised by a sense of audience awareness in a given writing situation. Roth's (1987:53) study of audience evolution during composing suggests that effective writers use certain powerful strategies in developing a sense of audience: considering a wide range of potential readers, addressing audience selectively at times, writing for the reader's "best self" and addressing an ideal reader.

According to Roth, these strategies can be taught to other students. Further, Roth claims that students need to be made aware that while audience conception prior to writing is ideal and useful, it is possible to be "hindered by rigid predefinitions of the audience" (Roth, 1987:53). Therefore, students need to be ready to revise their audience definitions as they continue to revise their writing.

Further, Roth agrees with Ede and Lunsford's (1988) view that the "audience addressed" and "audience invoked" positions are "not mutually exclusive" (1988:47). Rather, writers may both "invoke" and "address" their audiences. For Roth, this view of audience provides fertile ground to explore the possibility of audience evolution during the dynamic act of composing.

Composing as we know it, at least the cognitive view of composing, is a dynamic process (Emig, 1977; Flower and Hayes, 1980). Therefore, to envision audience as a dynamic entity which does not necessarily predate the text is to provide a useful bridge between audience concerns and other composing concerns.

4.3 CRITIQUE OF THE PROCESS APPROACH

As with most pedagogical approaches, the process approach to writing has not only found disciples who have behaved like "the newly-converted, embracing a new orthodoxy for its virtues without considering that it might have weaknesses as well" (McLeod, 1980:16). It has also attracted scholars who have refused to blindly join the bandwagon. McLeod (1980), Strong, (1985) Reither, (1988) take the process approach to task on a number of issues:

4.3.1 Not all Writing is Recursive

McLeod questions the assumption that all writing is recursive, and, therefore requires discovery of meaning through exploration of ideas. While this may be true of certain types of discourse (e.g., writing an academic paper), it may not be true of written discourse such as in memos, agendas, minutes of meetings etc. In this type of discourse, the process is linear as the writer already knows what he/she wants to say ahead of time. In this sense, therefore, Liebman-Kleine's (1986:786) observation that "different writers, different tasks and different situations demand different strategies," seems justifiable.

4.3.2 Composing Processes of Scientists

The process approach theorists' conclusion that writing is recursive is based on studies using a very selective sample. To substantiate her claim, McLeod contends that studies that investigated the composing processes of the skilled writers (e.g., Perl, 1988; Berkenkotter, 1988) all used subjects from the Humanities. However, argues McLeod, these subjects may be having different cognitive styles from their counterparts in the sciences. Thus the "left-brained sort - physicists, mathematicians, biologists and engineers" (McLeod, 1980:17) may be using a linear approach in their writing. Consequently, McLeod warns that "we should be careful not to impose our own recursive approach on students, especially

budding scientists and engineers, who might be using a linear process that serves them well already" (*ibid*: 18).

4.3.3 Treatment of Mechanics of Writing

McLeod voices her uneasiness at the tendency of some process adherents who have thrown mechanics out of the window in favour of free expression or "fluency." She contends that: "Editing skills and mechanics may come last on our list of what we want to teach students, but they must remain on that list. The unhappy fact is that while we may value content above surface features in a piece of writing, the rest of the world - where most of our graduates will be employed - does not" (McLeod, 1980:18).

Strong (1987), who discusses the contributions of linguistics to writing instruction - specifically, the notions of sentence combining, cohesion, coherence and writing quality - also argues that "the idea of not working with sentences in some disciplined way may seem ludicrous - a little like "studying" Mathematics without learning number operations or "studying" pottery without putting one's fingers in the clay. Writing, is after all, sentences" (Strong, 1987:85).

4.3.4 Peer Response Groups

Some process-oriented teachers use peer response groups without giving such groups evaluative criteria on which to base their responses. Consequently, as George, (1984) and Newkirk, (1984), have demonstrated, "students do not always get useful information from their peers" (McLeod, 1980:18). Vague evaluative responses such as "well done" or "good paper" may only serve to "bolster the writer's confidence, but do little to help the writer think through and revise the paper" (McLeod: 18).

4.3.5 Writing Requires Knowing

Reither (1988) claims that the process approach tends to emphasise discovery as a way of getting ideas. However, this has its limitations in that such emphasis plays down the importance of knowing through, for example, critical inquiry, research and study. Instead, students are told "to look heuristically into their own hearts, experiences, long-term memories, information- and idea banks to discover what they have to say on the assigned or chosen subject" (1988:142). Consequently, students are wrongly given the impression that "they can learn what they are talking about as they compose; they can write their way out of their ignorance" (*ibid*: 142).

In the context of this criticism, Reither argues that Flower's (1979) inexperienced writers, whose prose is writer-based, are not deficient in audience accommodation or language. Rather, they lack knowledge of academic discourse which would enable them to communicate intelligibly and be members of "knowledgeable discourse communities" (Bruffee, 1984:643). Thus, knowing is important since our experiences are not always adequate to provide us with writing material.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented an argument that establishes the process approach to composition writing as a viable approach, particularly in the ESL context - the context of this study - given that it allows the teacher to guide students during all the stages (*planning, drafting and revision*) of composition writing. Thus, students are not left in a "swim or sink" situation.

Although, the process approach to composition writing was shown to be a viable approach, its shortcomings were also discussed in an effort to present a balanced view of this approach.

The following chapter will present the results of the empirical study.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

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CHAPTER 5

RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, both qualitative and quantitative results of the empirical study will be presented. It will be recalled that the main purpose of this project was to investigate the teaching of English composition in Zulu secondary schools. Specifically, the investigation sought to answer one main research problem:

**How does a selected sample of ESL teachers in
KwaZulu secondary schools teach English
composition writing?**

The main research problem had five subsidiary problems:

1. Do most teachers in the sample use effective approaches in their teaching of composition writing?
2. What specific techniques do respondents employ in their teaching of composition writing?
3. To what extent have teachers been exposed to ideas about the teaching of composition writing?
4. Which problems do these respondents encounter in their attempts to teach composition writing?
5. Which possible solutions do these respondents feel could address their composition teaching problems?

In an attempt to answer these questions 100 questionnaires were administered to secondary school English teachers of selected schools in the Umbumbulu and Umlazi circuits. Of the 100 questionnaires sent out, 68 were returned and analysed. The study thus

yielded a response rate of 68% which is unusually high. This suggests that the respondents in the sample were enthusiastic about the project and that the data are representative of the views of this particular set of teachers, albeit that the data is not necessarily representative of all ESL teachers in Zulu secondary schools.

The following section contains results (mainly presented in tables) and brief discussions. More detailed discussions and analyses of the results will follow in Chapters 6 and 7.

5.2 RESPONDENTS

5.2.1 Gender of the Respondents

Table: 1 Responses according to gender

GENDER	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
	N=68	N=100
Male	32	47
Female	36	53
TOTAL	68	100

Table 1 above indicates that there was a fairly even spread between female and male respondents, viz. 47% male and 53% female.

5.2.2 Age Range of the Respondents

Table: 2 Age Range of the Respondent

AGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
	N=68	N=100
Under 20	6	9
20 - 29	25	36
30 - 39	27	40
40 - 49	8	12
50 - 59	2	3
TOTAL	68	100

The age profile of the respondents reflected in Table 2 shows that the respondents were predominantly within two age ranges, that is, 20 - 29 (36%) and 30 - 39 (40%). Assuming that the respondents would remain English teachers, one would see this as a positive finding since most respondents are relatively young.

5.2.3 Professional Qualifications

Table: 3 Professional Qualifications of the Respondents

QUALIFICATION	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
	N=68	N=100
P.T.C.	6	9
P.T.D.	1	2
S.T.D.	27	40
S.S.T.D.	9	13
U.E.D.	5	7
Other	20	29
TOTAL	68	100

Table 3 above indicates that the post-matric three-year Secondary Teacher's Diploma (S.T.D) was a popular professional qualification which most respondents had, i.e. 40%. Respondents who are mainly in the 40 - 49 and 50 - 59 age ranges account for the 20% in the "Other" category. These respondents indicated that they had qualifications such

as Higher Education Diploma (H.D.E), the two-year Junior Secondary Teachers' Certificate (J.S.T.C) and Primary Teacher's Diploma (P.T.C.). Faced with the demands to upgrade their "defunct" qualification, most respondents in these age ranges have had to go for In-service training to obtain qualifications such as H.D.E.

In this regard Table 4 below sheds more light. For example, a striking feature of Table 4 is that half the respondents i.e., 50% have only Std. 10 as their academic qualification. As can be seen in the professional qualifications listed in Table 3, Table 4 reveals that most of these respondents have done post-matric professional qualifications e.g., the three-year S.T.D (40%), P.T.C (9%) and P.T.D (2%), since 50% have Std. 10 as highest academic qualification.

5.2.4 Academic Qualifications

Table 4: Academic Qualifications of the Respondents

QUALIFICATION	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
	N=68	N=100
Std. 10	34	50
B.A.	12	18
B.Paed.	10	14
B.A. (Hons) or B. Ed	12	18
M.A	-	-
PhD	-	-
TOTAL	68	100

It is encouraging to note that 32% of the respondents have junior degrees, namely, B.A. and B. Paed (18% and 14% respectively) while 18% held honours degrees.

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PhD	--	--
TOTAL	68	100

It is encouraging to note that 32% of the respondents have junior degrees, namely, B.A. and B. Paed (18% and 14% respectively) while 18% held honours degrees.

5.2.5 Types of Schools

Table 5: **Types of Schools where Respondents Teach**

TYPE OF SCHOOL	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
	N=68	N=100
Day-school Rural	27	40
Day-school Medium equipped	21	31
Urban Well equipped	20	29
TOTAL	68	100

The figures shown in Table 5 are hardly surprising when viewed against the backdrop of the education dispensation for blacks in the current apartheid structure. In the circuits used, very few schools would qualify as "well-equipped" even though some of them are in the urban areas. The following table on the class sizes will illuminate the disadvantaged position of blacks even further.

5.2.6 Average Class Sizes

Table 6: **Average Class Sizes where Respondents Teach**

AVERAGE SIZE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
	N=68	N=100
20 - 29	3	4
30 - 34	9	13
35 - 39	11	16
40 - 49	12	18
50 -	33	49
TOTAL	68	100

As can be seen from the Table 6, about half the respondents claimed that they have classes of 50 or more. In fact, only 4% of the respondents had reasonable class sizes i.e. 20 - 29. As can be expected, this does not augur well for effective teaching.

5.3 COMPOSITION TEACHING TECHNIQUES

In this section, respondents were asked to indicate frequencies with which they used specific techniques.

Table 7: Percentage Distribution of Frequencies with which Writing Techniques are used

TECHNIQUES USED	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	ALMOST ALWAYS	TOTAL PERCENTAGE
					N=68
1. Discuss topic before students write about it	5	27	40	28	100
2. Use examples of good professional writing as models	16	42	32	10	100
3. Make students aware of audiences they write for	9	22	50	19	100
4. Select and focus on specific problems in students' writing	5	15	45	35	100
5. Use examples of students' writing	7	54	15	24	100
6. Make students work in peer groups	17	34	34	15	100
7. Comment on students' rough drafts before they submit the final piece	9	27	32	32	100
8. Mark every problem or error in rough drafts	8	17	25	50	100
9. Assign a mark to students' finished composition pieces	9	4	32	55	100
10. Comment on strengths and weaknesses of students' writing	0	16	46	38	100
11. Publish students' compositions for classmates to read	53	38	4	5	100
12. Hold individual conferences to discuss writing	13	43	35	9	100
TOTAL	151	339	390	320	1200

The results of this section, as shown in Table 7, generally reveal that the respondents use some of the techniques that are in line with the process approach to composition writing. As indicated earlier in Chapter 4 - the chapter which discusses the

tenets of the process approach to composition writing - the process approach, among other things, advocates:

- (a) teaching students how to plan, draft and revise their compositions (e.g., item 1,2,5);
- (b) that teachers intervene during all the stages of writing i.e., teachers should help students as they plan, draft and revise their compositions RATHER than simply waiting to put a mark on the finished piece (e.g., items 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12);
- (c) that composition topics should spell out clearly the audience addressed and purpose of writing (e.g., item 3); and
- (d) that teachers should make use of peer response i.e., students should share their writing in groups (e.g., item 6)

5.3.1 Helping Students to Plan

In the context of the process approach to composition writing, helping students to plan their composition might entail the use of the following techniques:

- (a) discussing topic before students write about it (item 1 in Table 7) ;
- (b) using examples of students' writing (item 5 in Table 7); and
- (c) using examples of good professional writing (item 5 in Table 7).

Table 7 suggests that most respondents (i.e., 40% often and 28% almost always) make composition writing easier for students by discussing the composition topic with the students before students write about it (Item 1). It is indeed encouraging that students are not left in a "swim or sink" situation, although 5% of the respondents indicated that they "never" discuss the topic and 27% stated that they do it "sometimes."

The response on the item "use examples of students' writing" (Item 5, Table 7) is unsatisfactory. Only 24% do this "almost always," 15% do it "often", with 54% doing it only "sometimes" and a disappointing 7% who do not do it at all. This disturbing given that the process approach proved the desirability of using students' own texts to highlight both errors

and strengths. In this way students receive an immediate context as they identify with the text rather than relating to the professional polished text. Moreover, students' own texts reinforce the notion of the process involved in arriving at a finished and polished text. This argument was elucidated in Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.3.

However, the use of polished professional writing (Item 2, Table 7) - a rather controversial technique in the ESL context - a mere 10% stated that they "almost always" use good professional texts while 32% indicated that they "often" do it while 42% claimed that they use this technique "sometimes." Thus, it seems positive that 42% do it only "sometimes," bearing in mind that the technique of using good professional writing as models can benefit learners if used sparingly and judiciously.

5.3.2 Teacher Intervention during the Composing Process

As stated previously, the process approach advocates that teachers should intervene during all the stages of the composition process (vide Chapter 4:4.2.4.6). In other words, besides helping students to discuss composition topics before students write about them, they can use the following techniques:

- 1) select and focus on specific problems in students' writing (item 4, Table 7);
- 2) hold individual conferences to discuss writing (item 12, Table 7);
- 3) comment on students' rough drafts before they submit the final piece (item 7, Table 7);
- 4) comment on strengths and weaknesses of student's writing (item 10, Table 7);
- 5) mark every problem or error in rough drafts (item 8, Table 7); and
- 6) assign a mark to students' finished composition piece (item 9, Table 7).

5.3.2.1 Select and focus on specific problems (Item 4, Table 7)

It is reassuring to note that 35% and 45% ("often and almost always," respectively) of the respondents "select and focus on specific problems in students' writing" (Item 4, Table 7). Indeed, this technique lends itself easily to purposive teacher intervention as he or she guides students in their composing efforts.

