Fostering Engagement with the First R, and the ELs: Teachers’ Practices Withstanding the Test of Time

by

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Fostering Engagement with the First R, and the ELs: Teachers’ Practices Withstanding the Test of Time

Reading has the power to take control of our emotions, to make us laugh and to bring tears to our eyes. Through reading, we can inhabit and experience worlds and cultures past, present and of the imagination. Time can pass unnoticed as we engage with the characters of a book, characters so real to us that they can vanquish loneliness, and support us through times of trouble. Reading is also the single most important tool for learning and so the visionary teachers who can give their students the gift of a love of reading are equipping them with a potent force.

This case study investigated the practice of four upper primary teachers to discover their motivations and objectives for the implementation of a specific combination of three literacy practices: reading aloud to students, providing dedicated silent reading time and engaging students in ‘book talk’. The teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the benefits to students of the programs were also investigated. As this study took place in a time of politico-theoretical debate on reading instruction, and during a time of a change to a values- and futures-oriented curriculum within Tasmania, this study also sought to determine the relevance of these teachers’ practices in a time of curriculum change.

Results indicated that the teachers’ personal love of reading and their understanding of the importance of well-developed reading skills to the future success of their students were the primary motivating factors for teachers’ programs. Teachers also had a naïve conceptual understanding of the attitude influence model that framed the boundaries of this study.

This study provides support for the implementation of the practices implemented by the participating teachers and it shows the power of teacher modelling as a vital component of pedagogical practice. The teachers’ narrative accounts provide access to their emotional commitment to their work, and their stories suggest that they implicitly understand the crucial importance of student motivation to any educational endeavour.
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Tammy Jones.
This dissertation is dedicated to

the authors,

Arthur Roth, John Marsden and J. K. Rowling,
who, through their talent for putting words on paper,
transformed my three daughters into avid readers,
opening to them the wealth of opportunity and joy
to be found in literature.
DECLARATION

I certify that this dissertation contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution, college or university, and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of this dissertation.

Tamara Anne Jones

October 2002
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Glossary

Listening comprehension “Understanding speech. Listening comprehension …can be described in "levels" -- lower levels of listening comprehension would include understanding only the facts explicitly stated in a spoken passage that has very simple syntax and uncomplicated vocabulary. Advanced levels of listening comprehension would include implicit understanding and drawing inferences from spoken passages that feature more complicated syntax and more advanced vocabulary” (SEDL, 2000, ¶ listening comprehension).

Literacy “The ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately in a range of contexts. It also involves the integration of speaking, listening, viewing and critical thinking with reading and writing, and includes the cultural knowledge which enables a speaker, writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different social situations” (Department of Education, 1997, Definitions section, ¶ 4).

Literate “able to read and write” (Literacy Glossary, 2002, ¶ literate) or “marked by skilful, clear, and refined expression” (Literacy Glossary, 2002, ¶ literate) of language.

New literacies “those literacies that have emerged in the post-typographic era. … [marking] an intellectual and cultural shift in the way information is designed, communicated, and retrieved” (Semali, 2001, ¶ 2).

Outcome-based education “an educational program that relies on performance assessment to determine its effectiveness” (Literacy Glossary, 2002, ¶ outcome-based education).

Read “A process of translating signs and symbols into meanings and incorporating new meanings into existing cognitive and affective systems” (Robeck & Wilson, 1974, p. 41).

Reading attitude “A system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation” (Alexander & Filler, p. 1)

Reading motivation “the individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 405)

Struggling reader “Any student of any age who has not mastered the skills required to fluently read and comprehend text which is written at a level that one could reasonably expect a student of that age to read” (SEDL, 2000, ¶ struggling reader).
**Trade books**  Literature-based books, as opposed to books such as basal readers.

**Whole Language Philosophy** is concerned with schools supporting, developing and enhancing children’s real-world language, which involves an understanding of the cultural and community contexts and of the learner and their interests and needs (Goodman, 1986). Whole Language philosophy takes the position that language learning is easy for learners when it is relevant, purposeful, has a focus on meaning, respects the uniqueness of past experiences, and empowers both personally and socially (Goodman, 1986).
1.0 INTRODUCTION

There is nothing special about reading, apart from everything that reading enables us to do (Smith, 1982a, p. 1).

1.1 Background

For those of us living in text-rich, first-world countries, the ability to read and to read well, can make an enormous difference to both our school performance, career potential and personal success (Kearsley, 2002; Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997) and, ultimately, to our enjoyment of life (Wragg, Wragg, Haynes & Chamberlin, 1998). Reading has the potential to not only inform, but also provoke, delight and stimulate readers intellectually. The ability to read is, therefore, a powerful and enabling tool for learning (Wragg et al., 1998).

Educational researchers who have studied the impact of the home literacy environment have found that there is overwhelming evidence that some parents strongly contribute to the reading attitudes of their children and that a child’s interest in books and reading can be firmly established within a family context during the pre-school years (Wilson, 2002). Ideally, a love of reading and of books should continue to be nurtured by teachers in the early years of schooling within the school environment, with the support of the family (Cairney, 2000). And so, by the time children reach the upper primary school level, there is an expectation or presupposition by curriculum developers that children will have attained a reasonable degree of ability in reading (Hempenstall, 1999; Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997; Wragg et al., 1998).

In reality, a proportion of children either come from an environment where reading is not seen as a valued activity (Alexander & Filler, 1976; Masters & Foster, 1997; Saxby, 1997) or have experienced a lack of success with learning to read well (Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997; Saxby, 1997). Too often, these children reach the upper primary level with a limited capacity to read and display little, if any, evidence of enjoyment in the act of reading (Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997). Frequently such children are not “turned onto reading” (Saxby, 1997, p. 215), nor are they “hooked on books” (Pilgreen, 2000, p 12). Those students who have developed good literacy
skills have already read, and written, thousands of words in excess of those students whose skills are poorly developed, and this may result in a significant difference in the reading ability of children in upper primary classes (Kearsley, 2002; Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997). The danger of this situation is that children of lower ability, if “left to their own devices will make no detectable progress in reading skill for the remainder of their school career” (Hempenstall, 1999, p. 5; see also Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997), thus placing in jeopardy their general academic progress (Worthy, 2002).

Despite the presence of children of low reading ability within schools, and contrary to the frequent “manufacture of ‘literacy crises’ by governments” (Luke & Freebody, 1999, Drawing on history section, ¶ 1), basic literacy levels, both in Australia and overseas, have steadily increased over the past century (Krashen, 1993; Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997; Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw & Rycik, 1999). At the same time, however, there has been a significant rise in the demands placed on the population to be increasingly more literate (Krashen, 1993; Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997; Moore et al., 1999). This is especially true with the advent of “new technologies [that] summon readers into new literacies” (Watson, 1994, p. 2). And, while there are very few people who are totally illiterate, there are many who have “poor or very poor literacy skills” (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2000, p. 1). These people experience difficulty meeting the complex literacy demands expected of them by the society in which they live (ABS, 2000; Krashen, 1993; Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997). In these “New Times” (Luke, 1998), society demands high levels of literacy competence of students, in order that they become productive members of the workforce (Luke, 1998). Luke (1998) suggests that students will use these “literacies to shape their values, ideologies and identities, and to design and redesign the practices of civic and community life” (p. 306).

There is a wide-spread and high level of understanding by educators of the demands of the modern workplace, and the fact that, “for the majority of learners, at, or about, the fourth year of school, ‘learning to read and write’ becomes, and remains ‘reading and writing to learn’” (Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997, p. 82; see also Rubin, 2000; Wren, 2001). This positions reading as the single most valuable educational tool (Rowe as cited in Rowe, 2000). Because the education system,
particularly from the upper primary grade level onward, relies so heavily on the skill of reading to aid students’ learning, it is a priority for schools to not only equip students with the competence to use these skills (Kearsley, 2002; Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997), but also with a highly motivated desire to use them (Morrow, 1991).

Many teachers who have recognised the influence of a positive attitude on the desire to read have implemented strategies such as sustained silent reading, teacher read-alouds and book talk (Calkins, 2001; Saxby, 1997). These strategies, which originated in the 1970s, when the Whole Language philosophy was a dominating influence in many Australian curriculum documents, are designed to provide time for students to practise and develop their reading skills, provide a reading model to students, and foster a positive book culture within the class (Calkins, 2001; Trelease, 2001; Wilson, 2002). However, the reaction of some traditionalist educators against Whole Language approaches has frequently resulted in contestation over curriculum decisions (Martin, Christie & Rothery, 1987).

Indeed, ever since Whole Language philosophy emerged as a way of theorizing literacy development, there has frequently been much unbalanced criticism of this philosophy by parents, the media and some government officials (Moore, 1996; Routman, 1996). There is evidence that the implementation of national benchmark testing policy has come about partly because of a perceived need for accountability in education, and partly because of what was seen by some as the failure of Whole Language to advance the reading skills development of children (Moore, 1996). There has been considerable ill-informed and unresolved debate over the efficacy of Whole Language, and whether a drill or skills-based approach is a more reliable, and therefore, preferable option in teaching children to read (Fields & Spangler, 1995; Routman, 1996).

Current policy in the United States of America prescribes a focus on phonemic awareness and phonics and attempts to emphasise a “back to basics” approach to reading instruction (United States Department of Education, 2002). Critics of this legislation point to the fact that financially interested groups are behind its introduction and that there has been a resultant, and retrograde, move away from literature-based programs, thereby divorcing the practice of reading
from engagement with real books (Edmondson & Shannon, 2002; Ford, 2000; Goodman, 1998). This legislation has resulted in the marginalisation of silent reading as a classroom practice in the USA, in particular, as a method of reading instruction due to the lack of a demonstrable causal link between silent reading and reading improvement (Edmondson & Shannon, 2002). This is a decision taken in spite of both anecdotal and qualitative research evidence provided by teachers and researchers indicating that silent reading is effective as a means of increasing the number of books that students read and in improving students’ attitudes to books and reading (Edmondson & Shannon, 2002; Krashen, 1993; Pilgreen, 2000). Unfortunately, such educational developments in the USA have a history of affecting educational practice in Australia (Wilkinson, Freebody & Elkins, 2000).

The classroom practices of silent reading, teachers reading aloud to children and book talk have been seen by many concerned educators as acceptable in Tasmania, notwithstanding their 1970s beginnings and the on-going debate over Whole Language versus skills-based approaches. In many schools however, these practices have come under pressure from the push by educational reactionaries for a dedicated two-hour literacy block (Wilson, 2002). Increasingly, these Whole Language practices, which were perceived as productive, have tended to be marginalised by teachers who have been urged to engage with language teaching that is described as being more explicit (Wilson, 2002). The pressures exerted by some politicians to malign the public education system have politicised the debate over pedagogical practices (Church, 1999).

However, the current introduction into schools of a futures- and values-oriented curriculum, described as the Essential Learnings (Department of Education, 2002a), suggests that there is a reaction against the extreme functionalist approaches to public education that have been described above. The authors of the new Tasmanian curriculum have brought about a situation that requires a reappraisal of the Whole Language teaching practices of silent reading, teachers reading aloud, and classroom discussion of books. The place of such practices in the new curriculum is assuredly warranted, indeed validated by the demands of the new educational approach for the new millennium.
This chapter introduces the research and commences with an explanation of the aims of the study (1.2). The following section provides details of the questions that guide the research (1.3). The conceptual framework is identified in the next section (1.4). Following this is a section that makes clear the researcher’s stance (1.5), followed by a discussion of the significance of the study (1.6). This is followed by the final section, which explains the chapter structure of this dissertation (1.7).

1.2 Aim of this Research

The aim of this research was to discover and describe the motivations that prompted four upper primary teachers to read aloud to their students, implement the classroom practice of silent reading, and engage students in book talk. This study will also identify the benefits to students that the teachers attribute to the inclusion of these practices within their reading programs. Furthermore, children’s attitudes to these practices are investigated and consideration is given to understanding the relevance of these practices in a time of curriculum change.

1.3 Research Questions

This study is descriptive in that it aims to describe the phenomenon of teachers’ motivations and objectives, and as such seeks to explain the “meanings, reasons, or purposes which individuals give for their actions” (Church, 1999, Underlying assumptions section, ¶ 3). Church (1999) refers to these attempts to explain the intentions of the participant as “intentional explanations” (Underlying assumptions section, ¶ 3). This investigation of intentional explanations is most appropriately undertaken by the use of qualitative research methods (Church, 1999).

The qualitative nature of the study also defines the type of questions that can be addressed in this research (Church, 1999). The research objectives of this study, then, are phrased in the following questions:

1.3.1 Research Question 1

- What motivations and objectives do teachers have for implementing their reading programs?
1.3.2 Research Question 2

- What benefits to students do teachers attribute to the successful implementation of their reading programs?

1.3.3 Research Question 3

- How do students respond to the reading programs implemented by teachers?

1.3.4 Research Question 4

- How relevant are teachers’ practices in a time of curriculum change?

Related hypothesis: Teachers who initiate reading programs that are designed to positively influence students’ attitudes toward reading, will themselves enjoy reading, and value reading as both a tool for learning and as an enjoyable recreational activity.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

The basis for the conceptual framework for this study, which examines teacher’s motivations as they attempt to influence their students’ reading attitude, is McKenna’s Proposed Model of Reading Attitude Acquisition (1994; see section 2.2.1, Figure 2.2.2-1), which is explained in chapter two of this dissertation.

The purpose of a conceptual framework is to explain “the main dimensions to be studied – the key factors, or variables – and the presumed relationships among them” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 28). The framework aids the researcher in defining the boundaries of the study, deciding which elements of the research are the most important, and ultimately deciding upon what data will be gathered and analysed (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

The following two sections will be presented in the first person.

1.5 Researcher’s Stance

I believe I should begin this inquiry with an “active, articulated subjectivity” (Gould, 1985, p. 290), which could be considered the essence of post-structuralist research in the qualitative paradigm. Gould (1985) suggests that this approach requires the researcher “to dissect the taken-for-granted world to explain” (p. 290) its status.
I have recognised and acknowledged that the choice of this topic meshes intimately with my deepest personal and professional commitments. I am a pre-service teacher in the final year of my Bachelor of Education degree, and have come to this field of study as a parent of three adolescent daughters and having worked as a teacher’s aide to a child with special needs in an early childhood setting for three years. Principally, my background and interests determine the theoretical and philosophical approach adopted for this research. It is for this reason that I feel the necessity to communicate and justify my position in this study, acknowledging that there are “formal and informal ways [in which beliefs] influence where people locate themselves in their responses to and interpretations of various situations, people, or events” (Ely, Vinz, Downing & Anzul, 1997, p. 45).

A keen reader myself, I originally had difficulty reconciling myself with the fact that my eldest daughter had difficulty with reading. In grade two, my daughter was assessed at my request, and found to have a mild learning difficulty: a limited dyspraxia. Despite my second daughter later displaying similar characteristics, I made a deliberate decision not to have her assessed for any learning difficulty, by this time believing, as Goodman (1986) does, that what children “suffer from most is the fact of being labelled” (p. 36). My third daughter was a capable, but not keen, reader without any noticeable learning difficulties.

The influence of a ‘good book’ on my children’s attitude to reading became apparent to me when, in grade two, my second daughter became engrossed in a novel that many people would have considered beyond her reading ability. *The Iceberg Hermit* by Arthur Roth, is suggested by reviewers as being suitable for grade 5 to 12 students. It so entranced my daughter that she valiantly struggled to read it and constantly amused us by telling us snippets that she found interesting. This daughter’s interest in reading has never waned.

Until grade 7 or 8, my eldest daughter was a struggling reader who only read when she was compelled so to do. When she was required to read John Marsden’s *Tomorrow, When the War Began* as a class novel, she could not put the book down. I gladly purchased each successive book in the series to satisfy her reading hunger. Now aged 18, my daughter is a regular borrower of books from the town library.
J. K. Rowling’s novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, was the next book of significance in our household. My youngest daughter, a capable reader with no learning difficulties, found reading “boring” and books in the school library “dodgy”. I presented *Harry Potter* to my daughter for Christmas. After initial encouragement to begin reading, the result was that, again, the series of books was purchased to satisfy a lust for the story. Two years later, my daughter’s bookshelves are full of books that have been read, enjoyed and stand as a testament to a newly-developed love of reading.

The experiences outlined above have been responsible for fuelling my interests in the areas of reading in the affective domain and reading attitude acquisition. I feel it is necessary to make explicit my awareness of the need for children to develop skills in all three cue systems: graphophonic, syntactic and semantic (Goodman, 1969), within a supportive environment that values literature. There can be no denying that all these skills are a necessary part of learning to read and write and there is no suggestion on my part that any area of instruction should be neglected, despite my focus in this dissertation on reading in the affective domain and reading attitude acquisition. I, therefore acknowledge my full support for a holistic literacy program throughout all school grades.

### 1.6 Significance of this Research

Burns (2000) suggests that, for researchers “there are three important sources of problems – experience, from theory, and related literature” (p. 26). This research is significant to my own experience and to the theory of reading attitude acquisition.

The preceding section (1.5) has made clear my stance in relation to this study. My experience as a parent of struggling and reluctant readers has raised concerns with me regarding the degree to which teachers take seriously the role of interest on motivation and attitude formation. With my own children, it was very much a case of “the right book for the right child at the right time” (Saxby, 1997, p. 206). The practices implemented by the teachers, who are the participants in this study, are ones that have been researched as influential in positively affecting children’s attitudes toward reading as well as providing children with time to practise their developing skills in reading. As stated in the hypothesis, it was my belief that
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teachers who implement such reading practices would have a personal love of reading and an understanding of the importance of the affective domain in developing attitude. Teachers’ own beliefs and values have been assessed as exerting a powerful influence on the students they teach (Bandura, 1993). This research then, is an attempt to inform my own understanding and practice, while contributing to the literature on reading in the affective domain.

Early in the planning of this study, I encountered McKenna’s Proposed Model of Reading Attitude Acquisition (1994; see section 2.2.1, Figure 2.2.2-1) in the literature on the topic. During scrutiny of the model, it was apparent to me that teachers with an informed understanding of the influences on attitude, as described by McKenna’s proposed model and literature, would be well positioned to affect change in students’ attitudes toward reading. Using the model proposed by McKenna as the conceptual framework for this study defines the boundaries of the study, but also provides a means by which to determine the depth of understanding possessed by teachers of the theory that underpins their classroom practices.

As the model proposed by McKenna (1994) is one that attempts to explain attitude influence, it was considered vital to the aims of this study to obtain data from students on their attitudes toward reading and their perceptions of the benefits they attribute to their teachers’ reading programs.

This study was proposed during a time of politico-theoretical debate over reading instruction overseas, and during the introduction of a values- and futures-oriented curriculum in Tasmania. The relevance of teachers’ practices during this shift in the focus of curriculum was seen as being appropriate to the prior aims of this study.

1.7 Structure of this Dissertation

Chapter One of this dissertation has provided the background to this study and detailed the aim of the research. In this chapter the research questions have been posed, and the theoretical and conceptual framework that supports this research has been introduced. The researcher’s stance has been made clear and the significance of this study has been addressed. The following chapters of this dissertation detail the steps taken to achieve the aim of this research.
Chapter Two presents the background and literature review as relevant to this study. This chapter examines the literature relating to reading motivation, attitude, contexts and influences; the benefits of engaging with children’s literature; the practices of teachers reading aloud, silent reading and talking about books; tensions over reading instruction; and reading in policy and curriculum documents. The chapter is concluded by a summary.

Chapter Three describes the research design and method of this study. The first section details the steps undertaken in the review of the literature, with subsequent sections discussing the research design, the selection of participants, measures and procedures involved in data collection and methods of data analysis. Issues of validity and reliability are discussed and details of a change in the aims of this study are addressed. A summary concludes the chapter.

Chapter Four presents the results of the study in relation to the teacher interviews. Each participant is introduced with a demographic summary. The results of the interview are presented as narrative vignettes, which were seen as the most appropriate way to present data pertaining to the primarily affective issues investigated to achieve the aim of the study. Each section concludes with an overview of the attitudes of the students in the class. The chapter closes with a brief summary.

Chapter Five presents the results of the study in relation to the student questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire are largely quantitative and the statistical analysis allowed for a picture to be built up of the prevailing attitudes of the students in any one class, and as a cohort. A brief summary concludes the chapter.

Chapter Six interprets and discusses the results of the study. This chapter presents the key results and provides a discussion and interpretation of these results as they relate to each of the research questions posed. This discussion is followed by a section detailing the limitations of this study and a summary concludes the chapter.
Chapter Seven presents the summary and conclusions of the study. The initial section revisits the conceptual framework of the study and summarises the research in relation to the aim and research questions. In the following section, conclusions are drawn from the discussion of results, and then the implications for educational practice are addressed. The limitations of the study are enumerated, before consideration is given to recommendations for future research. The chapter closes with a brief concluding statement.
Chapter 2

2.0 BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed thematic discussion of issues considered to be the background to this study, as well as presenting literature in the research areas relevant to understanding the conceptual framework and addressing the aims of the study.

This chapter begins with a review of the literature on reading motivation, attitude, environmental contexts for learning and attitude influences (2.2). The following section reviews and discusses the benefits of engaging with children’s literature: cognitive, language and literacy benefits; and affective, aesthetic and moral benefits (2.3). This is followed by a section that reviews and discusses the literature on teachers reading aloud, silent reading, and talking about books, which are some of the strategies implemented by teachers to promote children’s engagement with literature (2.4). The next section provides a review and discussion of tensions over reading pedagogy (2.5). This is followed by an overview of the evolving recent history of Tasmanian literacy curriculum and the policy and curriculum documents currently influencing literacy education (2.6). A brief summary concludes the chapter (2.7).

2.2 Reading Motivation, Attitude, Contexts and Influences

The terms motivation, attitude and interest would all appear to be somewhat “slippery” concepts (Marshall, 2000, p. 381), yet they are concepts that teachers have found to be of considerable value in describing particular aspects of their practice (Mathewson, 1994). Historically, the concentrated focus on the cognitive aspects of reading instruction has tended to sideline research into the affective aspects of the understanding of reading (Mathewson, 1985). Additionally, the elusive nature of affective variables, when compared with those of the cognitive domain, has been partially responsible for a general lack of interest in the topic by researchers (Fox, 2000; Mathewson, 1994). Nevertheless, Mathewson has reported a recent increase in interest, by social psychologists, in the “affective area and its influence on reading behaviour” (1994). However, searches of the literature
produced scant results – perhaps indicating the difficulty of attempting to deal with
the topic. One researcher who has made a point about influences on reading
research in the affective domain is Marshall (2000):

Any response to literature … will remain largely invisible to those
studying it until it is represented by the reader in some verbal or
material form. A reader’s response to literature, in other words, is
never directly accessible: It is always mediated by the mode of
representation to which the reader has access (e.g., talk, writing,
drawing). (p. 382)

2.2.1 Reading Motivation and Attitude

Betts (1979) had previously taken up the ideas that Marshall later describes as
an invisible force, suggesting that motivation, far from being the ambiguous
concept that it may appear, “embraces knowing (cognitive factor) and emotions
and feelings (affective factor) which put the learner in tune with books and other
printed material” (p. 63). While Betts described motivation as a “master controller”
(p. 63) in reading instruction, he broke the concept down into nine different and
vital factors which he believed not only facilitated, but escalated, students’ reading
achievement. These factors, as described by Betts (1979), are knowledge, skills,
values, intent, awareness of success, interest, personal needs, aspiration and
attitudes.

Mathewson (1994) has criticised the rather minimalist approach taken by
some researchers towards a definition of the concept of attitude. He considers that
many proposed definitions do not take into account the richness of the concept of
attitude. Mathewson suggests a more inclusive definition than those offered by
some theorists. His is “a tricomponent view of attitude with evaluation as the
cognitive component, feeling as the affective component and action readiness as
the conative component” (p. 1133). Supporting this analysis, McGuire (1989)
believes that this tricomponent view of attitude is one that is useful, and he
contends that it has major implications for reading research, in which he suggests
there is a strong case to be made for open-ended responses in qualitative research
designs in this field of study. This is an issue taken up by McKenna (1994) who
provides for a developing, recursive model of research exploration in his Proposed
Model of Reading Attitude Acquisition (1994; see Fig. 2.2.1-1, this section).
comics, he does consider that during times when children attach themselves to such texts, they undergo a time of growth in their tastes and literary insights. He believes, therefore, that it is important for teachers “to let their children read to their hearts’ content, but to ensure that there is a wide variety of appealing reading matter on hand, and gently to point their noses in the right direction” (Saxby, 1997, p. 206). He then mentions the appropriateness of the adage “the right book for the right child at the right time” (Saxby, 1997, p. 206).

Sometimes, in an effort to provide enjoyment for students and to capture their attention in order to engage them in a story, teachers use humorous literature. Rubin (2000) suggests that the appeal of humour has not been exploited by teachers to its fullest potential, although Saxby (1999) does point to the steady increase in the number of contemporary children’s fiction books that include humour as a feature. In commenting on this humorous fiction, Saxby (1999) recognised skilful authors “who can exploit absurdity, incongruity, and that youthful zest for the bizarre” (p. 9). He is, however, critical of books that provide a “quick, entertaining fix” (p. 9), although he professes to understand their appeal to students with “comparatively short attention spans, with limited vocabulary and grasp of language” (p. 9). Rubin (2000) appears to have a more grounded sense of the appeal of humorous literature, when she reminds readers that “laughter is infectious” (p. 211). Furthermore, she confirms the appeal of humorous books to students whose sense of fun is developing, as well as the interest that humour creates as a motivator that encourages readers to continue reading. Moloney (2000), an expert on boys’ education, reminds teachers that boys “love to find [fun] in the books they read” (What boys do like section, ¶ 6).

The influence of gender on student outcomes has raised concerns over the last decade (Buckingham, 1999) and been the cause of extended debate, both in Australia and overseas (Cortis & Newmarch, 2000). There is an increasing amount of research being undertaken to determine the factors that contribute to discrepancies between the levels of success of girls compared to boys in regard to school literacy practices, and, although attempts have been made to explain this trend, no conclusions have been reached and many questions have been raised (Buckingham, 1999).
Figure 2.2.1-1: McKenna's Proposed Model of Reading Attitude Acquisition

From “Toward a Model of Reading Attitude Acquisition” (p. 31), by M. C. McKenna, 1994, in Fostering the Love of Reading: The Affective Domain in Reading Education. Newark, Delaware, USA: International Reading Association. Copyright 1994 by the International Reading Association. Reprinted with permission.

McKenna’s (1994) model builds on Mathewson’s (1994) reading-specific Model of Attitude Influence upon Reading and Learning to Read and The Interactive Reading Process Model of Ruddell and Speaker (1985) and on a general model of attitude acquisition, Liska’s (1984) Revision of the Fishbein-Ajzen Model. Using his model,
McKenna attempts to refine and integrate “into one coherent model of reading attitude acquisition [these various models, and thereby account] for the influence of specific incidents of reading” (1994, p. 29-30).

According to Brown (1980), many information-processing models of learning have not taken into account the importance of factors such as “attitudes, opinions, prejudices, fears of failure, etc. … in determining the efficiency of any learning activity” (p. 13). McKenna’s proposed model, however, does embrace the largely affective nature of attitude, with beliefs being related in a causal way to attitude (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). Factored into McKenna’s proposed model are the conditions under which attitudes develop, and conditions under which change is likely to be effected in attitude, the conceptualisations of which are necessary for teachers to be able to intervene in the attitude cycle and begin the process of positively influencing their students’ attitudes within the classroom setting (McKenna, 1994). Vaughan and Estes (1986) believe that teachers who are enthusiastic and who communicate the valuing of reading, both as a cognitive and aesthetic experience, are empowered to affect their students’ attitudes toward reading positively.

McKenna et al. (1995) are aware that children’s acquisition of reading attitude is developed through complex processes and thus:

- may affect the level of ability ultimately attained by a given student through its influence on such factors as engagement and practice…. [and that] even for the fluent reader, poor attitude may occasion a choice not to read when other options exist, a condition now generally known as aliteracy. (p. 934)

McKenna’s (1994) proposed model is a complex one and for the purpose of this study, the focus will be narrowed to include only aspects of the environment of the classroom, and the ways in which teachers devise their reading programs with the specific intention of influencing their students’ attitudes toward reading.

Reading programs that provide dedicated reading time, for example, influence the students’ “intention to read” (see McKenna’s model, Figure 2.2.1-1, this section) by making materials of interest to students available and eliminating competing factors. McKenna (1994) asserts that the “beliefs about subjective
norms” sections of his model takes into account the influence of culture, parents, friends, teachers, gender and other environmental factors and demonstrates how these lead “to beliefs about how much reading is valued by significant others” (p. 32).

The “beliefs about the outcomes of reading” (see McKenna’s model, Figure 2.2.1-1, this section) section of the model suggests that students’ beliefs about the outcomes of reading influence their attitude. These beliefs may have their origins in the environment or they may be the memory of actual reading experiences, which McKenna has indicated by an arrow from the “metacognitive state” to “beliefs about the outcomes of reading” (see McKenna’s model, Figure 2.2.1-1, this section). McKenna considers that “This recursive, cumulative process suggests that the recurrence of dissatisfying results will lead to successively worsened attitudes. Conversely, a succession of positive experiences may result in more positive attitudes, but only if environmental factors are positive” (1994, p. 34). McKenna’s (1994) proposed model also accounts for the indirect, but positive, influence of setting up of book corners, and the appealing display of reading materials through the “social structure and environment” (see McKenna’s model, Figure 2.2.1-1, this section) section.

As can be seen from this overview of the sections pertinent to this study, McKenna’s (1994) proposed model addresses issues that are highly relevant to the teachers’ practices that are the subject of this study. Indeed, its effective capacity is demonstrated in a US national study on children’s reading attitude by McKenna et al. (1995). This study found that children’s attitudes commonly deteriorated, starting from a reasonably positive point in the early years, falling to what they describe as relative indifference, which “supported a model of reading attitude in which social factors and expectations gradually shape attitudes over time” (p. 935).