5.3.2.2 Hold individual conferences to discuss writing (Item 12, Table 7)

One would also expect that identification of specific problems in writing should lead to holding of "individual conferences to discuss writing problems" (Item 12, Table 7). At this stage, the teacher individualises composition teaching. However, the results on this item of the questionnaire are not very encouraging - a mere 9% stated that they "almost always" do it while 13% claimed that they "almost never" use this technique although 35% indicated that they "often" use it. It is quite possible, though, that teachers realise the value of individualising composition teaching but that large class sizes forbid such an enterprise.

5.3.2.3 Comment on students' rough drafts (Item 7, Table 7)

In line with the conception of composition writing as a process which requires multiple drafts before a final polished version is produced, the process approach advocates that teachers help students as they write these multiple drafts (Chapter 4, section 4.2.4.6). Therefore, besides individual conferences, teachers are expected to "comment on students' rough drafts before they submit the final piece" (Item 7, Table 7).

It is promising, therefore, to note that 32% "often" and another 32% "almost always" of the respondents "comment on the rough drafts of the students" (Item 7, Table 7). However, it would have been more acceptable if all the respondents had stated that they "almost always" use this technique because helping students as they grapple with multiple

drafts towards a final polished version seems to be at the heart of the process approach to composition writing (Chapter 4, section 4.2.4.6).

5.3.2.4 Comment on strengths and weaknesses of students (Item 10)

As can be expected, helping students to attain the ideal standard of composition writing calls for them to be guided to see both strengths and weaknesses in their writing. It is indeed reassuring to note that no respondent stated that they "almost never" use this technique. In fact 46% and 38% respectively claimed that they "often" and "almost always" comment on strengths and weaknesses of students' writing.

5.3.2.5 Mark every problem or error in rough drafts (Item 8, Table 7)

Although teachers are expected to comment on students' rough drafts, the process approach does not advocate that teachers should mark "every problem or error."

After all, as will be argued later in this chapter, the teacher has other students, namely peers, to help as students grapple with multiple drafts. Consequently, teachers' responses on this item are not promising because 50% of the respondents indicated that they "almost always" use this technique while 25% claimed that they "often" use it. Only 8% claimed that they "almost never" use it. It would have been better if all respondents had stated that they "almost never" mark every problem or error.

5.3.2.6 Assign a mark to students' finished composition piece (Item 9, Table 7)

Teachers have often been cast in a role typical of judges who evaluate and finally punish or reward performance. Therefore, it is not surprising that more than half of the

respondents, that is, 55% indicated that they "almost always" assign a mark to students' finished composition pieces while 32% stated that they use this technique "often."

5.3.3 Making students aware of audience addressed (Item 3, Table 7)

Flowing from the concept of writing as communication, the process approach advocates that teachers should specify the audience addressed and purpose of writing (Chapter 4, section 4.2.4.7). In this sense, the student writer is able to adjust his or her tone by selecting appropriate words to convey the intended meaning. Naturally, if a student does *not know why and with whom she/he is communicating*, she/he is at a disadvantage.

However, the results on this item are disturbing: only 19% of the respondents claimed that they make students aware of the audience addressed while 50% stated that they "often" use this technique and 22% indicated that they "sometimes" use it. As argued above, it is desirable that teachers specify audience. Therefore, the only consoling feature of this finding is that at least 50% use this technique "often" although it would have been more acceptable if 100% had claimed that they use this technique "almost always."

5.3.4 Make students work in peer groups (Item 6, Table 7)

As indicated earlier (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.2) one of the tenets of the process approach to composition writing is the use of peers both in the drafting and evaluation of composition pieces. In this sense, composition writing becomes a collaborative enterprise rather than a competition-generating venture.

Seen in this context, the findings on this item are not particularly positive as 15% indicated that they "almost always" use this technique while 17% claimed that they "almost never" use it. The only positive feature is that 34% stated that they "often" do it. On this

item, one would have expected more respondents to indicate that they make use of peer response.

5.3.5 Publish students' compositions for classmates to read (Item 11, Table 7)

It is in the context of encouraging ownership and pride in students' own writing that the process approach advocates the publication of students' compositions for classmates to read. However, as the results show, the *overwhelming majority*, viz. 53% of the respondents answered "almost never" on the use of this technique. In fact, only 4% claimed that they "often" use this technique while a mere 5% indicated that they "almost always" use it. It would seem, therefore, that this aspect of composition writing still needs attention.

5.4 EXPOSURE TO IDEAS ABOUT THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION

Table 8: How Teachers have learnt about Composition Writing

LEARNING METHOD	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
	N=68	N=100
1. I read about this topic	47	69
2. I heard a paper at a conference	14	21
3. I attended a workshop	38	56
4. I had training at college	38	56
5. I have conducted workshops and presented papers	6	9
6. I have heard teachers talk about it informally	44	65

In this section, teachers were asked to tick all the responses that related to the way they have come to know ideas on composition teaching and writing. As can be expected, while some had one avenue of knowing about this topic, some had more.

Generally, Table 8 indicates that teachers have had a fair amount of exposure to ideas about composition teaching. In other words, the picture that emerges from Table 8 inspires confidence that teachers are not in the dark as to the teaching of composition.

What is striking about Table 8 is that very few respondents (21%) had attended a conference on writing and even fewer (9%) had mastered the topic to a point of actually conducting workshops and presenting papers themselves.

It would seem that there is still a lot to be done in this regard, especially because conferences are valuable forums to air ideas. Moreover, teachers need the confidence to organise and facilitate their own conferences. However, it is heartening to note that 56% have attended workshops on composition writing.

5.5 PROBLEMS IN COMPOSITION TEACHING

(Item 19, section C in the questionnaire)

In this section, respondents were asked to share with the researcher problems (and possible solutions) they might have encountered in their composition teaching. Although not all teachers responded to this section, responses to this item led to seven main problems being identified. Since some problems were stressed most, a rank order of importance will be used below to present them:

1. overcrowded classes;
2. logical paragraph development in student writing;
3. poor English vocabulary and general expression;
4. negative attitude towards composition writing;

5. conflicting expectations of the educational authorities (e.g. principals & inspectors of education) with regards to composition writing;
6. students' failure to identify and address audience appropriately in writing;
and
7. students' apparent lack of confidence in expressing themselves in writing.

5.5.1 Overcrowded classes

The problem of overcrowded classroom in black education has been with us since the South African government entertained separate and unequally-funded systems of education for different races. Capturing the problems attendant to this state of affairs one of the respondents writes:

I handle a class of 50 + pupils. You can make up as to how difficult it is to mark each pupil's work (one and half pages, for instance) satisfactorily when each of the three sections I handle has 50+ pupils.

As can be expected overcrowding results in some pupils not participating effectively, that is, "getting lost in the crowd." Further, overcrowding militates against individual attention - one of the techniques espoused by the adherents of the process approach to composition writing.

5.5.2 Logical paragraph development in student writing

The general complaint in this section was that students do not seem to be able to "sequence their facts logically."

One respondent expressed this problem as follows:

I have found that students have ideas, but their problem is putting them down in a logical manner. What I have found to be useful if one has time is to teach them how to develop an idea in a paragraph rather than just writing statement after statement.

It is promising to note that the above respondent realises that paragraph development is a skill that can be taught and mastered. In this regard, another respondent indicated that perhaps teachers should initially concern themselves with the skill of paragraph development rather than insisting on lengthy but incoherent compositions.

5.5.3 Poor English vocabulary and general expression

The fact that poor English vocabulary and general expression were cited as problematic in composition writing is hardly surprising when one considers the fact that Zulu students have English as a second language. Unless students are encouraged to enrich their vocabulary (through, for example, watching television, reading and conversing daily in English) they are likely to continue being handicapped by limited vocabulary in the English language.

Besides vocabulary problems, some respondents feel that students express themselves in faulty grammar:

I,m (sic) teaching the Std. 9 classes. I have a huge problem since my pupils can't (sic) write simple English sentences without any faults. This makes it very difficult for me to enjoy marking their compositions.

Although poor vocabulary and faulty grammar can be problematic in marking compositions, teachers should not confuse a grammar exercise and a composition piece. In other words, as was argued in Chapter 3 (see 3.2.3.3) the emphasis when marking compositions should initially be on meaning (in other words, it must be asked whether the composition piece, despite its faulty grammar, conveys the intended meaning) then focus should gradually shift to issues of grammar and style, NOT vice versa.

5.5.4 Negative attitude towards composition writing

Some respondents felt that students have a negative attitude towards composition writing. For them it remains one of those school-sponsored tasks to be tolerated or avoided at the slightest opportunity that presents itself. One respondent captures the negative attitude of students as follows:

To the students, composition is unnecessary. They don't like it, as a result. Therefore, when given a composition homework (sic) the teacher hardly receives original work. There is a tendency of asking for assistance from better knowledgeable individual (sic) who usually writes the whole; composition for the candidate (sic). The latter is deprived of chances to develop in the language.

To tackle student perception of composition writing as a futile exercise teachers themselves may have to do their "homework" in this regard. Chapter 8 will, among other things, present concrete proposals which are designed to address this and other problems.

5.5.5 Conflicting expectations of the education authorities

The nature of conflict regarding different expectations between teachers and some education authorities (most of whom are not subject specialists but administrators) is fuelled by the fact that some administrators have not kept pace with recent developments in specific subjects. For example, in composition teaching it is an acceptable practice that teachers should, inter alia:

- use peer groups to mark;
- assign short paragraphs with a clear focus on *development rather than lengthy incoherent pieces*; and
- not necessarily assign a mark on each and every composition piece.

However, inspectors and principals may be impressed with nothing short of pupils' composition pieces that have been "coloured in red," that is, marked so thoroughly that the teacher actually rewrites the composition piece herself or himself. The end result of these conflicting expectations is frustration on the part of the teacher. One respondent captures the essence of this conflict as follows:

Inspectors require lots of work on composition, letters, grammar, etc. There seems to be little time to focus on specific problems and you are forced to assign a mark for each finished composition even though it is not necessary to me.

It seems that this problem requires that members of the inspectorate and principals should be more prepared to adapt to changing times and circumstances. In fact, it is not surprising that syllabi have changed to accommodate new insights. What is surprising is that some education authorities seem to frustrate change rather than promote it.

5.5.6 Student's failure to identify and address audience appropriately

The question of student failure to identify and address audience appropriately was identified. Some respondents indicated that students tend to diverge from the intended audience and use inappropriate language for a particular audience. For example, one cannot use forceful and uncompromising language in a composition whose purpose is to persuade. For example: the "matter of-fact" approach may not be appropriate when the writer tries to persuade (although it may be appropriate in other contexts).

It would seem, therefore, that students need practice in writing for a variety of audiences. In that way they will learn how to write in different modes of discourse using appropriate language.

5.5.7 Students' apparent lack of confidence in expressing themselves in writing

Some respondents indicated that they find it difficult to deal with pupils who seem shy to express their own ideas even if they are capable of doing so. In the words of one respondent:

Black students for a long time have not been allowed to express their views freely, so they tend to be wary of writing what is in their minds wanting to write what they think is in the teacher's mind (sic). The solution lies in total change of attitudes right from the home to the school.

The above respondent contextualises composition writing within a particular racial and ideological stance. The racist South African regime's attempts to stifle inquisitive minds are well known. Indeed students have been victims at one time or another (e.g., detentions without trial, June 16 1976 student massacre and the banning of student organisations). Therefore, what this respondent seems to indicate is that classroom practices which promote rather than stifle initiative, or which nurture inquisitive minds, may be at odds with oppressive political policies.

5.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be noted that, although there is a need for improvement in certain aspects of composition teaching, the results yielded by this survey revealed that the situation is not entirely negative. Firstly, with regards to the teachers' responses on the use of techniques, many teachers seem to use some techniques from the process approach. There is room for improvement, however, with regards to the following techniques:

1. using examples of students' writing (Item 5, Table 7);
2. making students aware of audiences they write for (Item 3, Table 7);
3. making students work in peer groups (Item 6, Table 7);
- 4) marking every problem or error in rough drafts (Item 8, Table 7); and
- 5) publishing students' compositions for classmates to read (Item 11, Table 7).

Secondly, teachers have indeed been exposed to composition teaching ideas. Nevertheless, more teachers still need to attend conferences on composition writing. More teachers also need to master this subject to an extent of being comfortable and confident in conducting and presenting papers themselves.

Thirdly, teachers' comments on the section that required them to state their problems was most revealing regarding the types of problems which confront the average English teacher in grappling with composition teaching.

The following chapter places the empirical results of Chapter 5 in didactic context.

CHAPTER 6

EMPIRICAL STUDY IN DIDACTIC CONTEXT

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CHAPTER 6

EMPIRICAL RESULTS IN DIDACTIC CONTEXT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in Chapter 2 (vide section 2.1), didactic literature evinces wide and often conflicting opinions regarding the various typologies and classifications of didactic principles. Nonetheless, for purposes of this study, I have selected and discussed (in Chapter 2) five didactic principles: individualisation, socialisation, control, active participation and motivation. These didactic principles will be used in this Chapter to analyse the empirical study from a didactic perspective.

6.2 INDIVIDUALISATION AS A DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE

As indicated in Chapter 2, (see section 2.2.2) individualisation as an educational principle relates to the consideration and provision for individual differences in pupils. Thus, in the assessment of composition teaching the crucial issue with regards to this principle seems to be the extent to which teachers accommodate individual learner differences.

6.2.1 Individualisation Principle and the Process Approach

The process approach to writing has a built-in support system that caters for individual differences: the conferencing technique. In simple terms, conferencing refers to the time set aside by the teacher to meet and guide individual students who might have

specific problems in writing. These may be problems associated with "getting started" (during prewriting or planning stage) or during production of initial drafts and more advanced or "polished" drafts.

6.2.1.1 Hold individual conferences to discuss writing (Item 12, Table 7)

However, when asked to indicate how often they "hold individual conferences to discuss writing," only 19% of the respondents indicated that they "almost always" do it while 13% gave a disappointing response by stating that they "almost never" use this technique. Only 35% claimed to use it "often." Thus, the empirical results on this item seem disappointing especially because conference sessions present opportunities for accommodating individual learner needs, problems, frustrations and joys inherent in the mammoth task of attempting to communicate meaningfully in English.

As was stated in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.2.3), teachers in a didactic situation face the challenge to assist every child to develop to his/her full potential. In this sense, the practice of teaching students in a class has to be reassessed and reconceptualised to accommodate the uniqueness of individual pupils. In this regard, the technique of holding individual conferences to discuss writing is didactically essential insofar as it allows the teacher to meet individual needs of learners. In a class situation some students may be too shy to participate meaningfully in group discussions and to verbalise their problems in composition writing. They may even fail to incorporate suggestions from peer critique sessions. Such students need the teacher's the listening ear as she/he provides what Krüger and Müller (1988:143) call an "action of accompaniment" which is an essential ingredient in a didactic situation. Only within the context of a pedagogic relationship of trust where there is a "safe protective space" (Du Plooy and Killian, 1984:82) can pupils' composing abilities be nurtured.

Large class sizes may have been a significant factor in making teachers shy away from holding individual conferences even though they appreciate the advantages. In that context, the 35% who "often" use this technique indicates progress in the right direction.

However, even in the context of large class sizes, teachers can resort to internal differentiation to compensate for the sometimes impractical "one-on-one" individual teaching (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.4).

Seen in this perspective, rather than strictly attending to individual pupils, one after the other, teachers can attend to groups of pupils who have more or less the same composing problems.

6.3 SOCIALISATION AS A DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE

Within the framework of the didactic situation socialisation has to do with the humanising process: making learners aware that existence implies coexistence with fellow social beings, e.g., peers. Thus, in using the socialisation principle to assess the effectiveness of composition teaching it becomes crucial to establish the extent to which teachers inculcate humanism to learners who are first social beings before they are students in a composition class.

In socialising learners, teachers have to organise composition writing sessions in such a manner that fosters and nurtures social relationships. The resultant didactic situation will then be characterised by students who learn for and from one another. Students will collaborate rather than compete during all the stages of the writing process. To the extent that teachers are generally said to be in loco parentis, their didactic efforts at inculcating humanism is to a large extent the fulfilment of the societal mandate - socialising learners into the acceptable forms of social behaviour.

6.3.1 Socialisation Principle and the Process Approach

As was indicated in Chapter 4 (vide section 4.2.2), one of the basic tenets of the process approach, is the use of peer-response in which students share their writing in groups. In Chapter 3 (see section 3.4.2.3) it was also explained how collaborative learning techniques (e.g., reader response, peer critiques, small writing groups, joint writing projects and peer tutoring in writing classes) can be used to engender a sense of collaboration rather than competition in a writing class. In this sense, the use of collaborative techniques in the process approach has a socialising effect. In other words, students learn to be less egocentric and to acknowledge that other people may have different opinions which are also legitimate. In essence, students learn to "live and let live", as the English adage says.

6.3.1.1 Make students work in peer groups (Item 6, Table 7)

However, when asked how often they "make students work in peer groups," only 15% claimed that they "almost always" use this technique while 17% indicated that they "almost never" use it. The only consoling feature of this finding was that at least 34% stated that they "often" use it.

Given the importance of the socialising implications inherent in making students work in groups, one would have been pleased with more respondents indicating that they use this technique in their composition teaching. It will be recalled that Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3.3) highlighted the significance of the socialising activities, particularly group work. It was stated that group work develops critical attitudes; it leads to improved concentration; it develops a more objective and level-headed attitude to the subject matter; it nurtures a spirit of tolerance and respect for different opinions regarding a given issue; it encourages joint decision-making and accountability; it encourages development of alternative problem-solving strategies; it encourages learners to develop skills and abilities to

communicate, to argue, to debate a problem and to convince others; it helps learners to develop a sense of responsibility, especially in cases of joint projects; and, through group work, students learn to appreciate the fact that one problem may give rise to a variety of related problems.

Seen against this background, the respondents' failure to utilise group work effectively in their composition teaching is indeed a cause of concern. Effective learning is more than the development of the innate talent of the child, it is also a result of constant interaction which takes place between an individual and his fellowman (Avenant, 1990:169). Seen in this perspective, classrooms should be sites where social relations are negotiated and maintained. Only then can individual pupils experience their unique individuality as an extension of the larger whole: society. Under these circumstances, individual freedom and social stability are reconciled as individual learn to appreciate and acknowledge their "connectedness" with fellowman and the constraints pertaining to the "relationship of connectedness."

6.3.1.2 Make students aware of audiences they write for (Item 3, Table 7)

Another composition technique which can be used to socialise students is to "make students aware of audiences they write for." As argued in Chapter 4 (see Section 4.2.4.7), writing in such a way that one answers imaginary possible reader questions demands that a writer eliminates egocentricity (e.g., as in writer-based prose) and imagines what the reader will think as she or he reads the piece (e.g., as in reader-based prose). Therefore, it is absolutely essential that students be given plenty of opportunity to write for a variety of audiences so as to "live" in as many different worlds as possible.

Egocentricity as a human trait remains one of the factors militating against effective collaboration in composition writing. In this context, teachers have to encourage pupils to transcend their individuality and "blend" with groups without necessarily losing their

individuality. Seen against this background, the composition technique of making students aware of different audiences they write for is of didactic importance. Students learn to appreciate the fact that what sounds clear and straightforward to them as writers of a given composition piece, is not necessarily clear to the reader or audience. The reader may need clarification, through exemplification, for example. Therefore, it is important to note that the ability to accommodate different audiences in composition writing is to a large extent one of the yardsticks of students' degree of socialisation.

However, the results of the empirical study in Chapter 5 (see Table 7) suggests that at least 50% of the respondents claimed that they "often" "make students aware of audiences they write for" while 19% indicated that they "almost always" use this technique.

Seen in the perspective of the forgoing discussion on the importance of socialising students through making them aware of different audiences they write for, the results on this technique would have been more encouraging if more respondents indicated that they "almost always" use this technique. However, it is inspiring that at least 50% stated that they "often" use it.

As with the use of peer groups, the teachers' responses regarding the enhancement of socialisation through making students aware of audiences they write for, are unsatisfactory. Teachers ought to exploit all opportunities that foster social relations, especially because (as stated in Chapter 2, section 2.3.2) teaching is a "social affair" (Gunter, 1982:47) designed to enable pupils to carve their special spaces while taking cognisance of others.

6.4 CONTROL AS A DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE

As mentioned in Chapter 2 (vide section 2.4.1), the purpose of control as one of the principles of the didactic situation is to monitor the sequence and progress of the didactic events. Control is so crucial that without it certain aspects of the didactic situation can be adversely affected. For example, without control it would be difficult, if not impossible, to account for teaching activities; there can be no evaluation or basis to identify the child's problems in the learning situation and there can be no critical assessment of the teacher's teaching competence.

Perceived from this perspective, the teacher has to function as class manager in the didactic situation. By virtue of his position as adult among the-not-yet-adults in a didactic situation, he/she is mandated to exercise firm but sympathetic authority, always taking cognisance of the ontic fact that authority presupposes the possibility of tension. Consequently, the teacher should exercise authority in a manner that does not stifle the individuality of the learners. Rather, they should be made to see conflict as integral part of being human and - with the sympathetic guidance of the teacher - handle it accordingly.

With regards to the process approach to composition writing, the crucial issue seems to be the extent to which the teacher monitors the sequence and progress of student activities during the stages of the writing process. In this sense, focus falls on the nature of the role played by teachers during student's composing process. The key questions seem to be:

- **Do teachers' roles afford them opportunities to critically assess their teaching competence regarding composition teaching?**
- **Do teachers' roles give the basis on which to identify pupils' problems in composition writing?**
- **Can teachers account for their teaching activities regarding composition writing?**

Composition pedagogy which successfully answers these questions can be said to be didactically-justifiable.

6.4.1 Control Principle and the Process Approach

Although the process approach to composition writing seems to be student-centred in orientation, there can be no doubt that the teacher still remains a crucial factor, as in any meaningful didactic situation. However, the teacher does not pose as the "know-it-all among the ignorant" as in the traditional paradigm of teaching and learning. Rather, the teacher poses as organiser or facilitator of learning as in the student-centred paradigm of teaching and learning. Specifically, the teacher in the composition class can use the following techniques to monitor the progress of work:

- 1) select and focus on specific problems in students' writing (Item 4, Table 7);
- 2) mark every problem or error in rough drafts (Item 8, Table 7); and
- 3) use examples of good professional writing as models (Item 2, Table 7).

6.4.1.1 Select and focus on specific problems in students' writing (Item 4, Table 7)

The composition writing technique of selecting and focusing on specific problems in students' writing is didactically essential. Firstly, it allows teachers to identify students' writing problems. Secondly, it creates opportunities for responding positively, insightfully and creatively to specific writing problems. Under these circumstances, teachers are able to critically examine their teaching regarding composition writing. They are also able to assess pupils' progress regarding specific components of the composing process.

According to the results shown in Chapter 5 (vide Table 7), a reasonable number of the respondents (45% "often" and 35% "almost always") stated that they "select and focus on specific problems in writing."

This finding is indeed a positive aspect because it suggests that teachers in the sample are in a clearer position to guide and monitor the progress of the students as they learn to compose.

6.4.1.2 Mark every problem or error in students' rough drafts (Item 8, Table 7)

As was argued in Chapter 5 (see section 5.3.2.5), with regards to the technique of "marking every problem or error in rough drafts," the teachers' responses on this item are unsatisfactory because half of them (50%) stated that they "almost always" use this technique while 25% indicated that they "often" use it. Within the context of the process approach to composition teaching one would expect teachers to allow students to self-correct at times through peer groups or pair work rather than marking every problem or error themselves. Thus, marking every problem or error will be excessive control while not marking at all will be an abdication of duty.

As was shown in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.4.7), teachers and students can share control of didactic events. However, such shared control is only possible when the locus of control gradually shifts from teachers to students who then begin to assume greater responsibility and initiative for their own learning. Seen in the context of composition writing, teachers should not aspire to marking every problem or error in students' writing. Rather, students - subject to the teacher's guidance - should assume some measure of responsibility for this task. Naturally, teachers themselves will have to want to share control with students and, consequently create a climate that prepares and nurtures students' sense of responsibility and initiative.

Besides the negative effects of excessive control inherent in marking every problem or error in writing, such an exercise might prove difficult if not impossible in large classes. It will be recalled that in the results as presented in Chapter 5 (vide section 5.5.1) the problem of overcrowded classrooms in black schools was cited as one of the problems militating against composition writing. Furthermore, results on the average class size as shown in Chapter 5 (Table 6), indicate that almost half of the respondents (49%) have classes of more than 50 students.

6.4.1.3 Use examples of good professional writing as models (Item 2, Table 7)

It is promising to note that according to Table 7 in Chapter 5, only 10% of the respondents claimed that they "almost always" use good professional texts while 32% indicated that they "often" use it and 42% said they "sometimes" use this technique (see Section 5.3.1).

To the extent that good professional writing provides a model against which students can be expected to measure their own writing capabilities, the "use of examples of good professional writing as models" has an element of control. Students' sense of free expression is channelled as students are expected to imitate the professional writer whose writing is upheld (by the teacher) as the desired standard.

However, as will be recalled, in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.2.3.3) it was argued that the use of professional writing as models in a composition class is controversial, especially in the ESL context. Therefore this technique should be used sparingly and judiciously in the ESL context - the context of this study.

In didactic terms, this technique represents an extreme form of control insofar as teachers impose a model of composition to be copied. This might impact negatively on students' sense of worth as this practice indirectly implies that their own sense of expression

is unacceptable in a didactic situation. However, as was argued in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.4.6), the validity and authenticity of control as implied in the authority figure of the educator ought to be reconciled with the educand's' desire for freedom.

Taken to extremes, as in the testimony from the present writer's observation as a secondary pupil, some teachers go to an extent of using corporal punishment - a familiar form of maintaining discipline in black schools - to impose composition models. They resent the idea of having to correct a piece of composition - which will obviously have grammar mistakes - when such corrections could have been avoided had the students merely copied a given model of composition. However, this practice has to be put in correct perspective. In this context, teachers usually had students (use copying many "perfect" compositions to fool school inspectors who usually visited our school and demanded to see evidence that we had written compositions which were duly marked. Our teachers duly "complied." No doubt, we as pupils did not compose anything. Professional writers and sometimes teachers themselves, did the composing part and we merely copied!

In sum, if the technique of using professional writers' texts as models is to serve any didactic purpose, its limitations have to be acknowledged and appreciated.

6.5 ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AS A DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE

There seems to be consensus that learner involvement and engagement with the learning task leads to effective learning. As argued in Chapter 2, (vide section 2.5.3) according to this principle, learners should be principal actors in learning rather than being bench-bound listeners who only do what the teacher says. They should exert themselves and be willing to take an active role in interacting with the learning task and this includes, among other things, active interaction with teacher, other students and the material presented.

As was stated previously, the principle of active participation implies that learners *must mentally and physically be active during teaching*. However, learners must want and be willing to learn. Clearly, this presupposes intentionality as a precondition for effective learning (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.2).

6.5.1 The Process Approach and Active Participation Principle

The process approach to writing encapsulates the didactic principle of active participation in the sense that it encourages active pupil participation, particularly during the following three main stages of writing: planning, drafting and revision.

Planning

At this stage of writing, learners, with the help of the teacher, have to take an active role in the planning of their own writing task. They need to discuss the topic, thereby sorting and sifting out irrelevant ideas from relevant ones. Such discussions can take many forms, e.g., debates, interviews, panel discussions, group work or pairs.

Thus, the process approach to writing assumes a willingness on the part of the students to *actively explore all avenues in an effort to come up with ideas for a given composition topic during the planning stage*. It is important to note that the teacher merely guides the students as they try to plan their compositions.

Drafting

During the drafting stage students "cut and paste" ideas that were discussed during the planning stage. Similar ideas are put together; some are deemed irrelevant and are therefore discarded.

During this stage, learners work in pairs or groups. Initial drafts that emerge after the structuring of information during this stage may further be exchanged and discussed among students who then (with the help of the teacher) decide on how to improve further drafts.

Revision

During this stage, students focus on both local and global revision. The former refers to the process known as proof-reading for surface features like spelling mistakes, punctuation and syntactic correctness. The latter refers to deeper features that have to do with overall meaning and purpose of writing. In other words, global revision necessitates that students be sensitive to the audience that the composition was addressed to, the purpose of writing (what the student was asked to do, e.g., persuade) and the topic (keeping to the point).

6.5.1.1 Discuss topic before students write about it (Item 1, Table 7)

The technique of discussing composition topics before students write about them encourages active pupil participation. Teachers do not merely assign a topic and leave individual pupils to their own devices to generate ideas for the topic at hand and to draft and revise the composition pieces. Rather, they involve students as a class, peer groups or in pairs during topic discussions.

Seen in this context, the results of the empirical study regarding the use of this technique are promising. Table 7 suggests that most respondents (i.e., 40% often and 28% almost always) claim that they discuss composition topics with students. Thus, students are not left in a "swim or sink" situation, although 5% of the respondents indicated that they "never" discuss the topic and 27% stated that they do it "sometimes."

In conclusion, it must be emphasised that teachers in the process approach do not impose or dictate terms regarding the content of compositions; rather, they only intervene as

helpers in the ongoing dialogic relationship based on mutual trust and understanding. Under these circumstances, they do not stifle the individuality of pupils and frustrate pupils efforts in planning, drafting and revising their compositions. As was argued in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.5.5), it would be a contradiction in terms to expect active participation from learners who are never given an opportunity to take initiative and control (subject to teacher guidance) of their own learning in a didactic situation. Periodic non-intervention on the part of the teacher was, therefore, suggested as a viable alternative to enhance active participation.