Other findings from the McKenna et al. (1995) study were that ability and attitude were clearly related, with children of higher ability displaying a more positive attitude toward reading, and the reverse situation occurring for students of lower ability, with evidence that the gap between ability levels widened with age. They also noted a gender difference, with girls generally displaying a more positive attitude to reading than boys, although this gender difference did not appear to be
related to ability (1995). The reliance by teachers on the use of basal readers appeared to be unconnected to students’ attitudes to reading in the McKenna et al. (1995) study.

Although McKenna’s (1995) proposed model is one of attitude acquisition, it contains several elements that have strong associations with Brian Cambourne’s (1984, 1988) research on the learning environment and the conditions that are required for language learning. The model also makes connections to the social aspects of Allan Luke’s (1994) research, and the roles attributed to readers in Luke and Freebody’s (Freebody, 1992; Luke, 1994) Four Resources Model, thus demonstrating its power as a research tool. Despite its complexity, McKenna’s (1994) proposed model does illustrate very clearly the compatibility and connectedness of the model with the work of significant others in the field of reading research.

2.2.2 Environmental Contexts for Learning

Cambourne’s conditions for language learning are comparable with the environmental contexts of the McKenna (1994) model, and are useful as a checklist against which to evaluate how conducive a classroom situation is to language learning (Emmitt & Pollock, 1997). The eight conditions described by Cambourne (1988) are immersion, demonstration, expectation, responsibility, use, approximation, response and engagement.

Cambourne (1988) explains that because children, from before birth, are immersed in the sounds of language they are thus attuned to it as a social medium of exchange. Our culture also immerses us in written text from an early age, and this immersion has “highly significant outcomes” according to the Tasmanian Education Department (1984). By the process of immersion, learners acquire an understanding of both language use and structure (Education Department, 1984). Not only should children be immersed in language, this immersion should take place in a resource-rich, supportive environment which provides “opportunities for interaction with knowledgeable others” (Campbell, 2000, p. 86).

Immersion in language allows for many demonstrations of purposeful language use, effectively modelling the practice of engaging with print. Cambourne (1988)
reminds his readers that books also provide demonstrations of “what a book is, what print is and does, how words are spelled and how texts are structured” (p. 34). Through the process of demonstration and modelling, learners recognise the reasons for, and value of, language as they are initiated into their language community (Education Department, 1984), thus enabling them to become members of the “literacy club” (Smith, 1988). Teachers provide demonstrations of, or model, “how a teacher feels about what is being taught …. a disinterested teacher demonstrates disinterest. Enthusiasm demonstrates enthusiasm” (Smith, 1982a, pp. 101-102).

As well as immersion and demonstration, there needs to be an expectation by the knowledgeable others that the learner will, in fact, learn (Campbell, 2000). Teachers need to plan positive learning experiences that will allow students, with support, to achieve reasonable learning outcomes (Campbell, 2000). The power of the phenomenon of the ‘self fulfilling prophesy’ has been thoroughly researched by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) and in its positive manifestation, Cambourne (1988) reminds us that: “We achieve what we expect to achieve; we fail if we expect to fail; we are more likely to engage with demonstrations of those whom we regard as significant and who hold high expectations for us” (p.33).

Learners need to decide for themselves what information is valuable to their learning needs at any given time (Cambourne, 1988). Students must be given the responsibility for making decisions about their learning, and decisions about when to seek assistance with their learning (Cambourne, 1988).

Cambourne (1988) also makes clear the need for learners to be given time to practice their developing understanding of language. This use should be “functional, realistic and non-artificial” (Cambourne, 1988, p. 33) and should be supported by knowledgeable others (Campbell, 2000).

Students’ approximations of language use should be respected and appreciated for what they are: the developing efforts of the learner to achieve the desired model (Education Department, 1984). The self-concept of the learner is enhanced when there is a willing and enthusiastic celebration of, and response to, their effort by knowledgeable others (Education Department, 1984). The authors of the
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Tasmanian curriculum document suggest that, “With time and practice, these approximated forms of the language will be replaced by conventional forms” (Education Department, 1984, p. 9).

Cambourne (1988) contends that in their daily lives, learners are exposed to a myriad of demonstrations. However, merely being immersed in demonstrations is not enough to allow learning to take place, because much of what is demonstrated will be ignored by the learner since it makes no connection with their personal experience (Cambourne, 1988). Indeed, for successful learning to take place, learners need to engage with the demonstration. To do this, they must first be convinced of three things: that the demonstration is achievable by them; that the learning gained will be purposeful to their lives; and that failure to achieve will not be consequentially unpleasant for them (Cambourne, 1988).

2.2.3 Reading Attitude Influences

This sense of a student’s “self-efficacy” (that is, their belief in their own ability to achieve success at a particular task) can be strongly influenced by the expectations of the teacher (Harris, 1999). When students see themselves as unable to achieve, because of a lack of ability, they can become de-motivated and reluctant to learn (Harris, 1999). Contrastingly, when students feel self-efficacious and therefore able to achieve, they will “often exert considerable effort, tenacity, and discipline” (McCabe & Margolis, 2001, p. 45). Harris (1999) suggests that in order to increase students’ levels of motivation, teachers need to shift the students’ attention from a focus on inabilities and towards a focus on positive achievement and gains in learning – a “can-do” (McCabe & Margolis, 2001, p. 45) approach. Changing students’ beliefs is a difficult task, especially when they have met with frustration with learning to read for a number of years (McCabe & Margolis, 2001). To be effective, teachers need to be aware of the power of self-efficacy (McCabe & Margolis, 2001), and their positive response to learners’ efforts needs to “be relevant, appropriate, timely, readily available and non-threatening, with no strings attached” (Cambourne, 1988, p. 33). Children who are the beneficiaries of a supportive environment are, according to Cambourne (1988), those who develop a sense of willing commitment and full engagement with the task.
Rosenblatt describes the sensation evoked in readers, when they become engaged and, therefore, active participants in the aesthetics of reading, as the “happening” (cited in Murphy, 1998). The term “participants”, as used by Rosenblatt, has been adopted by Luke and Freebody in their Four Resources Model (Freebody, 1992; Luke, 1994). Furthermore, the model provided by Luke and Freebody, argues that “a successful reader needs to develop and sustain the resources to play four related roles: code-breaker, text-participant, text-user, and text-analyst” (Freebody, 1992, p. 49). These resources encapsulate the roles seen as being necessary to become a competent reader, and they need to be based on the cultural expectations of readers. However, they are not sufficient in and of themselves to achieve the status of a literate person, as the performance of each role is interdependent and the fully competent reader needs to have developed a facility in all four roles. Luke and Freebody have since relabelled these roles as a “family of practices” (1999, Changing the terminology section, ¶ 1).

While Luke (1994) and Freebody (1992) describe the practice of the text-participant as relating to the readers’ prior knowledge of texts, this role is clearly dependent upon the reader’s ability to gain meaning from text in the role of the code-breaker. It is important to stress that it is this role, that of the participant, which relates most powerfully to the affective, and that is described as the “happening” by Rosenblatt (cited in Murphy, 1998) and as “engagement” by Cambourne (1988). It is through this practice that readers develop their emotional commitment to the act of reading.

Student interests contribute to the likelihood of their emotional commitment to reading, and are considered by many experts in the field (see for example, Calkins, 2001; Montebello, 1972; Saxby, 1997; Wilson, 2002) to be extremely influential when it comes to making reading relevant to children’s lives. Wilson (2002), for example, suggests that some magazines “are part of the culture of childhood” (p. 104) and that this is particularly the case with upper primary children. From her investigations, she discovered that, for many students, magazines provide an authentic purpose for reading and that the children with whom she talked were, indeed, skilled text-users (Wilson, 2002). However, while Saxby (1997) holds a different view regarding the literacy value of magazines and
Home literacy practices also influence students’ attitudes, and, while Bandura (1977) notes the important role that parents can play in modelling behaviour such as reading, Wragg et al. (1998) suggest that parents do not always communicate to their children the attitude that reading is a pleasurable experience. Furthermore, Wragg et al. argue that this parental indifference to reading might have negative implications for the development of students’ reading attitudes. This implies that the role of the teacher as reading model is of crucial importance when the student has no parent models.

2.3 The Benefits of Engaging with Children’s Literature

2.3.1 Cognitive, Language and Literacy Benefits

The language arts comprise both receptive and expressive language activities (Farris, 1993; Montebello, 1972). Reading and listening are the receptive language activities, while writing and speaking are the expressive language activities (Farris, 1993; Montebello, 1972).

While “all the language arts are interrelated” (Montebello, 1972, p. 3), reading is a foundation competency; it is the literacy skill that has the greatest potential influence over all other learning (Rowe as cited in Rowe, 2000). It is for this reason that any meaningful demonstration of language, such as that found in well-chosen books, is likely to provide children with an understanding of “how something is done” (Smith, 1982a, p. 101). Thus, reading can often provide many examples of interesting texts that have the potential to benefit the literacy development of children who engage with print resources (Fields & Spangler, 1995).

Five literary elements are suggested by Farris (1993) as being important to children’s literacy development and with which teachers should familiarise themselves. They are “(1) characterisation; (2) plot, (3) setting, both time and place; (4) theme; and (5) author’s style” (p. 65). Farris (1993) suggests that it is important that teachers develop understanding of these literary elements in their students, because combined, they contribute to the children’s literary and personal growth.

Many authors are skilled in the development of characters with which children are able to identify, thus allowing children to develop an understanding of personalities and beliefs (Farris, 1993). Through this engagement with, and
empathy for, the book’s characters, Farris contends that children gain an ability to transfer their understandings to people in real life. Like characterisation, plot has real-world transference value for children. As a result of their developing understanding of the complexities of plot, children can gain an understanding of conflict and resolution and gain a chance to investigate their own inner strengths and weaknesses, ultimately leading to greater cultural and social awareness, emotional and intellectual growth (Farris, 1993). It is also suggested by Farris that the care paid to setting descriptions that connect well-rounded characters, a well-developed plot, with time period and geographic place can elicit multisensory experiences for children, thus making reading an evocative activity, capable of fully capturing their attention.

The recognition of theme, too, is considered important by Farris (1993) as a means of establishing the point of the story and an author’s ability in the aforementioned areas, together with word usage and sentence construction, contribute to an author’s style, which cumulatively are often the cause of students becoming engaged in the books of one author. A recent Australian study (ACNielsen, 2001) on reading habits and attitudes, found that seventy-five percent of adults were influenced to read the books of an author whose works they had previously enjoyed. An author’s style, then, is a facet of literacy that can be used to advantage by teachers; style and content too can entice children to read an author’s books.

Many teachers have discovered that by reading well-written and exciting snippets of text to children, they can capture children’s attention, sufficient to send them to the complete text (Farris, 1993). Furthermore, once children have become ‘hooked’ on a particular author they are often interested to discover more about their currently favourite author and so author studies are another way of promoting and broadening children’s reading interests.

One of the most significant and most frequently mentioned examples of a literacy benefit to be derived by children from reading is in the connection between children’s reading and their writing (Fields & Spangler, 1995; Wilson, 2002). Wilson (2002) comments thus:
Reading and writing are inextricably intertwined. To say that every time a child writes, that child is reading is to say the obvious. Likewise, every time a child reads, that child is learning about writing. He learns not only about different types of texts and the different purposes served by writing but also about letters, words, sentences, paragraphs, headings, labels, and directional features of written language.

In fact, reading nourishes writing. To read any text type is to inform our understandings of that text type and thus inform our attempts to write that text type. To teach writing divorced from a rich reading program is to feed writers a nutritionally poor diet. (p. 169)

Literature written for children in the middle school years often emphasises imagery by using well-chosen words, and children’s vocabularies can be built up through their participation in reading and book talk (Farris, 1993). Furthermore, Rubin (2000) suggests that judicious choice of literature by teachers gives children the opportunity to discover factual information and word meanings. This suggestion implies that the teacher has a particularly well developed repertoire of known literature resources that can be recommended to children. Engagement with compelling literature has the potential of being a valuable way of learning because it happens contextually and incidentally, through the power of children’s engagement with literature. Discussion both before and after reading, and, when appropriate to the circumstances, during reading, allows children to extend their language development and comprehension (Rubin, 2000).

According to Rubin (2000), several abilities combine to form the complex intellectual process known as reading comprehension, with the major components of this process involving “word meanings and verbal reasoning” (p. 171), however researchers have found it difficult to nominate exactly the processes required to achieve reading comprehension. It is known, however, that people with good reading comprehension can usually identify the central ideas in texts, are able to discard irrelevant portions of texts, assimilate new material to concepts of which they have an existing understanding, and are able to extrapolate their thinking beyond the text to hypothetical situations (Rubin, 2000). Clearly, reading at this level is an advanced cognitive activity.
The ability to think beyond the text is possibly aided by the possession of good visualisation skills, which Maggart and Zintz (1992) consider useful in developing and extending comprehension. Reading comprehension is generally preceded by ability in listening comprehension, which itself relies on the ability to think (Rubin, 2000). Kelty, too, found that “practice in listening for detail will produce a significant gain in reading for the same purpose” (as cited in Rubin, 2000, p. 173). Therefore, engaging children in talk about word meanings, involving students in questioning, book talk and reading to children all have the ability to inform their reading comprehension.

When children do become ‘hooked’ on books, when they have developed broad interests in reading, they are unavoidably exposed to new vocabulary, and these are words encountered embedded in meaningful contexts (Weaver, 1988). Therefore, it should not be surprising to discover that children who have become avid readers frequently have a comprehensive working vocabulary and commonly have a higher than average level of competence in spelling those words (Calkins, 1983). Correct spelling is a skill upon which many parents, and society in general, places a great deal of importance (Farris, 1993). Indeed, it is a sad indictment of society that frequent and incorrect assessments of a person’s intelligence are based on their inability to spell correctly, thus making it a high priority in teachers’ work (Farris, 1993; Rubin, 2000). Farris (1993) agrees with Goodman’s (1986), assessment that when children are working in an encouraging and supportive environment, one that values approximations of spelling, or “invented” spelling, children are able to familiarise themselves with a range of words through the reading and writing process. They consequently move away from the sound-symbol strategies of earlier spelling stages, towards writing and spelling that are more conventional. A child’s success in spelling is dependent, therefore, not only upon visual discrimination, but also on being able to discriminate between sounds, and this requires a degree of ability in listening (Rubin, 2000).

Listening is an area of the language curriculum that is given less emphasis than other areas of the language arts (Farris, 1993) and it is one that is completely overlooked in the Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes (Department of Education, 2001a). Like reading, listening is a deceptively complex skill, one that should,
according to Farris (1993) be explicitly taught. According to Farris, there are three main steps to the listening process as regards hearing spoken language: receiving the spoken message, concentrating on what is being said, and classifying, comparing and relating what is heard to previous knowledge. Listening skills, then, are classified into four levels – marginal, appreciative, attentive and critical – with teacher read-alouds having the potential to develop the appreciative, attentive and critical listening skills of their students (Farris, 1993).

Research into children’s comprehension levels has revealed that, until children are halfway through high school, their listening comprehension skills are frequently at a more sophisticated and advanced level than their reading comprehension skills (Devine, 1978). Often the spoken words are in the students’ listening vocabulary, but children do not necessarily have the skills to both decode and “assimilate the words into a meaningful concept” (Rubin, 2000, p. 64). Therefore, children who are engaged in an act of listening that allows them access to complex vocabulary in a meaningful context are reinforcing the use of the vocabulary they are learning in situations that are comprehensible to them.

Saxby (1997) believes that it is in the primary school years that most children have the potential, given the coincidence of the right set of circumstances, to become avid readers. He attributes the voracious reading of some students at this level, to the Piagetian ‘concrete operations’ stage of development the children have reached, in terms of their “social, emotional and intellectual” (1997, p. 209) growth. This is the stage of their maturity when children are developing the ability to reason, to appreciate others’ points of view, to take more interest and become more involved in social contexts and exchanges. A teacher’s engagement of children with quality literature in the kind of supportive environment described by Cambourne (1988) will usually be productive in presenting a starting point for many discussions with students on issues of moral, cultural and societal significance (Moore, 1996). According to Saxby (1997), teachers should take the opportunity presented when children become more deeply involved in books of tapping into the newly gained vitality and interest in their world by children, and introduce to them a variety of books that help to develop and further their interests and understandings.
As children move away from their egocentric perspective and develop the thinking skills of hypothesis and prediction, and awaken their understandings of a complexity of issues, engagement with literature also provides opportunities for children to expand their imaginations.

### 2.3.2 Affective, Aesthetic and Moral Benefits

Smith suggests that by engaging children’s minds and hearts, through the reading of stories, allows teachers to teach by metaphors that “bypass conscious awareness and appeal to our intuitive side” (cited in Maggart & Zintz, 1992, pp. 384-385). This intuitiveness of human existence resides very much in the affective.

In their quest to understand the whole person, psychologists study three domains: the affective, the behavioural and the cognitive (Mizokawa & Hansen-Krening, 2000). It is the cognitive domain that has tended to receive the greatest attention from educators, and the emphasis placed on this domain “conveys the impression that [the] human being is able to be segmented or compartmentalized, whereas humans are whole organisms in whom all three domains interrelate, interact, and interdepend” (Mizokawa & Hansen-Krening, 2000, The three domains section, ¶ 5). Frequently, perhaps because of the inclination of behavioural scientists to favour quantitative research methods, the powerful driving forces that lie behind cognitive development, the affective domain, and thus the response of readers to the activity they are engaged in, has commonly been neglected.

It was the seminal work on reader-response theory by Rosenblatt (1938, 1978), and the subsequent development of the theory of aesthetic response by Iser (1978), that changed the direction of reading research by rejecting the assumption of the behavioural scientists that texts were the central feature of reading. Between them Rosenblatt and Iser can be said to have laid the foundations of the ensuing interest by researchers in the interaction, or transaction, between the reader and the text in literature (Church, 1997). There has been a recent resurgence of interest in the importance in reading instruction of the affective contexts in which it takes place, “which includes the teacher and his or her purpose” (Kearsley, 2002, p. 15). The reader, the text and the affective contexts in which meaning is created are recognised by Kearsley (2002) as key aspects of reading instruction.
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Csikszentmihalyi (1990), in his extensive investigations into what makes people happy, writes about “Flow” (p. 1), which he describes as an “optimal psychological experience” (p. 1), and “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter” (p. 4). In relating this experience to reading, Csikszentmihalyi suggests that without a reader's attention being fully concentrated on the activity of reading, enjoyment of a book is not possible. This concentration of attention is what Smith (1982a) refers to as “engagement”, a concept that is also acknowledged by Cambourne (1988) as crucial in the development of language competence.

Nell (1988) has researched widely in the area of the “psychological processes by which reading takes over consciousness” (p. 2). He describes how, when a reader “engages” with text, then the text becomes more than “black squiggles on the white page” (Nell, 1988, p.1), becoming emotionally important to the reader. This is a point developed by Nell (1988) who writes of the “psychological mechanisms that take skilled readers out of the world and lead them, absorbed and entranced, into the world of the book” (p. xiii) and perform “the prodigious task of carrying us off to other worlds” (p. 2). Reading for pleasure, or “Ludic reading”, is described by Nell (1988) as both a “consciousness-changing activity” (p. xiii) and “as an enormously complex cognitive act that draws on an array of skills and processes in many different domains” (p. xiii). It is, perhaps, this very complexity, that has caused reading in the affective domain to have been overlooked, undervalued and misunderstood by too many educators.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) agrees that the skills of reading go beyond those of developing literacy, to include the skills of being able to visualise, empathise, anticipate, criticise and evaluate (p. 50). According to Lowe (2002) children, and indeed adults, use stories to help construct themselves, to make sense of their world, to integrate past and present experiences and to help them “internalise information that would otherwise sit beyond [themselves]” (p. 1). Furthermore, Linning (2000) suggests that, “Perhaps the most valuable function of children's literature in the literacy program lies in its potential for giving children strong motives to keep on reading and thus develop further knowledge, skills and insights.
into language and life” (p. 106). Thus, emphasising that the search for motivators should certainly be high on any educator’s list of priorities.

It is arguable that it is the importance of the particularly elusive affective aspect of the reader’s engagement with text, that has led numerous researchers and writers to write so passionately about the values and virtues of reading children’s literature (see for example, Calkins, 2001; Fox, 1993; Montebello, 1972; Nell, 1988; Saxby, 1997). However, it is here, in this slippery, emotional concept that lays the potential for derision and hostility by those who would measure all educational achievement in terms of quantitative output.

2.4 Teachers Reading Aloud, Silent Reading and Talking about Books

According to many sources (Calkins, 2001; Saxby, 1997; Wheldall & Entwistle, 1988; Wilson, 2002), if teachers are to be successful in encouraging children to read, they need to be seen by children as readers. They need to do more than preach about the joys of reading, they need to demonstrate to children by their actions that they are passionate about reading. Chambers (1985) suggests that three of the methods of stimulating children’s interest in reading that have been extolled by teachers, writers of textbooks on reading, and researchers of the topic are teachers reading aloud to students, silent reading, and engaging children in talking about books and their reactions to them. It is worth noting that research studies of methods of stimulating an interest in reading that have sought the views of children have confirmed Chambers’ claims as being important to them (Worthy, 2000; Thomson, 1987).

2.4.1 Teachers Reading Aloud

The time-honoured practice of teachers reading aloud to children has provided inspiration and motivation for reading to countless generations of children in all literate societies across the world (Millard, 1997; Saxby, 1997). Frequently, adults recall that listening to a teacher reading aloud was one of their earliest and most pleasant associations with reading (Carlsen & Sherrill cited in Castle, 1994), and it is because they have the benefit of maturity and experience of a wide range of literature, that teachers can provide a role model of good reading practice. In fact, Millard (1997) believes that “A story shared with an adult is an ideal literacy event because it creates a situation in which learners come into contact
with the linguistic structures of written language and are enabled to enter into
discussion of disembedded experience” (p. 150). Teachers have the opportunity to
exercise their professional judgement in the selection of texts that are most likely to
capture children’s interest and produce good readers by reading to them on a
regular, and preferably daily, basis (Lickteig & Russell, 1993; Pilgreen, 2000).

Often referred to in the US literature as “teacher read-alouds” (Richardson,
1994a; Trelease, 2001), teachers reading aloud to their students usually involves the
teacher reading aloud literature that has typically been selected by the teacher,
usually for the express purpose of developing children’s aesthetic appreciation of
literature (Trelease, 2001). There is extant research that has found that this practice
has the capacity to influence, in a positive way, children’s attitudes toward reading
and their engagement with literature (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985;
Routman, 1991). However, there is also research that has shown that as children
progress towards the upper primary years, the teacherly practice of reading to
children occurs less frequently, or not at all due to the lack of available time
(Jacobs, Morrison & Swinyard, 2000; Kearsley, 2002). This is despite evidence that
upper primary school students can benefit positively from exposure to these
practices (Chambers, 1985).

In a survey of 183 teachers, carried out by Lickteig and Russell (1993), the
most frequently stated benefit (52.5% of teachers) of teachers reading aloud to their
students was enjoyment. The fostering of a love of literature and reading was given
as a benefit by 48.6% of teachers. The other benefits named by teachers included:
the building of listening skills and attention span, for relaxation and calming, to
encourage reading), exposure to good literature, to model good oral reading, to
build vocabulary, for students to gain information and add to their knowledge base,
to stimulate discussion and to increase comprehension skills. Teachers were
allowed to indicate multiple benefits of reading aloud.

Lickteig and Russell (1993) consider that there are many educational benefits
of reading aloud to students and that this activity should be recognised as an
important aspect of the school curriculum. They maintain that there needs to be an
emphasis placed on teachers expecting students’ undivided attention during
literature time: “Allowing children to work on ‘something else’ during literature
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gives the message that this is not quite as valuable as the rest of the curriculum” (Lickteig & Russell, 1993, p. 204).

Some teachers use the opportunity presented in reading aloud time to read literature that in some way links with a theme or topic being studied, but this is not always the case (Wragg et al., 1998). The role of the child is to sit and listen, and often to reflect or comment on the passage having been read at the end of the session. In a study conducted by Wragg et al. (1998) into effective literacy teaching, they noted that although surprisingly few teachers “talked about the value of reading out loud to the children and sharing books with them for pleasure” (p. 122) that it was noted by them as a “strong feature” (p. 122) of the classroom practice they observed. One of the teachers involved in the study by Wragg et al. (1998) talked about the passion she had for reading and how she felt that helping her students to develop a similar passion was something she considered crucial to her role as a teacher.

Numerous studies of teachers reading aloud to their students have shown the direct benefits associated with this practice (see for example, Jacobs et al., 2000; Lickteig & Russell, 1993; Morrow, Rand & Smith, 1995). These benefits are suggested by Castle (1994) as being: “growth in understanding of language patterns, text structure, vocabulary, fluent oral reading, others’ experiences, multicultural concepts, the authoring role [and] imaging” (p. 148).

Rubin (2000) suggests that, because children can pick up important paralinguistic cues such as pitch, intonation, pause and emphasis from the reader, “students of low and average achievement usually prefer to listen rather than to read independently” (p. 64). Children with more advanced reading skills frequently prefer to read for themselves because they can do so at their own rate, a rate that suits their comprehension and retention abilities, instead of being constrained by the pace of the reader (Rubin, 2000). The practice of silent reading, is therefore, seen as a valuable adjunct to teachers reading aloud to students, even for very able students, while providing students of lesser ability with time to practise their developing independent reading skills.
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2.4.2 Silent Reading

Although there are variations upon the basic theme, the strategy of engaging children during class time in silent reading involves students and their teacher participating in uninterrupted, sustained periods of silent reading of self-selected literature for the purposes of enjoyment and reading practice (Berglund & Johns, 1983; Sadoski, 1980). Silent reading is described by Ken Goodman (1998) as “a major feature” (p. 6) of whole language pedagogy.

The act of encouraging children to engage in silently reading a book of their own choice appears as a topic of approved classroom practice in much of the contemporary literature (Calkins, 2001; Harris, Turbill, Fitzsimmons & McKenzie, 2001; Krashen, 1993; Wilson, 2002). It is a practice that is seen in classrooms across Australia and overseas, under an assortment of names, abbreviations and acronyms, such as free voluntary reading (FVR), sustained silent reading (SSR), uninterrupted sustained silent reading (USSR), drop everything and read (DEAR) and sustained quiet individual reading time (SQUIRT), to name just a few. Although the practice of providing silent reading time dates back to the 1950s and 1960s (Pilgreen, 2000), most of the informed research literature on the topic hails from the 1970s and 1980s when the scheme was popularised as a language or literacy activity within the classroom setting. During this era there were many advocates for its use (Berglund & Johns, 1983; Sadoski, 1980; Wheldall & Entwistle, 1988).

The original rationale for the implementation of silent reading in classrooms was that reading was considered a skill, and that like any other skill, for the user, in this case the reader, to become proficient, practice was needed (Berglund & Johns, 1983; Sadoski, 1980). Indeed, there were suggestions that the amount of time for practice should be four times that of instruction, given that it was considered by some researchers and practitioners that there was frequently too heavy a reliance on instruction and too little on practice (Calkins, 1990; Mork, 1972).

The provision of in-class time for reading is considered important, because in the hours after school, many factors compete with each other for students’ attention, particularly in the busy middle school years (Pilgreen, 2000). These factors may include such things as private tutoring, music lessons, “organized sport, peer group activities, homework, part-time employment, and social commitments”
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(Pilgreen, 2000, p. 5; see also McKenna, 1994). However, there are frequently influential social class differences, that themselves are often dependent on socio-economic factors, the ethos or philosophy of different schools, and on the nature and commitment of individual children or their parents. All these factors have the potential to impinge on the amount of time children spend in reading. The cultural activities outlined above are frequently augmented by engagement with a heavy commitment by some children to television, computers and video games, and all have an impact on the amount of time available to students to participate in the act of reading (Pilgreen, 2000).

The objectives of initiating silent reading in classrooms include: improving students’ attention span, the opportunity for the teacher to provide a reading role model, the provision of a positive reading experience, exposure to a wide range of literature, the formation of good reading habits, the development of students’ desire to read in their free time, and, ultimately, to inspire students to become lifelong readers (Seow, 1999). Pilgreen (2000) suggests that these goals are most likely to be achieved because of the students’ discovery, during silent reading time, of the intrinsic rewards to be gained from reading. One longitudinal study, conducted by Greaney and Clark, found a positive, long-term effect, up to six years later, in the number of books read by students who had participated in a free reading program when compared with a control group of students (as cited in Pilgreen, 2000).

In a survey of the research literature on silent reading programs, Pilgreen (2000) examined thirty-two studies of classrooms where the teachers’ intention for using the strategy was to achieve an increase in student comprehension or achievement and improvement in students’ motivation to read. Her study found that of the thirty-two studies, which included forty-one experimental groups:

- ten were successful in attaining statistically significant results in reading comprehension;
- seven were successful in attaining statistically significant results in reading motivation;
- and fifteen were successful in attaining ‘observable’ growth in reading motivation – that is, improvement which could be quantified but not interpreted through the use of inferential statistics (2000, pp. 5-6).
Pilgreen’s (2000) analysis of the studies revealed eight components that were common to programs that achieved successful outcomes. She has labelled these as “Factors for SSR Success” (p. xvii). The six factors that were implemented most consistently were:

- access to a quantity of books, magazines, newspapers and other reading materials;
- book appeal, which encompassed self-selection of a wide variety of book type and genre and that are of sufficient interest to students at different levels of ability;
- the provision of an environment conducive to reading – quiet, uninterrupted, and sometimes comfortable;
- encouragement by the teacher to read, which often included the opportunity for book talk or teacher read-alouds as a complement to SSR periods;
- non-accountability, where no emphasis on assessment meant no records were to be maintained by the students; and
- distributed time to read – both the frequency and length of the time provided to students for reading. Pilgreen points out that provision of “massed time” (2000, p. 69) for students to read does not have the same impact on the development of the reading habit as does the provision of a regular, daily reading session.

The provision of staff training in the philosophy of silent reading programs and follow-up activities for students were the other two factors identified in the study as beneficial for its effective implementation (Pilgreen, 2000). Other researchers, too, have noted the vital role of the teacher in modelling reading behaviour (Perez, 1986; Wheldall & Entwistle, 1988).