6.6 MOTIVATION AS A DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE

Motivation, as seen in the context of didactic situations, means that learners have to have a desire and drive that propels them to learn (see Chapter 2, section 2.6.1). It is in that context that motivation as a didactic principle becomes relevant.

It was further stated that because the value of extrinsic motivation in didactic situations - although it may not be discarded completely - is sometimes disputed, learners should ideally be intrinsically motivated. To that end, subject matter relevance and the teacher's role in a didactic situation play a significant role in enhancing intrinsic motivation (see Sections 2.6.2.1 and 2.6.2.2).

6.6.1 The Process Approach and Motivation Principle

Regarding composition teaching and the didactic principle of motivation, it is crucial that we establish to what extent learner motivation is enhanced. In this regard, the key question is:

What techniques does the process approach to composition writing promote so as to enhance learner motivation?

In response to the question above, it appears that within the framework of the process approach to composition teaching, teachers may use the following techniques to enhance learner motivation:

- 1) use examples of students' writing (Item 5, Table 7);
- 2) comment on students' rough drafts before they submit the final piece (Item 7, Table 7);
- 3) comment on strengths and weaknesses of students' writing (Item 10, Table 7)
- 4) assign a mark to students' finished composition piece (Item 9, Table 7); and
- 5) publish students' compositions for classmates to read (Item 11, Table 7).

6.6.2 Use examples of students' writing (Item 5, Table 7)

It will be recalled that in Chapter 5 (see section 5.3.1), it was argued that using examples of students' own writing is a good technique in composition writing because students receive an immediate context as they identify with the text rather than relating to a polished text by a professional writer. In that context, students' own writing might motivate students better than examples drawn from professional writers.

However, the results on the use of this technique - as shown by Table 7 - indicate that teachers do not use examples of students' writing very often. In fact, only 15% of the respondents claimed that they use this technique "often," with 7% stating that they do not use it at all i.e., "almost never" while 54% indicated that they "sometimes" use it.

6.6.3 Comment on students' rough drafts before they submit the final piece (Item 7, Table 7)

The idea of commenting on students' rough drafts gives students the necessary feedback which motivates them insofar as it shows that the teacher is interested in guiding them throughout the composing process. In essence, the teacher's feedback sustains the ongoing dialogue between students and the teacher. It will be recalled that in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.4.6) it was argued that commenting on students' drafts constitutes a vital role of the teacher in the composing process.

Seen in this perspective, therefore, the results (see Table 7 in Chapter 5) on the use of this technique are encouraging because at least 32% claimed that they "often" use it while another 32% indicated that they "almost always" use it. However, as noted in Chapter 5 (section 5.3.2.3), a more promising response would have been the ideal 100% "almost always" response or the desirable 80%-90% response given the motivating effect teachers' comments might have on students.

6.6.4 Comment on strengths and weaknesses of students' writing (Item 10, Table 7)

In the context of composition writing (and in life generally) knowing one's strengths and weaknesses is a source of strength as it allows one to address weaknesses and improve on the strengths. As argued in Chapter 5 (see section 5.3.2.4), for students to attain the ideal standard of composition writing their strengths and weaknesses need to be pointed out to them.

In commenting on their strengths, the teacher motivates them to improve even further. In fact, such motivation may serve to play down the weaknesses as students realise that the teacher is not only interested in their weaknesses. In other words, the teacher's balanced approach to students' writing might motivate them.

Seen in this context, therefore, the empirical results on this technique (see Table 7) are promising since no respondent claimed that they "almost never" use this technique. In fact, 46% claimed that they "often" use it while 38% stated that they "almost always" comment on strengths and weaknesses of students' writing.

6.6.5 Assign a mark to students' finished composition piece (Item 9, Table 7)

As discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.6.2.1), the kind of motivation induced by incentives (e.g., marks) serves to motivate students to exert themselves even further. This type of motivation is extrinsic in nature. However, as previously argued in Chapter 2 (section 2.6.2.1), the desirability of extrinsic motivation in promoting learning is sometimes disputed. Therefore, techniques that inculcate intrinsic motivation should be used more often than those that relate to extrinsic motivation. Nonetheless, techniques that relate to extrinsic motivation - for example, assigning marks to students' finished composition pieces - also have a positive role to play in the teaching-learning situation.

Seen in this context, the results of Table 7 on this technique are positive in that more than half of the respondents (55%) claimed that they "almost always" assign a mark to students' finished composition pieces while 32% indicated that they "often" use this technique.

6.6.6 Publish students' compositions for classmates to read (Item 11, Table 7)

Publishing students' own compositions and displaying them in class for classmates to read is a technique which is meant to motivate students by instilling a sense of worth and pride. Students are made to feel that writing is not the sole preserve of the professionals:

they can also - within the context of their limited vocabulary and style - write pieces that communicate something meaningful and therefore worth reading.

However, as noted in Chapter 5 (section 5.3.5), Table 7 shows that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (53%) claimed that they "almost never" use this technique while a mere 4% claimed that they "often" use it and another 5% stated that they "almost always" use it. This is indeed very negative, given the motivating effect inherent in exposing students to their own writing in a published form, albeit elementary publishing.

In fact, publishing students' compositions might change students' attitude towards writing. As will be recalled, a negative attitude towards writing was cited as one of the problems in teaching composition writing (see section 5.5.4). Students' perception of composition writing as one of those school-sponsored tasks that have no purpose except to torture them might change. They will be motivated to read examples of their peers' published works displayed in class.

It is interesting to note that one respondent, having indicated that students have a negative attitude towards composition writing, suggested that students might be motivated through a very careful selection of composition topics:

.... composition topics given to the pupils should relate to the outside world, so that they will be able to organise their thoughts knowing what they are writing about is not fiction but true.

It will be recalled that in Chapter 2 [see section (a)] it was argued that the teacher always has a responsibility of initiating a dialogue between the learner and subject matter thereby enhancing learner motivation. Therefore, the respondent quoted above is suggesting that by keeping composition topics relevant and topical, the teacher is likely to arouse and sustain learner interest. In other words, the subject matter (composition topics) about which students write can sustain interest, thus keeping motivation high.

6.7 SUMMARY

The discussion in this Chapter has put the findings of the empirical study in a didactic context. With regards to individualisation and socialisation didactic principles, the results of the empirical study were to some extent disappointing.

However, with regards to the principle of active participation, the results were positive insofar as they suggested that respondents actively involve students in composition writing.

On the other hand, control and motivation didactic principles presented results which were both positive in some respects and negative in others. For example, on the control principle, it was argued that it is a positive finding that respondents "select and focus on specific problems in students' writing" and that few respondents "use examples of good professional writing as models." However, the marking of "every problem or error" in writing was viewed as negative.

In conclusion, it must be emphasised that teacher attitudes and practices have far-reaching implications on composition writing and students' lives in general. As was argued earlier (see Chapter 1, section 1.2), composition teaching plays a pivotal role in the school curriculum.

Seen against the main reasons advanced in that section, teachers have to use composition writing techniques whose didactic worth is not questionable, i.e., techniques which are in line with the didactic principles outlined in Chapter 2. If that does not happen, students may adopt a negative attitude towards composition writing and, consequently be adversely affected in their future lives. Composition writing is a skill which most students may need in their future careers. This point is further elucidated in Chapter 8 (see Section 8.6).

The following Chapter (7) will put the results of the empirical study in linguistic context. The discussion will be underpinned by the three paradigms (current-traditional, expressionistic and social) of composition writing which were presented in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 7

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CHAPTER 7

EMPIRICAL STUDY IN LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

7.1 INTRODUCTION

It will be recalled that in Chapter 3 I outlined three linguistic paradigms of composition writing: current-traditional, expressionistic and social. The discussion of these paradigms in Chapter 3 shows that - because each of these paradigms is informed by a different philosophical and epistemological orientation - each promotes different classroom practices.

This chapter places the results of the empirical study in the context of the above-mentioned linguistic paradigms. To the extent that these paradigms have strong theoretical bases, this chapter will allow us to draw conclusions as to the theoretical positions which English teachers in the sample uphold. However, it must be mentioned that although all English teachers teach composition writing in specific ways which betray their theoretical and philosophical leanings, the average English teacher may or may not be aware of (or even be able to articulate) the philosophical and theoretical foundation of his or her classroom practices.

In order to find out whether teachers' classroom practices do suggest which dominant linguistic paradigm is operative, respondents in the sample were asked to indicate the frequencies with which they use certain techniques of composition writing. These techniques were categorised according to the three linguistic paradigms (see Chapter 3).

Accordingly, the following section will first present a discussion of each of the three linguistic paradigms in the following order: current-traditional, expressionistic and social. Each linguistic paradigm will have a discussion of writing techniques, the use of which suggests some kind of bias towards that linguistic paradigm.

Secondly, the section will provide a general assessment which presents arguments regarding respondents' choice of paradigm(s). These arguments are solely based on the use of specific techniques (which were identified as showing a bias towards individual linguistic paradigms) since respondents in the sample were not asked to indicate their choices of paradigms per se.

Lastly, the section concludes with a discussion of the damaging long-term effects of the current-traditional paradigm.

7.2 THE CURRENT-TRADITIONAL PARADIGM OF COMPOSITION WRITING

The current-traditional paradigm of composition writing is characterised mainly by a greater emphasis on the following aspects of composition writing:

- treatment of error** (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.1);
- focus on finished products** (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.2); and
- the use of the models approach** (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.3).

7.2.1 Empirical Results in the Context of the Current-traditional Paradigm

Teachers who favour the current-traditional paradigm of composition are likely to use the following techniques in their composition teaching:

- Use examples of good professional writing as models (Item 2, Table 7);
- Select and focus on specific problems in student's writing (Item 4, Table 7);
- Mark every problem or error in rough drafts (Item 8, Table 7); and
- Assign a mark to students' finished composition piece (Item 9, Table 7).

7.2.1.1 Use examples of good professional writing as models (Item 2, Table 7)

As mentioned in Chapter 3 (vide 3.3.2.3), the use of good professional writing as models in the context of the current-traditional composition paradigm is mainly aimed at encouraging precision and correctness in language usage. However, as was argued in Chapter 3 (see 3.3.3.3) and Chapter 5 (see 5.3.1), the use of professional writing as models is a controversial technique in the ESL context which ought to be used judiciously and sparingly.

Seen in this perspective, the results of the empirical study as indicated in Chapter 5, section 5.3 are encouraging. According to Table 7, only 10% of the respondents claimed they "almost always" use examples of good professional writing as models while 32% stated that they "often" use this technique and 42% stated that they "sometimes" use it.

In sum, because of the controversial nature of this technique, the results would have been disturbing if a higher percentage of the respondents had specified that they "almost always" use it.

7.2.1.2 Select and focus on specific problems in students' writing
(Item 4, Table 7)

A satisfactory percentage (45% "often" and 35% "almost always") of the respondents indicated that they "select and focus on specific problems in students' writing." In the context of the current-traditional model of composition writing, this is a positive finding in that this technique represents balance between the two extremes:

- > marking every problem or error in rough drafts (see section 7.2.1.3 below);
and
- > leaving students to mark their own compositions as they please.

Thus, the essence of the argument is that teachers who tend to select and focus on specific problems are better poised to guide students than teachers who merely mark every problem or error or teachers who abdicate their responsibility by allowing students to mark their own work as they please.

Teachers who mark every problem or error are likely to be frustrated and rendered inefficient by the sheer large numbers in most black schools (see Chapter 5, Table 6). Moreover, some respondents cited overcrowding as one of the major factors militating against efficient composition teaching (see Section 5.5.1).

On the other hand, teachers who abdicate their responsibility by assigning the task of marking compositions to students without setting any measure of control, - e.g., giving out evaluative criteria to be used - are likely to be even more inefficient. Effective teaching requires teacher guidance even if students are to assume the responsibility of task completion.

7.2.1.3 Mark every problem or error in rough drafts (Item 8, Table 7)

The technique of "marking every problem or error in rough drafts" represents an extreme position when compared to the above-discussed technique of "selecting and focusing on specific problems in students' writing."

The results of Table 7 with regards to this technique are disturbingly negative because only 8% answered "almost never," while half of the respondent i.e., 50% answered "almost always" and 25% answered "often." Against this backdrop one would have been satisfied with a higher percentage of the respondents claiming that they "almost never" use this technique. Within the context of the process approach to composition teaching, time spent in marking every problem or error could be better spent in guiding the students as they produce draft after draft. Teachers should not wait for the final product and then penalise students for mistakes that might have been avoided had the teacher been with the students every step of the way in the composing process. Such late intervention only serves to frustrate and undermine pupils' confidence in their composing abilities.

7.2.1.4 Assign a mark to students' finished composition piece (Item 9, Table 7)

More than half (55%) of the respondents stated that they "almost always" assign a mark to students' finished composition pieces while 32% indicated that they "often" use this technique. A very small percentage (9% "almost never" and 4% "sometimes") indicated that they use this technique on a small scale.

However, it should be indicated that although it was argued in Chapter 6 (see 6.6.4) that assigning a mark to students' written pieces might have a motivational effect - albeit extrinsic in nature - it might not always be possible and desirable.

Therefore, teachers who favour the current-traditional paradigm of composition writing may be missing out on other convenient techniques like using peer editors - with strict guidance in terms of the evaluative criteria - and allowing students to actually justify and assign marks to each others' composition pieces. This exercise, if properly controlled can make composition writing fun.

7.3 EXPRESSIONISTIC PARADIGM OF COMPOSITION WRITING

The expressionistic paradigm of composition writing is characterised mainly by its greater emphasis on the following aspects of composition writing:

- the use of peer editors (see Chapter 3, section 3.3.2.1);
- a relaxed classroom atmosphere (see Chapter 3, section 3.3.2.2); and
- the use of journals as learning tools (see Chapter 3, section 3.3.2.3).

7.3.1 Empirical Results in the Context of the Expressionistic Paradigm

Teachers who favour the expressionistic paradigm are likely to use the following techniques in their composition teaching:

- Make students work in peer groups (Item 6, Table 7); and
- Hold individual conferences to discuss writing (Item 12, Table 7).

7.3.1.1 Make students work in peer groups (Item 6, Table 7)

As indicated in Chapter 3 (see 3.3.2.1) and Chapter 4 (see 4.2.4.6 and 4.3.4), unlike relying on the sole feedback of the teacher, making use of other students in a

composition class to offer critiques and feedback on each others' composition pieces allows the individual student to gain more insight into the topic at hand. Peer editors help in shaping the ideas thus leading to greater clarity and originality of thought.

Seen in this context, the results of Chapter 5 as indicated in Table 7, are not particularly positive because a mere 15% indicated that they "almost always" use this technique while 17% stated that they "almost never" use it. The only positive aspect on this finding is that 34% claimed that they "often" use this technique. Given the usefulness of this technique, a higher percentage of respondents who use it would have been a positive feature.