Wheldall and Entwistle (1988) undertook four scientifically based research studies of silent reading programs, and found that a quiet and distraction-free
reading environment was one crucial factor in improving the level of on-task reading by students. They found that the teacher, by engaging in activities such as marking student work, writing on the board, creating displays of student work or working with individual students or groups of students, creates a distraction for the students and contributes to off-task behaviour by students.

Teacher modelling of reading was the other factor that was found to be crucial to the success of silent reading programs by Wheldall and Entwistle (1988). Perez (1986) argues that the modelling by teachers of reading behaviour is the most important factor in motivating children to read. The importance of modelling is supported by the findings of two New Zealand studies by Pluck, Ghafari, Glynn and McNaughton (1984), in which both studies found that “concurrent modelling involves a competent model providing a continual display of target behaviour and hence a continuing opportunity for learners to imitate” (p. 115). Bandura (1977) regards observational modelling as a very effective way of influencing students’ learned human behaviour, and believes that when the requisite behaviour is modelled by a parent, teacher or other respected individual, that kind of reinforcement is especially powerful. It is important to note that, when there is a conflict between teacher behaviour, and what is advocated as appropriate by the teacher, it is most likely that students will imitate the behaviour of the teacher (Bandura, 1977) – actions speak louder than words. This, of course, has major implications for the success of silent reading programs (Wheldall & Entwistle, 1988).

It has been suggested by many authors that teachers should themselves read silently during silent reading to model the act of reading (see for example, Calkins, 2001; Krashen, 1993; Pilgreen, 2000). This presents teachers with the opportunity to make use of this time to read children’s or adolescent literature as a means of professional development (Calkins, 2001). When teachers take the time to read children’s and adolescent’s literature they then have access to another, frequently successful, way of encouraging their students to read because they can make accurate personal book recommendations based on their knowledge of the book and the child (Chambers, 1985; Field, 1994).
2.4.3 Talking about Books

Chambers has coined the term “booktalk” (1985, p. 20) to refer to a suite of activities in which he encourages children and their teacher to engage in productive, critical engagement with, and discussion of, challenging literary texts. According to Chambers, far from being straightforward communication between people, booktalk is a complex social activity.

Killen (1998) has addressed the definition of discussion, which he sees as “an orderly process of face-to-face group interaction in which people exchange ideas about an issue for the purpose of solving a problem, answering a question, enhancing their knowledge or understanding, or making a decision” (p. 26).

A further definition is offered by Dixon (2000) who views discussion as:

an art form; as students participate in meaningful interaction over important content, they are both enriched and challenged by shared ideas that come from critical analysis … the focus is on oral communication of thoughts in action that include sharing and pooling thoughts from which new ideas and new understandings emerge. (p. 104)

These three views emphasise the important role that booktalk plays in the development of children’s learning within the classroom, and in “liberating [them] from their egocentrism” (McInerney & McInerney, 1998, p. 32).

2.5 Politico-theoretical Tensions over Reading Instruction

2.5.1 The Politics of Reading

In the United States of America, the results of biennial national testing by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have greatly influenced educational policy (Edmondson & Shannon, 2002), which is significant information for Australian educators, since trends in reading research and policy in Australia tend to parallel those of other English-speaking countries (Wilkinson et al., 2000).

Much of the educational and political debate arising from policy decisions made in the USA has been over the “relative significance of skills- and meaning-based instruction” (Wilkinson et al., 2000, p. 4). This has caused the polarisation of the apparently incompatible ideological stances of researchers, teachers, literacy policy and curriculum writers, politicians and the commercial sector in the USA.
over the most beneficial type of reading instruction for beginning readers (Baumann, Hoffman, Moon & Duffy-Hester, 1998; Goodman, 1998). This tension over reading pedagogy has been termed “The Great Debate” (Chall, cited in Baumann et al., 1998, p. 636) or, alternatively, “the Reading Wars” (see for example, Goodman, 1998).

On one side of the often vitriolic, debate over reading instruction are those aligned with Whole Language philosophy and on the other side supporters of skills or phonics-based approaches (Baumann et al., 1998; Goodman, 1998). The skills and phonics lobby are supported by publishers and right wing politicians (Ford, 2000; Goodman, 1998) who frequently base their expertise in the teaching of reading on their own early reading instruction. This essentially “fundamentalist” (Goodman, 1998, p. 27) view of reading has limited support from theoretical and educational philosophies (Ford, 2000; Goodman, 1998).

Ammunition for the war being waged, is the fact that those who support a whole language approach to learning to read have used predominantly anecdotal evidence as opposed to the ‘evidence based’ (understand quantitative) research upon which they claim to base their own argument (Edmondson & Shannon, 2002). Yet the findings of many rigorous ethnographic studies have described the beneficial outcomes of implementing silent reading in a classroom (see for details Pilgreen, 2000). Indeed, this view is supported by the acknowledgement of the US National Academy of Science’s *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, that: “Research suggests that the amount of independent, silent reading children do in school is significantly related to gains in reading achievement” (Anderson et al., 1985, p. 76). However, the results of these studies have not been substantiated in a way that satisfies the demands of some influential bodies for clear scientific evidence of a causal link between children reading silently and their improved reading outcomes (National Reading Panel cited in Edmondson & Shannon, 2002). Coles (2001) has examined the evidence for “scientifically based reading instruction” and negatively criticised the methodology and results of the studies on which much of the argument rests.

Policy in America, however, has seen funding directed to those schools prepared to implement a skill-based approach to reading education (United States Department of Education, 2002). The effect of this policy decision has meant that
silent reading is no longer considered as reading instruction, and teachers who wish to engage their students with this practice must do it at an alternative time (Edmondson & Shannon, 2002). Yet, a basic tenet of the Whole Language philosophy is that children learn to read by reading (Smith, 1982a, 1999), whereas, phonics-based approaches to reading are founded on the essentially behaviourist (Skinner, 1957) theory that, if teachers are to make reading easy, language needs to be broken up into manageable parts. This commonsense approach has produced the situation in which whole, or natural, language is frequently reduced to meaningless individual “words, syllables and isolated sounds” (Goodman, 1986; see also Smith 1982b, 1999). The authors of levelled texts and basal readers that are manufactured to suit the purpose of this type of reading instruction, commonly focus more on language use than development of a plot that might capture a child’s interest (Morrow & Gambrell, 2000).

2.5.2 Literature versus Levelled Texts

The practice of using levelled texts and basal readers is commented on frequently in the literature (Calkins, 2001; Graves, 1991; Morrow & Gambrell, 2000; Wilson, 2002). Basal readers are books with controlled vocabulary and syntax, presenting a systematic approach to teaching reading from early childhood to middle school years (Graves, 1991). Levelled readers, however, can be either those belonging to specific programs or they may be regular literature texts that have been assessed for their readability by teachers using different instruments designed for that purpose (Calkins, 2001).

Currently, in Australia, there has been an upsurge in the use of levelled readers, which is related to the introduction of a dedicated two-hour literacy block within early years education programs (Wilson, 2002). In some instances, funding to schools is dependent upon their implementation of this type of program (Wilson, 2002), which is an example of US policy insidiously influencing Australian educational practice (Edmondson & Shannon, 2002).

Wilson (2002) criticises the current Australian push towards levelled readers because “the levels being used are those of the Reading Recovery Program, which was a program designed to help the least proficient readers in any grade 1 class” (p. 105). Her concern is that “even the most proficient [readers] are reading on levels
designing for the least proficient” (2002, p. 105). Opponents of the levelled reading programs argue that presenting language in a systematic way is unrelated to the social use of language (Fox, 1993; Wilson, 2002). And so, with a priority given to texts that contain limited and unnatural vocabulary conforming to a pre-determined level of reading competence, and not to providing books that are of interest to the reader, there is much less likelihood of inspiring children to read (Fox, 1993; Wilson, 2002). This point of view is enunciated by Fox (1993) who describes basal readers as “emotional deserts between two covers” (p. 121). Fox goes on to suggest that books that “teach merely the mechanics of reading” lack life and that “Real books offer the mechanics of reading as well as the emotional and intellectual mechanics of life itself” (p. 121). Another criticism of basal readers is that more value is placed on child readers progressing through succeeding levels of readers rather than on making meaning from the text, of being a text-user or text-analyst (Luke & Freebody, 1999; Wilson, 2002). Because of the narrow conception of reading embodied in the concept of the basal/levelled reader, Wilson (2002) believes that children tend to identify the purpose of reading a book as one of attaining a certain reading level, instead of reading for the purpose of enjoying literature and the reading experience. It also “removes the pleasure of choosing and anticipating” (Wilson, 2002, p. 150).

Calkins (2001), however, has developed a differing view to that of Wilson (2002). While recognising the criticisms of the use of levelled texts, Calkins (2001) has become convinced, over time, of the benefit of providing children with a “judicious and flexible system for pointing children toward a fairly broad range of texts [that] can help them develop an internalized, felt, sense of what reading should feel like” (p. 121). In fact, she believes that “too many children have become so accustomed to reading at frustration level, [that] they don’t even know what they are missing” (2001, p. 121). She places emphasis on the idea of the child finding a “just right” (2001, p. 122) book and levelling a certain amount of her classroom texts has provided children with this opportunity.

2.5.3 Teachers and the Debate

Baumann et al. (1998) have established that while, at a political and theoretical level, the debate rages over the most appropriate form of reading
instruction, that debate only marginally influences the classroom teacher. Instead, teachers seem more concerned with providing the best education for their students and tend to incorporate into their practice a range of strategies to suit the needs of individual children (Baumann et al. 1998). This proposition is supported by the words of Smith (1982a) who explains that:

all methods of teaching reading appear to work for some children but that none works for all. Some teachers seem to succeed whatever the method they are formally believed to employ. We must conclude that the instructional method is not the critical issue…. It might not be particularly unfair to say that many children learn to read – and many teachers succeed in helping them – despite the instructional method used” (1982a, p. 186)

Luke and Freebody (1999) support a view that the reasons for the “literacy problem” are showed, historically, to have “as much to do with economic, cultural, and social change as it did with anything that might go on in schools and classrooms” (Drawing on history section, ¶ 7).

2.6 Reading: Policy and Curriculum Documents

From the following overview of the current policy and curriculum documents influencing curriculum in Tasmanian schools, it can be seen that they are connected by some common threads: a recognition of the importance of being literate, a specific reference made to readers participating in the act of reading for pleasure, and enjoyment and the need to experience an increased awareness of themselves and others. The authors of the curriculum documents acknowledge that experience of the culture in which children live, and other cultures of the world, can be gained through the imagination and appreciation of literature. There is also an invitation for readers to respond to texts at both affective and critical levels.

In 1998, the document *Literacy for All: The Challenge for Australian Schools* was produced by the federal Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) and circulated to all Australian states. Through this document, recognition was given to the priority placed by government on the provision of “strong foundational literacy skills” (p. 7) to all students. Furthermore, the authors emphasised the importance of children achieving high levels of literacy, and the vital role that literacy plays in life-long learning. This document
acknowledged, however, that there was no preference by the federal department for any particular methodology of literacy instruction, and that approaches needed to be balanced and appropriate to the needs of individual learners.

While proclaiming its intention to service the needs of all Australian children, the DEETYA document had a clearly stated, strong early childhood focus. There was very little reference made to children beyond early childhood education. Importantly, the text introduced the concept of benchmark testing and reinforced the national literacy goal agreed to by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers in March 1997, “that every child leaving primary school should … be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level” (DEETYA, 1998, p. 9).

In practice today, the Tasmanian Department of Education, Independent and Catholic schools currently derive their English curriculum and literacy outcomes from a variety of sources, which include the National Statements and Profiles for English (Curriculum Corporation, 1994a, 1994b), the First Steps documents (Education Department of Western Australia, 1997) and the Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes (Department of Education, 2001a)

_A Statement on English for Australian Schools_ (Curriculum Corporation, 1994a), in its texts strand, recognises that “literature involves the use of language and the imagination to represent, recreate, shape and explore human experience” (p. 6). The authors go on to make the point that “literature texts provide readers, viewers and listeners with rich meanings and significant imaginative experiences” (p. 6). Through this strand, “students extend their understanding of the world and of themselves” (p. 7), thus emphasising the wide ranging benefits to be derived from reading, a point that is developed more fully in the following passage:

The English curriculum develops students’ knowledge and appreciation of … literature’s potential to provide a source of enjoyment … [its] potential to inform and educate through its imaginative representation of human experience … the opportunity literature provides to reflect on the ways writers use language, including its linguistic structures and features … the ways in which literature can shape the reader or listener’s perceptions, and the ways these can be discussed and challenged [and] the different ways people can respond to texts, depending on their context. (p. 7)
The First Steps (Education Department of Western Australia, 1997) documents provide a philosophical and theoretical framework for learning to read which has been adopted by the Catholic school sector in Tasmania. This series of curriculum documents suggest, in the section on the desirable outcomes, that a language program should attempt to develop a child as a reader who:

is self-motivated to read for pleasure or to satisfy a purpose... uses reading to enter worlds beyond personal experiences ... responds sensitively and perceptively to literature ... can identify likes and dislikes about different authors and justify opinions ... [and] can reflect on, and respond to texts critically, providing different levels and interpretation and points of view. (p. 15)

The Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes (TLOs) address the reading of texts in the first strand, which “is about students reading, understanding and responding to texts. It involves reading for a range of purposes, including for enjoyment, appreciation, information and direction” (Department of Education, 2001a, Strand description section, ¶ 1). While the TLOs address the skill of reading, there is no consideration given to the other receptive language skill of listening. This document, therefore, appears to lack parity with other curriculum documents (see for example Curriculum Corporation, 1994a, 1994b; Education Department of Western Australia, 1997) in use in schools throughout Tasmania, which all give consideration to, and therefore validate, the importance of this skill.

Criticism has been levelled at the concept of a curriculum that has its primary focus on the development of skills, competencies and outcomes (see for example, Moore, 1996), such as that currently operating in Tasmania. Moore (1996), for example, considers that this style of curriculum ignores values and civics education, which should be a “vital consideration in curriculum design” (p. 2). This facet of curriculum is considered important by Moore because it encourages critical thinking, problem solving and the “imaginative engagement with social and cultural issues” (p. 2).

In Tasmania in 1978, after a statewide consultation process, five recommendations were made by the Tasmanian Education Next Decade Committee and these had widespread implications for the future of education within the state (Watt, 2001). Among these suggestions were recommendations for
the definition of “the content for a core curriculum based on the elements of communicating, thinking and valuing”, that “schools should become more involved in teaching moral, religious and aesthetic values”, and that “the level of student literacy and numeracy skills should be increased by monitoring through statewide testing …” (Watt, 2001, Setting the stage section, ¶ 2). These consultation processes eventually led to a discussion paper being produced in 1980 (Watt, 2001). This paper detailed four major requirements for a new curriculum, which it suggested should:

- be developed from the needs of children;
- develop children who know as much about themselves, the world and its people as is possible;
- “contain a strong thread of usefulness in the form of essential learnings, basic competencies and enabling capabilities” (Watt, 2001, Defining a curriculum section, ¶ 4); and
- “highlight the purposes of communicating, valuing and thinking to which all teachers subscribe” (Watt, 2001, Defining a curriculum section, ¶ 4).

At a national level, further movement toward futures-based education gained impetus in 1984, when the Commission for the Future was established with the goal of fostering “the development of a productive, innovative culture in Australia, and [encouraging] all Australians to become involved in shaping their future” (World Future Society, as cited in Patton, 1987, Elements of a state futures initiative section, final ¶). This was to be achieved, in part, through a clarification of the values required to make changes to our future world and through the inclusion of balanced perspectives, within a global community and world economy context (World Futures Society, as cited in Patton, 1987).

The effect of the criticism of skills, competencies and outcomes-based education and the push towards the development and implementation of futures- and values-based curriculum has resulted in some Australian states reassessing the focus of their curriculum documents. This has been the case in Tasmania, where in
addition to the documents in current, widespread use, some schools became project schools for the curriculum concept described as the Essential Learnings (ELs) during 2001 and 2002. The ELs curriculum, like the New Basics (Education Queensland, 2002) now being introduced into Queensland schools, could be described as both futures- and values-based. By 2005, this curriculum initiative will have been introduced into all Tasmanian Department of Education schools and all teachers within the department will be expected to report children’s progress using outcomes derived from the ELs documents by that time (Department of Education, 2002a). There is a possibility that the ELs will become commercially available to other systems within Tasmania.

At present, the outcomes for the Essential Learnings are still a “work-in-development” (Department of Education, 2001b) and are available only in draft format. Nonetheless, some of the outcomes relevant to reading are contained within the essential learning of communicating, which include the understanding “that text conveys meaning which goes beyond own experience and can be imaginary” and “that the meaning of texts can be compared with [the reader’s] own experience and with previously encountered texts’ (Department of Education, 2001b, p. 9). However, the value of creativity expressed in the ELs, perhaps, comes closest to what is articulated in the current documents by including “engaging with and responding to the aesthetic qualities of the natural and constructed world” (Department of Education, 2001a, p. 9).

2.7 Summary

This chapter provided a detailed thematic discussion of the literature as it relates to motivation and attitude, and their combined influence on children’s intention to read and their development of a positive attitude toward reading.

The conceptual framework provided a lens through which the boundary of the study was defined and provided a means through which to focus and assess the data collected to achieve the aims of the study.

Three literacy practices were detailed and the benefits that derive from the implementation of these practices, both in the cognitive and the affective domains, were investigated.
Chapter 2 – Background and Literature Review

A summary of the current debate over appropriate reading instruction and the influence they exert on educational policy and a review of the curriculum documents currently influencing Tasmanian reading education concluded this chapter.
Chapter 3

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and justifies both the design of the research and the methodological decisions employed in conducting this study. The chapter begins with a discussion of the process undertaken during the literature search (3.2). This is followed by the detailing of the process by which permissions were obtained for the study (3.3). The next section discusses the methods employed in the research design (3.4), followed by the details and justification of the sampling methods engaged in the selection of the participants (3.5). The details of the design of the data collection instruments are given (3.6), and the particulars of the administration of the data collection instruments are provided (3.7). Following this, the qualitative and quantitative methods employed in the data analysis phase of the study are detailed (3.8) and the issues of validity and reliability as they relate to the methods employed within the study are addressed (3.9). The next section of this chapter explains a change in the aims of the study and the reasons for this change (3.10), and then there is a discussion of the limitations of this study (3.11). The chapter concludes with a brief summary (3.12).

3.2 Literature Search

A process of wide reading in the area of secondary sources was undertaken with a focus on literature published on the topic of understanding reading in the affective domain, and theories pertaining to reading in this domain. This literature provided access to the theoretical framework for this study as well as highlighting current research and material that historically underpins much of the research in this area. Although this historical literature dates back to the Rosenblatt (1938) reader-response theory, it is considered seminal, having had an impact on all consequent research in this field (Church, 1997; Connell, 2001; Karolides, 1999). Indeed, this work is of too great an importance to the field of study to ignore (Church, 1997; Connell, 2001; Karolides, 1999).

Subsequent reading of the literature on the teaching of reading was undertaken, and enabled the identification of several programs employed by
teachers and designed specifically to influence their students’ attitudes to reading: silent reading, teacher read-alouds and book talk (Maggart & Zintz, 1992; Rubin, 2000; Ruddell, 1999; Saxby, 1993). The literature revealed numerous previous studies on these reading programs (see for example, Askov & Fischbach, 1973; Jacobs et al., 2000; McKenna et al. 1995; Sadoski, 1980; Wheldall & Entwistle, 1988). An examination of these studies provided access to the methods and survey techniques relating to reading attitude employed by previous researchers in this field of study.

Further searching and reading was undertaken to establish the details of past, present, incoming curriculum documents, and current trends in reading policy as they related to the aims of this study.

3.3 Permission for this Study

Prior to commencement of this study, applications to undertake research were submitted to and approved by the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix A) and the Office of Educational Review of the Tasmanian Department of Education (see Appendix B). The approval of the principals from three participating Tasmanian government schools and one Tasmanian Catholic school were also sought and obtained prior to undertaking research in their schools.

3.4 Research Design

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in the design of this study. This combination of methods allowed for the collection of the most appropriate data needed to answer the research questions.

Semi-structured interviews, a principal qualitative method, allowed access to what was considered a vital aspect of this study: the “thoughts, feelings and perceptions of … informants” (Burns, 2000, p. 388). The use of a semi-structured format in the interviews allowed the flexibility to elicit a depth of response from the participants and, on occasions, to pursue a line of enquiry regarding a unique experience or facet described by the participant. Following any deviation from the standard instrument, the researcher always returned to the question at the place of departure, and allowed all participants the opportunity, at the conclusion of the
interview, to contribute information that they felt was of relevance to the study, but that was not covered within the interview procedure itself. This approach was based on the understanding that the participant is the only person who understands and can encapsulate all the subtleties and interpretations of their own classroom practice (Burns, 2000). As Burns argues: “The qualitative researcher is not concerned with objective truth, but rather with the truth as the informant perceives it” (2000, p. 388).

3.5 Participants

The participants in the study were four upper primary teachers and sixty-eight children from their four classes.

The selection of the teachers for this study was based on purposive sampling which allowed for selection of participants based on “their relevance to the topic of investigation” (Denscombe, 1998, p. 15) and their likelihood of providing data valuable to the research (Denscombe, 1998). Each participant teacher was selected on the basis that they regularly adopted the practice of reading aloud to their students, regularly scheduled periods of uninterrupted, sustained, silent reading within their literacy program, and included students in discussion on books. These practices have been acknowledged as having a positive influence on reader attitude, reading ability and reading comprehension (Krashen, 1993; Pilgreen, 2000).

These participants were chosen because they presented an opportunity to investigate the motivations and objectives that teachers have for implementing such practices in their reading programs. It was anticipated that these teachers would be able to provide insights into the benefits that they perceive as ensuing from such practices as those outlined, and from insights gained through interviews with these teachers, an assessment could be made as to what loss would be sustained if these programs were to be abandoned. In the United States of America, there is legislation that prescribes the return to a skills-based approach (Edmondson & Shannon, 2002), and it is unclear how far-reaching may be the affects of this push.

This research also provides the opportunity to assess whether, and to what extent, these classroom practices mesh with the aims of the ELs curriculum currently being introduced into Tasmanian schools.
The researcher used an electronic mail-out to all second, third and fourth year Bachelor of Education students at the University of Tasmania, who all undertake the School Experience units of their course in Tasmanian schools, asking them to nominate upper primary teachers who included both uninterrupted sustained silent reading and read aloud to their students within their programs. There were a relatively small number of teachers nominated by students (eight nominations from over four hundred e-mails sent) and attempts were made to contact all those teachers who were nominated as effecting both practices. Of the teachers contacted, three were teaching in an early childhood setting, which was outside the framework of this study and they were therefore not invited to participate. Eventually, two male and two female teachers agreed to participate.

Each teacher was initially contacted by either telephone or electronic mail, dependent upon the contact details provided by the nominating university student. An explanation of the purposes and methods of the study was given and the teachers’ verbal consent to participate was obtained. Following this, contact was made with the principals of the teachers’ schools seeking their permission to undertake research within their schools. Permission for the teachers’ participation in the study was granted by all four principals.

Geographically, three of the schools are situated in a large, regional Tasmanian city and one is a school in rural Tasmania. All schools fell within one school district delineated by the Department of Education.

Demographically, the schools varied widely. School size ranged from just under one hundred students enrolled in the smallest participating school to over six hundred students in the largest. The Department of Education schools also varied in relation to their placement on the Educational Needs Index (ENI), with a range from the low thirties to marginally over one hundred. The ENI is a measure of socio-economic need used in resource allocation formulae for Tasmanian government schools, with a higher number indicating a higher economic need. Currently, schools range from a minimum rating on the ENI of 15.45 to a current maximum rating of 120.00 (Department of Education, personal communication, October 28, 2002). A comparable measure of need was unavailable for the Catholic school that participated in the study. Three of the classes were co-educational and
one was an all-boys class. One class was a composite grade 4/5/6 class, two classes were composite grade 5/6 and one class was a grade 6 class.

Of the 111 children in the four classes studied, parental permissions were obtained for 71 children to complete the questionnaire. Due to student absenteeism on the days of attendance to distribute and oversee the completion of the questionnaire, of the 71 children, only 68 children were present. All 68 children were asked to give their permission to participate in the questionnaire and all of these children gave their permission and completed the questionnaire. Of the 68 students, 35 students are male and 33 female. This represents an overall participation rate amongst the children of 61.2%.

3.6 **Data Collection Instruments**

Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were the data collection instruments used to obtain data for the purposes of this study; however, limited and mostly incidental observation did occur. The multiple methods chosen reflect not only the preferences for the type of data to be obtained but also the limitations of time and access availability (Denscombe, 1998). The combination of methods of data collection serve to corroborate data obtained, enhance the validity of the data and lend support to the analysis of findings (Burns, 2000).

In order to collect in-depth data from the participating teachers semi-structured interviews were used. Prior to the semi-structured interview, each teacher provided data on the *Teacher Short-Answer Questionnaire* (see Appendix C) which garnered demographic data regarding the participants’ age, gender, teaching qualifications, teaching background and experience, together with details regarding their membership of professional associations.

3.6.1 **Design of Data Collection Instruments**

3.6.1.1 *Semi-structured interview*

The semi-structured *Interview Schedule* (see Appendix D) used in the research was developed specifically for this study.

The interview schedule was designed to allow for the collection of information regarding each teacher’s personal attitude toward reading and reading
preferences, their beliefs about whether they felt their attitude toward reading influenced and was visible to children in their reading pedagogy and program; and the importance they placed upon children developing reading skills. There was also a focus on certain aspects of their program, such as their objectives for, and benefits of, having children reading literature in their class and the ways in which they promoted children’s engagement with literature.

The instrument also allowed for the collection of data regarding details of various aspects of the teacher’s programs; specifically silent reading time, reading aloud to students, book talk and any other activities implemented to encourage reading.

Questions were also asked that related to whether the teachers felt they were successful in recommending books to students and to the teachers’ beliefs about the influence of their students’ parents and friends on students’ reading attitudes.

The question of whether teachers believed there was a gender difference in attitudes toward reading was also asked and teachers were given the opportunity to give their views on this issue.

3.6.1.2 Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire

There are many commercial and freely available survey instruments designed to measure attitudes to reading. The instrument used in this study was one designed specifically for use in the original study plan. It was derived from a combination of reading attitude surveys and from the questionnaires used in two national Australian studies. The first of these national studies was the ACNielsen study, *A National Survey of Reading, Buying and Borrowing Books for Pleasure* (2001), which was part of the Books Alive campaign of the Australian Federal Government through the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. The second was the *Young Australians Reading: From Keen to Reluctant Readers* (Woolcott Research, 2001) study, conducted on behalf of the Australian Centre for Youth Literature. In choosing to include questions derived from these two national studies, it was possible to make comparisons between the four classes and these national studies.
All questions posed in the questionnaire were framed positively. Clip art pictures were included on the questionnaire to make the instrument appealing to the young participants. No coding numbers or boxes were included on the questionnaire in an effort to make the questionnaire as user-friendly as possible (Denscombe, 1998) and reduce the likelihood of confusion in completing the instrument, given consideration of the age of the participants.

The questionnaire contained several sections aimed at collecting different types or levels of response. Closed questions were included in order to obtain a restricted response, while questions employing a Likert Scale allowed for expressions of degrees of agreement or disagreement in reaction to questionnaire statements (Denscombe, 1998). Open-ended questions allowed for both a varied length response expressed in the words of the respondent, and for respondents to provide rich details of their views (Denscombe, 1998) and preferences, without restricting “either the content or the manner of the respondent’s reply” (Burns, 2000, p. 572).

The questionnaire was tested by trialling with children of a similar age group who were not later included in the study. The wording of one of the finally selected questions was changed due to feedback received during this trial.

Sections of the questionnaire asked for specific responses to students’ attitudes toward reading and different reading acts or situations, students’ perceptions of themselves as readers, influences on students’ reading attitude, reading preferences, reasons for reading, reading habits and the students’ level of agreement or disagreement with statements made about reading. For the purpose of maintaining anonymity, the participating students were also given the opportunity to select a pseudonym for use in the reporting of the results of the study.

Given the change in direction of the study (as outlined at section 3.10), not all the data obtained from the questionnaires are included within the results and discussion sections of this dissertation.
3.6.1.3 Observation

Only limited observation of the teachers, their students and the classroom environment was undertaken during the study, and the observation that was undertaken was more of an incidental nature. This occurred during the time spent administering questionnaires to children. These observations were included as a data source within the narratives in chapter four.

3.7 Administration of Data Collection Instruments

A Principals’ Information Letter (see Appendix E) was forwarded to the Principal of each of the participating schools, together with a copy of a draft School Newsletter Item (see Appendix F) for publication in the school newsletter. A copy of the Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire (see Appendix G) to be administered to the children participating in the study was also provided to principals.

The four participating teachers were sent a Teachers’ Information Letter (see Appendix H) together with a copy of the questionnaire to be used with the children involved in the study. Prior to the teachers’ interviews, teachers were supplied with a Teacher Statement of Informed Consent (see Appendix I), which was signed prior to audiotaping of the face-to-face interview. The semi-structured interview questions varied slightly according to the responses of the teachers to preceding questions, with some questions re-worded for clarification and others added or omitted at the discretion of the researcher, to allow for greater elaboration on topics of interest to the participant and the researcher (Denscombe, 1998).

Each teacher was supplied with envelopes, each containing a Parent Information Letter (see Appendix J) and Parent Consent Form (see Appendix K) addressed to the parents of the students in their class for distribution to the students.

Parents of students were made aware of the study, initially through a notice (see Appendix F) placed in the school newsletter of each of the participating schools inviting participation in the study. This was followed by the Parent Information Letter (see Appendix J) and Parent Consent Form (see Appendix K) that was sent home with students in the subject classes. On this form, parents indicated their willingness to allow their child’s participation in the questionnaire, and for the
possibility of a follow-up interview by signing the Parent Consent Form and returning it to their child’s classroom teacher in an envelope provided for that purpose and enclosed with the letter and form.