However, it must be mentioned that the technique of using peer editors is not an exclusive preserve of the expressionistic paradigm where it is used for enabling individual pupils to achieve clarity of expression and thought. Peer editors also feature prominently in the social paradigm of composition writing. They help in nurturing the spirit of collaboration: an essential feature of this paradigm.

7.3.1.2 Hold individual conferences to discuss writing (Item 12, Table 7)

Individual conferences allows both the teacher and student to share both frustrations and joys inherent in composition writing. Therefore, they offer, in didactic terms, an opportunity of individualising composition writing instruction.

However, the empirical results on the use of this technique are not very encouraging because although 35% stated that they "often" use this technique, a mere 9% of the respondents claimed that they "almost always" use it while 13% indicated that they "almost never" use it.

7.4 SOCIAL PARADIGM OF COMPOSITION WRITING

The social paradigm of composition writing is characterised mainly by its greater emphasis on the following aspects of composition writing:

- **composition topics that relate to social, political and economic issues of the day (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.2.1);**
- **an awareness of the complexity and richness of language as a medium of communication (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.2.2); and**
- **the use of collaborative techniques in teaching composition writing (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.2.3).**

7.4.1 Empirical Results in the Context of the Social Paradigm

Teachers who favour the social paradigm of composition writing are likely to use the following techniques:

- **Discuss topic before students write about it (Item 1, Table 7);**
- **Make students aware of audiences they write for (Item 3, Table 7);**
- **Use examples of students' writing (Item: 5, Table 7);**
- **Comment on students' rough drafts before they submit the final piece (Item 7, Table 7);**
- **Publish students' compositions for classmates to read (Item 11, Table 7); and**
- **Make students work in peer groups (Item 6, Table 7 - also see discussion in 7.3.1.1).**

7.4.1.1 Discuss topic before students write about it (Item 1, Table 7)

Since the social paradigm of composition writing proceeds from the basic assumption that knowledge is a social construct, created and validated by discourse communities, the notion of discussion, therefore, is essentially a basic component of this paradigm. Through discussions new knowledge is created (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.1).

In the context of composition teaching, discussing the topic before pupils write about it serves to enhance their understanding of the topic. They also gain new insights into the topic at hand. Consequently, when pupils eventually write about the topic they come better prepared than they would had the topic not been discussed beforehand.

Table 7 indicates that most respondents (40% often and 28% almost always) discuss composition topics before pupils write about them. This finding is indeed reassuring insofar as it indicates that pupils are not left in a "swim or sink" situation. Nonetheless, the 5% of the respondents - although negligible - who claim that they "almost never" discuss the topic before pupils write about it, is a cause for concern. The ESL context particularly requires that topics be discussed beforehand.

7.4.1.2 Make students aware of the audiences they write for (Item 3, Table 7)

It will be recalled that in Chapter 4 (vide 4.2.2) it was stated that one of the basic tenets of the process approach which is mainly based on the social paradigm is that audience and purpose in writing assignments should always be specified. It was also argued that teachers should allow students to write for a variety of audiences so as to practise writing in different styles, tone and registers.

In essence, the above argument places writing within the sociolinguistic context insofar as it assumes that writing to address different audiences enhances pupil's

sociolinguistic competence. Sociolinguistic competence implies the ability to use appropriate language - appropriate in terms of who is addressed, why the person is addressed, on what occasion etc. - in a proper sociolinguistic context. In other words, by experimenting with addressing many fictitious audiences, pupils gain facility in the use of sociolinguistic rules of appropriacy and decency. Simply put, pupils learn "what to say or not to say; to whom and when."

However, the empirical results on the technique of "making students aware of audiences addressed," (see table 7) are not very inspiring. Although 50% of the respondents claimed that they "often" use this technique, only 19% stated that they use it "almost always." Given the importance of this technique, the 9% who claim that they "almost never" use this technique is a cause for concern.

Nonetheless, it is encouraging to note that some respondents realise the importance of audience. When asked about some of their problems in composition teaching (vide 5.5.6), it emerged that pupils' failure to identify and address audience appropriately is one of the key problems. Writing in different modes of discourse for a variety of audiences is likely to remedy this deficiency.

7.4.1.3 Use examples of students' writing (Item 5, Table 7)

In line with the conception of writing as a social activity, the technique of using pupils' writing as examples characterises the social paradigm of composition writing. Rather than relying on polished professional writing - writing which tends to be remote from the socio-cultural milieu of the students - teachers who favour the social paradigm draw from the immediate experiences of the pupils.

In this context, the school does not negate pupils' experiences - and consequently their identity - but serves to affirm pupils' experiences by legitimising and authenticating their

texts. Pupils' voices deserve to be heard and appreciated. Seen in this context, pupils are conceived as a social entity which evolves its own brand of writing that warrants emulation by other peers. Consequently, pupils learn from each others' experiences and grow together in a spirit of collaboration rather than competition.

With regards to the empirical results on the technique of using "examples of students' writing," the teachers' responses are not satisfactory. A small percentage (24% "almost always" and 15% "often") use this technique as frequently as it should. On the other hand, more than half (54%) of the respondents stated that they "sometimes" use this technique while 7% of the respondents gave a disappointing response of "almost never."

7.4.1.4 Comment on students' rough drafts before they submit the final piece (Item 7, Table 7)

It will be recalled that in Chapter 4 (vide 4.2.2) it was stated that composition writing, as conceived from a process approach, is an exercise which requires multiple drafts before the final version is produced. Consequently, teachers are expected to intervene in the process of writing by commenting on the pupils' rough drafts. This form of teacher intervention presupposes an ongoing dialogic relationship between the pupil and the teacher. In fact, successive drafts should respond to the teachers' questions, requests for clarification, and detail. Therefore, the teachers' comments establish the framework against which the teacher-pupil "conversation" is sustained.

It is reassuring to observe that the results of the empirical study, as shown in Table 7, indicate that 32% of the respondents use this technique "almost always" and another 32% use it "often." However, given the importance of this technique, it would have been more inspiring if at least 50% of the respondents had claimed to use this technique "almost always."

7.4.1.5 Publish students' compositions for classmates to read (Item 11, Table 7)

Flowing from the conception of writing as a social activity, the technique of "publishing pupils' compositions for classmates to read" reinforces the notion of sharing ideas. In this sense, composition writing ceases to become a lonely individualised and private experience. Rather, it becomes a public experience to be celebrated and appreciated. Clearly, publishing pupils' compositions puts a stamp of approval which validates the pupils' own voice - a voice that needs to be heard rather than being stifled. Consequently, pupils' sense of pride and ownership is enhanced.

However, it is disheartening to note that more than half of the respondents (50%) stated that they "almost never" use this technique. In fact, only 4% claimed to use this technique "often" while another 5% claimed to use it "almost always." It would seem therefore that the use of this technique deserves attention.

7.5 GENERAL ASSESSMENT

As indicated earlier, this chapter attempts to contextualise the empirical results within the framework of the three linguistic paradigms of composition writing discussed in Chapter 3. Using twelve techniques of composition teaching - which were categorised according to the three linguistic paradigms - the main purpose was to find out whether current classroom practices (as indicated by frequency of techniques used) do indicate what the dominant linguistic paradigm is.

Of the four techniques presented as favouring the current-traditional paradigm of composition writing, three were used fairly frequently. On the other hand, both techniques presented as favouring the expressionistic paradigm of composition writing were not satisfactorily used. With regards to the social paradigm of composition writing, only one

technique, out of the six that were presented as favouring this paradigm, was used satisfactorily.

Consequently, the findings of this investigation indicate that there is a strong bias in favour of the current-traditional paradigm of composition writing. This is not satisfactory because, as argued in Chapter 3, both the social and expressionistic paradigms have something worthwhile to offer in a composition classroom.

However, these findings need to be approached with caution. As in any research project where respondents have to fill in questionnaires, the possibility of unreliable responses always lurks in the background (see Chapter 1, section 1.6).

7.6 DAMAGING LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF THE CURRENT-TRADITIONAL PARADIGM

It must be noted that the continued dominance of the current-traditional paradigm (as shown by the findings in this chapter) has damaging long-term effects on students (and, by extension, society). This paradigm should not be allowed to dominate composition pedagogy in our schools because of the following reasons:

7.6.1 It undermines pupil confidence in writing

The current-traditional paradigm undermines pupils' confidence in their ability to communicate their thoughts in writing. Pupils get frustrated when teachers "bleed" on their papers. The long-term results of overcorrecting students' papers is lack of interest in writing. School impressions of writing might persist until pupils reach adulthood which might breed a

society of people who fear the written word. Such a society stands to lose its rich cultural traditions, values and mores as these elements will not be recorded for posterity.

7.6.2 It distorts the nature of real-life communication

The current-traditional paradigm - through its treatment of mechanical errors in writing as the overriding concern wrongly creates the impression that communicating the message is not important. In real life the message itself is as important as the manner in which it is communicated.

Secondly, preoccupation with surface features of writing might make students to lose sight of the vibrant and rich nature of language as a communication medium. In this context, students might not appreciate the subtle nuances of language as used in everyday situations.

7.6.3 It is not didactically-sound

Since the current-traditional approach to composition encourages classroom practices that are built around the conception of writing as product - an approach that was criticised in this study - it lacks purposive teacher intervention at strategic points during the process of composing. It is, therefore, not didactically accountable.

Moreover, by insisting on using texts by professional writers, it misses the motivational impact of using texts by students themselves. This also renders this paradigm didactically wanting on the motivation - an important didactic principle.

7.6.4 It does not promote important human values

The current-traditional paradigm does promote the humanness ethos which is embodied in the collaborative techniques which are used in the social paradigm. This is unsatisfactory given that this ethos encapsulates one of life's sustaining principles: coexistence.

7.6.5 It promotes the teacher-centred teaching-learning paradigm

By denying students opportunities to share ideas during the stages of writing (e.g., peer groups during planning, drafting and revision), the current-traditional paradigm promotes the traditional teacher-centred paradigm of teaching and learning instead of the progressive pupil-centred paradigm. Under these circumstances, students experience composition writing as an activity which heightens their anxiety and fears as they await the teacher's final mark. At no stage are pupils actively engaged to initiate and be responsible for generating (individually and collectively) their own ideas.

7.6.6 Synthesis

It is against the background of the detrimental long-term effects (as outlined above) of rigidly sticking to the undesirable practices of the current-traditional paradigm that one laments the continued dominance of this paradigm.

Both the expressionistic and social paradigms of composition writing, as discussed in Chapter 3, have a meaningful role to play in promoting efficient and didactically justifiable composition teaching.

The following chapter presents recommendations regarding composition teaching. It also has a practical dimension in the form of model composition lessons designed to contextualise the theoretical principles of both the expressionistic and social paradigm.

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CHAPTER 8

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents recommendations and a conclusion. For each of the five didactic principles (individualisation, socialisation, control, active participation and motivation) there will be recommendations regarding (a) teachers, (b) teacher educators and (c) administrators. As will be recalled, Chapter 2 presented these five principles as constituting what effective teaching and learning is. As such, these principles have been used throughout this study as criteria. Therefore, they would be effective as a reference framework for the recommendations. The main reason for isolating (a) teachers, (b) teacher educators and (c) administrators (e.g., principals, inspectors and planners) stems from the belief that these three frequently act as major catalysts in improving school systems.

8.1 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING INDIVIDUALISATION

There are six recommendations in all: three for teachers, one for teacher educators and two for administrators (see sub sections 8.1.1, 8.1.2 and 8.1.3). The first of these three subsections contains a model lesson illustrating individualisation.

8.1.1 Recommendations to Teachers Regarding Individualisation

This section presents three recommendations for teachers. First, it places the composition writing technique of conferencing within the context of individualisation didactic principle. Secondly, a model lesson illustrating individualisation is presented. Thirdly, a discussion of the model follows.

8.1.1.1 Conferencing Technique

Teachers in the composition class should accommodate individual pupil needs through the use of the composition technique called conferencing. Specifically, teachers should:

- set time aside when they can be consulted by individual pupils (use some of the time they would have used in marking);
- adopt a positive attitude towards students by being approachable; and
- encourage students to take an initiative in bringing to the attention of teachers problem areas with regards to writing.

Accommodating individual pupil needs in the composition class through the use of the conferencing technique will enhance individualisation.

The following section presents a model composition lesson to demonstrate how the individualisation principle in a composition class can be accommodated. The terminology and lesson structure which will be used in the following model lesson (and in ALL model lessons presented in this chapter) have been formulated by Kruger and Muller (1988:131-148).

8.1.1.2 Model Lesson No. 1: Illustrating Individualisation

<u>Class:</u>	<i>Std 9</i>
<u>Subject :</u>	<i>English (ESL)</i>
<u>Topic:</u>	<i>Advantages and disadvantages of racially-mixed schools.</i>
<u>Teaching Media:</u>	<i>Video recorder, monitor set, worksheet, video of debate on racially-mixed schools and chalkboard.</i>
<u>Educational Aim:</u>	<i>To instill the love of writing in response to critical reviews on educational and social issues.</i>
<u>Objective:</u>	<i>Pupils will produce written responses to critical reviews as contained in the video tape.</i>

FIRST LESSON PHASE: **AROUSING AND DIRECTING INTEREST**

- (a) *Introduce the lesson by playing a video recording of a debate on the issue of racially-mixed schools and their impact on the social, political and cultural aspects of children who attend these schools. Tell pupils that they will have to listen attentively to the panel discussion on the video.*

SECOND LESSON PHASE: **INSTRUCTION**

- (b) *Make the listening to the video task-based by allowing pupils to fill-in a worksheet (see EXAMPLE OF WORKSHEET for lesson 1 at end of this lesson).*

THIRD LESSON PHASE: **FUNCTIONALISATION**

- (c) *Ask pupils to break into friendship groups. Once in groups, they must share their skeleton notes written in their worksheets. Tell them to conduct group discussions in which they will generate more ideas on this topic. Assist pupils to work out a possible framework for presenting a composition on this topic.*

- (d) *Still in groups, pupils must prepare ground for the first draft (which will be written individually) by sorting out ideas. In other words, help pupils to group similar ideas together and to discard irrelevant ones. This stage will represent the first step of bringing logic to the draft composition.*

FOURTH LESSON PHASE: EVALUATION

- (e) *Ask pupils to write the composition as individuals. A specific date for submission of the first individual drafts must be set aside. On the day of submission, pupils must assess each other's compositions using criteria like the ones suggested in lesson 8.3.1.2.*
- (f) *Set time aside (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.4.6) to entertain individual pupils who may have problems in incorporating the suggestions of their peers.*

See example of
worksheet on
next page

EXAMPLE OF WORKSHEET FOR MODEL LESSON 1

STD. 9. ESL RACIALLY-MIXED SCHOOLS

1. Speaker no. 1 supports racially-mixed schools on the following grounds:

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

2. Speaker no.2 objects to racially-mixed schools on the following grounds:

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

3. I support/ object to racially-mixed schools on the following grounds:

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

8.1.1.3 Discussion of Model Lesson 1

Firstly, this composition lesson features a strong sense of pupil involvement and consequently of individualisation. The activities in all four lesson phases take into account the nature and ability of every individual child in the class: in the first phase they are invited to interpret the video in individual ways, i.e., to choose whether they are for or against racially-mixed schools; in phase two they complete the worksheet as individuals, thus each child is assisted to develop according to his/her own capabilities, to learn at his/her own pace in a unique manner; in phase three each pupil is free to contribute to his/her group by stating and defending personal views, thereby learning to develop self-esteem within a group context; in the fourth phase they write their compositions in highly individualistic ways and, in so doing, transform elementals to fundamentals.