All student participants were also supplied with a combined Student Information Letter and Statement of Informed Consent (see Appendix I). All students were given a verbal outline of the nature of the study and of the contents of the Information Letter and the Statement of Informed Consent during which time the researcher informed students of the receipt of parental permission for student participation in the study and stressed the voluntary and confidential nature of the study. All students were offered the opportunity to read the Student Information Letter and to indicate their willingness to participate in the study by signing the Statement of Informed Consent and returning it to the researcher prior to completion of the Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire. No enticements were offered to students to encourage their participation. All students whose parents had consented to their involvement in the study and who were attending school on the day of data collection agreed to participate in the study.

3.8 Data Analysis

3.8.1 Methods of Analysis for Quantitative Data

Once the collection of the questionnaire data was completed, the questionnaire was coded for data entry by the researcher into an electronic spreadsheet and then converted to a format suitable for use by the statistical analysis program, Statview. Some of the data were treated as nominal data and some as continuous data and these allocations changed in accordance with the requirements of the specific analyses being performed (Burns, 2000).

Statistical tests of significance were performed on the data which gives “additional credibility” (Denscombe, 1998, p. 204-205) to the interpretations made and therefore to the level of confidence in the findings and results of the study (Denscombe, 1998).

The use of descriptive statistics allowed for the quantity of data to be summarised and presented using “measures that are easily understood by an observer” (Burns, 2000, p. 43). Where analysis was concerned with the
determination of relationships between variables, the tests used were “chi square for testing associations with nominal data [and] rank order correlation for testing relationships with ordinal data” (Burns, 2000, p. 212).

Chi square, a “non-parametric test of significance” (Burns, 2000, p. 212), is a simple and appropriate test when testing for a relationship between two discrete categories of data. This test determines whether any “difference between observed and expected proportions is likely to be a function of sampling error (non-significant) or unlikely to be a function of sampling error (significant association)” (Burns, 2000, p. 213). The two categories of data were sorted into two or more sub-categories and arranged as a cross-tabulation in a contingency table (Burns, 2000). Additionally, where the mean was rendered “untypical, unrealistic or unrepresentative” (Burns, 2000, p. 46) of the data, results were displayed as histograms, which provided a more representative portrayal. Where it was considered important to display relationships between subsets of the data, results were displayed as Venn diagrams (Clapham, 1990).

3.8.2 Methods of Analysis for Qualitative Data

The qualitative data obtained during the data collection phase of the study were collected by the administration of semi-structured interviews with each of the four participants as described in the Administration of Data Collection Instruments section (see section 3.7). The audiotaped interviews were then transcribed into typewritten dialog form. The data were coded into themes, which are “the most useful unit of analysis” (Burns, 2000, p. 589), and this thematic coding then formed the basis for the discussion of qualitative results.

Recently there has been a developing awareness of the value to be gained from the analysis of “talk” as the “primary medium through which social interaction takes place” (Silverman, 2000, p. 821). There has also been a growing recognition that research recognising the importance of talk is “more dialogic, more exploratory, less given to pseudo-objectivity, than the traditional mode” (Rich, 1979, p. 145). These arguments were persuasive in encouraging me to adopt a particularly conversational approach to the research task.
The qualitative nature of this study, and the flexible and responsive interview technique used, meant that all “questions have not been asked of all respondents, or have not been phrased in the same way or delivered at the same stage in the interview” (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 1999, Software packages section, ¶ 3) and so the data obtained is not necessarily directly comparable. For this reason, together with a preference to preserve the complexities of the changing interpersonal and environmental contexts, and to reveal the motivations of the participants (Polkinghorne, 1995), a decision was made to present the data in storied narrative form.

The purpose of research is the generation of knowledge in order to improve understanding, and the use of narrative provides a holistic approach to achieving this purpose (Schostak, 1995). Therefore, the presentation of the data in narrative form is a recognition that what is at issue in this research is the multiple and different ‘realities’ that each of the participants brings to the ‘story’ (Schostak, 1995). Narrative, which is a form of naturalistic approach, allows the integrity of the subjective experience of individual participants to be maintained (Burns, 2000), which is of considerable importance to the researcher, because the value of the research is its capacity to present the data with honesty.

As “storied memories retain the complexity of the situation in which an action was undertaken and the emotional and motivational meaning connected with it” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11), it was considered appropriate to present the data as four narrative vignettes. Each of these vignettes explores the participants’ beliefs, values, reasons, justifications and motives for their work practices, and shows how they define themselves as teachers of reading within the context of their classrooms (Schostak, 1995). The vignettes, as a whole, give both unity and meaning to the data (Polkinghorne, 1995).

3.9 Validity and Reliability

Triangulation is the process of using multiple methods of data collection to obtain referent points to establish the “truth” of a particular study (Denscombe, 1998). Denscombe admits that this process assumes that there is a single truth. The use of the mechanistic and positivistic term “triangulation” in interpretive research, according to Ely et al. (1997), draws “people away from the difficult but essential
job of wrestling with complex ideas of multiple perspectives and meanings” (p. 35). Crystallization is suggested by Richardson (1994b) as a more appropriate term than triangulation, as “crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions” (p. 522). Crystallization, then, is the term describing the multidimensionality of this qualitative research, which eventually must be made meaningful for the reader (Ely et al., 1997) and is adopted here as the most appropriate descriptor for this research.

Ely et al. (1997), remind us of the qualitative researchers’ “interest in telling [and of their consuming] need to present their stories of research as an on-going journey” (p. 52). Accordingly, they propose that it is through making transparent the actuality of the process of data collection that researchers establish credibility. The authors argue that if a single researcher’s interpretation of qualitative data is to be understood as credible, then the research itself needs to be recognised to be an account “of in-process stumblings, mis-steps, [and] insights” (1997, p. 34). It might also be considered a map of the “various avenues” (1997, p. 34) travelled in the search for meaning in the data. But it is more, because it also explains the creation of a three-dimensional model in which the author demonstrates how the data was molded into its present shape (1997, p. 34). The researcher was also impelled by the writing of Ely et al. (1997) to:

reflect the process of research - … in-progress victories, insights and puzzlements of the researcher as the research unfolds, … as well as descriptions of the successes and failures of the ongoing stories of multiple meaning making. So, the process is the product. (p. 52)

The views of Ely et al. (1997) are acknowledge, and a decision has been made to document and detail, within the narrative, the researcher’s interactions with the participants. As well as this, it was decided to make explicit the thought processes of the researcher, particularly as they are the thought processes of a beginning, and somewhat hesitant researcher. It is recognised that “since our lives are our data, and the personal is political, the sharing also has learning value… since knowledge can never be ‘value free’” (Gould, 1985, p. 288).
3.10 A Change of Direction

This study was originally designed to investigate upper primary teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards reading and the use of in-class reading practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature. A secondary objective was to investigate the influence of gender socialisation on students’ attitudes toward reading. In pursuit of this purpose, the data for the original study was collected. However, after analysis, it was concluded that, while it was possible to obtain results that provided a “snapshot” of both teachers’ and students’ attitudes, to achieve the original aim of the study there was a need to provide a comprehensive picture of attitude influence. To achieve that, there would have needed to be two adjustments to the method: a change to a longitudinal survey and an increase in the number of participants.

The undertaking of a longitudinal study would have allowed for a study of the development of attitude over time with a particular cohort of students (Burns, 2000). While this is a valuable way of studying development, the difficulties associated with this approach are that it “is extremely time-consuming, costly, organisationally complex, and slow in producing results” (Burns, 2000, p. 571).

To provide any significant data on influence, either in reading attitude or gender socialisation, a larger sample group would have been required because the small number of cases included within some categories would not allow for the accurate analysis of and generalisation from the data (Burns, 2000).

Given consideration of the time constraints for completion of the study, and the necessity of locating additional participants and seeking and obtaining permissions, neither of these adjustments to the design of the study was possible. A decision was made to restructure the study to enable the use of the data collected, while still keeping the integrity of the research aims as specified to the participants and approved by the various authorities (see section 3.3).

The design of the Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire (see Appendix G) allowed for the collection of data to substantiate data obtained from teacher interviews. This instrument sheds light on student attitudes to reading, and it
therefore adds another facet to the crystallisation process in the understanding of the dynamics at work in the individual classrooms.

3.11 Limitations of this Study

In terms of research design, the significance of the findings of this study would have been advanced in the area of reliability and external validity if the scope and resources had allowed for the inclusion in the study of a greater number of participants. However, the information contributed by the participating teachers and their students has offered a detailed insight into the motivations, instructional goals and implicit theories of these teachers.

The limitations of the study do impose some restrictions on the extent to which the findings can be generalised, however the depth and detail that it has been possible to provide offers considerable internal validity to the study and therefore a singular insight into the affective responses of the teachers to their practice of teaching reading.

3.12 Summary

This chapter detailed the seeking and approval of permissions obtained from the Tasmanian Department of Education, the University of Tasmania’s Ethics Committee, the principals of the four participating schools, the four participating teachers, the parents of the participating students and of sixty-eight students themselves.

This chapter also detailed the initial literature searching that gave rise to the study and focuses on the methods of data collection and data analysis. The issues of validity and reliability have also been addressed.

Reference has been made to a change from the original study design and the reasons for this were explored.

The results obtained through the undertaking of this research study are presented, discussed and interpreted in the following three chapters, with the purpose of addressing the research questions as previously detailed.
4.0 STORIES FROM THE CLASSROOM

4.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter describes in detail the data collected through the interviews with teachers. The results were obtained through the analysis of the audio-taped, semi-structured interviews consented to and undertaken with the four participating teachers.

As this research is, in part, ethnography, that is to say “writing about people” (Burns, 2000, p. 393), it is important to introduce the teachers who were the participants in this study. Each teacher is therefore introduced and then their story, which is written in narrative form, is presented. In order to present each of the participants as the distinctive and unique individuals that they are, each story begins on a fresh page and the narrative form offered closely reflects the “voice” of each participant. All participants were offered the opportunity to use a pseudonym for the purposes of this study and it is this pseudonym by which they will be referred to throughout the study, in an effort to maintain their anonymity.

As the suite of narratives also reveals the story of a beginning researcher, the participants are introduced in chronological order, according to interview date: “Michael” (4.2), “Jane” (4.3), “Bronte” (4.4) and “Steve” (4.5).

Each vignette is closed by a summary of the Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire results from each of the classes in order to bring to light the reading attitudes of these students and thus provide another facet in the crystallisation process described by Richardson (1994b), making meaningful the unique properties of each of the classes.
4.2 An Introduction to Michael

Michael is aged in his early fifties and teaches a co-educational grade 4/5/6 of twenty four students in a small rural primary school. This is his first year at his current school.

A teacher for twenty eight years, Michael has spent many of those years serving as school principal in a number of Tasmanian schools. Twenty of his teaching years have been spent in the upper primary sector. He is primary trained but has, over the course of his career, taught the full spectrum of grades from Kindergarten to high school.

Gained both in Queensland and Tasmania, Michael’s teaching qualifications include Tasmanian Teacher’s Certificate (TTC), Diploma of Teaching (Dip.Teach.) and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.). He is a member of both the Australian Literacy Educators’ Association (ALEA) and the Primary English Teaching Association (PETA).

Eighteen of the students in Michael’s class participated in this study.

4.2.1 My Conversation with Michael

I am conscious that I’ve said I’ll be there at 9:15. I am always eager to be where I say I’ll be on time. It’s a long drive and I don’t want to be late. The speedo needle edges just over the speed limit.

Paint markings on the road. Bits of glass. The scene of the fatal accident I read about in the newspaper. I slow down and the needle eases back under the speed limit. Large trucks rush in the other direction and my car is buffeted by their passing. My hands grip the wheel tightly. The busy highway narrows as I get further from the city, winding through the hilly scenery. It’s a beautiful country morning, cold but clear. I’m nervous and have butterflies in my stomach. This is my first interview.

The school is not hard to find. There’s a signpost from the main road and I take the turn. I drive into the car park and am struck by the neatness of the grounds.

I get out and go to the boot of the car, check my backpack once more, worried that I’ll have forgotten something, but I have everything I need. My mouth has gone
dry as it does when I am nervous. I take a quick drink of orange juice and then chew a peppermint. The tastes don’t mix well, but I’m worried about my breath. I do up my backpack, grab it and shut the boot. I walk towards the entrance to the building, still nervous.

I open the glass-panelled door and walk through. There’s a man coming towards me. He smiles and asks if I am Tammy. It’s a small school and he probably knows all the parents by sight and, after all, he’s expecting me. I tell him he is right and ask if he is Michael. Yes. He shakes my hand, still smiling, and I feel welcome. He asks me to follow him, tells me the interview will take place in someone else’s office, where it is quiet.

We walk past a woman, who I assume is the school secretary, and Michael introduces me to her. He tells her that I have come to interview him and I feel he is pleased that I have. He shows me into the small, white office and to a wooden-armed chair, turns, shuts the door and takes a seat himself. I open my backpack, get out all the paperwork, and the tape recorder.

I am still nervous. I say as much. He is reassuring, happy to be of help. He had sounded a little gruff when I spoke to him on the phone to arrange this interview, but I must have been mistaken. He kindly tries to put me at my ease. I thank him for his willingness to be a part of my study, tell him of my appreciation.

I hand him the Statement of Informed Consent and explain the content; explain what I need from him if he is to take part in my study. He looks it over, signs it, and hands it back to me. I hand him another sheet I’ve prepared on which he can write his details. It’s efficient that way, but cold, handing over a form and getting someone to write down the demographic tally of their worth. It’s as if writing your name, sex, details of the class you teach, length of time teaching, qualifications and age, can sum up the essence of a human being, the essence of whom you are as a teacher, as a person. Yet it happens all the time. It is customary.

He starts to tick boxes. He gets to the boxes where I’ve asked him to specify his age. I’ve purposefully left this question to near last. I feel it is rude to ask, that some people might feel uncomfortable about answering. I’ve grouped the ages in five-year
lots. "Aargh!" he exclaims loudly, confirming my discomfort about the question. He ticks the box that signifies he’s in his early fifties and comments that he’s getting to the stage where there aren’t many boxes left. I’ve often felt the same and tell him that. He hands the form back completed. The interview begins.

I thank Michael again for taking part in this interview, and ask him about his personal reading. He tells me he’s a keen reader within the limitations of his eyesight, which he explains has been problematic. He indicates his glasses. Empathetically my eyes smile back at him, from behind my own. He tells me that he particularly likes reading stories about people’s lives and that he’s also into computer books, because he’s really interested in computers, not the technical side of things, but how you can use them, particularly in teaching. It interests me that he, too, is up-to-date with computers. So many teachers are supposed not to be. Possibly as a testament to his interest, Michael’s classroom has seven computers for student use.

We begin to discuss Michael’s reading program, and he tells me that he has no doubt that his enjoyment of reading is obvious to his class. He considers reading to be very important for children, and that their enjoyment of reading is paramount. He feels that without a love of reading, children are unlikely to have success and that this will really limit what they can achieve in life. I nod my agreement. He thinks that turning children on to reading is a particularly important aspect of his role. There’s a lot of work to be done in this area, especially to turn reluctant readers, and boys, on to reading.

With fiction, he’s aware of the power of the imagination. He believes that when children read what is the fruit of someone else’s imagination, it can help them develop their own imaginations. His goal for children is that they will be able to grab a book, sit down and, by engaging with it, be off somewhere else in their heads. I can tell he is passionate about this topic. He breaks in on my thoughts, marvelling at the ability of a book to take readers somewhere else completely, and telling me that there is a whole world out there waiting to be discovered and enjoyed through the pages of a book. I feel I have come to the right place. The distance of the trip is immediately justified.
When I ask for his opinion on the importance of skills development, he asks me to clarify my meaning, and I suggest the explicit teaching of phonics. Later, when I am going back over the transcript of the interview, analysing the data, I feel I have done the wrong thing: have been too specific. It was a leading question, but it is too late. He shares with me his thoughts on phonics. He feels that children have to be able to decode, but that many children are turned off by the repetitive nature of the things that they have to do to give them skills. He explains that he tries to teach these things in a 'just in time' kind of way, providing the right information at the right moment for a child’s needs. I interpret his answer as meaning that he supports a Whole Language philosophy, but I don't ask.

Michael’s belief is that people have a lot of leisure time available to them, and that kids get a bit sick of Nintendo and television. He believes reading has the capacity to make their free time enjoyable, so, becoming a lifelong reader is important. He recounts to me the story of the death of his mother in a nursing home just prior to Christmas last year, and reminds me that nursing homes are dull and boring places. He says that if you can read, then you can take your mind to another place and forget that the nurse hasn’t changed your bedpan. He chuckles and I chuckle with him, sorry to hear about the death of his mother, but understanding his meaning.

The first rule of Michael’s class is explained to me: children must always have a book in their desk. This enables them to take out their reading books whenever they finish their work. Michael has five plastic boxes full of books, which are mostly his own, from which students can choose. Yet another set of books is from the school library and these are replenished and changed often so that the children can always find something new that's of interest to them. He's trying to encourage children to read a variety of books.

Silent reading is not school policy in Michael’s school, but it is something that he thinks he probably started doing in about 1972. Michael tells me that he believes he must read during the silent reading period too and that when he does read he chooses a variety of books including children’s books. He admits that sometimes a child will come to him, excited about a book and wanting to show it to him and that he will sometimes listen to the child read. I prompt to ask if the reading time is not
completely silent all the time and I think that puts him on the defensive. He seems to think I am being critical, but I am interested that children feel free to come to him during silent reading time to discuss a book they are reading. He says that while he doesn't ask for complete silence the rest of the children are usually engaged in their own reading. I explain that I'm interested in hearing about what happens in his class, regardless of what anyone might think. He is mollified and continues with his description of silent reading.

I ask him whether the children sit at their own desks or whether there is somewhere casual to sit. He replies that sitting at your desk can be quite casual. He is teasing me.

It’s encouraging for Michael if children bring a book from home, but he believes teachers needs to tread carefully with magazines. This is not so much because of their possibly controversial nature, which I thought may have been an issue, but because Michael is conscious of turning off reluctant readers by not accepting their choice. If the children are showing an interest in opening a book, then he believes that’s a start. If a child is always reading the same kind of text, then he subtly suggests a change. Another teacher in the school won’t allow any magazines to be used during silent reading time, and Michael laughingly comments that the teacher is young, and just hasn’t learnt the trade yet.

The freedom to choose what they like to read makes it possible for children with low reading ability to cope well with silent reading time. Michael targets his most reluctant readers and uses the resource person that he has come to his room for half an hour each day to model reading to them and then have the children read back.

The greatest benefit from implementing a silent reading program, in Michael’s opinion, is the raising of children’s self-esteem. Often, when he’s seen children struggling with their reading, he’s made a concerted attempt to work with them. When they’ve completed a page, or a chapter, and they come and tell him about it, he recognises the development in them and is heartened by a smiling face. He says that’s his motivation for his program.
On the question of parents, Michael believes that parents who interact with him know he has a real love of giving their children every opportunity to be better people, and that most parents accept that reading is a wonderful thing to do. He mentions that some of the parents he’s met can’t read themselves; so they’re over the moon when someone helps their children to read.

Michael reads aloud to his class, but doesn’t use a class novel as a serial. He suggests that many children, especially reluctant readers, are liable to be turned off because they can’t remember what happened before and can’t piece the story together in their minds. Instead, he has some books that have short extracts from good children’s literature and he often uses these for reading to the class.

Sometimes he’ll just have the kids put their pens down and he’ll read to them for five or ten minutes. He does this spontaneously, so that children recognise that in their own lives they can just stop what they’re doing, go to their room, pick up a book and go away somewhere else in their minds. This is especially important if they’re being annoyed by someone at home, or things aren’t going well for them.

He reads to the children because he believes that it’s enjoyable for them. He feels that for most people, listening to someone else read takes them back to the times when they were children and their parents used to read to them. It is important, he feels, that the reader has the skills to make the text come alive for the children.

The reluctant readers especially love him to read books that contain humour and he’s currently reading a series that the kids love. They’re really lapping them up. He enjoys using tapes of stories too; particularly those of Paul Jennings because they last 25 minutes and the kids love them. They’re presently listening to The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe on tape. They’re also watching the video, so that there are two things happening and this is particularly helpful for reluctant readers: they’re hearing the story, but then they’re seeing it and getting a visual impression of what’s happening so it’s not so hard for them to keep track of the storyline.

Michael doesn’t always think that reading related activities are popular with children, although the brighter and more academic children, and those who are artistic, will often enjoy follow-up activities. The reluctant readers have enough
trouble decoding, without trying to make sense of the story at a deeper level. He’d rather just get them to love their book, and not to have them think that every time they read a damn book, he’s going to say he wants them to write about the main characters and how they interacted.

Michael recommends books to the kids that he’s enjoyed reading and shares his favourite books with them. Often they’ll ask him to read out bits of their favourite stories to the class. This gives him pleasure, and the kids enjoy it too. When I ask him if he’s successful with his recommendations, he laughs and says I’ll have to come back and ask the kids in ten years’ time. I wonder about the long-term benefits of my own teaching programs: what will my students remember in ten years’ time?

Often Michael does author studies and children are allowed on the internet to find their favourite author. They print out pages and pages, because they’re interested in the information. Michael knows then that they’ve really engaged themselves with the topic. In addition, when the children notice that the author has books published that they haven’t read yet, they sometimes go to some effort to find and read them, which Michael considers is wonderful, because they’re being hooked on books.

As far as benefits linked to his reading program, Michael has seen that once children get enjoyment from their reading, their story writing shows immense improvement. He believes their reading informs their understanding about how to go about writing, and they subconsciously pick up a lot of spelling. I remember reading about this in the literature on connections between reading and writing.

Michael feels that modelling is very important. If children see him enjoying reading, most children will take on board that he’s doing something he likes. He’s also not backward in telling them that he likes reading. He says he has a very open relationship with the kids and that pays off when he sees them following his lead and just coming in after recess and taking out their books and starting to read.

The influence that parents exert on their children’s attitudes occurs in two ways, according to Michael. Either, they don’t provide books for their children and therefore the love of reading isn’t developed, or alternatively, they are enthusiastic and buy them a book every time they go near a shop. His own kids loved books and he says his
house is a testament to that. When Michael’s kids give him books as gifts it indicates to him that what he did when they were little has positively influenced his children’s attitudes towards reading.

On the topic of parents, Michael says he’d really like to take some parents and shake the living daylights out of them because they want their children to excel at maths, or at running, or be the best footballer, but they really don’t care about reading. Kids’ friends, too, have an influence on their reading attitude. Michael thinks that the ten minutes of silent reading time, when everyone has to read means that no-one can be influenced negatively. On the question of boys’ attitudes to reading, he thinks that boys are just not turned on to reading, possibly because it’s not seen as cool to read. They’d rather be out playing or doing things. He also feels that they haven’t developed that fascination with their own imagination, whereas it seems to be more inherent in girls. He suggests that perhaps boys just take longer to mature. You just have to keep going with them and helping them with their skills. Two of the boys in his class have gobbled up the Too Cool series and he’s ordered the next set because the boys are just pounding at the door wanting to get on and read them.

Michael attributes his love of reading to his father, who used to “devour” books. He remembers reading The Coral Sea as a child and that was when he realised that reading was something he enjoyed doing. It saddens him that he’s had trouble with his eyesight and that it hinders his ability to read longer books. He thinks he probably enjoys reading shorter books to the kids because he can read them without having a shocking headache at the end of it.

He thinks that computers and the internet are exciting, in terms of children being turned on to reading. They can find out so many personal things about authors, so the kids can understand that when these people were in grade five or six, their teacher was probably encouraging them to read and write and telling them they might be able to be an author, and now they are. They get to understand that authors are real people. By taking this approach, the children realise they have that potential within them to write too. He laughs and says it reminds him of when he was teaching sex education in the Catholic system and he used to say that the Pope and the Queen
both went through puberty. I laugh as he tells me that, by him doing this, it all makes sense to kids.

Michael feels that if teachers are interested in any discipline area, if they’re really fascinated, then they’ll teach it better than anyone else. At the end of the day, he feels you need to decide what is going to be the most beneficial for the children. I agree with him.

I thank Michael for his willingness to participate, leave the permission forms for his students’ parents to complete and arrange to return to administer them. I take my leave of his school and I travel back home the way I came, warmed by an inner glow.

4.2.2 Michael’s Class

This section details the results of some of the responses, given by the children in Michael’s class, to the Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire and illuminates some of the attitudes to reading of the participating students.

Of the eighteen students in Michael’s class who completed the questionnaire, six were boys and twelve were girls.

Fifteen of the eighteen students in Michael’s class who completed the survey profess to like reading. The three students who do not like reading, are all boys: Maverick, Paul and Joel.

Eleven of the eighteen children enjoy it when someone reads to them. Of the two children in the four classes that neither liked reading nor being read to, one was the boy, Maverick.

Fourteen students thought that Michael enjoyed reading, three (Paul, Kristy and Pixie) were unsure, and one boy, Maverick, thought that he didn’t.

Fourteen of the children think that they are good readers. Again, the boy, Maverick, is included in the four children who do not believe they are good readers: Josh, Maverick, Joel and Nikki. These results are expressed pictorially in the form of a Venn diagram in Figure 4.2.2-1.
Chapter 4 – Stories from the Classroom

Of the thirteen students who admitted having been recommended a book by Michael, ten said that they had enjoyed the book, one did not provide a response and two replied in the negative: B.J. and, once again, Maverick.

Only one of the seven children who thought their friends like to read was a boy; the other eleven children were unsure. No child replied that their friends did not like to read.

Figure 4.2.2-1 Pictorial representation of the reading attitudes of students in Michael's class.
4.3 An Introduction to Jane

Jane is in her late twenties and teaches a co-educational class of twenty eight grade 5/6 students in a large, suburban primary school.

Teaching for eight years, Jane has been employed in the upper primary level for six of those years. She has also had experience in early childhood and lower primary classes.

Jane holds a Tasmanian Teacher’s Certificate and a Bachelor of Education and gained her qualifications in Tasmania, specialising in primary education. She is currently studying towards a degree in psychology.

Thirteen of the students in Jane’s class participated in this study.

4.3.1 My Conversation with Jane

I’ve arrived to interview Jane just as her class has left for the day. I’ve already picked up a “Visitor” tag from the office. It has been a hectic day for Jane and her class, as they have spent the day packing up their classroom in anticipation of moving into a newly-built room. It’s hard to get a picture of how this room was, as it is now reasonably bare: a large room with a few boxes of items still to be transferred to the new classroom, odd bits and pieces on the floor, a curtain hanging awry, and a table and two chairs sitting, waiting for our interview. I thank Jane for her willingness to participate, especially given the extra pressure she is under from the classroom move.

Jane seems pleased to be able to help, and tells me she enjoys reading and reads everything. On the weekend, she considers reading the newspaper is a must. She has a bag of novels sitting by her bedside and she’s ploughing through these. She enjoys fiction books, magazines and the internet. She still enjoys children’s literature and often the librarian will ask her to review books for the school library to see if she could recommend them. She doesn’t do as much reading as she would like. She admits that finding time to read is difficult. She gets to the end of the day and, although reading is relaxing, other things seem to be more important than her selfish reading time. I sense she may feel a bit guilty, as I sometimes do, about taking time out for reading.
Jane, like Michael, is absolutely sure her enjoyment of reading shows in her program. She feels it’s vital for children to read, because if they’re illiterate they’re in big trouble, as society’s pretty much visual and, if kids can’t read, they’re struggling a lot to succeed.

Jane believes that children who are read to from a young age have a love of reading. She feels that sometimes children can get to grade 5/6 and people assume many things about their reading, but that you can’t do that. In her school program, she tries to find ways to help children who don’t enjoy reading see that there are books that they can enjoy and that reading can be an enjoyable experience. She thinks that sometimes she’s fighting past experiences with the children; she feels that something has frequently happened to them that has made reading unpleasant for them and, in her opinion, this is definitely school-based.

Jane thinks it’s important that children enjoy their reading; that they get involved in a book instead of just having to read. She thinks they should be able to read things that they enjoy, because if kids aren’t enjoying what they are reading, then they’re not going to want to go and do it repeatedly. However, she also strongly encourages them to select something different if they’re stuck with the same sort of material all the time.

She believes that it’s hard for children to know why they don’t like a book. It could be because it’s not their type of book, they’re not competent readers, they’re tired, or there are too many distractions. In fact, she suggests that there are a variety of reasons and children don’t always have the ability to link the reason to why they don’t want to read. She feels that they sometimes blame reading itself and not the circumstances that influence them while they are reading. I find her comments to be astute. She’s obviously given this some thought in the past.

She likes students to be able to understand the context of what they’re reading which is something that can be a problem, and she likes children to get into the habit of looking up words from their reading in the dictionary if they don’t know what they mean. She tries to foster an enjoyment of reading in kids and she gives them the message that if they read a lot, whether they enjoy it or not, it does help them with
their spelling and grammar. She believes that readers are good spellers, but laughingly says she has no proof of it. She also finds it gives them good examples of different writing genres, and helps their learning in lots of ways.

Her main objective is that the kids enjoy what they’re reading and look forward to reading, that they like having that time to read, that they can read for themselves and understand what they’re reading.

She makes the point, though, that sometimes some children won’t enjoy reading because they have to research something, or they’ve left things to the last minute. However, children need to be able to read to get answers, and therefore it’s important that they know the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. In her classroom library, as well as a large number of novels, Jane also has a variety of other books, like the Guinness Book of Records and books on music and books on facts. She finds that some children really enjoy researching because they like these information books. I’ve witnessed this myself in my school experience classes, especially with the boys in upper primary grades, who love to come and share facts that they have found fascinating.

Jane thinks that students should become life-long readers, but she doesn’t think that life-long reading necessarily means reading a novel every night. Children should at least having some enjoyment, whether it’s the newspaper, magazines, books or chat rooms on the internet – it’s still reading. If kids haven’t that desire to read then they miss so much and they just won’t do it. She particularly relates the benefits of being a life-long reader to success in study because she feels that in high school everything students do is connected in some way to reading. High school textbooks and encyclopaedias contain language that can be hard for some students to access, so they need to feel really comfortable with being able to use that kind of book before they leave primary school.