Secondly, this lesson has an element of what Kruger and Muller (1988:143) call an "action of accompaniment." Rather than leaving pupils to their own devices, the teacher intervenes first in helping pupils generate ideas and in working out possible frameworks for the composition. Also, pupils are given a chance to individually consult with the teacher (that is, using the composition conferencing technique discussed in Chapter 4 section 4.2.4.6). This accompaniment re-assures pupils of the teacher's concern for their progress. It also helps the teacher in assessing individual pupils' progress and then formulate corrective strategies, if the need arises.

Thirdly, the lesson depicts an attempt to balance group activities with individual attention. In other words, although pupils work in groups most of the time, there is a definite attempt to attend to their individual problems in writing.

8.1.2 Recommendation to teacher educators

This section discusses dialogue journals as tools of learning in uniquely individualistic ways, thus enhancing individualisation in composition writing.

Keeping dialogue journals

Teacher educators can promote composition writing through introducing dialogue journals at teacher education institutions. Student teachers would then make writing a habit. More importantly, student teachers might conceive of writing first as an individual experience - albeit with social consequences - which can be enjoyed.

Journals have been presented in this study as tools of learning (see Chapter 3, section 3.3.2.3). Practice with journal writing therefore equips student teachers with a powerful tool. This could take many forms. First, teacher trainers could share their journal entries with student teachers as a way of demonstrating how journals work. Second, student teachers could be encouraged to always have their own journals ready (i.e., carry them in person) so as to use them in many ways (reflecting on their subjects, about their teacher(s), about their classmates, etc.). Third, the college curriculum, with built-in practice teaching sessions, provides ample opportunities for student teachers to try out new ideas. They may, for example, during practice teaching ask pupils to keep journals to reflect on the subject taught - how it is handled, the joys and frustrations with the subject, etc.

8.1.3 Recommendations to Administrators Regarding Individualisation

Workshop: Journal writing

Administrators should organise teacher seminars in which English teachers are given workshops on journal writing and expressive writing. Obviously, if teachers are to assign expressive journal writing (as suggested in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.2.3) in their classes to aid learning, they themselves must keep journals. Therefore, this workshop requires participants to use dialogue journals wherein they will record their thoughts, feelings, impressions, insights and ideas as they travel through the workshop. Clearly, journal writing promotes individual learning insofar as pupils interact and interpret their learning experiences in highly individualistic ways: they offer personal responses to the learning experiences in the workshop.

In the context of this workshop, teachers begin to experience first-hand the importance of writing to oneself in order to invent, clarify, interpret or reflect. Journals, then, become the teachers' companions throughout the workshop, and hopefully, they end up being part of the teachers' tools of aiding teaching and learning long after the workshop.

Workshop: Theory of expressive writing

This workshop complements the practical workshop discussed above. It introduces teachers to Britton's (1982) theory of expressive writing - the type of writing found in journals, diaries, and first drafts. Since participants have had opportunity to write dialogue journal entries (in the above workshop), they can be subjected to a theoretical discussion of what the concept expressive writing means, what its pitfalls are, and how expressive writing can be incorporated as a learning activity in their classrooms.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SOCIALISATION

There are eleven recommendations in this section: six for teachers, two for teacher educators and three for administrators (see sub sections 8.2.1, 8.2.2 and 8.2.3). The first of these subsections contains a model lesson illustrating socialisation.

8.2.1 Recommendations to Teachers Regarding Socialisation

Socialising Learners

The school, as a societal agency, is duty-bound to socialise learners. Therefore, getting pupils to work in peer groups and giving out assignments which require students to write for a variety of audiences are better suited to help the school in its important mission: socialising learners. Teachers should, therefore, take a lead in:

- ◆ *encouraging students to work in peer groups;*
- ◆ *supporting and guiding peer groups by discussing with them evaluative criteria;*
- ◆ *encouraging students to accept criticism (as though it were from the teacher) and openly challenging what they do not understand;*
- ◆ *making students write for a variety of audiences; and*
- ◆ *encouraging students to accommodate their audiences by, inter alia, not assuming any shared understanding of the topic (except in special cases as when one writes for members of one's discourse community).*

Class: Std. 10

Subject : English (ESL)

Topic : Do teachers have a right to go on strike to further their cause?

Teaching Media: Newspaper cuttings and chalkboard

Educational Aim : To instill the love of writing argumentative essays.

Objective: Pupils produce written responses to the newspaper letters and editorial opinion on the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) strike.

FIRST LESSON PHASE: AROUSING AND DIRECTING INTEREST

- (a) Ask pupils to give the names of the trade unions they know of in South Africa (e.g., COSATU, NUM, POPCRU etc). They must further be asked to name teacher unions currently serving teachers (e.g., SADTU, NATU, NAPTOSA, etc). This should be followed by a clarification of such concepts as unionism, collective bargaining, employer, employee and conditions of service.

SECOND LESSON PHASE: INSTRUCTION

- (b) Hand out newspaper cuttings (letters from readers in response to the SADTU strike as well as the editorial opinion on this issue). In groups, pupils should study the arguments presented and then jot them down.
- (c) In response to the arguments presented in their specific newspaper cutting, the group should be asked to jot down their ideas using the brainstorming method. They need to take stands on the issue of the SADTU strike.
- (d) Ensure that all members in their groups are active and that domineering members should be prevented from monopolising discussions.

THIRD LESSON PHASE: FUNCTIONALISATION

- (e) *At this stage, pupils (in groups) should prepare the first draft. Similar ideas are put together in an attempt to forge a logical sequence of ideas and thus finally present a coherent and convincing essay.*

FOURTH LESSON PHASE: ASSIGNMENT

- (f) *Having spent time in groups working on the format of their first drafts, pupils should be asked to finish this project as homework. A specific date should be set for submission.*

FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURE

On the day of submission, first drafts are studied in pairs. The following evaluative criteria can be used to improve the quality of the first drafts:

- *Do ideas presented follow any logical sequence?*
- *Is there a smooth paragraph flow?*
- *Are there points that need more elaboration?*
- *What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of this piece of writing?*
- *Are there other ideas that you wish to add in helping this writer?*
- *Has the writer kept to the point?*
- *Does the writer present adequate examples to back up his/her points?*
- *Indicate any mechanical errors that need attention in this piece.*

Ask pupils to incorporate their partners' ideas in writing the second drafts. At this stage, give an opportunity to pupils (e.g., those who may feel they need more guidance than that provided by peers) to consult you (conferencing).

8.2.1.2 Discussion of Model Lesson

One of the salient features of this lesson is a strong sense of socialisation - pupil collaboration. Pupils help each other in three distinct phases: planning (when they generate ideas for the composition piece), drafting (when sorting out in preparation for logical presentation) and revision (when they use evaluative criteria to respond to each others' drafts) (see Chapter 3, sections 3.3.2.1 and 3.4.2.3; Chapter 4 section 4.2.2). Pupils exploit the advantages of group work extensively to sharpen their ideas on the composition topics (see Chapter 2, section 2.3.3).

The group work technique promotes the learning of many social values: students learn patience and tolerance, particularly in response to one another's points of view; they learn joint decision-making and accountability which is an essential component of learning to co-exist without imposing one's will on others; they develop a sense of responsibility, especially because group work puts them in a position where they have a joint project to accomplish; they develop critical attitudes, in the sense that they have to assess the validity and authenticity of one another's opinions; and they develop skills and abilities to communicate, to argue, to debate a problem and convince others.

Secondly, although pupils are actively involved in learning (see Chapter 2, sections 2.5.3 and 2.5.9), particularly in generating ideas for composition writing, the teacher remains a vital "back up." He/she intervenes during all the stages of the composing process (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.4.6). He/she arouses and sustains learner interest through stimulating teaching media and relevant composition topics [see Chapter 2 section 2.6.2.2 (a) and Chapter 3, section 3.4.2.1].

Thirdly, the follow-up procedure of this lesson uses evaluative criteria. As can be observed, the nature of these criteria indicates a shift of focus in composition evaluation - a shift from mere pre-occupation with the form (e.g., grammar aspects) to meaning or message conveyed. In other words, pupils are taught the importance of language as a

vibrant communication medium. Under these circumstances, the student writer does not "choke up" (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.1). He/she develops confidence in expressing ideas. Only then do peer editors focus on grammatical, stylistical and syntactical aspects of the composition piece.

It is important that students be socialised into the acceptable linguistic norms: correct grammar. They need to appreciate the fact that languages, in general, remain sacred cultural possessions which most societies guard jealously lest they be contaminated. Languages are the life-blood of societies from which they derive their unique cultural identities. In this sense, therefore, students have to learn acceptable linguistic forms if they are to function (linguistically) without offending members of the speech community.

However, it must be pointed out that the above argument does not imply that members of the speech community should, in guarding language, be blind to the dynamism inherent in any language. Languages develop as people coin new terms and concepts in line with the demands of times. For example, it has become standard terminology to refer to unrest and boycotts in South Africa as "toyi-toyi." This term has been coined to describe a phenomenon in this phase of South African history. In this context, English language has been enriched in the process of trying to adequately capture human experience in the 1990's. Thus the essence of the argument is that learners need to appreciate that there will always be acceptable linguistic forms which may be modified as language develops to capture the subtle nuances of human experience.

8.2.2 Recommendations to Teacher educators Regarding Socialisation

Teacher educators can promote socialisation through requiring student teachers to write compositions regularly and through framing composition topics in ways that evidently

capture teacher educators' awareness of the social uses of language as medium of communication.

Requiring student teachers to write compositions/essays regularly

If student teachers are to appreciate the nature of writing as a social activity, they have to write compositions regularly at teacher education institutions. Further, requiring prospective teachers to write compositions could help prepare student teachers to appreciate the nature of composing, its demands and joys. It is self-evident that personal experience with writing is better than a theoretical understanding of what writing can do.

Before student teachers can be expected to teach composition writing efficiently, they themselves must learn to write compositions. However, teacher education institutions like universities tend to ignore this factor on the assumption that student teachers should have mastered the technique of composition writing at high school level. Unfortunately, this argument (deliberately ?) misses a vital point: the problems attendant to black education and their effect on the quality of the students who enr l at teacher education institutions. Undoubtedly, these institutions inherit high school problems. Therefore, even if teacher education institutions choose to ignore the deficiencies (by adopting an elitist approach which excludes those who are not ready without empowering them to compete fairly) they will not disappear. It is against this background that I strongly recommend that ESL teachers be given many opportunities to write regularly, thus experiencing first-hand the use of composition techniques that promote socialisation, e.g., group work and peer reviews.

Framing written assignments

Teacher trainers should demonstrate understanding of the composing process. It must, therefore, be apparent in the compositions they assign to student teachers that they understand that composition writing - as a social activity - is in essence about communicating a message. Features like purpose and audience are very important in

composition writing. Assignments should be framed so that they specify audience (which must be extended from time to time to include others besides the teacher), purpose of writing (if writing is to be seen as genuine communication) and the rhetorical situation. Such demonstration may encourage the student teachers to do the same in their future classes.

8.2.3 Recommendations to Administrators Regarding Socialisation

Administrators can promote the understanding of composition writing through organising in-service workshops for both teachers of English and other subjects. Teachers of other subjects such as Geography, Economics, History and Biology could also greatly benefit from workshops on student problems in composing and the nature of the composing process itself. After all, they also assign essays in their subjects. These workshops could be run in a manner that ensures maximum participant collaboration thereby entrenching socialisation as a viable alternative in a didactic situation.

Besides organising workshops, administrators could, in the context of composition writing, promote socialisation, through classroom designs and classroom furniture that enhances maximum pupil and teacher movement.

This section presents recommendations regarding workshops, classroom design and furniture arrangement.

Workshop: Exploring

In the belief that all teachers experience problems with student writing (although some may not be able to articulate the causes), this workshop would exploit such common ground. Participants are asked to write about problems in student writing. They share solutions and strategies for improving student writing. Discussing problems might lead

to an understanding of the diverse and complicated nature of the composing process. Teachers should then be asked to summarise ideas that emerged from the discussions.

A workshop of this nature might provide a forum for teachers to do brainstorming and mind-mapping with regards to the problems they experience in student writing.

Workshop: Composing

This workshop would require teachers to write something from personal experience, share the piece with others and receive feedback designed to improve the quality of the piece. Thus, teachers experience what they put students through when they assign writing and employ techniques like peer editing. Perhaps what is even more important than this type of modelling is the awareness of the intricacies attendant to composing. Such an awareness could then prepare teachers for their role as facilitators in the composing process rather than judges of students' finished products.

Additionally, having responded to colleagues' demands for clarity in their own writing, teachers may come out of this workshop better prepared to inculcate a sense of composition writing as communication, that is, "restrain their red pens" for a while and focus on the message being communicated.

Classrooms and furniture

Among other things, the dominant teaching-learning paradigm can clearly be discernible through classroom design and furniture. If the predominantly used paradigm is teacher-centred, classrooms are likely to be arranged in a way that encourages students to sit in neat rows facing the over-arching dominant figure of the teacher. On the other hand, a student-centred paradigm of teaching-learning is likely to be characterised by a class architectural style that encourages pupil activity. Chairs in such a class are likely to be

movable to accommodate all sorts of seating arrangements, e.g., small circles, one big circle, dyadic or triadic formations, etc. When this practice is used, the principle of socialisation becomes meaningfully entrenched because social values being taught verbally are being re-inforced non-verbally.

Unfortunately, the average teacher has minimal influence on major decisions about types of classes and furniture to be used in schools. Therefore, administrators can promote sound pedagogical techniques like group and pair work through building classrooms that are in line with student-centred pedagogy.

8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING CONTROL

There are 11 recommendations in this section: seven regarding control and the role of the teacher in composition writing, one model lesson illustrating control, a discussion of the model lesson, one recommendation for teacher educators and one for administrators (see sub sections 8.3.1, 8.3.2 and 8.3.3).

8.3.1 Recommendations to Teachers Regarding Control

The following sections outlines the role of the teacher regarding control in the context of composition teaching.