By casually monitoring students’ reading and then targeting children’s specific interests Jane has met with some success in positively influencing children’s attitudes toward reading. As an example of this, she mentions one boy who had told her he wasn’t going to read, but then, knowing that he loves ferrets, she found a book called
The Great Ferret Race. She is so enthusiastic about telling me how the boy is reading the book every afternoon without prompting, about how he’s telling everyone else about it and showing them. He’s really hooked on reading it. I have a laugh and share with her that I, too, have a pet ferret that I adore. I can well understand this boy’s interest in ferrets, and his need to find out more about them is obviously giving him a purpose for reading.

Jane has another student who is very capable with her reading, but who doesn’t find any enjoyment in it. Jane has just given her a book to read that she thinks will be right up her alley, and the girl seems happy with the suggestion. Jane sees her job as one of keeping students motivated by suggesting books they may enjoy, which means that she needs a comprehensive knowledge about children’s books as well as an encyclopaedic knowledge of her children’s likes and interests.

Sometimes she’ll reward a student, who has been showing a developing interest in reading, by giving them time during class to go to the library, so that reading is seen as a high-value activity.

Demonstrating by modelling her own reading, getting children to share things that interest them from their own reading, and reading a class novel are all things that Jane thinks build interest in reading. She says that if children have enjoyed a book she has read to them, she makes a list of other books they might enjoy and should try. She tends to suggest authors who have more than one novel, so that children can move onto another of their books. Jane believes she is successful in her recommendations because students often take up these suggestions and seem to be enjoying what they’re reading.

Jane knows that it’s important for kids to see that silent reading time is not just a time for them to be quiet, but as a time that is really important: even if they’re not good readers, then it’s something they can work towards improving. Jane says that during silent reading she is always doing something: she uses the time to do something with the children, or for them. Occasionally, she will hear the children read, or may help a child with a maths problem from earlier in the day. At times, she gets them to finish off other work. She says that sometimes she will do some reading
while the children are reading. This surprises me a bit, as Jane has already talked about the importance of modelling. I have the feeling, again, that Jane may feel guilty about “just” sitting and reading.

Jane believes that students should be able to sustain their reading uninterrupted for a minimum of half an hour, even if they don’t enjoy reading. She uses silent reading because she feels it consolidates the things the children are learning, not just producing an output of spelling, language work and writing, but providing input as well. She feels that if you have children who are struggling with written work and not putting either influence or accent into their written voice, that they won’t get any better at this aspect of writing until they have some experience with the input side of things. Jane maintains that children gain most from the visual cues that they find in books; how paragraphs look, or how you use speech marks or a new line for a speaker. She points these things out to the children when they’re reading and she sees the outcome of this in the development of their writing skills.

Jane likes to discuss with students about where writers get their ideas from, and letting their imagination run free in their writing. She finds that reading helps children with characterisation and visualisation in their own writing. The class has talked about the difference between a book and the same story as a movie. When they watch the movie first, it’s hard to get the movie picture out of their heads; it’s been “spoilt”. However, when they read the book first and then see the movie, the kids are amazed by how differently they imagined the characters and the scenes. This kind of discussion helps children to understand where the ideas came from and how imagery is created. It has led them to talk about similes and metaphor. Another thing that the children notice from their participation in these types of activity is what the book had that the movie missed out, and how that affects the story. Jane feels that this type of discussion highlights how, when you read to yourself, you can just let your imagination build its own world.

Jane knows that some children simply don’t have time to read when they go home, and that maybe reading’s not promoted at home, but for whatever reason students are too busy with activities like violin, soccer, swimming, basketball, netball and everything else. They get home, have dinner and it’s time for bed. They’re too
tired for anything else, so she tries to cater for them to have time to be lost in a book and develop their imagination during the school day. She is quite convinced that this is a very productive thing to do.

Jane reads to the class because she likes being read to herself, and when she reads to them, it gives the class a chance to be able to sit back and completely enjoy a book and to visualise what’s happening, without the effort that some children find reading to be. It enables even the not-so-competent readers to gain enjoyment. She uses audio books, too, sometimes. She tends to pick books that are a bit challenging to read, and she likes being able to expose them to books that are different to those they would normally choose themselves. Giving children an understanding that you can’t “judge a book by its cover” is another of her motivations for reading certain books to the class. She’s made the mistake, with her own reading, of passing over a book before because she’s thought it would be boring and then realising when she’s eventually read it that she’s really enjoyed it. Sometimes the children have asked her to read them the class novel while they’re doing their artwork or while they’re inside eating their lunch, promising to be quiet. When that happens, she knows that she has chosen a good book.

She thinks there are many benefits from reading to children. Foremost is her conviction that they develop understanding, through learning to enjoy fiction. The book she is currently reading to the class has a mixture of humour, seriousness and adventure. It also covers the issue of stereotyping, which has lead to discussion with the class. She also feels that the auditory skill of listening, being able to tune in and pick out information, is something that we, as a society, don’t tend to be very good at; we’re very visual, not so audially-inclined, so listening to the reading of a good book really does help to encourage attentive listening.

The two books that Jane feels have been most successful, and which are her favourites to read to the class, have been based, more or less, on true life: the main characters are of mixed gender, and the storyline combines issues with action and adventure. The true-life feel to books makes them believable and draws the children into the story. The book she’s reading to them now explores issues of friendship, with the characters struggling through hardships as a group and supporting each other,
even though they don’t necessarily get on very well. Often issues of importance to children’s social and moral development are raised with subtlety by authors, within the context of a story. Jane believes that engagement with these types of texts raises children’s awareness of issues and provides many opportunities for classroom talk. This ultimately helps to develop children’s understanding and may help them to cope if faced with similar real-life situations.

Jane has had the class do spin-off activities from class novels, but thinks that it’s hard for the children who can’t visualise. Often they’ve had a class brainstorming session about issues that have come out of a book and activities will be based on those and she finds that by discussing these as a whole class, the activity helps children to recall the details of the book. She thinks the children enjoy these activities and that they help with the children’s development of understanding of books and of writing.

The children’s writing also improves because of the modelling that books provide. They model how sentences and paragraphs are put together and often, when she finds a particularly good paragraph or sentence, reads it aloud and gets children to visualise what the author has written. Then they talk about how the author is able to create the image that they have in their minds. She likes to discuss with them how four or five people can listen to a story and all get the same impression or image; how the author manages to get into all their heads and get the same effect from all of them, from one sentence or one paragraph. In that way, they all develop an understanding of how to create imagery and set the scene. She laughs and reminds me that the way you read a book too is very important.

When choosing books to read to the class Jane tries hard to find something with appeal for everyone and she finds that humour is a particularly good way to get some kids interested. If they can have a bit of a laugh in the first couple of pages, it tends to grab their attention. After reading one book in a series by Andy Griffiths and having the whole class howling in laughter, suddenly the next day the librarian told her that the whole series was gone from the library!
As an alternative to using humorous books, Jane uses books with really good action, and she finds this will often hook kids into a story. In her class last year, she read the first book in John Marsden’s *Tomorrow When the War Began* series. After that introduction to the series, the children could just not put them down – and these were children who would not read. She knows that all it took to get them to read the series was just hearing that first book. I share with Jane the story of my eldest daughter and of how this series was so influential in turning her into a reader. It’s funny, because neither Jane nor I could put down the series until we’d finished reading it ourselves.

As a child in primary school Jane remembers struggling to find authors that she liked and when she found one, she would read all that she could find that was written by that author, and then wonder what to read next. She has seen this happen with children in her class and she feels that this is when they are at risk of not bothering to look further. Getting kids hooked on an author or a good series helps them continue with their reading, but it’s very important to be able to give them some suggestion as to what they might enjoy reading next. This is where it’s vital that teachers have knowledge of what is available in children’s literature.

Jane says she needs to spend a lot of time talking to kids about how to pick a good book, because many kids don’t know how to do that. They need to read the blurb on the back, then read the front cover and then maybe read the first couple of pages, and if they’re still not sure, flick to the middle of the book and pick a couple of pages to read. If it still doesn’t grab them, then they should put it back. In this way, they end up with more success in picking a book they’ll like, and Jane says that she can see kids’ ability to choose improving over time.

Before I leave, Jane points out that her program works for her and that when it’s not working she changes it, adjusts it to fit the class or the circumstances. I thank Jane for her time and assistance and wish her well for her classroom move.

The next time I call in to administer the students’ questionnaires, Jane and her class are in a bright and colourful, brand, new classroom with not only books...
displayed in and on the bookshelves, but dioramas that the students have completed as part of a reading contract. They looked great.

4.3.2 Jane’s Class

This section details the results of some of the responses, given by the children in Jane’s class, to the *Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire* and illuminates the attitudes of the students to reading.

Of the thirteen students in Jane’s class who participated in the study by completing the questionnaire, six were boys and seven girls.

The children who agreed that they liked to read numbered eleven, with one boy and one girl each professing not to like reading. Nine of the thirteen students enjoy someone reading to them. Of the two children within the four classes who enjoy neither reading nor someone reading to them, one is a girl in Jane's class: Chloe. Eleven students from the sample of thirteen self-assess as “good” readers. One of the two children who don’t consider themselves to be good readers is Chloe. These results are expressed pictorially in the form of a Venn diagram in Figure 4.3.2-1.

Eight children were able to say that they thought Jane enjoyed reading, however five of the students were unsure whether she did or not.

Seven out of the eight children, to whom Jane had suggested a book to read, felt that they had enjoyed the recommended book.
Figure 4.3.2-1 Pictorial representation of the reading attitudes of students in Jane's class.

Legend

- Boy
- Girl
4.4 *An Introduction to Bronte*

Bronte is in her late fifties and teaches a co-educational grade 6 class of 30 students in one of the city’s Catholic primary schools.

Bronte has been teaching for thirty years, eleven of which have been in the upper primary area, and during her teaching career, she has taught classes ranging from Kindergarten to high school.

Qualifying as a teacher in New South Wales, Bronte holds a Tasmanian Teacher’s Certificate and is primary trained. She is a member of the Australian Literacy Educators’ Association (ALEA).

Twenty-four of the students in Bronte’s class participated in this study.

4.4.1 *My Conversation with Bronte*

I hurry to Bronte’s school, find a parking space in the car park and quickly devour an early lunch. There is some building maintenance going on at the school and I follow Bronte’s instructions and reach her classroom a little unsure of whether I’m in the correct place. I knock and enter. Students are queuing at Bronte’s desk and I go to speak to the university student Bronte has told me is in her class. We introduce ourselves. When the queue dissipates, Bronte notices I am there and welcomes me.

She organises the class so that they know who I am and the first group show me to a vacant classroom, where I set up the materials to administer the child questionnaires. I give the questionnaire to groups of five or six students at one time, with the last person from each group notifying the next group. All is going well until two boys complete the questionnaire and when I go to tick them off my list, they are boys whose forms were not returned! I explain to them that they did not have parental permission to participate, and that even though they were keen to participate and have given me their permission, I must destroy their forms.

When lunchtime comes, I go back to Bronte’s room to interview her, but first she needs to supervise the children eating lunch outside. After they finish eating, she sends them to clean up the yard, which is littered with papers, some of them blown in
from the street. We go back to the classroom and I thank Bronte for allowing me to interrupt her schedule.

In telling me about her personal reading, Bronte says she enjoys reading and that she prefers to read mysteries and that she reads heaps of them; that in the school holidays that is all she does. I laugh and she says again, laughing, that that is all she does.

She feels that the children would know that she likes reading, because she likes them all to have read a good book from cover to cover by the end of the year, which is something she thinks not all of them have done before they get to her class. She thinks that reading is essential for children and that unless children read and comprehend, they can’t even follow simple instructions or anything else, so being able to read is very important. At this point Bronte tells me that children need to have skills, particularly at the beginning to be able to decode words, to read on, go back and self-correct. Sometimes these skills need to be specifically taught, but for the lucky ones it just comes naturally.

Children’s enjoyment of reading is very important to Bronte and she likes children to be able to read within their own interests. She is excited about a new library development, which she considers will be the “hub” of the school, and should give children access to a wider range of books. She likes them to read a certain number of books within a variety of genres: picture books, information books, and novels. Children are able to select within their own level, but, with a grin, Bronte, tells me she has to keep her eye on a couple of the children who need help to make “appropriate” choices. I reflect on how amazing it is that facial expressions can add so much meaning to a conversation.

She has the children do little follow-up activities, nothing major that will make them resent reading, but just so that she can see that they’ve thought about what they’ve read. In planning these activities, Bronte finds it useful to consider Bloom’s Taxonomy and she gives the children a wide choice of things they can do. Because the children are able to elect what they do, she’s not making it an onerous task for them,
but instead providing them with an activity through which they are able to gain enjoyment.

Her main objectives are for children to read for enjoyment, and to have a look at the way people have written and try to adapt this to their own writing, to come away with one technique that they can use as a tool in their own writing. She is well aware of the influence of reading on writing.

Like Michael, Bronte feels that students have so much leisure time to fill. She is a mother of five, four of whom are readers. The one that isn’t a reader is the one who’s always bored. Her two boys have ADHD and she notices that the one who doesn’t read has more trouble coping than the other. Both Bronte’s sons are in the army, and they have just completed military service overseas. Her non-reader son came back home feeling really down and fed up with the whole world, while the other son came back okay. She feels strongly that this is because he read everything he could get his hands on and was able to take his mind away and then get on with life. She feels that, for most people, reading can have a big influence on the mind. I’m amazed by how Bronte has made this connection between her son’s reading and his ability to cope with a difficult mental situation.

This year most of the children seem to prefer books, but in past years, Bronte laughingly tells me she has accepted almost any form of literature to get them reading. She says that I might think that this sounds terrible, but I understand exactly what she means: once she has them at least reading something, she can lead them on to some good literature and develop in them an appreciation for quality reading materials.

Bronte feels strongly that she needs to be a role model by reading when students are reading: if the children know that she enjoys books, and see her reading, then she feels that her role modelling influences them positively. She doesn’t think there are many parents who read as role models and feels that the only time some children see an adult read is when they see their teacher reading.

She feels that sometimes children lack visualisation skills and puts that down to everything being done for them on computers and television. Giving children quiet time to read helps children to develop their powers of concentration. For active boys
especially, Bronte feels that having dedicated quiet time where all the children have to sit and read helps to break down the “reading is sissy” attitude that sometimes exists. By having silent reading time in class, the children do a lot of reading and there is no peer pressure put on students not to read. They all have to sit quietly, knuckle down and get on with their reading.

There is a child in Bronte’s class who has recently arrived in Australia and has limited English skills. While the other students read at their level, this child is given picture books to “read” and after silent reading, Bronte spends individual time with her hearing a recount of the story and they look together to find words that may be familiar to the child. She also has two special needs students in her class of thirty students.

Bronte has a strong belief that there are positive effects from reading to children, partly because of the modelling aspect. It helps children with book choices. They learn about looking at the book covers and blurbs, and that leads them into predicting who and what the story might be about – something this class hasn’t done much of previously. Bronte rolls her eyes wickedly!

She finds that she will quite often choose a novel to read because it fits in with a social issue and they do work around that issue that stems from the novel. They are currently reading *Sadako and the Thousand Cranes* and have recently read *My Hiroshima* because they’ve been studying a unit on Japan. The books have been a very powerful way of raising the moral issue of whether it was right to drop the atom bomb, and this has lead to a lot of very thoughtful discussion by the class.

Reading to students, although it’s not written down anywhere, is considered by Bronte to be school-wide policy; it’s very much a common practice within her school. She tells me that she normally reads to the children for at least ten minutes, but, depending on how exciting it is, she might go a bit longer. She laughs, and I suspect that she quite often reads “that little bit longer”.

If Bronte starts reading a book to the class and then feels the children are showing a lack of interest, she doesn’t continue to read it. Instead, she advises the
students that if they'd like to know what happens in the story, that they can borrow the book themselves from the library. It's better to get a book that they like.

Bronte, like Michael and Jane, sees the value in books that include humour and she enjoys reading these aloud to the students, saying that they're good for a laugh and that the kids love them.

When I ask why she reads to students who can read for themselves, she thinks that she does it for the sake of the children's enjoyment. She feels that from many stories you can get more enjoyment when you share the fantasy with other people. The children enjoy it, and it's relaxing. She also believes that the children get more variety in literature, which maybe they wouldn't get otherwise. In addition, she's aware that the weaker readers can just sit back and enjoy a story they couldn't read for themselves. When children hear stories being read, it puts a different feel to the story. When one person's interpretation of the story is very different to someone else's interpretation then that sometimes leads to a spontaneous discussion, and that must be good for the development of the children's communication skills.

Like Jane, Bronte thinks that comparisons between a book and the movie of the same story can create a lot of useful discussion, particularly when children begin to understand that they have been watching someone else's interpretation of the book. She relates the story of going to see the movie *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. She hadn't read the book to the class, but they had all read it and she found it really interesting to hear the great discussions between students, wondering why certain things were portrayed in the way that they were. It really got the children talking and she loved it, because it really showed her how much they had developed understanding, based on their connections to prior learning.

She varies what she read to include information books and picture books as well as novels, and, sometimes, the commercially produced "Big Books".

By third term, Bronte sees the benefits of her program. This is obvious to her in the school library, where children seriously look for authors and for things of interest to them. They are able to look at a book, decide it's not for them and put it back on the shelf, whereas early in the year they just grab any book, throw it in their bags and
bring it back the following week, not having read it. She feels it’s most important that
the students don’t just borrow a book from the library, put it in their bag, lug it
around for a week and then take it back to the library unread. I ask her if this is her
“theory of use”. She laughs loudly and says that it’s the theory of children and parents
thinking the child is reading, when all they’re doing is making their bag heavier every
day. I laugh and suggest that they’re just making work for a chiropractor later on. We
laugh together and she says that what is important is that they actually read the books
they take out.

She also sees the benefits of her reading program evidenced in the children’s
narrative writing, when children’s spelling and vocabulary improve and when they start
to use some really effective words in their own writing.

When I ask Bronte about whether she has a theory about reading or the
enjoyment of reading, she thinks that as long as she provides children with plenty of
variety and they get enjoyment out of reading that these will build their curiosity.
Again, she reiterates her belief in the importance of role modelling.

When I ask Bronte if she ever sets reading as homework, she says that she often
does. We both have a good laugh when I ask if they actually read what they are set as
homework and she says that she doesn’t think that they do. She laughs and reminds
me she said she’d be honest and I tell her it doesn’t help anyone if you’re not.

All the time I have been interviewing Bronte, her uni student, Michelle, has
been in the room. Bronte tells me that Michelle told her the other day that she has
learned to laugh during her time in the class, and I can well believe this. I’ve enjoyed
my conversation with Bronte. I thank her for her time, openness and honesty, and
leave to finish administering the student’s questionnaires. Then it’s a dash back to uni
in time for a lecture.

4.4.2 Bronte’s Class

This section details the results of some of the responses, given by the
children in Bronte’s class, to the Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire and
illuminates the attitudes of the students to reading.
Of the twenty-four students in Bronte’s class who participated in the study by completing the questionnaire, ten were boys and fourteen girls.

The children who agreed that they liked to read numbered twenty-three, with only one girl professing not to like reading. Thirteen of the twenty-four students enjoy someone reading to them. Twenty students from the sample of twenty-four self-assess as “good” readers, with one of the children who considered herself not to be a good reader being a newly arrived non-English speaking girl. These results are expressed pictorially in the form of a Venn diagram in Figure 4.4.2-1.

Twenty-two children were able to say that they thought Bronte enjoyed reading, with the remaining two students feeling unsure about whether she did or not.

Ten out of the twelve children to whom Bronte had suggested a book to read, felt that they had enjoyed the recommended book.

Figure 4.4.2-1 Pictorial representation of the reading attitudes of students in Bronte’s class.
4.5 An Introduction to Steve

Steve is aged in his late thirties. This is his second year teaching an all-boys grade 5/6 class of twenty-five students in one of city’s suburban schools.

A teacher for ten years, Steve has been teaching in upper primary classes for eight of those years, with his other experience being in grade 3/4.

Steve gained his Bachelor of Education in Tasmania, and is trained in primary education.

Steve’s wife is an early childhood teacher and Steve comes from what he calls “a reading house”. During weekends he enjoys reading the newspaper and he tries to get in some personal reading “every night or maybe every other night”. He takes pleasure in reading to his own young children every day.

Thirteen of the students in Steve’s class participated in this study.

4.5.1 My Conversation with Steve

The suburb has a pretty name defying its harsh reality. As a teenager, I moved to a house on the border between this suburb and its neighbour. We chose to use this suburb in our address. It’s not a choice you would make today. I remember how I rode my horse through the rolling paddocks, before this suburb and its tenants were dumped here, part of some social experiment of the 70s. Today the experiment is acknowledged as a failure. People aren’t boxed this way any more, but for these students, and their families, this is the actuality of their lives.

I park my car. School is in, but there are school-aged children wandering in the car park. I wonder why they’re not in school. I ask one of them the way to the office and he directs me. I am impressed by his politeness and the clarity of his directions. It wasn’t what I expected. I follow the path and find the door. Entering, I look around and head to where I see the office sign. Steve has told me I need to check in here first. The woman in the office tells me that I am to see the principal before meeting Steve, but she is not yet in her office, I’m just a little early.
The woman arranges for me to see the assistant to the principal and he meets me and takes me to his office. He forgets to introduce himself, but offers me a seat and then asks me about my research. What is my research question? I wasn’t expecting this. I have so many questions I am toying with, still trying to pin down the essence of what I want to know, but I don’t tell him that. I describe my topic, explaining that I have sent all the details of my research to the principal by e-mail. Steve has allowed me a window of time when he can talk to me and I am conscious that I am supposed to be in his classroom by now. The interview with the deputy is suddenly over and I am delivered to Steve’s classroom.

Steve is expecting me. He introduces himself, shakes my hand, and allocates me a stool to sit on near him in front of where the boys are sitting on the floor. He introduces me to the boys and explains my presence to them; asks them to recall having taken home forms to be filled in about reading. Some of them signal that they have remembered by smiling at me. Others look a bit blank, probably the ones who didn’t bring back the forms. I say hello. Steve has already checked off the forms as they have come back to him, he knows who is allowed to participate. He hands me the keys to his office and allocates me three boys from the list. The boys he chooses are not listed consecutively. He chooses in the same way a teacher does when allocating groups; he gives me three who will work together sensibly.

I set myself up in his office and group after group of boys settle in to talk to me. I go through the preliminary explanations with each group, asking if they would like to participate. Again, I am surprised by how keen children are to be involved in a survey. The boys are polite, respectful. At one stage, I leave the door open, while Steve reads a story to the boys. I do this as much to let the boys listen as to listen myself. He reads with expression, varying his pace and intonation with the needs of the story and the children appear to be engrossed. They are on the floor, some lying, and some sitting. Some are drawing and I am intrigued by this. I make a note to ask Steve about it later.

I finish my surveying just in time for recess. When I leave Steve’s office there is an older woman helping some of the boys who are working on a large mural that dominates the back wall of the classroom. It is still a work-in-progress and they seem
to enjoy working on it. One of the boys tells me that it depicts where they’ve been on camp. Another explains that the placement of the features is not quite accurate, but that they’ve fitted in all the important things. I agree with him, that is the important thing.

Steve takes me to the staffroom and leaves me there to get a drink. Someone asks me who I am today. It’s a funny expression. As if you can be someone else for a day, just because you’re relief teaching for them. We chat for a while, and at the end of recess, Steve comes back again to collect me.

He explains that he’s taking the boys out for some exercise; it’s something he says he does often during the day. He asks if I want to go with them. I do. His room has direct access to the outside and we go out onto an asphalt area. They play dodge ball and during the play, Steve chats to me about the class, about how he’s aware of the need for them to expend built up energy and work out tension and frustration through planned physical activity. He tells me how much he needs to work on developing their social skills, how hard he’s worked to bring them together as a group, how much work they are, how tired he is at the end of each day, how much he cares for these boys, how much he loves his job. He glances towards me occasionally, but watches the boys, and all the while, he is interspersing his chat with feedback to them. He speaks to them by name, individualising them, respecting them. He tells them when they’re playing well, and lets them know when they’re not. His approach is direct, but at the same time casual. The respect is mutual. I see it in the way they look to him.

The game finishes and we go inside. Steve says the boys are now due at the library and we deliver them there. It’s large, light and airy, and the many books are well displayed. The room is physically at the centre of this part of the school and has a thoroughfare running through it that the kids aren’t supposed to use. Steve points out a section of books specifically set aside with ‘his’ boys reading interests in mind. We continue on, back to the staff room where I will find out more about Steve.

He’s a keen reader himself, who, like Jane, reads the newspaper each weekend. He has two young children and tries to read to them at least once a day and to read
something for himself every night. His is a reading house. He hopes his enjoyment of reading shows in his program and he thinks it does. He believes the ability to read is vital, and that if you can’t read you’re stuffed: life’s a lot harder.

I ask about how much importance he places on skills development. He considers for a moment, and then he tells me that he probably spends half his time working with children on how to read, and how you need to read. The other half of his time is spent just reading to children, or helping them read and choose books.

When I ask about the importance he places on children’s enjoyment of reading he gives me a wry smile, laughs and says he’d like to say half, because of his previous answer, but that it’s probably more than that, because if kids don’t enjoy what they’re reading then they’re not going to read. He tries to read books to them that he enjoys and that he believes they’ll enjoy. He tries to make the whole experience enjoyable, knowing that this will help turn them on to reading.

He begins to tell me about his program objectives. He hopes that by the end of the year each child will have reached the highest level of which they are capable: they will be reading at level 26+. He hopes that they’ll be independent readers, who will be able to choose and read their own book. I’m surprised and intrigued by this. This is my fourth interview and no-one else has mentioned levelled readers. I wonder to myself about what this means in terms of my research.

The goal of getting children to a point where they become lifelong readers is important to Steve because he sees that goal as really important. Sometimes peoples’ lives can become very empty, he thinks. He feels that no-one is ever lonely if they have a book, because they have the characters, and the world in which they live, with them. It’s something he says he talks about often in class.

There is also the importance of the evolving nature of our world and the need to be able to access information. So, he has explained that there are many reasons for the way he operates his program.

To get kids interested and engaged in reading he likes to introduce good books to them when he comes across them and often talks to the kids about books he’s
reading, both for work and for enjoyment. He shares with them books that he reads to his children, in the hope that they might like to read them to others in their families, or maybe just to read for fun themselves. He does this because he thinks little kids’ books are often great fun. He reads to the students every day and twice when possible. He expects that students in his class will read, and he expects them to take responsibility for their reading, because he knows that taking responsibility is an important aspect of their development.

He schedules two reading times each day: one reading practice time in the morning and one reading enjoyment time in the afternoon. This is when children can choose to read books, the newspaper, magazines, comics or hop on the internet and read sports results. He finds that what works best with these boys is to have reading early in the morning. They know that if they are prepared to read well, give it all they have, then he’s going to reward them with some daily PE games. This is a different approach to how he’s run silent reading in the past and it’s designed to suit the needs of this particular class.

He feels it’s very important for the children to learn to sit and read with concentration. If the children do the wrong thing, they get a first warning about not being on task, and then if they still can’t read sensibly, they spend time back in the classroom at recess, showing Steve that they can do it well. It’s that important to him that they learn to do the right thing with reading.

During silent reading, the children will sometimes be reading with a friend or someone Steve’s assigned them to read with, or working with him or reading independently. He also reads himself during silent reading time, and he likes to read a range of books. He sometimes uses this time to read a picture book that he wants to share with the class later or a novel from home. Because many of these boys do not have regular reading models at home, he feels that it’s especially important for him to model reading behaviour to them.

He talks to the kids about being beginning, emergent or independent readers. They know what that means and they all know where they are in the scheme of things; they’re very honest about it and their abilities. He has some Reading Recovery levelled
reading material in the class and the kids of low reading ability read these books. They’re aware of which level they’ve reached. Each week Steve gives them a pack of about eight books at their own reading level and lets them choose from among these books.

The kids know Steve will do a running record on their reading during the week and they are very conscious of their movement up through the levels each few weeks. He feels that when kids reach level 26+ they will be independent readers. He knows that when they get to that level they will be able to choose a novel and read it, comprehending and understanding the story. Without the use of levelled texts, Steve feels that kids may be trying to read and having a disastrous time, which will ultimately turn them off reading. He expects them to work hard to read well during their practise time to develop and improve their reading skills.

Steve and the boys are very conscious of making progress and doing well. He feels that, for the moment, reading skill is more of a high priority for these guys than the enjoyment aspect of reading. He knows that the enjoyment will come when they can eventually choose their own books; books they will be able to read and understand. This seems to me, in some way, to contrast with what Steve said earlier about the importance he places on kids’ enjoyment of reading.

Unlike the other three teachers I’ve interviewed, Steve gets his class to keep a daily reading record. He asks the children to record the date, the type of book, whether it was a Reading Recovery levelled book, or what colour the dot was, the title and the page number they have reached. He finds that this helps them the next day to locate their place from the previous day’s reading. At the end of the week, they need to make a comment about how well they’ve read during the week. Steve uses this system to give the children feedback and acknowledge their efforts, because he knows that’s important for them.

Literacy and numeracy are the major foci at Steve’s school, so all the teachers have a big literacy block with a high expectation that students will be reading. He’s always had silent reading in his classes, because he’s sure that if kids don’t practise reading then they’re not going to be very good at it, like anything else that needs
practise. He picked up the idea for silent reading during his university school experience placements and he’s seen it done in a number of ways, both good and bad. He believes that the way he is doing it is the right way for these boys.

Silent reading time benefits these kids, because they don’t read at home. They go home to the Playstation or X-Box or Game Cube and don’t have anyone at home who can be a reading model for them. This is why he feels it’s so important to model reading, to talk to them about books, and let them have reading experiences that are meaningful in a variety of ways.

When I ask him about whether he’s ever had to justify the inclusion of silent reading in his program, Steve points out that most schools let teachers run their own programs, and that there’s lots of anecdotal and scientific evidence to show that when teachers are committed to their programs, that they work. Kids will pick up if teachers treat silent reading time as just a half an hour off in the day to catch up on planning or something. Moreover, if that happens, then they know that the teacher doesn’t care. Steve is the only one of the four teachers that I’ve interviewed who has mentioned research and theory, and he’s made a point of which I have been long convinced: that teacher commitment is something that is paramount to successful classroom practice, no matter what the subject.