While the process approach to composition writing is student centred in orientation, it does not preclude purposive teacher intervention. Teachers in composition writing - as in any didactic situation - have a responsibility to monitor and guide learners. Specifically, teachers have to:

- select and focus on specific problems in students' writing;
- guide students through selective and judicious choices of composition models;
- organise and monitor peer group activities;
- provide stimulating material to "jumpstart" composition writing;
- monitor students' progress from first draft until they submit the final composition pieces;
- mediate in cases of disputes, especially when students' cannot reach consensus during peer group discussions and when students question the authenticity and validity of each other's critiques; and
- mark students' compositions - usually making mechanical errors secondary to clarity of the message being communicated.

Model lesson 3
follows

8.3.1.1 Model Lesson No.3: Illustrating Control

<u>Class :</u>	<i>Std. 6</i>
<u>Subject</u>	<i>English (ESL)</i>
<u>Topic</u>	<i>Paragraph Writing</i>
<u>T/ Media</u>	<i>Chart with 6 pictures, story entitled "The Frog and the Ox," and chalkboard</i>
<u>Educational Aim</u>	<i>To instill the love of listening to spoken English and writing in English.</i>
<u>Objective :</u>	<i>Pupils will be able to discuss the picture sequence and write a paragraph.</i>
<u>Methods :</u>	<i>Question and answer, narrative and discussion.</i>

FIRST LESSON PHASE: AROUSING AND DIRECTING INTEREST

(a) *Ask general questions about frogs and oxen (where they are found, common characteristics, etc.). Pupils' answers must be written on the chalkboard. Inform pupils that you are going to narrate a very interesting story called "The Frog and the Ox."*

SECOND LESSON PHASE: INSTRUCTION

(b) *Ask pupils to have notebooks ready so that they take down notes and unfamiliar words as the oral presentation of the story progresses. Read the story slowly so as to allow pupils time to jot down unfamiliar phrases and words.*

(c) *Ask pupils to indicate unfamiliar vocabulary that need clarification. Their responses must be written on the board. You may add a minimum of essential verbs and only the most pertinent vocabulary.*

THIRD LESSON PHASE: FUNCTIONALISATION

(d) *Pin the chart which has the story of "The frog and Ox" told in picture sequence. Go through all the pictures with pupils responding to questions like:*

- * *What do you see in Picture One?*
- * *How can you link Picture One with Picture Two?*

Pupils' responses must be written on the chalkboard.

FOURTH LESSON PHASE: EVALUATION/ ASSIGNMENT

(e) *Ask pupils to write a paragraph about all the pictures in the chart. Pupils should use the skeleton on the board. Move around the class so as to identify pupils who might need your attention.*

(f) *At the end of the period, determine if students have finished writing their paragraphs. If not, set a specific date for submission.*

8.3.1.2 Discussion of the Model Lesson

Given the low class level (Std. 6), the teacher may want to monitor pupils' composing abilities closely. This means, among other things, that he/she initially assigns short paragraphs rather than fully-fledged compositions.

It makes common sense that frustration can be avoided if lower ESL classes approach composition writing from an angle of the basics, for example, sentence-combining activities and paragraph writing. However, even at this low class level the teacher should exercise control in a way that ensures that the locus of control gradually shifts from him/her

to the students themselves thus leading to shared control and student self-discipline and self-management (see Chapter 2, sections 2.4.7 and 2.4.8).

This model paragraph writing lesson illustrates control in a didactic situation. The lesson phases themselves show sequence designed to point a clear direction, control pupils' development (in the context of learning to write paragraphs in ESL), thus ensuring repetition of aspects of unlocking (Griessel, 1991:48). There is also a strong sense of accompaniment as the teacher, with the help of instructional media, contextualises composition writing. However, this accompaniment is by no means stifling. In other words, the teacher's authority (and consequently the directives he/she gives) is reconciled with freedom of initiative and participation. Pupils get an opportunity to air their views, albeit within the context of teacher guidance through picture sequence and questions; they listen to the story, jot down unfamiliar vocabulary and respond to the picture sequence presented in the chart.

8.3.2 Recommendations to Teacher educators Regarding Control

Responding to student writing

Control as a didactic principle also manifests itself clearly in the evaluation context. In other words, the way in which teachers respond to student writing shows their style of control over the didactic situation, specifically the educational outcomes they desire. However, a rigid approach towards evaluation of students' compositions impacts negatively on the writing abilities and attitude of students.

Teacher educators should, therefore, encourage student teachers to try various strategies (such as peer editing, conferencing and positive feedback) of responding to student writing. If students do not learn and practice such strategies at college, they are

likely to come out of college ready to assume duties as judges rather than sympathetic facilitators who guide students in achieving their intended meanings in writing. The didactic implications of teachers who adopt judgmental attitudes are that young people may become overly obedient and submissive, fearful to express their views; they may even lose the ability to think creatively. It is the task of teacher educators to make students acutely aware of these dangers.

As stated previously (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.4.6), according to the process approach to composition writing, teachers should intervene during all stages (i.e., planning, drafting and revision) of the writing process. They should not simply assign a topic and then wait to pass judgement in the form of marks. As will be recalled (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.2) the current-traditional paradigm of composition writing was also criticised for its emphasis on the finished compositions (products). An approach which focusses on the product rather than the process of composition writing is not acceptable in an ESL context because it is tantamount to adopting a "swim or sink" situation.

Allowing students to "sink" and then focus on errors in their compositions might kill the joy of writing. More importantly, such an attitude might dampen students' spirit and consequently drive them to a position where they are no longer prepared to take risks in writing. In this sense, a "swim or sink" approach is usually didactically counter-productive. As indicated in Chapter 3 (see section 3.2.3.1), errors should be pointed out without them being made the overriding concern, particularly during first drafts. Students should first be encouraged to come out of their "linguistic cocoons" to say something meaningful. Only then can teachers begin to work with students on matters of form (e.g., local revision as in checking spelling, punctuation, word order; global revision such as paying attention to diction, tone, style).

In sum, if students perceive teachers as merciless judges who parade with red pens, they will be fearful to take risks in writing. Rather, students should perceive their teachers as individuals who are capable of giving advice, comfort and understanding. It is

important, therefore, that student teachers be made profoundly aware of the importance of positive feedback in student writing. College and university lecturers must demonstrate to student teachers techniques designed to help students write better compositions and essays.

8.3.3 Recommendations to Administrators Regarding Control

Administrators can play a meaningful role in sharpening teachers' skills of responding to student writing. Thus, an in-service workshop on this topic could impact positively and ensure that teachers, both from English departments and other subject departments, share expertise on this crucial and (sometimes) frustrating aspect of composition teaching.

Workshop: Responding to student writing

This workshop explores some strategies of helping students improve the quality of their writing. Some of these strategies are: individual conferencing, peer editing, rewriting, and positive reinforcement. These techniques are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 (sections 3.3.2.1 and 3.4.2.3) and Chapter 4 (section 4.2.4.6).

For this workshop, teachers read and respond to a piece of student writing, noting (1) where it is strong, (2) where weak, and (3) what specific suggestions might help the student writer to improve the paper. They do this exercise first as individuals and then as groups.

This workshop should go beyond merely generating a list of helpful hints for responding to student writing. It should allow teachers to gain confidence in their ability to respond insightfully and creatively to student writing. This confidence is important, given that teachers in content-areas often feel insecure about responding to and evaluating writing; many remember being penalized by error-conscious English teachers and some retain the

view that writing, along with responding to writing, is an arcane craft, the precise practice of which belongs exclusively to teachers of English" (Fulwiler, 1981:60).

8.4 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

There are fifteen recommendations in this section: seven regarding active participation and the role of the teacher during the three stages of writing as process, one model lesson illustrating active participation as a didactic principle, a discussion of the model lesson, four recommendations for teacher educators and two for administrators (see subsections 8.4.1, 8.4.2 and 8.4.3).

8.4.1 Recommendations to Teachers Regarding Active Participation

○ The Stages of Writing Process and Teacher Involvement

According to the didactic principle of active participation, active learner involvement and engagement with the learning task leads to effective learning. Consequently, the teacher has a responsibility of ensuring maximum pupil participation in a didactic situation.

The process approach to composition writing makes provision for three main stages (planning, drafting and revision) as a pre-condition for effective compositions.

Therefore, the teacher should help sustain and maximise learner involvement during all the stages of the writing process.

During the planning stage, the teacher should:

- ✓ Introduce the topic, through reading, listening or oral activities (e.g, debates, interviews and pair or group discussions);
- ✓ Organise topic discussions (this could be pair, group or class discussions); and
- ✓ While avoiding the presentation of a prescriptive model of composition, the teacher should ensure that pupils know exactly the ideal format of the composition expected of them.

During the drafting stage, the teacher ensures that pupils:

- start sorting out their ideas by:
 - grouping similar ideas;
 - discarding irrelevant and unnecessary information; and
 - logically arranging their ideas in preparation for the first draft.
- write and discuss (with peers or the teacher) the first draft.

During the revision stage, the teacher has to ensure:

- that class atmosphere is made conducive for the process of revision - an otherwise threatening activity as it involves exchanging drafts; and
- that final drafts go through global and local revision;
 - in global revision, the pupils (in pairs or groups) exchange compositions to check on items like paragraphing, use of transitional devices, overall clarity of language used, etc.
 - in local revision, the teacher and pupils check on items like spelling, punctuation marks and stylistic features such as commas, colons, etc.

8.4.1.1 Model Lesson No. 4: Illustrating Active Participation

<u>Class</u> :	Std. 8
<u>Subject</u> :	English (ESL)
<u>Topic</u> :	Guided Composition
<u>T/ Media</u> :	Picture handouts and Chalkboard
<u>Educational Aim</u>	To promote the love of writing in English.
<u>Objective</u> :	Pupils will be able to write a descriptive essay.

FIRST LESSON PHASE: **AROUSING AND DIRECTING**

- (a) *Introduce the topic by showing pupils a picture of a couple standing in front of a house. Find out whether students know what a couple is. Ask pupils to list things that relate to the word couple, for example, lovers, marriage, children, friends, partners and houses (a spidergram may be used for this purpose).*

SECOND LESSON PHASE: **INSTRUCTION**

- (b) *Distribute picture hand outs. Ask pupils to study the pictures and make short descriptive notes. In other words, they write details of the picture. At this stage, encourage pupils to write anything about the picture. They should not worry about relatedness of descriptive details at this stage i.e., they should merely list descriptive features.*

THIRD LESSON PHASE: **FUNCTIONALISATION**

- (c) *Ask pupils to sit in pairs and compare their descriptive notes. In pairs they must also generate further ideas, paying attention to minute details in the pictures.*

- (d) Give pupils guidelines to generate a written description of the picture. For example, pupils should begin their essays as follows:

"The picture shows a couple standing in front of a house ..."

Pupils then describe a house in the first paragraph.

- (e) Paragraph 2 begins as follows:

"Next to the man is a woman ..."

Pupils then describe the woman paying attention to dress, complexion, facial expression etc.

- (f) Paragraph 3 concludes with a description of the man.

FOURTH LESSON PHASE: ASSIGNMENT

- (g) Ask pupils to work out their three-paragraph descriptive essays as homework to be submitted the next day. On the following day, pupils should discuss their essays in groups. With the help of the pupils, work out evaluative criteria to be used in assessing the descriptive compositions. For example, peer editors in group may use the following criteria:

- * Does the writer adequately describe
(a) the house,
(b) the woman and
(c) the man?
If not, what details can you add or eliminate to make these paragraphs effective?
- * Do descriptive words/phrases/ clauses used by this writer adequately capture the essence of this picture? If not, can you suggest any effective descriptive words/phrases or clauses to make this essay effective?
- * Are there any mechanical aspects (spelling, punctuation, word order, tenses etc.) of this composition that need attention?

FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURE

- (h) *Once pupils have given each other written feedback, ask them to study the suggestions and then attempt to incorporate them in their second drafts. Set the next submission date.*

8.4.1.2 Discussion of Model Lesson

Pupil involvement comes out strongly in this lesson. It manifests itself in various stages of the lesson. As the teacher arouses and directs interest, he/she involves pupils as a class in a short discussion which is designed to lead to picture descriptions. Having individually studied pictures, pupils work in pairs to improve the quality of their descriptive notes. Once fully-fledged compositions have been written, pupils work as peer editors, who, guided by specific evaluative criteria help each other to write in a way that captures the essential details of the pictures.

Active participation, as it manifests itself in this lesson helps in developing many didactic values: students learn through self-discovery and self-exertion which is made possible by the teachers' willingness to allow pupils to explore and get engaged in stimulating and challenging activities, e.g., picture study. The activities in this lesson also enhance acceptance of responsibility which results from the adoption of a deep approach towards learning. Learners, individually and both in pairs and groups, collaborate to prepare meaningful compositions. In this context, they are all bound by a sense of collective accountability and responsibility.

Secondly, learner interest is enhanced and sustained through the use of visual stimuli: the pictures. As a result, active participation is improved. Pupils are not simply asked to describe a thing or a specific phenomena without the aid of pictures which serve as a launching pad for more penetrating thinking. This illustrates the significant role which pictorial and other visual media should play in the composition class. Besides making composition writing exciting, such media serves to contextualise composition writing.

Consequently, pupils learn to appreciate the fact that composition writing is designed to help them master specific forms of writing, e.g., description.

8.4.2 Recommendations to Teacher educators Regarding Active Participation

Teacher educator's Role in Creating and Sustaining Group Work Ethos

If student teachers (in their future classes) are to successfully engage pupils in composition writing, they have to believe in the value of group work in the context of composition writing. Consequently, teacher educators are better poised to influence student teachers, preferably through example rather than through word of mouth. Therefore, teacher educators should:

- encourage collaboration rather than competition during all the stages of composition writing;
- at times assign group compositions thereby inculcating collective responsibility;
- engendering a warm and supportive class atmosphere which then acts as an essential support mechanism which sustains learners as they "give and take" during collaborative activities; and
- reward collective effort **BUT** try to ascertain that **ALL** individuals in a group participated at their full capacity.

In sum, teacher educators have a duty to instill a sense of working together for the success of common goals. This requires, among other things, loyalty to the team and a willingness to suspend self in favour of group thereby accepting a sense of connectedness to fellow learners. Learners ought to be taught and shown that while individual effort and initiative is commendable, they stand to benefit even more from collaboration in the execution of learning tasks.

Collaborative learning techniques like group work re-inforce student active participation. Students learn to take an active and meaningful role in their learning, thus replacing teacher-centred pedagogy with student-centred pedagogy. In other words, the principle of active participation in a didactic situation forces students to realise the importance of taking initiatives and responsibility for their own learning. In the long-term, this realisation embodies an important life lesson. Adulthood is about attainment of responsibility and ability to take initiatives in controlling one's life.