We go on to discuss the commitment of the teacher and the effect that this has on students. Steve reminds me that it’s the role of the teacher to lead the group and that this is especially important with his boys’ class; they want him to lead them and to show them how to “be”. Therefore, this is once again emphasising the importance of providing a model for these boys.

It’s not school policy to read to the kids, and I ask Steve why he reads to students who can read for themselves. He thinks for a moment and says I’ve made a good point. He thinks they need to hear someone read; that he models things like expression, pause and drama with his voice. He also does it because he knows there are some great books that kids will really enjoy that they otherwise wouldn’t read or be able to read for themselves. Reading to the class also opens up opportunities for him
to talk with them about reading, and to show them that he enjoys reading himself. He likes them to see that reading aloud to someone is important.

He continues to emphasise the point that he would like the children to be able to share what they read with others and take their reading skills and love of reading from the classroom to the real world. Ideally, he likes to think that these boys, when grown, will read to their own children. That’s why he feels it’s important to show them that he reads to them, not because he has to, but because he wants to, and in that way it helps build his relationship with them. He says again, that I had asked him a good question, and he grins his shy grin. He obviously enjoys the challenge when someone asks a question that makes him think.

This issue of creating a positive relationship with the boys is brought home very powerfully when he tells me the story of when he read the class the story *Blue Back*, by Tim Winton, last year. He says it’s a fantastic book and that the guys really loved it. Steve tells me that one of them, a really rough-nut grade five boy, bought him a copy of the book. Then he admits that, in fact, the boy actually stole him the copy: a hard-backed version. He felt very strongly that this was pretty awesome stuff, and he tells me that it almost brought tears to his eyes, as it has done to mine, and I wipe away a tear from under the rim of my glasses.

When he reads to them, the boys sit or lie on the floor. They can have a drink with them, or chew gum, and they can draw if they want to. He doesn’t mind, just as long as they let him read, because he knows that there are some kids in his class who really want to hear the story. He thinks that most kids like having stories read to them.

I ask about the boys drawing while he reads to them. This is an idea he has only put into action in the last couple of weeks, one that was a suggestion from Ian Lillico, an expert in boys’ education from Western Australia who he’d heard talk at the uni recently. Steve thought at first that it might take the boys off task, but he says they do it beautifully. That’s another choice they can make for themselves, and the ability to make choices is important, he believes, for kids. Sometimes they draw what is happening in the book, and at other times, they draw something different. If there’s a map in a book he’s reading, then he’ll photocopy it and give them one, so they can
colour it and follow the story on the map. The theory is that the drawing activity connects to motor control and actually helps them to listen and concentrate. Again, I'm interested in the willingness Steve has expressed to follow up on theory, especially when he sees it benefiting his students.

Like Michael, Jane and Bronte, Steve mentions that humour has a part to play in getting kids interested in books. The first book he read to the class this year opens with a character being hit in the testicles by a surfboard. It really got the boys going. They loved it. In fact, Steve says that it is the most momentous book that he's read to them all year. Perhaps this is because it got them involved straight away, they could empathise with the experience and they laughed for days about it, wanting him to read more and more just in case it happened again.

That particular book was good, too, because it went on to open up many issues. Steve feels that it was like casting a fishing line and reeling the boys into the book, through the use of humour. He could really see the impact that it had on the boys’ interest in the book.

Steve often reads books to them that have been suggested by experts on boys’ education, like Jenni Connor and James Moloney. He says that kids know when books are junk and that reading some of them is just like a take-away meal: they have little value. If he’s struggling to read something and he sees the kids have lost interest; either their eyes change or they become distracted. Then he knows that the book isn’t working and he doesn’t continue reading. He likes to talk to the kids right then about how it’s fine, if you’re not enjoying a book, to choose to put it down. Because the enjoyment aspect is so important if they’re to keep reading.

He recommends books to the boys all the time, but thinks it’s important that he’s read the books and knows what he’s recommending and that the kids will cope with the books. He finds that having the part in the library with the section especially for boys is great, because they know they can go there and find a book they may enjoy and in that way they’re not wasting time looking for half an hour.

The benefit of his program is that the boys are reading, they’re reading at home and they’re actually engaging with reading as a worthwhile activity. When they do writing,
after reading, he finds that their writing is more cohesive and of better quality and he feels that this is because they read and then talk about what they've read. He doesn't believe that their spelling benefits from reading, which I find interesting because it goes against what my other participants have said. Once again he refers to research he has read on the topic that says reading and spelling aren't all that strongly connected.

Steve comments that some of his theories about reading have come from his wife who is an early childhood teacher. He says that he thinks that early childhood teachers often seem to have a better understanding than primary teachers of how people develop reading skills.

I thank Steve for the allowing me to disrupt his class and I tell him that I have gained some insight into the way his class works. He says that he knows I'll find out more about how classes work soon enough myself. I guess I will.

### 4.5.2 Steve’s Class

This section details the results of some of the responses, given by the children in Steve’s class, to the *Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire* and illuminates the attitudes of the students to reading.

Thirteen students in Steve’s all-boy class participated in the study by completing the questionnaire.

The children who agreed that they liked to read numbered twelve, with only one boy professing not to like reading. Eleven of the thirteen students enjoy someone reading to them. Eleven students from the sample of thirteen self-assess as “good” readers. These results are expressed pictorially in the form of a Venn diagram in Figure 4.5.2-1.

Every one of the thirteen boys was able to say that they thought Steve enjoyed reading.

Eight of the ten children to whom Steve had suggested a book to read, said that they had enjoyed reading the recommended book.
Figure 4.5.2-1 Pictorial representation of the reading attitudes of students in Steve’s class.
4.6 Summary

This chapter has presented an introduction to each of the participants and given a narrative account of the interaction between the interviewer and the participants. The narratives were followed by some statistical data on each of the teachers’ classes. The next chapter provides an analysis of the data derived from the *Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire*.
Chapter 5

5.0 QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

5.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter describes in detail the data collected through administration of the Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire (see Appendix G). Questionnaires were administered to sixty-eight grade five and grade six students in the four upper primary classes.

This chapter is divided into sections, each of which investigates the responses to one question from the Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire. Each question answered by the students provides insight into students’ attitudes towards reading and therefore, cumulatively provides an answer to Research Question Three: How do students respond to the reading programs implemented by teachers?

In this section, results from the Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire are based on students’ responses to a five-point Likert scale. A level of agreement was indicated by students as follows: strongly agree = 1; agree = 2; neither agree nor disagree = 3; disagree = 4; and strongly disagree = 5. Thus, a low score indicates strong agreement, and a high score indicates high-level disagreement with the given statement.

Where a chi square $P$-value is indicated, a significance level of $p < 0.01$ has been set (Burns, 2000). This level of significance means that for a result to be considered significant, the results could happen by chance less than once in one hundred times.

5.2 Do students like to read?

The results of the question: Do you like to read?, analysed by class teacher, are shown in Table 5.2-1. There is no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of students, which would indicate that no single teacher influenced students’ attitudes to any greater or lesser degree than any other. This was indicated by a chi square $P$-value of 0.5266. This result must be treated with caution, however, given the small number of responses in the negative categories (Burns, 2000).
5.3 Do students consider themselves to be ‘good’ readers?

The question: *Do you think you are a good reader* provided students with the choice of a positive or negative response only. A definition of “good” was not provided to the children, either on the questionnaire or verbally. The results are presented in Table 5.3-1. Fifty-six of the sixty-eight students (82.4%) self-assessed as ‘good’ readers.
Children were asked to provide a definition of what they considered a “good” reader to be, and fifty-nine students provided a response, with some answers falling into more than one category of definition. The short-answer responses indicated that seventeen children defined good readers as those who practice. Other answers provided by students were categorised as the ability to decode or spell (12), enjoyment (6), confidence/self-esteem (5), listening (5), comprehension (4), ability/speed (4), influence of family or teacher (3), and imagination (2). Other definitions included the possession of a good vocabulary, access to books, freedom to choose, patience, effort and inquisitiveness. However, the responses of eleven children indicated that they defined a “good” reader as someone who can read aloud well.

Although twice the number of boys as girls nominated themselves as not being “good” readers, there was no significant difference based on gender. The data on students’ self-assessed reading ability is displayed by gender in Table 5.3-2.

Table 5.3-2 Children who self-assess as ‘good’ readers, by student gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>‘Good’ readers</th>
<th>Not ‘good’ readers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Do students like someone reading to them?

The statement: *I really like it when someone reads to me*, was given in the questionnaire. Student responses, shown in Table 5.4-1, indicated a mean score of 2.912 over all responses. While an initial analysis, based on the mean score, may have indicated a degree of non-committal to the statement, the students’ responses were actually much more diverse, with a minimum score of one and a maximum of five.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.056</td>
<td>1.349</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.846</td>
<td>1.281</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronte</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.042</td>
<td>1.398</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.538</td>
<td>1.391</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.912</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.346</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis by gender of the students indicated a slightly more positive attitude toward being read to, by boys, however this difference, when analysed by unpaired means comparison, was statistically insignificant (chi squared $P$-value = 0.1554). Results are indicated in Table 5.4-2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.686</td>
<td>1.323</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.152</td>
<td>1.349</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.912</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.346</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the data from the children’s responses is displayed as a histogram (see Figure 5.4-1), it is evident that, while the positive response was larger, the number of children indicating a negative response to the statement was of a similar magnitude.
Students’ open-ended responses to the question of why they did, or did not, enjoy someone reading to them, indicated that eleven children who did not like being read to would simply prefer to read themselves. Other students gave reasons for this response. Four children preferred to read at their own speed because they felt this was quicker. Three children lacked comprehension when being read to and liked to read for themselves, because it gave them the opportunity of being able to go back over things they didn’t understand. Chloe, for example, pointed out that “you can miss out on parts that you would probably read again”. Five students felt that having someone read to them was either boring or annoying.

Figure 5.4-1 Attitudes of all students to the statement: I really like it when someone reads to me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5 Combining the previous responses

In order to provide a clear “snapshot” of the students’ attitudes towards reading, and having someone read to them, based on students’ self-assessment of their reading ability, a Venn diagram has been prepared (see Figure 5.5-1). A Venn diagram is a way of displaying relations between subsets of a universal set, with the universal set of all students represented by the interior area of the rectangle and subsets bounded by simple closed curves (Clapham, 1990). The results indicate student responses to the questions analysed in the preceding sections: 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4.

The Venn diagram indicates that the greater proportion of children self-assess as being good readers, who enjoy reading and enjoy having someone read to
them. However, the second largest group consists of those children who self-assess as good readers and who enjoy reading themselves, but do not enjoy having other people read to them. Only two children self-assessed as being good readers, and who enjoy someone else reading to them, while not enjoying reading themselves. As discussed in the previous chapter, only two children of the sixty-eight, provided a negative response to each of the three questions about reading ability, reading attitude and enjoyment of listening to someone else read to them. These two children are those represented inside the smaller unconnected circle in the Venn diagram in the following figure.

Figure 5.5-1 Pictorial representation of the reading attitudes of students in all classes.

5.6 How do students feel about reading for pleasure?

Students were asked the question: If you think about reading books for pleasure, how do you feel? A range of responses was available to students: really like it; quite like it; don’t like it much; don’t like it at all; don’t read books and can’t read. The students’ responses to these degrees of attitude were coded from one to six respectively.
Results, as shown in Table 5.6-1, indicated that students generally felt positive about reading for pleasure, with a mean score of 1.647 for all students indicating a mean response of between really like it and quite like it.

Table 5.6-1 Attitudes of all students to reading for pleasure, by class teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.722</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.846</td>
<td>0.987</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronte</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.500</td>
<td>0.590</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.615</td>
<td>0.650</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.647</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.748</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference in the response according to gender, as set out in Table 5.6-2, was not statistically significant.

Table 5.6-2 Attitudes of all students to reading for pleasure, by student gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.686</td>
<td>0.758</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.606</td>
<td>0.747</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.647</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.748</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A histogram of the data obtained from the students’ responses to the question, potentially gives a clearer indication of the positive attitude that students had to this question (see Figure 5.6-1).
5.7 Do students really enjoy silent reading?

Students were asked to respond to the statement *I really enjoy silent reading time.* Responses to this statement ranged from a minimum of one to a maximum of five, however students’ responses were generally positive, with an overall mean of 2.147. The children in Steve’s class and Bronte’s class were slightly more positive in their responses, with mean scores of 1.769 and 1.792 respectively (see Table 5.7-1).

Table 5.7-1 Attitudes of all students to silent reading, by class teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.500</td>
<td>1.249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.692</td>
<td>1.437</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronte</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.792</td>
<td>0.977</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.769</td>
<td>1.013</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.147</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.200</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student responses by gender are given in Table 5.7-2, with no significant difference between the attitudes expressed by gender.
Table 5.7-2 Attitudes of all students to silent reading, by student gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.029</td>
<td>1.175</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2.273</td>
<td>1.232</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2.147</td>
<td>1.200</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student responses are displayed in a histogram in Figure 5.7-1, showing the generally positive response of students to this statement.

Figure 5.7-1 Attitudes of all students to the statement: I really enjoy silent reading time.

5.8 Do students believe that their peers, who can read for themselves, enjoy having books read to them?

The statement: *Children who can read for themselves enjoy having books read to them* was given in the questionnaire. Student responses to this statement were generally positive, with a mean score of 2.433 over all responses, as indicated in Table 5.8-1. There were, however negative attitudes expressed towards the statement and Jane’s class was the only one that recorded no negative response to this question.

One child in Bronte’s class did not provide a response to this statement.
Table 5.8-1: Attitudes of all students to whether children who can read for themselves enjoy having books read to them, by class teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.611</td>
<td>0.698</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.462</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronte</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.435</td>
<td>1.121</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.154</td>
<td>1.068</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.433</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.941</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When set out by gender, there is little difference between the mean result of boys and girls. Results of an unpaired means comparison (chi square $P$-value = 0.9694) provided in Table 5.8-2, confirm that there was no statistically significant difference in attitude to the statement based on the gender of students.

Table 5.8-2: Attitudes of all students to whether children who can read for themselves enjoy having books read to them, by student gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.429</td>
<td>0.979</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2.438</td>
<td>0.914</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.433</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.941</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The histogram displayed at Figure 5.8-1, indicates the more central tendency of student responses to this statement.
Figure 5.8-1 Attitudes of all students to the statement: Children who can read for themselves enjoy having books read to them.

### 5.9 Do students believe that to be a good reader requires lots of practice?

The data obtained in response to the statement *To be a good reader you need lots of practice* indicated a mixed response from students. The students who expressed most agreement with the statement were from Steve’s class, with a mean score of 1.615. Michael’s class had a mean score of 2.000, Bronte’s 3.000 and Jane’s 3.154 (see Table 5.9-1).

Table 5.9-1 Attitudes of all students to the statement: To be a good reader you need lots of practice, by class teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.154</td>
<td>0.689</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronte</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>1.383</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.615</td>
<td>0.506</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.500</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.153</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When analysed using an unpaired means comparison by class teacher, a statistically significant difference was apparent. The data is displayed in Table 5.9-2, with statistically significant differences indicated by the addition of an asterisk (*) to the $P$-value column. The classes with the largest significant difference were Steve’s and Jane’s, with the probability of this difference happening as a matter of chance
being less than one in ten thousand. Other classes that are statistically significantly different are those of Michael and Jane (P-value = 0.0002), Bronte and Steve (P-value = 0.0014) and Michael and Bronte (P-value = 0.0087).

Results indicate that the responses of students in Jane’s and Bronte’s classes are most similar (Mean difference = -0.154; P-value = 0.7100). The next most closely aligned classes are Michael’s and Steve’s (Mean difference = 0.385; P-value = 0.1264). These results appear to suggest a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of students to whether students require a lot of practice to be a “good” reader, based on the gender of their teacher.

Table 5.9-2 Unpaired means comparison of attitudes of all students to the statement: To be a good reader you need lots of practice, by teacher pairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Pairs</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael, Jane</td>
<td>1.154</td>
<td>0.0002*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael, Bronte</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.0087*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael, Steve</td>
<td>0.385</td>
<td>0.1264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane, Bronte</td>
<td>-0.154</td>
<td>0.7100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane, Steve</td>
<td>1.538</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronte, Steve</td>
<td>1.385</td>
<td>0.0014*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When analysed by teacher gender, the student responses indicate a mean difference of 1.215, indicating that the difference is statistically significant (P-value = <0.0001). Table 5.9-3 shows the number of students, mean, variance and standard deviation, by teacher gender.

Table 5.9-3 Unpaired means comparison of attitudes of all students to the statement: To be a good reader you need lots of practice, by teacher gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Gender</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.054</td>
<td>1.386</td>
<td>1.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.839</td>
<td>0.473</td>
<td>0.688</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An analysis by student gender indicates the results are not statistically significant. Results of an unpaired means comparison by gender are shown in Table 5.9-4.

Table 5.9-4 Unpaired means comparison attitudes of all students to the statement: To be a good reader you need lots of practice, by student gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.400</td>
<td>1.193</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2.606</td>
<td>1.116</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>2.500</td>
<td>1.153</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data is presented as a histogram in Figure 5.9-1, and show that those children in agreement with the statement outnumber those in disagreement.

Figure 5.9-1 Attitudes of all students to the statement: To be a good reader you need lots of practice.

5.10 Do students believe reading assists learning?

The statement *Reading is good because you learn many different things* was given. The results are shown in Table 5.10-1, indicated by teacher. There is a strong positive attitude expressed by students towards this question with an overall mean score of 1.750. As indicated by the minimum score of one and maximum score of three, no child responded in the negative.
Table 5.10-1 Attitudes of all students to the statement: Reading is good because you learn many things, by class teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.833</td>
<td>0.786</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.923</td>
<td>0.641</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronte</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.625</td>
<td>0.495</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.692</td>
<td>0.855</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.750</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.677</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data were analysed using unpaired means comparison and a chi square P-value of 0.7905 indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the attitudes towards whether reading assisted learning that were based on the gender of the child (see Table 5.10-2).

Table 5.10-2 Attitudes of all students to the statement: Reading is good because you learn many things, by student gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.771</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.727</td>
<td>0.719</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.750</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.677</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largely positive response indicated by the data is displayed in a histogram at Figure 5.10-1.
5.11 Do students believe that reading improves students’ vocabularies?

The statement: *Reading helps me learn new words*, resulted in a low mean score of 1.706 over all students surveyed. This indicates a generally positive response irrespective of class (Table 5.11-1) with the students in Steve’s class providing the most agreement with this statement with the lowest mean score of 1.538.

Table 5.11-1 Attitudes of all students to the statement: Reading helps me learn new words, by class teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.833</td>
<td>0.514</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.769</td>
<td>0.599</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronte</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.667</td>
<td>0.868</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.538</td>
<td>0.877</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.706</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.734</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis by unpaired means comparison of the results of students’ responses, to the statement that reading improves vocabulary (chi square $P$-value = 0.5768), indicates no statistically significant difference in attitudes, based on the gender of the child. The results are given, by gender, in Table 5.11-2.
Chapter 5 – Questionnaire Results

Table 5.11-2 Attitudes of all students to the statement: Reading helps me learn new words, by student gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.657</td>
<td>0.873</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.758</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1.706</td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overwhelmingly positive nature of the students’ responses to this statement is indicated more clearly in the histogram shown in Figure 5.11-1.

Figure 5.11-1 Attitudes of all students to the statement: Reading helps me learn new words.

5.12 What prevents students from spending more time reading?

The question *What stops you from reading more?* established the types of activities that compete with reading for students’ free time. The students were allowed to nominate multiple reasons, and the data is displayed in Table 5.12-1 by number and percentage of students nominating any particular reason, by class teacher.

The reasons given on the questionnaire included homework, television, sport, computers, friends, not interested in reading and other, where children were allowed to nominate a reason of their choosing.

The reasons listed by students in the “Other” category included such things as helping parent/s or housework (*n* = 2), siblings (*n* = 2), and musical instruments.
(n = 2). Reasons that received one response each were: taking care of a pony, inability to find books liked by the child, going out, a busy schedule, forgetting to read, drama, a working parent, doing something else, not feeling like reading and family problems.

Table 5.12-1 Activities that prevent students from spending more time reading expressed as a percentage of students, by class teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Michael (n = 18)</th>
<th>Jane (n = 13)</th>
<th>Bronte (n = 24)</th>
<th>Steve (n = 18)</th>
<th>Total (n = 68)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>55.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reason</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.13 Summary

This chapter has provided the details of the data obtained from the Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire as analysed by the statistical analysis software program, Statview.

The next chapter provides a discussion of the data from this chapter and the previous chapter that provided the results of the interviews with the four participating teachers.
6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and interpret the data presented in chapters four and five. This chapter will also refer to issues raised in the literature reviewed in chapter two, and is divided into four sections so that each provides a summary of the key results for one of the research questions. This summary is followed by a detailed discussion and interpretation of the study’s research questions. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of this study, particularly those relating to the scope of the study and the resources that supported the project.

6.2 Research Question One

- What motivations and objectives do teachers have for implementing their reading programs?

This section summarises the key results of this study that derive from the semi-structured interviews with the four participating teachers. These findings are discussed and interpreted in the context of other empirical research, and the findings are used as the basis for determining what motivations and objectives teachers have for implementing their reading programs.

6.2.1 Key Results

The results from the semi-structured interviews with the teachers indicated that, as predicted in the hypothesis: Teachers who initiate reading programs that are designed to positively influence students’ attitudes toward reading, will themselves enjoy reading, and value reading as both a tool for learning and as an enjoyable recreational activity.

It became apparent from the interview data that all four teachers shared a love of reading and had, as one of their objectives for children, the desire to experience the joy to be derived from engaging with literature. Teachers had a firmly held belief in the absolute importance of their students becoming literate. They understood that when students cannot read, or have difficulty reading, the
future is grim. The teachers held this conviction in terms of students’ educational futures and, ultimately, their life futures.

There was a consciousness by each of the teachers in this study that some children are not in the fortunate position of having appropriate reading role models at home. Given the importance that they placed on students becoming literate citizens, they felt that the provision of a reading role model was one of the duties of being a teacher, albeit one they enjoyed. According to the teachers there were many, competing factors that minimised the amount of time during which students were free to read outside of school hours. The provision of in-class reading time, therefore, allowed students time to practise this skill, and the chance to engage thoroughly with a book. The teachers in this project expressed the view that when they could get children to engage with literature there was a higher probability that this would positively influence their attitude toward reading. This increased level of engagement, encouraged by the teachers, was understood by them to result in students reading to satisfy their own interests and, in doing so, students not only improved literacy skills like writing, but gained awareness about themselves and others, about the world and their place in it.

These teachers were aware of the difference that reading could make to students’ lives and, because they were serious about the importance of their profession, they wanted the best possible outcome for their students.

6.2.2 Discussion and Interpretation of Results

6.2.2.1 Teachers’ own love of reading

The teachers’ answers to the first question of the interview, which inquired about their own interest in reading, revealed that each of the teachers identified themselves as being keen readers. While Jane enjoyed novels, Bronte exposed her holiday-time addiction to mystery stories. The teachers’ reading interests, however, appeared not to be limited to reading fictional texts, but as suggested by Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) had extended to a variety of genres: Michael enjoyed biographies and educational computing texts, and both Jane and Steve read the newspaper during weekends. Jane’s reading for enjoyment also included magazines and “new literacies” (Watson, 1994, p. 2), such as internet texts.
Comments from two of the teachers referred directly to their own childhood experiences, which indicated a lifelong enjoyment of literature. Michael, for example, attributed his inherited love of reading to his father, whom he recalled “used to devour books” (Michael, Interview, May 8, 2002, p. 19). Michael remembered reading *The Coral Sea* during his childhood and, while he didn’t claim that he “had some sort of ‘happening’” (Interview, May 8, 2000, p. 19), reading that book gave him an understanding of his enjoyment of reading. It was perhaps coincidental that Michael used a phrase which included the word “happening”, however, it was the view of Rosenblatt that aesthetic, engaged reading was just that: “a way of happening” (as cited in Murphy, 1998).

Jane, too, related memories of her own childhood reading experiences:

I just remember when I was in primary school that I struggled to find authors that I liked. When I found one, I was so excited about having books to read, and then I’d get to the end of the book, or the series, and wonder what to read next. Sometimes I felt as though it was just easier to say I wouldn’t bother. (Interview, May 15, 2002, p. 24)

This type of experience appears to have had an influence on the way Jane interacts with children in her class and it has an affect on the way that she runs her reading program. This is apparent because in a comment she made earlier in the interview, she said:

Perhaps, if they really like a particular author, then I can suggest some more of their books that are held by the library. If it’s the style of writing or the content, then I’ll try to suggest something they might like. Sometimes, you can see that they need very structured guidance: you almost need to hold their hand and walk them to the library. At other times, you can give them a list and send them off to look for something. (Jane, Interview, May 15, 2002, p. 18)

It also appeared that each of the teachers had felt what Smith (1982a) and Cambourne (1988) had referred to as an “engagement” with texts. This engagement was apparent in some of the comments by the teachers. Steve, for example mentioned that he tries to instil in his students the awareness that “you’re never lonely if you have a book beside you; you have the characters and their world with you” (Steve, Interview, May 28, 2000, p. 2). It would seem from Steve’s comment that in order to gain this impression, he must have experienced an
‘engagement’ with texts. Indeed, during the course of my conversation with Steve, he recounted his apparently remote isolation in teaching appointments that were ‘far from the madding crowd’, and yet he never experienced loneliness because of his stock of literature.

Some of the teachers made comments that indicated a personal understanding of Nell’s (1988) awareness of readers being ‘taken out of themselves’ (see section 2.3.2). Michael, for example, commented that when children enjoyed reading, they could “be off wherever it might be – in outer space or in France or wherever” (Interview, May 8, 2002, p. 4).

These examples indicate that the teachers’ personal attitude toward reading was a strong, motivating factor in the planning and implementation of their reading program. The data indicated that all four teachers are not only keen readers themselves, but have, as an objective of their teaching, that their students will develop into keen readers, highly self motivated readers and lifelong readers, which is one of the most significant of the benefits that Seow (1999, see section 2.4.2) attributes to silent reading programs.

6.2.2.2 An understanding of the importance of being literate

The value of being, what Smith (1988) has termed, a “member of the literacy club” was obvious to teachers in the study. There was a clear recognition by each of them that difficulty will confront children if they are unable to read well and, as suggested by McCabe and Margolis (2001, see section 2.2.3), that children will seldom become fully engaged in reading until they develop a positive conception of themselves as effective readers.

Steve considered that being able to read was vital for students and that life would be more difficult for students who are unable to gain the necessary skills. Although Bronte considered that being able to read was essential for children, she related this achievement as being primarily due to children developing comprehension and understanding:
If children are unable to read, they find it hard to do anything. If they cannot read and comprehend, they will be unable to understand even simple instructions. Their ability to gain understanding is just so important. (Interview, May 22, 2002, p. 2)

The relationship between children’s love of reading and the gaining of the ability to read were aspects that Michael linked:

Without a love of reading, and without success in reading, children really are limited in what they can do. The job of turning them on to reading is what I see as particularly important, particularly with reluctant readers and boys. A lot of work has to be done to help them, and I consider it such an important aspect of what I do. (Interview, May 8, 2002, p. 3)

Jane shared with the other teachers the view that children will have trouble succeeding in life without literacy skills. She recognised that modern society is highly orientated toward the visual, and she was convinced that society’s reliance on the ability to read to gain understanding made it vital for children to develop a high level of reading ability.

As Rowe’s (as cited in Rowe, 2000, see section 2.3.1) research shows, literacy is the foundation upon which other competencies are built. Each of the teachers in the present study had a fully developed but pragmatic understanding of this, and had, as an objective of their reading programs, the improvement in the life chances for success of their students.

6.2.2.3 The need for appropriate reading role models

The need for students to have appropriate reading role models, an idea supported by Bandura (1977), Perez (1986), Wheldall and Entwistle (1988), was something that each teacher mentioned spontaneously. The importance of modelling was repeatedly emphasised by all four teachers, who were each concerned because they believed that many parents do not provide a reading role model for their children. Bronte, for example, noted that she thought, “There are a lot of children whose parents don’t read these days, and so these children don’t have role models. I think the only place they’re going to find a role model is in a teacher” (Interview, May 22, 2002, p. 7). Indeed, it was a view expressed by each of the teachers, that it was part of the duty of teachers to provide an appropriate role
model for their students; that modelling of reading behaviour was something that is very important in improving students’ reading attitudes.

The data, however, showed that, Bronte was the only teacher who admitted to spending silent reading time by always reading silently herself. Indeed the expressed understanding of the importance of modelling, mentioned above, was actually being compromised to some extent by the classroom practice of the other teachers. Although Michael and Steve indicated that during silent reading time they usually did read silently themselves, at other times they might choose to hear individual students read, or confer with individuals, or groups of children about their reading. In Jane’s silent reading time, she seemed frequently to be occupied by other tasks. For example, she indicated that she might sometimes withdraw a child to help him with, for example, a maths problem from earlier in the day, or have students complete other work during allocated reading time. The teachers were not asked why they behaved in this manner, but perhaps it could be related to the lack of another suitable time to perform the tasks they choose to undertake during this time. A comment by Michael would appear to indicate that he felt it was important to respond to his students’ enthusiastic engagement with their reading and their wish to share with him. This could be seen as a positive engagement with his students.

One further response by Jane may help, perhaps, to shed light on another possible reason for teachers’ actions. Jane said that during silent reading time she is “never doing nothing. I’m doing something with them or for them in that time” (Jane, Interview, May 15, 2002, p. 7). Earlier in the interview when asked about her personal reading, Jane mentioned that while she really enjoys reading, “other things seem more important than just me, selfish me, reading for me time” (Jane, Interview, May 15, 2002, p. 1). When viewed together, these two statements by Jane appear to communicate what could be described as a sense of guilt. Although, at a theoretical level, Jane understands the importance of modelling reading behaviour, when faced with the actual prospect of sitting and reading in front of the class, she may believe that she is “doing nothing” (Jane, Interview, May 15, 2002, p. 7). Rosenblatt (1983), however, explains that readers are certainly not just sitting doing nothing, and that “the experience of [engaging with] literature, far
from being for the reader a passive process of absorption, is a form of intense personal activity” (p. v). In the views of Perez (1986), Wheldall and Entwistle (1988), by modelling silently reading in front of the class, teachers are providing an element that is crucial to the success of silent reading programs.

6.2.2.4 Provision of time to practise

One of the reasons given by Sadoski (1980), Berglund and Johns (1983) for the implementation of silent reading programs was the provision of time during school hours for students to practise their reading skills. All four teachers in this study fully supported the need for students to practise their developing reading skills and saw that as one of the primary reasons for the inclusion within their reading programs of silent reading time. Steve said, for example, supported the view of Sadoski (1980), Berglund and Johns (1983): “If they don’t practise, then they’re not going to be very good at reading, like anything else” (Interview, May 28, 2002, p. 5). All four teachers scheduled regular silent reading sessions where students were able to read self-selected material. Unlike Michael, Jane and Bronte, however, Steve made a clear distinction in his daily reading program between “reading practise time … and reading enjoyment time” (Steve, Interview, May 28, 2002, p. 4) by providing two daily reading sessions: one for practise and one for enjoyment.

Each of these teachers recognised the potential of reading to relieve boredom by “filling” children’s free time, but also to make it an enjoyable and educationally beneficial time for students. There were two differing views expressed by teachers when it came to the question of children’s availability of reading time outside of school hours. Michael, Bronte and Steve maintained that children have a lot of free time outside of school. Indeed, all three teachers mentioned the considerable amount of time spent by children in watching television and videos, and playing computer games.

Jane, however, recognised that, possibly because of their rather different social status, many students in her class had after-school commitments such as violin, soccer, swimming, basketball and netball. These competing factors, according to Pilgreen (2000, see section 2.4.2), act together to minimise the amount
of time available to students for reading outside of school hours, and therefore increase the importance of providing students with time for reading in class.

### 6.2.2.5 Interest and enjoyment as motivating factors

There appeared to be an experience-based understanding by the teachers of the role of enjoyment as a motivating factor in encouraging children to read. Like Csikszentmihalyi (1990, see section 2.3.2) and Nell (1988, see section 2.3.2) the teachers understood that children feel enjoyment once they have fully engaged with literature. They believed from experience, that this enjoyment had the capacity to lead to an increased interest in reading.

These explanations of teachers’ understandings indicated that they had an abstract awareness of the existence of a model of attitude acquisition. The descriptions by teachers of their classroom practices appeared to indicate that they included many of the aspects of McKenna’s (1994) Proposed Model of Reading Attitude Acquisition, although there was no mention by the teachers of any particular theory of attitude influence. The conceptual understanding, that the power of enjoyment was the single greatest motivator of children’s engagement with literature, did appear to underpin the teachers’ reading programs.

The teachers stressed the fact that reading programs that engaged with children’s own interests were highly important in establishing and maintaining children’s interest in reading. Readers’ interests were found to be vital to the success of silent reading programs by Pilgreen (2000, see section 2.4.2) and readers will remember that Jane related her understanding of this notion in her anecdote about her student’s love of ferrets and his newly developed interest in reading on this topic.

Bronte also commented on the importance of allowing children to read magazines, which was seen by Wilson (2002) as providing an authentic purpose for students’ reading. Bronte recognised any form of literature as acceptable, particularly as a beginning measure, if it increased children’s interest in reading. Michael, too, felt that if children are at least interested in opening a magazine or a book and looking through it, then he considered that this was an indication of the possibility of them deciding to read. Both teachers considered, as did Saxby (1997,
see sections 2.2, 2.3, 2.4), that once they had children interested in reading, that they could then help them to develop an appreciation of quality children’s literature.

Michael made a connection between his own attitude towards children’s reading material choices and the considerable length of his teaching experience. He suggested that teachers who do not allow children to read magazines have not yet “learnt the trade” (Interview, May 8, 2002, p. 7). Michael felt that the children of low reading ability in his class have coped well with silent reading, and he directly attributed their success to the freedom they had to choose to read what they were interested in reading.

A comment made by Jane supported Brown’s (1980) notion that “attitudes, opinions, prejudices [and] fears of failure” (p. 13 see section 2.2.1) played an important part in determining whether children will continue reading. She said that sometimes teachers were “fighting against past experiences with students; not necessarily that they just don’t like reading, but something has happened to them that’s made it a really bad thing (Interview, May 15, 2002, p. 2). Jane held a strong conviction that this problem was one that was school-based.

Steve suggested that if children do not enjoy what they are reading they will not choose to read. However, a later comment he made appeared to contradict that view. When discussing children of low reading ability, Steve said,

For those guys, we’re very conscious about making progress, so the enjoyment’s not as high a priority as is the improvement, knowing that the enjoyment will come when they can finally be choosing their own books and understanding what they read. (Interview, May 28, 2002, p. 6)

This seems to reflect the greater emphasis on a skills-based approach taken by Steve, which may be symptomatic of his awareness of the low level of reading ability of some of his students when they arrived in his class at the beginning of the year. As mentioned in the vignettes, Steve was the only teacher to bring up the topic of levelled readers for children of low ability. Calkins (2001, see section 2.5) agreed with Steve’s view that children suffer from frustration if they struggle to
make sense of their reading. His provision of levelled texts attempted to alleviate this frustration and have students gain self-efficacy through gains in achievement.

One aspect of children’s enjoyment that was agreed by all four teachers was the use of humour in reading materials. Readers will recall Steve’s recount of the incident with the surfboard that his students so thoroughly enjoyed and the desire they had for him to continue reading based on their emotional engagement with the character involved.

The influence of gender on children’s reading attitudes was one raised with teachers, and it was an issue, as suggested by Buckingham (1999, see section 2.2.3) where there was no real consensus of views. To explore this issue to any extent was beyond the scope of this study, however, the teachers’ views on the matter were as follows.

Michael felt that “boys are just not turned on to reading” (Interview, May 8, 2002, p. 17), and that this could be “because it’s not seen as being cool to read” (Interview, May 8, 2002, p. 18). He also believes that boys “prefer to be out playing, doing things. They haven’t developed that fascination with their own imagination … that seems to be inherent in girls” (Interview, May 8, 2002, p. 18). Michael was enthusiastic, however, about the increase in the number of books and series aimed at tackling the lack of interest in reading by boys: “You’ve only got to look at what the publishers are providing now, the books that are coming out for reluctant readers, for boys. It’s quite incredible” (Interview, May 8, 2002, p. 18).

Bronte agreed with Michael’s view that boys appeared to need to be more active and were less likely to want to remain still long enough to read long novels. She suggested that they prefer books that are “short and quick and where they get more of an instant gratification” (Interview, May 22, 2002, p. 22). Bronte, like Michael, believed that it was important to provide boys with books that catch their interest. She believed it was then a matter of working on their belief in their reading self-efficacy (see McCabe and Margolis, 2001, see section 2.2.3). It is a matter of “lots and lots of encouragement. They need lots of encouragement. They need to be told all the time they’ve made a really good effort” (Bronte, Interview, May 22, 2002, p. 22).
When asked about whether he had noticed a gender difference in attitudes towards reading, Steve replied that:

I’d probably say yes, but if I thought about it, no. There are boys in the class who really enjoy reading, just because they do, not because they’re a boy, just because they really enjoy it. And there are girls you see who really enjoy [reading] and girls who don’t for whatever reason, so no. (Interview, May 28, 2002, p. 13)

Although Jane was aware of reluctance by boys to read, she, too, speculated about whether it was actually just boys who were reluctant readers, or whether their reluctance was simply more obvious:

It’s been the boys who I’ve been aware of that are not keen to read. I’m wondering if maybe because boys are more vocal in saying they don’t want to read, and girls maybe seeming a little bit more compliant, that [girls] just [read], and they don’t particularly enjoy it. Maybe, had I delved a bit further, I’d have found that [girls] weren’t really that keen either. I’m just speculating, but I don’t think it’s just been boys in the past that have been unhappy about reading. (Interview, May 15, 2002, p. 29)

Michael, Jane and Bronte all relied heavily on an approach that seemed based on whole language philosophy, with skills being taught more implicitly than explicitly and a considerable reliance on either their own children’s literature collections or books borrowed from the library as the basis of their most significant reading material.

6.2.2.6 Language and literacy learning

There was recognition by all teachers in the study that reading is directly responsible for a development in students’ understanding of language and of life, and this was both a motivating factor and objective in the implementation of their reading programs. A further discussion on this aspect of the teachers’ motivations is to be found in the section on language and literacy benefits (see section 6.3).

6.3 Research Question Two

- What benefits do teachers attribute to the successful implementation of their reading programs?
This section summarises the key results of this study that are derived from the semi-structured interviews with the four participating teachers. In the context of other empirical research, these results are discussed and interpreted, and are used as the basis for determining what benefits teachers attribute to the successful implementation of their reading programs.

### 6.3.1 Key Results

The key results of the teacher interviews indicate that the benefits that teachers attribute to the successful implementation of their reading programs include improved outcomes in many aspects of the students’ language and literacy development. Teachers also attribute the increase in students’ reading interests, their wider reading and an increase in the number of books read by students to the implementation of their reading programs. Other benefits mentioned by teachers were an increase in students’ self-esteem through a developing reading self-efficacy, the ability to empathise and understand beyond the students’ lived experiences and a development by students of the ability to both lose and find themselves through engaging with books.

### 6.3.2 Discussion and Interpretation of Results

#### 6.3.2.1 Language and literacy benefits

Writing improvement was one of the literacy benefits to children most frequently cited by the four teachers in this study in relation to their reading programs, and one in which they saw significant gains in student learning. This supports the findings of much of the literature (see for example Fields & Spangler, 1995; Wilson, 2002, section 2.3.1). Other benefits noted by the teachers related to children’s understanding of key literacy concepts.

Bronte, in fact, gave as one of the main objectives of her reading program: “for children to read for enjoyment and to look at the way authors have written. I like them to try to adapt what they learn from reading into a tool for their own writing, to try and use some of the techniques, and perhaps come away with one technique that they think worked” (Interview, May 22, 2002, p. 4).

Maggart and Zintz (1992) believe that descriptive language in children’s literature provides a wonderful source of imagery for children, and Bronte has
found that this leads to children’s use of some effective words in their narrative writing. Both Bronte and Jane mentioned the importance they placed on students developing reading comprehension, a view supported by the literature (see section 2.4.1).

Michael, Jane and Bronte all believed that reading contributed to the spelling skill development of their students. This view is supported by Farris (1993) and Goodman (1986) (see section 2.3.1). Michael emphasised the importance that he placed on enjoyment as a motivating factor in reading instruction, but also in developing literacy skills: “Clearly, they get enjoyment from their reading as they get better at it, and then their writing improves, and their spelling improves” (Interview, May 8, 2002, p. 3).

Jane believed that by reading a large volume of text, students improve in the development of their spelling and grammar because of the examples students are confronted with during the reading process. This is consistent with the view expressed by Farris (1993, see section 2.3.1).

Bronte found that providing a supportive classroom environment and utilising class discussion allowed for the development of children’s awareness of key literacy concepts. Supporting a view by Killen (1998) and Dixon (2000) (see section 2.4.3), Bronte has found that during spontaneous discussion after she has read aloud to the class, “sometimes one child’s interpretation of a story will be totally different to another child’s interpretation” (Interview, May 22, 2002, p. 12) and this has brought about further discussion about how this has occurred.

Michael, Jane and Bronte all mentioned using books in their language programs that had an associated video movie. Bronte found that this brings about children’s realisation that a movie is “someone’s interpretation of the book, it’s not word for word. It leads into an awful lot of discussion, with children wondering why things were portrayed in a certain way” (Interview, May 22, 2002, p. 13). This raises children’s awareness and contributes to the shared knowledge of the class as Killen (1998) and Dixon (2000) have suggested (see section 2.4.3).
6.3.2.2 Increased and wider reading by students

While the constraints of this study did not allow for the quantification of the number of books read by students, all teachers involved in the study indicated that, they believed that as a direct result of the reading programs they implement in their classrooms, students are reading more books, both in volume and variety. This anecdotal evidence is supported by studies included in the meta-study of silent reading programs by Pilgreen (2000) and other studies (see for examples, section 2.4.2).

Bronte found that by providing silent reading time, eliminated negative peer pressure (see McKenna, section 2.2.1 on the influence of peers on attitude) and allowed children the opportunity to read more books:

Many children in my class, particularly my very active boys, really benefit from being made to sit down and read. They’re not looking at anybody to influence them, or be influenced. They have to knuckle down and a lot of them need that. It’s not the “done thing” to be seen to be reading. We completely remove the negative peer influence from the classroom and everybody reads. They get on with it, they get a lot of reading done, and that’s good. (Interview, May 22, 2002, p. 10)

However, later in the interview, Bronte mentioned the positive influence that students sometimes have on each other’s reading, by talking about books they have enjoyed. She has noticed that on occasions children ask if they can be the next to read one of these peer-reviewed books.

All teachers also mentioned that they either read the beginning pages of a story or read excerpts of stories to children with the intention of encourage students to pick up and read the particular book. This action by the teachers is one that has seen an increase in the variety of books that children have read, in accordance with the literature (see for example, section 2.4).

Bronte found that by reading to children she gave them enjoyment and that the weaker readers, as suggested by Rubin (2000, see section 2.4.1), gained the most from being able to listen to books that they would otherwise be unable to enjoy. Bronte also found that after she had read a novel aloud to the class that sometimes students, usually of lower ability, would read the book themselves. She wasn’t sure
whether this was because of the familiarity they felt with the text and that that enabled them to read it more easily or because they had enjoyed the novel and wanted to experience it again.

6.3.2.3 Improvement in students' self-esteem and self-efficacy

Michael saw the development of children’s self-esteem as “the greatest benefit” (Interview, May 8, 2002, p. 8) of the inclusion of silent reading within his reading program. He saw his targeting of children, who are reluctant readers, to work with either himself or the school’s resource person, as helping in this regard. Through providing children with time to read and by helping them to develop their reading skills one-to-one with a “knowledgeable other” (Campbell, 2000), he saw children develop not only their reading skills and reading self-efficacy, but also their self-esteem:

I see the development in a child, who’s been struggling with their reading, and the smile that comes on their face when they come to tell me they’ve completed a page, or a book. That’s my motivation for having silent reading. (Michael, Interview, May 8, 2002, p. 8-9)

6.3.2.4 Ability to empathise and understand beyond lived experience

As suggested by Wragg et al. (1998, see section 2.4.1) some of the teachers included certain literature in their reading programs that tied into a unit theme and enhanced children’s understanding of situations beyond their lived experience. Bronte’s account of her unit on Japan, gave an insight into teachers’ use of literature to develop understanding and awareness of issues that go beyond children’s life experiences. Saxby (1997) pointed out that at the Piagetian ‘concrete operations’ stage children are developing more of an appreciation of the points of views of others and that this developing awareness can be stimulated by the use of books. Bronte had raised with her class “the moral issue of whether it was right to drop the atom bomb” (Interview, May 22, 2002, p. 11) through their engagement with literature. She found that the children developed empathy for the characters in the two books studied and that some very valuable discussion occurred in her classroom as a direct result of children’s exposure to and engagement with literature.
6.3.2.5  Ability to engage with a book and find escape

Like Nell (1988, see section 2.3.2), Michael and Bronte saw the power of reading to provide an effective way of escaping situations. Michael would spontaneously have the children get out their books and read. He wanted them to understand that “in their own lives, if they’re being really hassled by someone at home or things aren’t going well, they can just stop, go to their room, pick up a book and be away somewhere else” (Interview, May 8, 2002, p. 10). Bronte told the story of her two sons and the way she attributed to reading one son’s ability to cope mentally with the trauma of overseas military service: “He came back having coped well, because he read everything he could get his hands on: he was able to read and get on with life” (Bronte, Interview, May 22, 2002, p. 4). Although not directly related to Bronte’s classroom experience, this gives an indication of the strength of Bronte’s commitment to and understanding of the affective domain of reading.

6.4  Research Question Three

• How do students respond to the reading programs implemented by teachers?

This section summarises the key results of this study that are derived from the questionnaires administered to the 68 participating students. The previous two sections discussed the motivations and objectives that teachers had for the implementation of their reading programs, and the benefits they attributed to the successful implementation of their reading programs. In the light of these previous discussions and interpretations, this section examines the students’ attitudes and opinions and makes comparisons with teachers’ beliefs and the literature.

6.4.1  Key Results

Overall, students’ responses to questions relating to their enjoyment of reading, self-assessment of their own reading ability, and opinions on components of teachers reading programs were positive.

An overwhelming proportion of children enjoyed reading for pleasure, with a majority enjoying silent reading time provided by teachers. The number of students who enjoyed their teacher reading to them, while in the majority, was less obviously
so. Students did, however, perceive that their peers derived enjoyment from their teacher reading to them.

The question of whether achieving the status of “good” reader required practice gained a mixed response, which was statistically significant by teacher gender. There was, however, strong agreement from the students that reading assists learning and increases their vocabularies. A variety of outside school hours activities were recorded as impinging upon students’ reading opportunities after school hours.

The findings as summarised in this section are discussed and interpreted, where appropriate, in the following section.

6.4.2 Discussion and Interpretation of Results

6.4.2.1 Students enjoyment of reading

It is important to begin this section with the knowledge that of the sixty-eight students participating in the study, given a forced choice response to the question of whether or not they liked reading, 89.7% stated that they did enjoy reading. While teachers were not asked to nominate the number of children who liked reading within their classes, they did feel that most children enjoyed reading, although they were aware that some children had low reading ability and some were reluctant readers. This figure of 89.7% compares favourably with a figure of 86% of primary school students aged ten years or older that to some degree like reading, which was obtained during the Young Australians Reading Survey (Woolcott Research, 2001).

6.4.2.2 Students’ self-assessment of ability

There was no provision made for the assessment of students’ reading ability as part of this research, as the focus was on the reading self-efficacy of the students.

Students were asked, in a forced choice response question, whether they considered themselves good readers. The students were not given a definition of “good” but were asked to provide their own definition of a good reader. Eighty-two percent (n = 56) of students considered themselves to be good readers. From
this figure, it could be assumed that most children in these classes have a positive reading self-efficaciousness.

The most frequently suggested definitions of a “good” reader, suggested by the students, indicated that children believe good readers are readers who practise, who are able to decode or spell and who enjoy reading. Much of the literature would support the children’s views.

6.4.2.3 Students’ opinions of teacher read-alouds

While all teachers considered that children generally enjoyed having stories read to them, the students gave a mixed response to the statement: I really like it when someone reads to me. These possible reasons for this result are discussed further in the following section (6.4.2.4).

6.4.2.4 Students’ combined responses

The data in the previous chapter indicated that all teachers felt that most students, once they have developed a reasonable reading comprehension and ability, do enjoy reading. They were aware, however, that a small proportion of students remain unresponsive to literature through their own reading efforts. From the data (see section 5.4), it can be determined that the majority of students (n = 35; 51.5%) surveyed enjoyed reading, self-assessed as good readers and enjoyed being read to by their teachers.

However, of the fifty-four students who enjoyed reading and self-assessed as good readers, over one-third (n = 19, 35.2%) claimed not to like someone reading to them. This phenomenon was suggested in the literature by Rubin (2000, see section 2.4.1) who proposes that readers of more advanced ability prefer to read at their own rate rather than being constrained by the teacher’s pace. This view of Rubin’s was supported by some of the students’ responses to the question that asked students’ reasons for their enjoyment, or lack of enjoyment, of having their teacher read to them.

Short-answer responses by the children would suggest that these self-efficacious, keen readers prefer to read books of their own choosing at their own pace. All teachers mentioned the need to cater for a wide range of tastes in their
reading aloud programs and it would seem that it is difficult to meet the needs of diverse groups of students. Steve did mention that his class, being a single-gendered class, was more easily catered for than mixed gendered classes he has taught. This finding has implications for teaching practice.

6.4.2.5 Students’ opinions on reading for pleasure

The mean response of 1.647 to the question: *If you think about reading books for pleasure, how do you feel?* indicated a high level of student commitment to reading for pleasure, which was supported by the teachers perceptions.

6.4.2.6 Students’ enjoyment of silent reading

Although the mean response of 2.147 would indicate that students were generally positive toward the statement: *I really enjoy silent reading time*, there were dissenters amongst the students. Steve’s and Bronte’s students gave more positive responses than the students in the other two classes. The only hypothesis able to be offered to account for this difference is that the classroom rules under which the teachers operated their programs may have influenced the response. It was noted by Bronte that she always modelled silent reading and insisted on absolute quiet during reading time, and by Steve that he made a point of having students return to the class to read during recess if this condition of his program was not met. Perhaps, then, this result may relate to how strictly individual teachers enforce the rules of their programs.

6.4.2.7 Students’ opinions on peers impressions of teacher read-alouds

The results of students’ responses to the statement: *Children who can read for themselves, enjoy having books read to them?* would indicate that students gave a more positive response regarding their peers enjoyment of listening to their teacher read than they did to their own enjoyment. This was the case over all students, by teacher and by gender. This would tend to indicate that even when students did not enjoy being read to themselves, they assumed their peers enjoyed being read to by the teacher. One explanation for this could be that students saw teacher read-alouds as a potentially enjoyable activity; however, they did not themselves enjoy the book selected for reading to the class.
6.4.2.8 Students’ beliefs about good readers requiring lots of practise

The response of students to the statement: To be a good reader requires lots of practice provided a statistically significant response based on the gender of the teacher, with Michael’s and Steve’s classes more strongly agreeing with the statement than the students in Bronte’s and Jane’s classes.

It is unknown from the data whether Michael and Steve placed more emphasis on student reading practise than did Bronte and Jane, however Steve’s program included elements, such as reading practise time (as opposed to reading for pleasure time) and the provision of levelled readers. No explanation can be suggested for this phenomenon, and further investigations could perhaps attempt to provide an explanation.

6.4.2.9 Students’ beliefs about reading assisting learning

Students agreed that reading influenced their learning as suggested in the literature (see section 2.3). The children were not asked to specify in which areas this learning took place, but their high level of agreement with the statement: Reading is good because you learn many different things would indicate that they found reading beneficial to their learning, which may prove a positive sign for classroom practitioners.

6.4.2.10 Students’ beliefs about reading improving vocabulary

Results from the student survey data would again indicate students’ high level of agreement to the benefits to their vocabularies from reading. This is supported Farris (1993) and Rubin (2000) (see section 2.3.1).

6.4.2.11 Students’ views on competing factors

Students in Jane’s class were the only children to indicate above average responses to all competing factors listed on the Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire with over half the students in her class indicating their involvement in homework (\(n = 10; 76.9\%\)) and sport (\(n = 8; 61.5\%\)) as having the potential to impact on their availability of time for reading. Television viewing, computers and socialising with friends were each indicated by six students (46.2%). Two (15.4%) of Jane’s students indicated a commitment to music as a reason for lack of reading time. This above sample average level of commitment to extra-curricular activities,
as was recognised by Jane, may be due to the difference in cultural orientation of these children from a higher socio-economic status school community.

Michael’s class registered an above average response for all listed competing factors with the exception of sport, nominated by only three (16.7%) students. No details were forthcoming during the interview that might explain for this; however, reasonable speculation about this result suggests that it might be accounted for by the small number of students and the rural nature of the school, and a possible lack of organised after-school sporting activities in isolated rural communities. Michael’s class had the greatest number of students \((n = 10; 80.0\%)\) who nominated homework as a competing factor.

Bronte’s class and Steve’s class nominated responses that were below average in all cases except one: homework in Bronte’s class \((n = 16; 66.7\%)\) and sport in Steve’s class \((n = 4; 30.8\%)\).

6.5 Research Question Four

- How relevant are teachers’ practices in a time of curriculum change?

This section summarises the key results of this study as derived from the interviews with the four participating teachers and the questionnaires administered to the 68 participating students. In the context of the Essential Learnings (Department of Education, 2002a) curriculum documents and empirical research, these results are discussed and interpreted, and are used as the basis for determining the relevance of the three classroom practices, identified as the focus of this study, in a time of curriculum change.

6.5.1 Key Results

The data from the teachers’ interviews and the review of the curriculum literature and documents would suggest that the practices of the four teachers met a range of objectives contained within the culminating outcomes of the communicating EL and the thinking EL (Department of Education, 2001b). The value of the benefits outlined in previous discussion (see section 6.3) connect strongly too, however, with the other culminating outcomes that require students to be self-directed and ethical, responsible citizens and active contributors. Many of
the comments by teachers, which are supported in the literature (see section 2), would indicate that their students’ engagement with literature will contribute to students’ literacy, social and emotional growth.

6.5.2 Discussion and Interpretation of Results

Because reading is well-recognised as a foundational literacy skill (Rowe as cited in Rowe, 2000) by the curriculum developers of the ELs (Department of Education, 2001b), the culminating outcome for students becoming effective communicators, reflects the need for, and values the importance of, students becoming literate citizens to take their place in society. This importance is recognised by the research (see for example, Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997) and in the motivations and objectives of the four teachers in this study (see chapter four). The authors of the ELs curriculum (Department of Education, 2002a) suggest that children’s understanding of language should encompass its form, structure, use, meaning and interpretation in a variety of personal, social and cultural contexts, and that this understanding should be demonstrated in linguistic practice. These outcomes are entirely compatible with the outcomes of the practices of the four teachers, and in accord with the social research of Luke (1994).

6.6 Summary

This discussion chapter has discussed and interpreted the results in the preceding two chapters, in relation to the four research questions presented. This chapter also presented the key findings of this study in relation to research literature. The results discussed and interpreted in this chapter form the basis for the summary and conclusions, which are presented in the following chapter.


7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The previous chapter presented and discussed the major findings of this research and informs the summary and conclusions offered in this chapter. This chapter is presented in seven sections. The initial section revisits the conceptual framework of the study and summarises the research in relation to the aim and research questions (7.1). In the following section, conclusions are drawn from the discussion of results in chapter six (7.2). The next section addresses the implications for educational practice (7.3). The limitations of the study are then considered (7.4), before consideration is given to recommendations for future research (7.5). The chapter closes with a brief concluding statement (7.6).

7.1 Summary

This research investigated the personal and pedagogical motivations that prompted four upper primary teachers to implement a reading program that included three particular literary practices. The practices that teachers engaged in were reading aloud to students, the provision of dedicated silent reading time, and encouraging students to engage in book talk.

This study also investigated the benefits to students that the teachers attributed to the inclusion of these practices within their reading programs. Furthermore, children's attitudes to these practices were investigated and consideration was given to understanding the relevance of these practices in a time of curriculum change.

This study was developed from, and theoretically framed within, the concepts of McKenna’s Proposed Model of Reading Attitude Acquisition (1994, see section 2.2.1). This model embraces the predominantly affective nature of attitude and recognises the influence of conditions under which attitudes develop. Furthermore, the model indicates conditions under which change was likely to be effected in attitude. The conceptualisation of these influences by teachers was seen by McKenna (1994) to be paramount if they were to intervene in the attitude cycle and positively influence their students’ attitudes towards reading through the provision
of a supportive environment, and by fostering children’s affective engagement with literature (McKenna, 1994).

Although complex, McKenna’s (1994) proposed model was influential and helpful in the analysis of teachers’ behaviour as reported by them, allowing, as it did, some understanding of the intricate patterns that influenced teachers’ motivations and their objectives for their reading programs. Furthermore, it was possible, through the lens of the model, to gain a fine-grained appreciation of the benefits attributed by the teachers to their programs, as they explained them in their interviews. The model captured and situated many of the aspects of the classroom practices described by the teachers, as well as enabling description of the intuitive theoretical understandings of the four teachers.

The data obtained by surveying the sixty-eight students added another facet to the crystallisation process, allowing access to students’ attitudes toward reading and their impressions of the programs implemented by their teachers.

7.2 Conclusions

The interviews with the four teachers provided a detailed picture of the motivations that lead to the implementation of their specific reading programs. As well as possessing a personal love of reading, which fuelled their enthusiasm for the topic, the four teachers were influenced in their work by the serious implications for their students if they failed to achieve success in reading. These implications are well documented in the research.

The teachers had a well-developed, if naïve, conceptual understanding of the attitude model described by McKenna (1994). The programs they implemented, while designed to provide students with a model of reading behaviour and provide time to develop and practise reading skills, also had as an underpinning objective to improve the attitudes of students through their engagement with books and book talk.

The teachers’ reading programs were primarily organised so that they engaged with the interests of the children but were also, perhaps, intuitive in their intention to intersect with children’s developing attitude towards reading. All four
of the teachers were attempting, each in his or her own way, to achieve these goals in a classroom environment that was supportive and encouraging of literacy engagement – in much the same way that Smith (1982a), Cambourne (1988), Luke and Freebody (2000) suggest as productive. They were, in every sense, fulfilling the theoretically projected objectives of the model. The majority of the children in these classrooms demonstrated a genuine commitment to the literacy activities in which they were engaged. They had absorbed the ethos of their teachers, each of whom was able to express unreservedly his or her commitment to the goal of ensuring the children recognised the importance of the enjoyment of literacy achievement.

The teachers in this study all understood that they had achieved their intentions in their literacy programs when they were able to gauge children’s attitudes toward reading from the children’s response to it. As Michael said, very tellingly, “his smile tells me what I want to know about his attitude” (Interview, May 8, 2002 p. 9). The benefits of engaging with literature, as discussed with these teachers, were not being measured by ‘scientific testing’. They were measured instead by the number of books being read, the conversations that emerged from them, the subtle differences that became apparent in the children’s writing, the growth in vocabulary and the joyful participation the children expressed when they were ‘allowed’ to read their favourite books.

Equally important to the goals of literacy achievement, in the opinions of the teachers, was the learning that occurred in the area of children’s social and emotional growth. The teachers attributed this growth to the fact that the content of the literature with which children engaged provided them with access to complex abstract concepts that were made concrete for them through their engagement. This, in turn, allowed the teacher and children to engage in the discussion of issues that were relevant and often challenging.