8.4.3 Recommendations to Administrators Regarding Active Participation

Policy initiatives

Initiatives at the school and class levels have to be commensurate with the umbrella education policy of the country. In other words, teachers (as translators and interpreters of education policy) cannot afford to work at cross-purposes with the stated education policy. Therefore, since the idea of encouraging students to work in groups implies a departure from the traditional paradigm of teacher-centred classrooms, policy initiatives ought to be evolved so as to re-orientate teachers in the field about student-centred teaching-learning paradigms.

Workshops, seminars and conferences exist as potential forums to help teachers come to terms with changes in the education field. For example, a practical workshop in which teachers actually write compositions and follow all the suggested three stages of writing (planning, drafting and revision) can benefit teachers a lot. Teachers themselves have to experience what it means to work as groups in composition writing.

Avoiding contradictions

The education system itself should not contradict its purposes through practices that are at odds with the stated objectives. For example, it is a contradiction in terms to stress and reward individual achievement at all times while hoping to instill a spirit of collaboration at the same time. In this sense, therefore, if the value of collaboration as a practical and viable learning alternative is to succeed, the grading system at schools will have to be reconceptualised and adjusted to accommodate individual contribution in the context of the group effort.

Secondly, on a broader scale, any repressive government system cannot hope to engender a sense of working together in its citizens. Consequently, even pupils (who tend to be accurate observers) may find an apparent contradiction in class practices (e.g., group work) which are founded on principles of participatory democracy in a socio-cultural and political atmosphere which is anathema to collaboration. Administrators have both the platform and conceptual understanding of the larger forces and factors which can undermine and frustrate teachers' efforts at legitimising collaborative enterprises.

8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING MOTIVATION

There are nine recommendations in this section: seven for teachers, one for teacher educators and one for administrators (see sub sections 8.5.1, 8.5.2 and 8.5.3). The first of these three subsections contains a discussion of two previously presented lessons (see lessons 1 and 2).

8.5.1 Recommendations to Teachers Regarding Motivation

Teachers' attitude towards composition writing

It seems strange that children, who otherwise scribble effortlessly anywhere at the slightest opportunity that presents itself, suddenly lose interest in writing at school (Ndlovu, 1993). Teachers' attitudes towards the task of writing play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes and dispositions. A bitter and sarcastic tongue promotes student withdrawal into their "linguistic cocoons." On the other hand, a sympathetic and understanding disposition towards students in a composition class encourages risk-taking. Consequently teachers should:

- avoid embarrassing comments (verbal or written) in students' compositions;
- make an effort to demonstrate good writing by using students' own compositions;
- always indicate BOTH strengths and weaknesses in students' writing; and
- display products (elementary publishing) of students' own writing in class.

Composition topics

Besides a cheerful and positive disposition towards writing, teachers can also enhance motivation by assigning composition topics that interest students. Mundane topics kill the joy in writing. In this regard, teachers should:

- sometimes allow students to choose writing on topics that interest them;
- assign topics which have relevance insofar as they relate to the current social, economic and political issues.

8.5.1.1 Model Lesson and Discussion

Two model lessons previously presented in this chapter (Lesson 1 and 2) illustrate the use of topics which, because of stimulating content have a built-in motivational effect. Composition topics of this nature tend to have a strong motivational potential insofar as they should relate to current socio-politico-cultural issues (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.2.1). In this regard, the media remains a vital source of information which can be tapped by both teachers and students alike. For example:

- individual pupils may be asked to bring newspaper cuttings on articles which interest them;
- pupils may be asked to share with the class news items which interest them; and
- teachers and students may bring to class tape recordings (video or cassette) of popular television programmes like "Agenda" or "Newslime."

In short, putting composition writing within the context of the pupils' socio-cultural milieu encourages them to see the relevance of composition writing in their lives. In this context, student perception of composition writing may improve significantly.

Subject matter relevance is a crucial factor in enhancing motivation in any didactic situation. Under these circumstances, subject matter should appeal to learners, thus creating and sustaining intrinsic motivation. The long-term effects of exposing learners to subject matter (e.g., relevant and topical composition topics) is that they, through being intrinsically motivated, free themselves from perpetual dependence on incentives. They learn to appreciate learning for the sake of the pleasure it brings rather than being driven by expectations of incentives.

In a nutshell, relevant subject matter promotes intrinsic motivation, the attainment of which implies self-control and self-discipline which are all inward dispositions.

8.5.2 Recommendations to Teacher educators Regarding Motivation

Demonstrating motivation

Teacher-educators are on the cutting-edge of development in the education field. They are well positioned to influence student teachers' attitudes towards composition writing and teaching. Thus, it is imperative that in composition teaching, teacher educators demonstrate how motivation can be aroused and sustained in a composition lesson.

Most teacher education institutions require teacher educators to conduct demonstration lessons as part of the curriculum. Therefore, teacher educators have to utilise this built-in advantage to maximise student motivation through adopting a positive approach and selecting relevant composition topics.

8.5.3 Recommendations to Administrators Regarding Motivation

Overcrowded classrooms

Overcrowded classrooms remain one of the demotivating factors in composition teaching, particularly because it requires constant teacher intervention and supportive guidance. Unfortunately, the provision of school facilities, like classrooms, is the responsibility of educational administrators and politicians. It is, therefore, beyond teachers' powers to address the problem of overcrowding and general lack of facilities in most black schools.

8.6 CONCLUSION

With regards to composition paradigms, this study has shown that there is at present a strong bias in favour of the current-traditional paradigm. The expressionistic and social paradigms - which mainly led to the process approach to composition teaching - are not satisfactorily exploited. This finding is further corroborated by the equally unsatisfactory results on the use of individualisation and socialisation didactic principles, especially when seen in the context that the expressionistic paradigm relates to individualisation and the social paradigm relates to socialisation.

This finding suggests that the study has accomplished most of its purposes. Two of these were to evaluate the approach used by teachers and to identify techniques used by respondents in the sample (see Chapter 1, sub sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2). The detrimental effects of using the current-traditional paradigm to the exclusion of both the expressionistic and social paradigms which encompass process approach techniques, were highlighted.

On the positive side, the study has shown that teachers in the sample claim to actively involve pupils thus accommodating the didactic principle of active participation. Control and motivation as didactic principles yielded results which were positive in some respects and negative in others.

Another purpose of the study was to establish whether teachers are exposed to ideas on composition teaching (see Chapter 1, sub section 1.3.3) In this regard, the study has shown that, generally, the respondents in the sample claim to have had a fair amount of exposure through reading on this topic, conference papers, college training on this topic and informal talk with colleagues. However, the results on this aspect indicated that conferences and workshops were neglected and this was viewed negatively, especially because both workshops and conferences are valuable forums to air ideas and debate issues on any subject (see Chapter 5, section 5.4).

With regards to problems faced by respondents in ESL composition teaching (see Chapter 5, section 5.5), the results of the study were revealing. Initiatives directed at improving composition teaching can now be formulated with a clearer picture of the scope and nature of the problems confronting English teachers. In this sense, the study has fulfilled another one of its major purposes (see Chapter 1, sub section 1.3.4).

With regards to eliciting solutions to composition teaching problems (see Chapter 1, section 1.3.5) respondents were not as articulate as expected. In fact, most teachers did not respond to this item. They only stated what they perceived to be pressing problems without suggesting solutions. Thus, this particular purpose of the study was not accomplished.

As part of mapping a way forward, the research suggests possible solutions which have to be perceived within the framework of an acute awareness that successfully teaching composition writing to ESL learners is obviously no easy feat. It depends on a number of variables, some of which are beyond the scope of this study.

Firstly, it requires an approach that is grounded both on sound didactic principles and influential linguistic theories of writing. The process approach seemingly meets this requirement.

Secondly, general classroom conditions need to be made conducive to the use of the writing techniques which are in line with the process approach. Problems like overcrowded classrooms are demotivating factors which need to be addressed by education authorities if composition writing is to improve in black schools.

Thirdly, teachers themselves need exposure to conferences, workshops and seminars which address ESL composition writing. This exposure costs money and a willingness to learn on the part of teachers. In the interest of sound classroom practice, administrators have to be sensitive enough to respond positively in financing in-service

workshops. Teachers need to realise the need to keep pace with the latest techniques and approaches to composition writing.

Fourth, the help of content teachers need to be enlisted in the battle to promote ESL composition writing.

Generally, teachers who teach content subjects (e.g., Economics, History, Geography etc.) assume that it is the sole responsibility of the English teacher to teach English composition writing. It is then assumed that skills learnt in the English composition class will transfer to essay writing in the content area subjects. Consequently, when students fail to write coherent, logical and meaningful essays in the content subjects, those who teach these subjects tend to adopt a "holier-than-thou" attitude and blame the English teachers of having failed. This state of affairs raises fundamental questions such as "Whose business is the teaching of composition or essay writing?" Obviously, teachers of English are responsible for teaching composition writing within the context and constraints of English as a subject. However, skills acquired during English composition teaching may not necessarily make students better essay writers in Physical Science and Geography, for example. Therefore, teachers of English and other subjects should collaborate in finding a common approach to the teaching and evaluation of writing (composition/essay writing).

A unified cross-curricular approach to the teaching of composition and essay writing is important because the assumption that composition writing skills can transfer to content subjects without any additional teaching is fallacious. At worst, it may lead to unnecessary contradictions between the demands of the content subjects (with reference to what constitutes a good essay/composition) and English as a subject (where composition writing is normally taught). Under these circumstances, content subject teachers may be working at cross purposes with teachers of English.

The argument that composition writing should be taught only by English teachers misses the point that most teachers assign extended writing (that is, essays or compositions)

at one time or another during the course of their teaching. In this sense, most teachers are duty-bound -within the framework of their subjects - to teach writing in a way that does not contradict what teachers do in the English class. For example, teachers within one school may be sending contradictory messages to the students if they differ remarkably in their approach to essay marking. Teachers in the English class may be paying attention to *mechanical aspects of composition writing* (e.g., spelling, punctuation and syntax) as well as presentation of facts. On the other hand, teachers in content-area subjects may be only interested in facts, disregarding how those facts have been presented.

In conclusion, the pivotal role of English composition teaching in education should be emphasised. Composition writing teaches valuable skills: it teaches young people critical thinking; they learn to organise ideas in logical ways which helps them especially in communicating and expressing themselves sensibly and sensitively, thus preparing them effectively for employment, especially because formative and communicative skills are worthwhile attributes which enhances one's chances of employment. Seen in this context, composition writing is not simply a subskill which pupils have to learn in order to pass English. The quality of a person's writing is a major determinant of his/her selfrealisation. It embodies important features of a person's personality, potential and future self-fulfilment.

APPENDIX A:

COVERING LETTER

Adams College of Education
Private Bag X 20013
AMANZIMTOTI
4125

Dear Colleague:

I am working on a study of how English composition is taught in Black Zulu secondary schools. As a teacher of English in your school, you possess the knowledge and insights which I need to explore how English composition in particular and writing in general is taught in our secondary schools.

The questionnaire has been constructed to obtain the following data:

- (a) your teaching circumstances e.g., class size, subjects etc;
- (b) your views on some techniques which might be used in teaching writing;
- (c) problems and solutions you might offer with regards to the teaching of writing;
- (d) your exposure to ideas about the teaching of composition writing.

The success of this study depends on your willingness to complete this questionnaire. Your name will NOT be mentioned in any discussion of the questionnaire results. You do not need to put your name on this questionnaire. Further, I wish to assure you that participation is voluntary and that the information you give will be confidential.

I have estimated that you will be able to complete the questionnaire in 25-30 minutes. Please complete the questionnaire and post to the above address. If you need a copy of the results, write a letter to me at the above address.

I hope you will find it convenient to complete this questionnaire by May 30 1993.

Thank you for your time and help.

Sincerely
Goodman Thamsanqa Shezi
Post-Graduate Student

APPENDIX B:

QUESTIONNAIRE TO ESL TEACHERS

A SURVEY ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION
IN ZULU SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please circle the appropriate answer or fill in the blanks.

1. **Age group:**

Under 20

20 - 29

30 - 39

40 - 49

50 - 59

Over 60

2. **Sex:**

1. Male

2. Female

3. **Qualifications:**

(Professional)

1. P.T.C.

2. P.T.D.

3. S.T.D.

4. S.S.T.D.

5. U.E.D.

6. OTHER (please specify)

(Academic)

1. Std. 10
2. B.A.
3. B.Paed.
4. B.A (Hons)
5. M.A.
6. Ph.D

4. **Where do you teach?**

1. day-school-rural
2. day-school-urban medium equipped
3. urban well equipped school

5. **Average class size:**

1. 20-29
2. 30-34
3. 35-39
4. 40-49
5. 50-

6. **How many years of full-time classroom teaching experience you have had (including this current year[s])**

B. COMPOSITION TEACHING TECHNIQUES

The following questions concern your teaching techniques in the English composition class. I am interested in the different techniques you might be using. Please circle the appropriate number for each question.

	Almost Never	Some- times	Often	Almost always
7. When a topic is introduced, how often is there in class discussion (whole class, small group, or individual) about it before students begin writing?	1	2	3	4
8. How often do you use examples of professional writing to help students improve their writing skills?	1	2	3	4
9. For each writing assignment, how often do you try to make your students aware of the audience(s) for whom they are writing?	1	2	3	4
10. When responding to problems in the writing of students, how often do you select and focus on specific problems?	1	2	3	4
11. How often do you read out in class examples of other students' writing to improve their writing?	1	2	3	4
12. When students are working on a piece of writing, how often do you have them work in peer groups?	1	2	3	4
13. When students produce rough drafts, how often do they receive written or oral comments on them?	1	2	3	4
14. How often do you mark every problem or error that you see in a finished piece of writing?	1	2	3	4
15. How often do you assign a mark to students' finished composition pieces?	1	2	3	4
16. When responding to the compositions of the students, how often do you let them know about the strengths and weaknesses in their writing?	1	2	3	4
17. When students write, how often do you publish their work for class members or for other readers outside of your English class?	1	2	3	4
18. How often do you have individual conferences (either formal or informal) with your students to discuss their writing?	1	2	3	4

C. PROBLEMS YOU MAY HAVE EXPERIENCED IN COMPOSITION TEACHING

19. This section gives you the opportunity to share with me problems you might have had in teaching composition writing.

In the spaces provided, briefly explain your problem(s) and suggest what solution(s) you think might help.

D. EXPOSURE TO IDEAS ABOUT THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION

The following is designed to give me an idea about your exposure to ideas about the teaching of composition writing.

Please tick all the statements which describe your exposure to ideas and concepts about composition teaching.

20. — I read about this topic
21. — I heard a paper at a conference on this topic
22. — I attended a workshop on this topic
23. — I had training at college on this topic
24. — I have conducted workshops and presented papers on this topic
25. — I have heard teachers talk about it informally

E. YOUR OWN COMMENTS ON COMPOSITION TEACHING

26. The questionnaire may not have touched all your important thoughts about the teaching of composition writing. In the space provided, I would appreciate any additional comments you wish to share.

Thank you for your contribution to this study.

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