The carefully constructed contact with literature that these teachers have provided has the potential to generate the motivational force of commitment to reading that will encourage children to engage with complex, challenging ideas and to move beyond their known experience. As was suggested by Dixon (2000), participation in book talk, the active and meaningful discussion of literature, has the
potential to provide a potent means for the voicing of the children’s thoughts and perceptions, and in so doing, adding to the shared knowledge of the class. Children in the classrooms who were the focus of this study became privy to ideas and gained access to vicarious experience beyond their own actuality, as a direct result of their engagement with literature, as Nell (1988) suggests they would. They were able to make discoveries about themselves, their world and the world beyond them, in a way that offered the essence of the experience without its inherent dangers (Meek, 1988).

It is cautiously suggested that many of the benefits that have been discussed here, tend to fall within the affective domain and thus forge an appropriate connection to the philosophical shift towards a ‘thinking’ curriculum, one that demands engagement with the cognitive skills of hypothesis, synthesis, assessment and evaluation of ideas. Indeed, the four teachers in this study, by planning the literacy practices described by them, as described in this document, are providing precisely the kinds of developmentally appropriate activities that raise the consciousness and inform the moral decisions of students.

Many of the researchers in the literature have suggested, as was found to be the case in this study, that teachers who understand the power of interest and motivation in influencing student attitudes, not only to reading, but generally, will be better able to affect positive change in the classroom. The teachers who participated in this study, and others like them, who attend to the affective domain of learning, are, it is hesitantly suggested, ideally situated to implement the changes envisaged by the developers of the new values- and futures-based curriculum, the Essential Learnings (Education Department, 2002a).

If we, as a society, want children to graduate from our schools with the values expressed in the new curriculum documents, then literature, and teachers who appreciate its worth, are well positioned to help develop creative, imaginative, thinking people to take their place in that society.

The many facets of classroom practice that the teachers have described in their interviews, have added greatly to the researcher’s understanding of children’s affective development, and the importance of interest and motivation in
influencing attitude and achieving student learning. These four teachers were all
caring, professional people who sought the best for their students and were
generous enough to share their insights gained over many years of experience.
Together with the contribution made by their students, who participated in the
survey, they have built up a picture of their practice and the benefits that accrue
from it. The researcher appreciates their time, openness and honesty in
contributing to her knowledge and to that of the research on this topic.

7.3 Application to Teaching Practice

The findings of this study indicate that there are serious educational
implications for teaching practice as well as for teacher education. While the
importance of the affective is recognised in older literature, there seems to have
been little current research in the area, due, perhaps, to the slippery nature of the
domain and the challenge that might present quantitative research.

Whilst it is heartening to recognise that children’s affective development is
now being given strong acknowledgment by curriculum developers in Tasmania,
there is perhaps, some work to be done in raising the awareness of classroom
teachers of the considerable importance of demonstrating their own literate
behaviour as a model for the children in their classrooms. Furthermore, children’s
engagement with literature and the benefits, both to literacy and values education,
to be gained from this engagement are a frequently unrealised aspect of classroom
practice. This is particularly the case at the upper primary and middle school levels,
where, too often, it appears from the literature, an assumption is made that
students are able to read and little is done to provide time for the development of
the most complex of reading skills or the encouragement of positive reading
attitudes.

McKenna (1994) has proposed a model of reading attitude influence that is
supported by research relevant to the social (Luke, 1994) and environmental
(Cambourne, 1984, 1988) classroom contexts, and there was, indeed, a naïve
conceptual understanding of McKenna’s proposed model by the teachers involved
in this study. However, it cannot be assumed, after extensive scrutiny of the
literature, that this understanding is widespread within the teaching profession. A
greater awareness of the ways in which reading attitude develops and can be
influenced would certainly be of benefit to practicing teachers and to pre-service professionals.

The findings derived from the students who were surveyed, suggest that most children enjoyed their participation in the classroom practices implemented by the four classroom teachers and the children were able to recognise the benefits they gained from the reading program. The fact that the majority of the students appeared to have a positive reading self-efficacy, that is they believed themselves to be competent readers, emphasises the importance of the feedback that they were getting from their teachers and from their own capacity to derive enjoyment from their reading. Students’ interests and self-efficacy must be taken into account in classroom reading programs if a positive change in their reading attitude is to be affected.

While there are many pressures on the practice of classroom teachers, the ability of literature to assist in the development of children’s values and deeper understandings needs to be understood and harnessed by educators and administrators. The findings of this study suggest that time must be provided each day, both for silent reading and for teachers to read to children. The immeasurable benefits of these practices, and of engaging students in book talk in a supportive classroom context, have been discussed within the literature and are supported, not only by the views of the teachers, but also by their students. Engaging students in these practices will be time well spent.

7.4 Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of this study, its sample size, does impose restraints on the extent to which the findings can be generalised. However, the four upper primary teachers who participated in the study were teaching in a broad range of geographically and socio-economically diverse educational environments. These teachers were selected because of their implementation of a specific combination of reading and literacy practices and therefore this sample of teachers are not necessarily representative of other upper primary teachers in Tasmanian schools or the reading programs that they implement.
Therefore, in terms of research design, the significance of the findings of this study would have been advanced in the area of reliability and external validity if the scope and resources had allowed for the inclusion in the study of a greater number of participants. However, the information contributed by the teachers and their students has offered a detailed insight into the motivations, instructional goals and implicit theories of this small group of teachers regarding reading pedagogy and the importance placed by them on the affective domain in reading instruction.

### 7.5 Recommendations for Future Research

This research has identified areas that provide scope for further study of reading practices in upper primary classes.

A large-scale quantitative investigation into the reading practices of upper primary teachers could add greatly to the literature on the current classroom reading practices in upper primary classes within Tasmania. Small-scale studies into individual programs have been undertaken at various times in Australia, however, most of the literature on large-scale research is derived from overseas studies, mainly from the United States of America. There is currently no documentation that provides an understanding of the diversity of practices being implemented in upper primary classes in Tasmanian schools. A study of the type suggested, surveying a representative sample of these teachers, may provide significant benefits for other researchers and practitioners in the field.

Furthermore, a longitudinal, comparative study of children’s attitudes would seem appropriate given the nature of the time factors involved in the development and influence of attitude. An attitude survey completed by students upon entering, for example, a grade five classroom of a teaching professional, such as those that were the participants in this study, could be used in determining the development of attitude when compared with a survey taken upon completion of grade six in the same classroom.

Additionally, future researchers might consider the analysis of pre-service reading education programs as useful in determining the extent of the current focus of these programs on the affective domain and its influence on children’s reading motivation and engagement, with the possibility of extending the knowledge of
pre-service teachers as regards models of attitude influence, such as that proposed by McKenna (1994).

Finally, the results of the student survey indicated a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of the students of the male and female teachers in this study to how important practice was to becoming a good reader. Further research may be able to suggest if this is a wide-spread phenomenon or limited to the sample in this study.

7.6 Concluding Statement

Society today requires citizens who are literate, citizens who are able to think creatively and imaginatively in order to meet the demands and responsibilities of an uncertain, but exciting, and rewarding future. Educational authorities must recognise the importance of providing students with literacy skills as well as the abilities necessary to be effective communicators. We need leaders of the future who are empathetic and able to make intelligent and ethically based decisions. Such leaders are most likely to come from a school environment where there is a curriculum underpinned by values and focussed on creating a thinking society. Such a document is the new Tasmanian curriculum, the Essential Learnings (2002a).

This study has attempted to illuminate the benefits that may accrue to the whole of society when teachers engage in classroom practices that encourage the development of flexible, demanding ways of thinking that excite interest and enthusiasm for lifelong literacy learning.
ADDENDUM

“Life is not easy. It is full of needs. Literature has the power to meet these needs.


“The spark for each of these will be found in the curl of a good book.”

Montebello, M. S. (1972, p. 102).
REFERENCES


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Appendix A

University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee Approval Letter
To: Mr R Wills
From: Amanda McAully
Executive Officer
Date: 29th April 2002

Subject: H6576 A study of upper primary teachers’ and students’ attitudes toward reading and in-class reading practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature

The Northern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee on 29th April, 2002 recommended approval of this project.

You are required to report immediately anything which might affect ethical acceptance of the project, including:
- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants;
- proposed changes in the protocol;
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

You are also required to inform the Committee if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion, giving the reasons for discontinuation.

Please Note:
Approval is subject to annual review. You will be asked to submit your first report on this project by 29th April 2003.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda McAully

Contact: University of Tasmania
Research and Development Office
GPO Box 252-01
Hobart Tas 7001
Phone: 62 262763
Fax: 62267148
Email: Amanda.McAully@utas.edu.au
Appendix B

Department of Education Office of Educational Review Approval Letter
16 April 2002

Mrs Tammy Jones
“Ghillies Keep”
581 Brown Mountain Road
KAROOLA TAS 7268

Dear Tammy

RE: A STUDY OF UPPER PRIMARY TEACHERS’, STUDENTS’ AND PARENTS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING AND IN-CLASS READING PRACTICES DESIGNED TO PROMOTE CHILDREN’S ENGAGEMENT WITH LITERATURE

I have been advised by the Departmental Consultative Research Committee that the above research study adheres to the guidelines established and that there is no objection to the study proceeding.

Please note that you have been given permission to proceed at a general level, and not at individual school level. You must seek approval from the principals of the selected schools before you can proceed in those schools.

A copy of your final report should be forwarded to the Director, Office of Educational Review, Department of Education, GPO Box 169, Hobart 7001 at your earliest convenience within six months of the completion of the research phase in Department of Education schools.

Yours sincerely

(ORIGINAL SIGNED BY ALISON JACOB)

Alison Jacob
DEPUTY SECRETARY
(EDUCATION STRATEGIES)
Appendix C

Teacher Short-Answer Questionnaire
A study of upper primary teachers’ and students’ attitudes to reading and in-class reading practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature

**TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please place a cross in the box with the answer that applies to you, like this → 

I am a
- [ ] female
- [ ] male

I currently teach grade
- [ ] 5
- [ ] 6
- [ ] 5/6

My class is
- [ ] co-ed
- [ ] all male
- [ ] all female

There are _________ children currently enrolled in my class.

How many years have you been teaching? _____________________________________

What other grade levels have you taught?
- [ ] K/P
- [ ] 1/2
- [ ] 3/4
- [ ] High school

How long have you been teaching grade 5/6? ___________________________________

What teaching qualification/s do you hold?
- [ ] TTC
- [ ] Dip Teach
- [ ] BEd
- [ ] BEd(Hons)
- [ ] MEd
- [ ] Other __________________________

In which state did you gain your teaching qualifications? ________________________

Do you hold any other qualifications?
- [ ] Yes ______________________________
- [ ] No

What teaching specialisation did you undertake during your training?
- [ ] ECE
- [ ] Primary
- [ ] Other __________________________

Did you have a Major or Minors?
- [ ] Yes ______________________________
- [ ] No

Are you a member of any professional teaching association?
- [ ] ALEA
- [ ] AATE
- [ ] PETA
- [ ] Other __________________________

Your current age
- [ ] Under 25
- [ ] 26-30
- [ ] 31-35
- [ ] 36-40
- [ ] 41-45
- [ ] 46-50
- [ ] 51-55
- [ ] 55-60
- [ ] Over 60

For the purposes of this study, I would prefer to be known by the pseudonym: ___________________________________

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. Your participation is very much appreciated.
Appendix D

Interview Schedule
A study of upper primary teachers’ and students’ attitudes to reading and in-class reading practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature

TEACHER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. As I’ve explained previously, I’m interested in talking to you about various aspects of your reading program.

PERSONAL READING
First, some questions about your personal reading…
• Would you say that you are a keen reader?
• What sort of things do you enjoy reading?
• Do you think your enjoyment (or lack of enjoyment of reading) shows in your program?
• How important do you think reading is for children?
• How much importance do you place on skills development?
• How much importance do you place on children’s enjoyment of reading?
• What objectives do you have for children reading literature in your class?
• Do you think that having students become lifelong readers is important?
  ○ Why is that?
• What sort of things do you do in your class to promote students’ engagement with literature?
  ○ Books kept in room, silent reading time, serial novel reading, book discussions, etc.

SILENT READING TIME
I’d like now to talk about silent reading time…
• Do you timetable silent reading time?
• How much time do you allow?
  ○ How many minutes per day? Days per week?
• What time of day?
• Can you explain to me how you run your silent reading time?
  ○ What are the rules? When do children choose their books? Are they allowed to change books during reading time? Do they move around the room or talk? Do they have to sit at their desks? What are they allowed to read? Can they bring books from home? What type of reading material is acceptable? Can children borrow books from the school library to reading during this time?
• Do the students all read during silent reading time?
  ○ What else might they be doing?
• What do you do during silent reading time?
  ○ Mark work? Plan? Read? Children’s novels/adult novels?
• Do the children have to keep a reading log or do any other paperwork?
• Do they give any verbal report to you or to a group of children or the whole class?
• Is it school policy to have silent reading time?
• Where did you get the idea to have silent reading time?
  ○ Another teacher? A book? Teacher training?
• For how long have you had silent reading time running in your classroom?
  ○ This year? For how many years?
• Why do you have silent reading time?
• What do you find, if anything, are the benefits of having silent reading time?
• How do children who have poor reading abilities cope with silent reading time?
• Have you ever had to justify giving children silent reading time?
To parents? To other teachers? To a principal?
  o If yes, how did you do that? Did you convince the person?

READING ALOUD TO STUDENTS
I’d now like to talk to you about reading aloud to students…

• Do you read aloud to your students?
• Is this reading timetabled?
  o How often? Time per day? Per week? When is it timetabled for? Why?
• How long do you read per session?
  o A chapter, 20 minutes?
• Why do you read to students who are able to read for themselves?
• Are there any benefits you can suggest of reading to these students?
• Where did you get the idea to do this?
• Is it a school-wide policy?
• Where are the students when you read to them?
  o In a group on the floor, at their desks, in bean-bags?
• What kind of books do you choose to read to the class?
  o Popular novels, classic novels, humorous novels, novels relating to an integrated topic or theme?
• Do you ever have any before, during or after reading activities or worksheets?
  o What sort of things? How long do they take?
• Do you think these are popular with the children?
  o Why do you think that?
• Do you think they increase children’s knowledge about books and writing?
• Do you talk to students about books you are reading or have read?
  o In what way?
• Do you ever recommend books to children?
• How do you know which books to recommend?
• Do you think you are successful in your recommendations?
• In what other ways, if any, do you promote literature to your students?
• What are the benefits you see as being linked to the reading programs you implement in your classroom?
• Can you give examples of the evidence of any of these?
• In your opinion, is there a clear link that unites these two separate aspects of your program?
  o What is it? What brings them together?

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS
• What would be your recommendation for “must have” read-aloud books for this grade?
• What would be your recommendation for “must have” bookshelf books for this grade?

INFLUENCES – PARENTS / FRIENDS / GENDER
• Do you find that parents influence children’s attitudes to reading?
• What about their friends’ attitudes to reading? Does it matter to the children if their friends enjoy reading?
• Have you ever noticed a gender difference in attitudes toward reading? What in particular have you noticed?

FINAL QUESTION
• Before we finish, is there anything else you would like to say about your beliefs or classroom practice relating to students’ engagement with literature?

Thank you very much. I appreciate the time you’ve given up to take part in this interview.
Appendix E

Information Letter to Principals
INFORMATION LETTER

A study of upper primary teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards reading and in-class reading practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature.

Dear [name of principal],

You may recall having been contacted regarding your willingness for your school to participate in research into attitudes towards reading and other classroom practices designed to promote reading by children. This is a formal invitation for your school to take part in this research.

The research will be part of a study being conducted by myself, Tammy Jones, in conjunction with my supervisor, Robin Wills, for the completion of my Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the links between teachers reading to children, children reading silently in a regular, supportive, silent classroom situation and other practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature.

As you are aware, I have approached [name of teacher] regarding his/her willingness to participate in the research and he/she is happy to be involved in the study, subject to your approval.

[Name of teacher] will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview that will be audio taped. It is anticipated that the interview will last approximately half an hour. During the interview, he/she will be asked about his/her teaching experience, understandings and beliefs, particularly as they relate to reading, reading habits and attitudes. He/she will also be asked about his/her in-class reading-related programs and I will undertake observation of his/her class and have children complete a questionnaire. A follow-up interview with some children in the class may be required. I envisage being at the school at various times over a period of approximately three weeks.

It is not anticipated that participation in the study will cause the school, teacher or students any risk or discomfort and disruption of the class will be kept to a minimum.

Your support of the study would be greatly appreciated and I would be pleased if you would consent to the school’s involvement in the study. In an effort to inform parents of the research and to gain their support and involvement I ask that the school insert the attached item (or an amended version) in your school newsletter.

All research data will be treated as strictly confidential. Any information pertaining to the teacher, students’ or schools’ identity will be removed from the data during...
processing. All tapes, transcripts and computer files will be kept in a locked cabinet or password-protected computer at the University of Tasmania for the required period of time after the completion of the study and then deleted or destroyed by shredding. For the purposes of publication of the study, all participants will be referred to by a pseudonym, which they are free to choose themselves, if they prefer.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If participants decide to take part in the study and subsequently change their mind about participating, they are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice.

This project has received ethical approval from the University Human Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education.

If you have any general concerns, please contact:
Mr Robin Wills
Ph. 6324 3051.

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints, please contact:
Prof. Roger Fay,
Chair of the Northern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.
Phone: 6324 3576

OR

Amanda McAully,
Executive Officer of the Northern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.
Phone: 6226 2763.

A copy of the completed study will be forwarded to the school within three months of completion of the study and an abstract will be available on the internet via the University of Tasmania’s website at http://www.educ.utas.edu.au.

Thank you for your participation and support of this study.

Yours faithfully,

Tammy Jones,
Researcher.
Appendix F

School Newsletter Item
Dear Parents,

________________ Primary School has been invited to be involved in research as part of an Honours project being undertaken by Tammy Jones, a fourth year Bachelor of Education student at the University of Tasmania.

Tammy is conducting “A study into upper primary teachers’ and students’ attitudes to reading and in-class reading practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature”. She asks that the parents of children in Grade 5/6 ____________ consent to their children participating in the study. Children will be asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their reading attitudes and practices and may also be asked to participate in an interview.

Participation in the study would be appreciated, but is voluntary. All responses are confidential and children will not be named in the study.

If you have a child in Grade 5/6 ________________, your child will bring an information letter and consent form home. If you decide to consent to your child participating, please complete the consent form and return it by ________________ to the drop-off box in the school office or your child’s classroom, in the envelope provided.
Appendix G

Grade 5/6 Student Reading Questionnaire
A study of upper primary teachers’ and students’ attitudes to reading and in-class reading practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature

**GRADE 5/6 STUDENT READING QUESTIONNAIRE**

*Please place a cross in the box with the answer that applies to you, like this → ✕*

I am a  
- [ ] boy  
- [ ] girl

I am in  
- [ ] grade 5  
- [ ] grade 6

I am in a  
- [ ] all girls class  
- [ ] all boys class  
- [ ] mixed class

Do you like to read?  
- [ ] yes  
- [ ] no

Do you like people reading to you?  
- [ ] yes  
- [ ] no

Why is that?  ___________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Do you think you are a good reader?  
- [ ] yes  
- [ ] no

What do you think makes someone a good reader?  _____________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Do you think your friends like to read?  
- [ ] yes  
- [ ] no  
- [ ] not sure

Do you think your teacher likes to read?  
- [ ] yes  
- [ ] no  
- [ ] not sure

Have you ever read a book suggested by your teacher?  
- [ ] yes  
- [ ] no

If you have, did you enjoy the book?  
- [ ] yes  
- [ ] no

If you think about **reading books for pleasure**, how do you feel?
- [ ] Really enjoy it  
- [ ] Don’t like it at all
- [ ] Quite like it  
- [ ] Don’t read books
- [ ] Don’t like it much  
- [ ] Can’t read

Would you like to have more time to **read for pleasure**?
- [ ] Yes  
- [ ] No  
- [ ] Don’t know

What stops you from reading **more**?
- [ ] Busy with homework  
- [ ] Busy with sport
- [ ] Watching television  
- [ ] Playing on computer
- [ ] Other  ___________________________________________________________

When you have **read for pleasure**, which do you like best?
- [ ] Fiction  
- [ ] Non-fiction  
- [ ] Both
In the following section, place crosses in **all** boxes that apply to your reading.

If you read **fiction books**, what sort of fiction books do you usually read?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter books</th>
<th>Short stories</th>
<th>Mystery / Crime / Thriller</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comics</td>
<td>Animal / Pet</td>
<td>Science Fiction / Fantasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture books</td>
<td>Historical / Western</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you read **non-fiction books**, what sort of non-fiction books do you usually read?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooking</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies / Crafts</td>
<td>Encyclopaedias</td>
<td>Animal / Horses / Pet care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science / Space</td>
<td>Technology / Computers</td>
<td>Self-help / Do-it-Yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cars</td>
<td>Dance / Music</td>
<td>Clothes / Fashion / Make-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing / Hunting / Guns</td>
<td>Motorbikes</td>
<td>Military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What are the **main reasons** you read **books for pleasure**?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To improve knowledge</th>
<th>To gain information</th>
<th>For pleasure/enjoyment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To relax</td>
<td>To help get to sleep</td>
<td>As a way to escape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To use imagination</td>
<td>To prevent boredom</td>
<td>To fill in time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How strongly** do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading is good because you learn many different things</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading requires a lot of concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really enjoy silent reading time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d rather watch TV than read a book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who can read for themselves enjoy having books read to them</td>
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<tr>
<td>To be a good reader you need lots of practice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading books is important to me</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t have time for reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading is a special activity – it has something that TV and computers don’t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading helps me learn new words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I only read books when there’s nothing else to do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I really like it when someone reads to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I hate reading aloud</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the following section, place a cross in the box that best describes your family, like this → 

I see a family member read

Someone in my family reads to me

I have books given to me by my family

I read for pleasure at home

I visit the library with a family member

I discuss books I’m reading with a family member

How many books do you estimate are in your home?

1-19

20-49

50-99

Unsure

In the following section, place a cross in the box that best describes your habits, like this → 

How often do you read in the following situations?

In bed

At home, but not in bed

Travelling to or from school

During the week

On the weekends

On school holidays

In the following section, please write anything else you would like to say about reading

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

My name is _________________, but for this study please call me _________________.

Thanks!
Appendix H

Information Letter to Teachers
INFORMATION LETTER

A study of upper primary teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards reading and in-class reading practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature.

Dear [name of teacher],

You may recall having been contacted regarding your willingness to participate in research into attitudes towards reading and other classroom practices designed to promote reading by children. This is a formal invitation for you to take part in this research.

The research will be part of a study being conducted by myself, Tammy Jones, in conjunction with my supervisor, Robin Wills, for the completion of my Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the links between teachers reading to children, children reading silently in a regular, supportive classroom situation and other practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature.

You will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview that will be audio taped. It is anticipated that the interview will last approximately half an hour. During the interview, you will be asked about your teaching experience, understandings and beliefs, particularly as they relate to reading, reading habits and attitudes. You will also be asked about your in-class reading-related programs and I will undertake observation of your class and have children complete a questionnaire. A follow-up interview with some children in the class may be required. I envisage being at the school at various times over a period of approximately three weeks.

It is not anticipated that your participation in the study will cause you any risk or discomfort and disruption of your class will be kept to a minimum.

All research data will be treated as strictly confidential. Any information pertaining to your identity will be removed from the data during processing. All tapes, transcripts and computer files will be kept in a locked cabinet or password-protected computer at the University of Tasmania for the required period of time after the completion of the study and then deleted or destroyed by shredding. For the purposes of publication of the study, you will be referred to by a pseudonym, which you are free to choose yourself, if you prefer.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you decide to take part in the study and subsequently change your mind about participating, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice.
This project has received ethical approval from the University Human Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education.

If you have any **general concerns**, please contact:

Mr Robin Wills  
Ph. 6324 3051.

If you have any **ethical concerns** or **complaints**, please contact:

Prof. Roger Fay,  
Chair of the Northern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.  
Phone: 6324 3576

**OR**

Amanda McAully,  
Executive Officer of the Northern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.  
Phone: 6226 2763.

A copy of the completed study will be forwarded to the school within three months of completion of the study and an abstract will be available on the internet via the University of Tasmania’s website at [http://www.educ.utas.edu.au](http://www.educ.utas.edu.au).

You are free to keep this information letter and a copy of the *Statement of Informed Consent*.

**Thank you for your participation and support of this study.**

Yours faithfully,

Tammy Jones,  
Researcher.
Appendix I

Teacher Statement of Informed Consent
STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

A study of upper primary teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards reading and in-class reading practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature.

1. I have read and understood the 'Information Letter' for this study.
2. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
3. I understand that the study involves the following procedures:
   (a) a semi-structured interview of approximately 30 minutes duration which will be audio taped;
   (b) classroom observation of my in-class reading-related programs;
   (c) questionnaire to all consenting students in my class;
   (d) possible follow-up semi-structured interviews with selected students in my class.
4. I understand that the study involves giving details of my:
   (a) teaching experience, understandings and beliefs;
   (b) reading habits and attitudes towards reading; and
   (c) reading-related in-class programs.
5. I understand that all research data will be treated as confidential.
6. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
7. I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a subject.
8. I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Name of teacher ............................................................................................................

Signature of teacher ............................................. Date ............................... 

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Tammy Jones ............................................. Date ...............................
Appendix J

Information Letter to Parents
INFORMATION LETTER

A study of upper primary teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards reading and in-class reading practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature.

Dear Parent/s or Guardian/s,

You may recall having seen a notice in the school newsletter regarding my research into attitudes towards reading and classroom practices designed to promote reading by children in your child’s class. This is a formal invitation for your child to take part in this research.

The research I propose is to be part of a study being conducted by myself, Tammy Jones, in conjunction with my supervisor, Robin Wills, for the completion of my Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree.

Parent/s or guardian/s are asked to consent to their child taking part in a questionnaire, and possible subsequent interview with the researcher. Your child’s name, class or school will not be identifiable in any published research. All research data will be treated as strictly confidential. Your child’s participation in this study would be greatly appreciated but is entirely voluntary. If you consent to your child’s participation in the study, you are asked to complete the attached consent form and promptly return it to school with your child in the enclosed envelope. Additionally, your child’s consent will be sought for their participation in the study.

If you decide to consent for your child to take part in the study and either you or your child subsequently change your or their mind about their participation, you are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time without prejudice. It is not anticipated that your child’s participation in the study will cause him/her any risk or discomfort.

This project has received ethical approval from the University Human Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education and has the permission and support of your child’s school.

If you have any general concerns, please contact my supervisor:

Mr Robin Wills
Ph. 6324 3051.

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints, please contact:

Prof. Roger Fay,
Chair of the Northern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.
Phone: 6324 3576
OR

Amanda McAully,
Executive Officer of the Northern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.
Phone: 6226 2763.

A copy of the completed study will be forwarded to the school within three months of completion of the study and an abstract will be available on the internet via the University of Tasmania’s website at http://www.educ.utas.edu.au.

You are free to keep this Information Letter.

Thank you for your participation and support of this study.

Yours faithfully,

Tammy Jones,
Researcher.
Appendix K

Parent Consent Form
Statement of Informed Consent

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Please read the following points and if you are happy for your child to participate in this research project, complete the consent slip at the bottom of the page, detach and return it tomorrow with your child to your child’s classroom teacher in the envelope provided. Prompt return of this form would be greatly appreciated.

Title of Research Project:

A study of upper primary teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards reading and in-class reading practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature.

1. I have read and understood the 'Information Letter' for this study.
2. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
3. I understand that the study involves my child completing a questionnaire, with the possibility of a follow-up interview with the researcher.
4. I understand that the study involves my child giving details of his/her reading habits and attitudes and that no risks or discomfort are envisaged.
5. I understand that all research data will be treated as confidential.
6. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
7. I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that my child cannot be identified as a subject.
8. I agree for my child to participate in this investigation and understand that he/she may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Tammy Jones,
Researcher.

[Signature]

I/We, ______________________________________________________________ [name/s of parent/s or guardian/s], consent for my/our child, ________________________ [name of child], to participate in the research being conducted by Tammy Jones into grade 5/6 children’s reading attitudes and practices.

Signature of parent/guardian × ________________________________

Signature of parent/guardian × ________________________________
Appendix L

Student Information Letter and Statement of Informed Consent Form
INFORMATION LETTER

A study of upper primary teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards reading and in-class reading practices designed to promote children’s engagement with literature.

Dear Grade 5/6 Student,

You might remember hearing from your teacher or parents about my research into reading as part of my university studies. This is an invitation for you to take part in this research.

Your parents/s or guardian/s have agreed that you can take part in my research by filling in a questionnaire. Later, I may ask to interview you. Anything we discuss will be treated as strictly confidential. Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated but is entirely voluntary. If you consent to participate in the study, you need to complete and sign the attached consent form and hand it back to me.

If you change your mind about talking to me, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without getting into any trouble. I don’t think that your participation in the study will upset you in any way.

The university and your school have approved this project. If you have any problems with the study you can speak to your parents or your teacher who will know what to do.

Thank you for your participation and support of this study.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Jones.

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

MY NAME IS ________________________________.

MRS. JONES HAS GIVEN ME AN INFORMATION SHEET AND I HAVE READ IT.

I UNDERSTAND THAT MRS. JONES IS GOING TO TALK TO ME ABOUT READING AND BOOKS.

I UNDERSTAND THAT ANYTHING I TELL MRS. JONES IS CONFIDENTIAL AND MY NAME WILL BE KEPT SECRET.

MRS. JONES HAS ANSWERED ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH THAT I HAVE ASKED.

I UNDERSTAND THAT I DON’T HAVE TO TALK TO MRS. JONES IF I DON’T WANT TO.

I AGREE TO TALK TO MRS. JONES, BUT IF I CHANGE MY MIND, I DON’T HAVE TO.